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## **Facing Both Ways:**

**How can journalism educators address the challenges of networked, disruptive technologies in the news media as well as in teaching and learning?**

Reflexivity in the Digital World: Rethinking Journalism Teaching and Learning in an Interactive World Conference, University of Sheffield, 21 March 2012

**Neil Thurman**





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## Conference theme

- “Digital and **interactive technologies** have **revolutionised** the **way people** use and **consume media** content . . . .”





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## Conference theme

- “Digital and **interactive technologies** have **revolutionised** the **way people** ~~use and consume~~ **media content** **learn**”





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## Conference theme

- “As a result, **traditional** ways of practicing **journalism** and delivering news ... have **struggled to keep up** with [changes to the way people consume media]”





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## Live Blogging

# Changing mainstream online journalistic practice in:

- Verification
- Subbing
- Sourcing
- Reader involvement
- Story structure
- Deadlines
- Corrections

Summary of  
key points

Live blog  
text

Further  
information  
on people  
involved in  
the story

Social sharing  
options

Video

Comments – not  
visible on the same  
page

Other articles,  
comment &  
analysis

The screenshot shows a BBC News live blog for the article 'Murdochs grilled by MPs'. The page is divided into several sections:
 

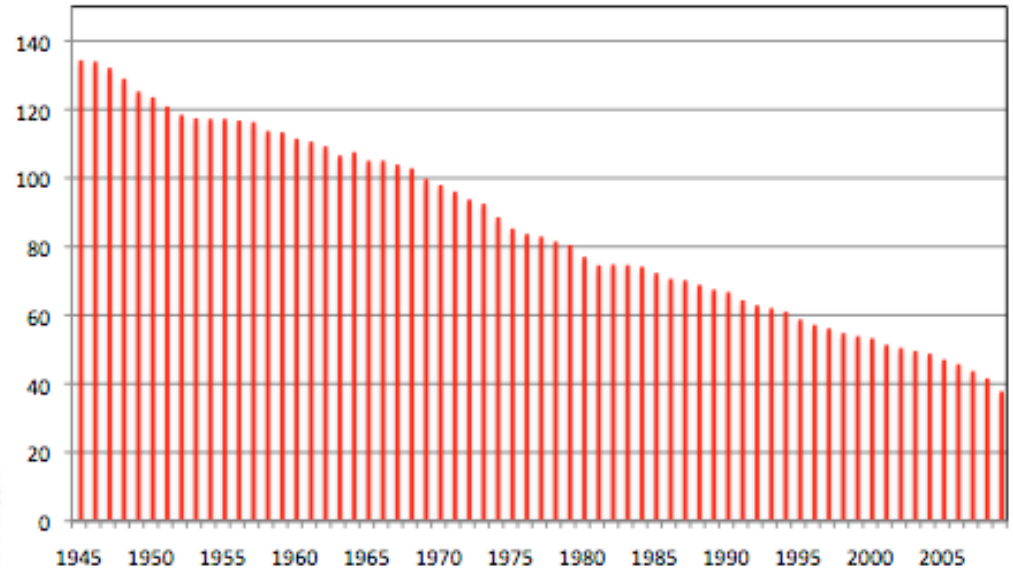
- Key points:** A summary of the main events, including questions from the Commons culture committee on News International's role in the phone-hacking scandal.
- Live text:** A real-time transcript of the hearing, with a 'LIVE NOW' indicator. It includes updates on the progress of the hearing and the reactions of the participants.
- Video:** A video player showing a live broadcast of the hearing, with a 'LIVE NOW' indicator.
- Join the discussion:** A section for reader comments and social media sharing options (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube).
- Comment here:** A section for reader comments, which is currently empty.
- Participants:** A grid of photos showing the participants in the hearing, including Robert Murdoch, James Murdoch, Rebekah Brooks, and various MPs.
- News and analysis:** A section at the bottom of the page with links to related articles and analysis.



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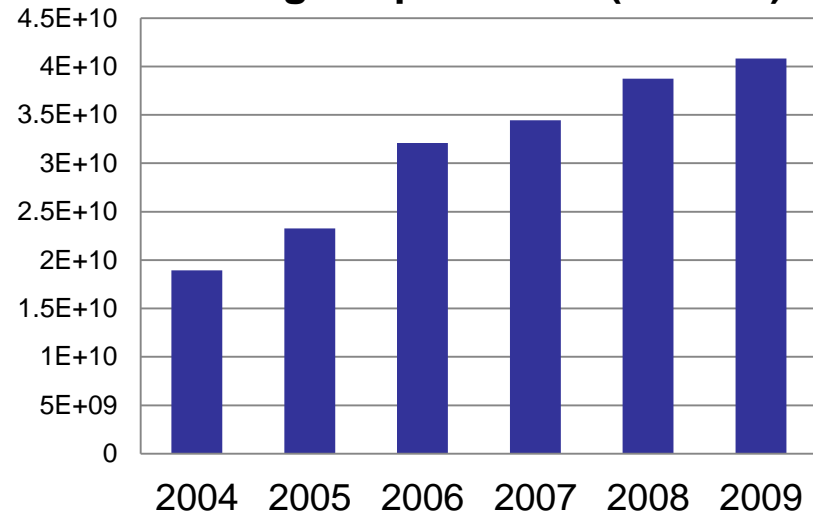


## US Newspaper circulation per 100 households



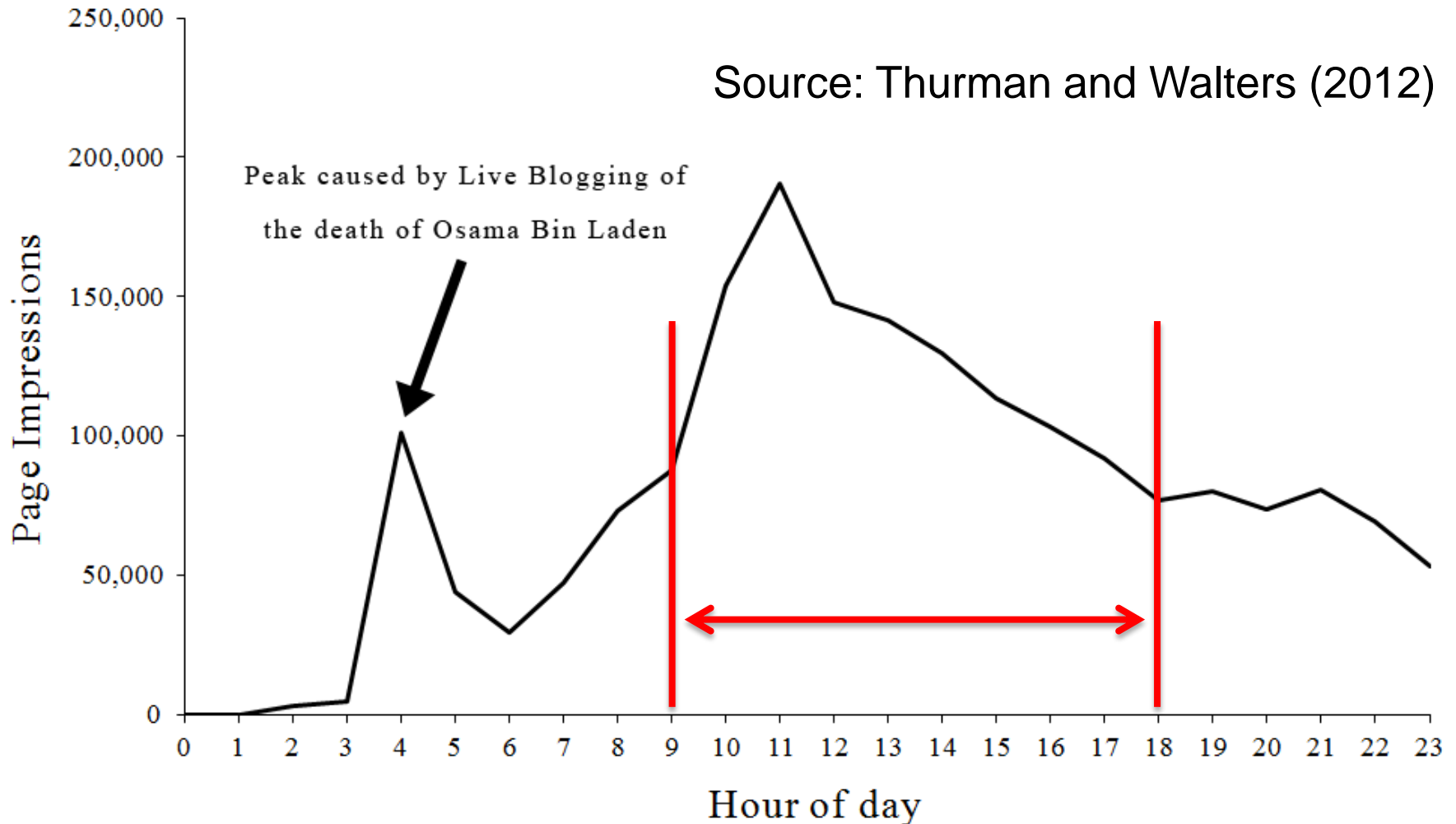
Source: Newspaper Association of America

## Combined US Newspaper Online Page Impressions (billions)





# Aggregated hourly page view data for 10 Live Blogs at Guardian.co.uk, March-May 2011.





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## ‘News at Work’ consumption patterns....



- Methodical & comprehensive 1<sup>st</sup> visit to news sites followed by...
- Several subsequent visits motivated by “need for a distraction or **more info about an event**”

Source: Boczkowski, 2010





## ‘News at Work’ consumption patterns....



- Habit of **monitoring** news sites’ homepages and often **not “clicking on stories”** during subsequent visits.
- Preference for **textual** rather than aural, animated or highly visual **content** (“privacy concerns” in office location).

Source: Boczkowski, 2010



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## How Live Blogging suits 'News at Work' consumption

**Regular updates (av. every 9 mins) provide follow up information about events.**

“I like the immediacy... being kept up-to-date”

“I like simple bite-sized nuggets of information on updates”

“I like that it is updated when a new item on the story breaks”

**—Survey respondents, pers. comm, Aug '11**



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## How Live Blogging suits 'News at Work' consumption

**Use of a single–dynamic–page, suits users' preference for monitoring a page rather than clicking on stories**

“I like that it gives you many different little points about the story”

**—Survey respondent, pers. comm, Aug '11**

29 users in our survey 'liked' the 'convenience' of Live Blogs.





## How Live Blogging suits 'News at Work' consumption

**Text format more suitable for reading in office where workers need to look as though they are working**

“Something I can glance at if I'm busy”

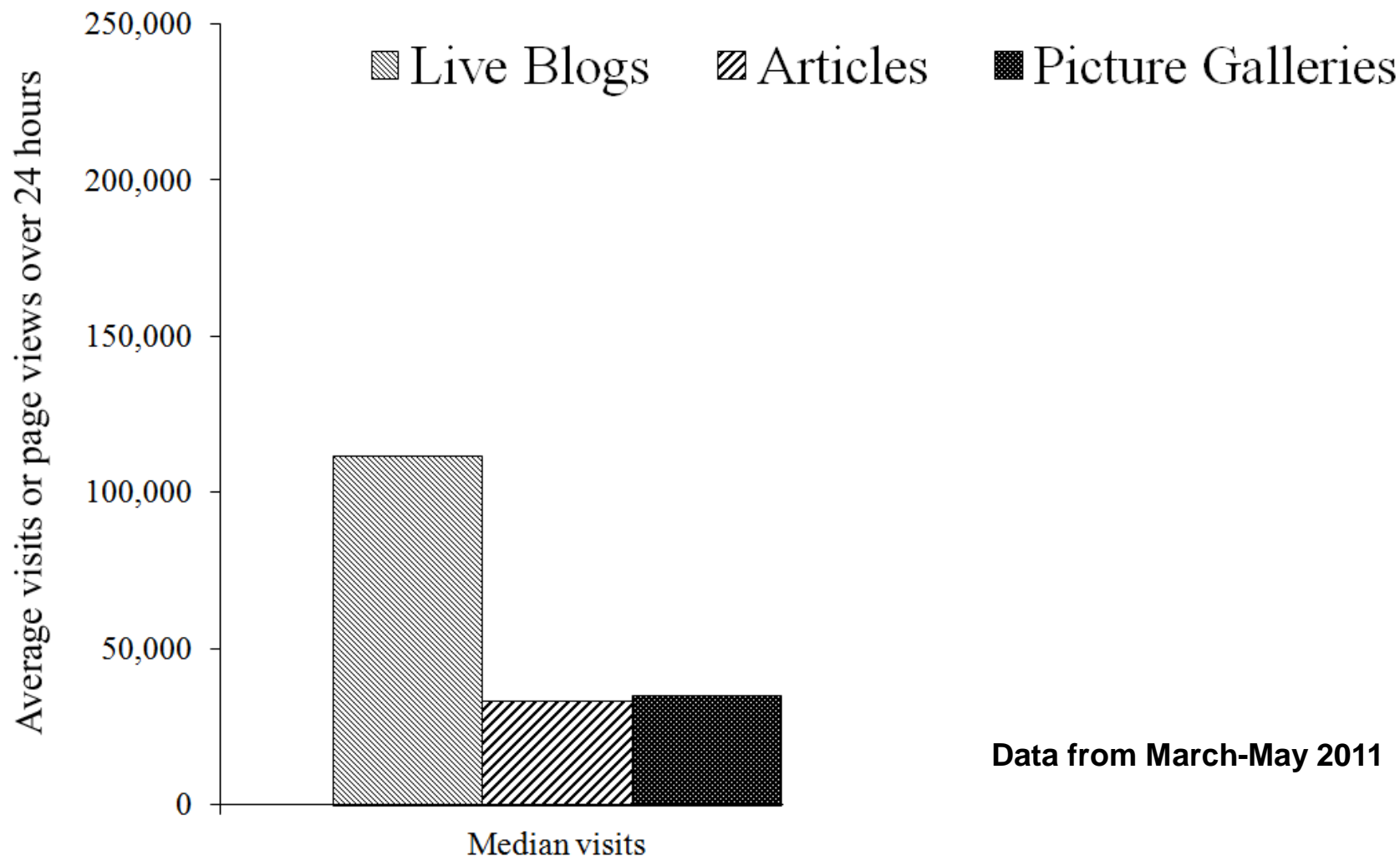
“Perfect way to keep up to date during the working day”

“Easier to read while getting on with other things (e.g. at work!)”

**—Survey respondents, pers. comm, Aug '11**



# Live Blogs: visits & page views



Data from March-May 2011



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## Live Blogging – prevalence

- Adopted worldwide e.g. NYTimes.com, BBC, Guardian, Al Jazeera, Telegraph.co.uk

guardian.co.uk

News | Sport | Comment | Culture | Business

News > Politics > Politics live with Andrew

**POLITICS LIVE**  
**WITH ANDREW**  
UK POLITICAL JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR

Tuesday 19 July 2011

# The Telegraph

HOME NEWS SPORT FINANCE COMME

UK World Politics Obituaries Earth

Road and Rail | Law and Order | Crime | Religion | Scotland | Northern

Phone Hacking

News of the World phone hacking scandal: live

BBC Mobile

## NEWS

Home World UK England N. Ireland Scotland Wales

**LIVE** Murdochs grilled by

Key points

- Rupert and James Murdoch face questions from the Commons culture committee on News International's role in the phone-hacking scandal.
- John Yates, the former assistant chief constable at the Met, will also speak to MPs, following his resignation on Monday.

Live text

Reporters: Justin Parkinson and Emma Griffiths

1630: Back to the hearing: Paul Farrelly says it is not known whether News International was complicit in keeping back information. Rupert Murdoch says he does not find the situation satisfactory.

1629: Editor in Chief of Guardian Newspapers Alan Rusbridger tweets: James M: I was 'surprised and shocked' we were paying Mulcaire's fees Doesn't read the Guardian then <http://bit.ly/gCn8gy>

1628: Kerry Douglas in Cairns, Australia emails: The Murdochs doing very well indeed. Very patient with the ridiculous petty questions, don't these committee members understand the level these men work at in running a corporation of this size? Fancy being a CEO and a chairman of a company that employs 56,000 people a question about petty cash. If this committee's aim was to trip up the Murdochs or discredit them then they have failed.

1627: Tim Colman in Norwich, UK emails: The Murdochs have, so far, said nothing of substance or consequence. The enquiry, as is, could have been over in 5 minutes if they'd just read their opening statement. What a waste of time. What a shame.



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## Live Blogging – significance

- **Common:** Guardian.co.uk publishes 146 Live Blogs / month
- “transforming journalism”  
— **Paul Gallagher (2011)**, head of online content at the Manchester Evening News.





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The screenshot shows a BBC News live blog for the article 'Murdochs grilled by MPs'. The page is divided into several sections:

- Key points:** A summary of the main events, including Rupert and James Murdoch's testimony, the role of the phone-hacking scandal, and the involvement of the World Journalist Sean Hoare.
- Live text:** A section with a red header containing real-time updates from the hearing, such as '1836: Back to the hearing. Paul Farrelly says it is not known whether news international was consulted in leading base information.' and '1837: The hearing was scheduled for about an hour. It's raising the two-hour mark now.'
- Video:** A video player showing a hearing in progress, with a 'LIVE NOW' indicator.
- Join the discussion:** A section for reader engagement, including social media links for Twitter (@BBC\_News4ourday) and Facebook, and a 'Comment here' section.
- Participants:** A grid of portraits and names of people involved in the hearing, including Robert Murdoch, James Murdoch, Rebekah Brooks, and various MPs like John Whittingdale and Theresa Coffey.
- Other articles and analysis:** A section at the bottom with links to related content, such as 'Phone-hacking scandal' and 'What next for News Corp?'





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## **Live Blogs – challenges to journalistic conventions**

**Duration: 360 mins**

**Number of updates: 40**

**Office based authors/contributors: 2**

**Part time contributors in the field: 1**





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“The subs can’t even correct stuff you did five hours ago, you’ve got to be out of the [live blog for them] to do that” –  
**Matthew Weaver,**  
**Guardian.co.uk Live Blogger (Middle East Live)**

“Readers tend to point out [mistakes] which I’ll sometimes pick up myself because I look at the readers’ comments” –  
**Andrew Sparrow,**  
**Guardian.co.uk Live Blogger (Politics Live)**



# Live Blogging – key characteristics

Reverse chronological order with latest update at top

## Live text

Reporters: Justin Parkinson and Emma Griffiths

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1628: Kerry Douglas in Cairns, Australia emails: The Murdochs doing very well indeed.

Very patient with the ridiculous petty questions, don't these committee members understand the level these men work at in running a corporation of this size? Fancy asking a CEO and a chairman of a company that employs 56,000 people a question about petty cash. If this committee's aim was to trip up the Murdochs or discredit them then they have failed.

Live blog  
text





### Work with trusted sources (e.g. known Twitter accounts)

“narrow patch of usual suspects and I know who they are”

“won’t look at generic search terms, I’ll be looking at lists of people we know are there”

—stakeholder interviews, pers. comm, Aug ‘11



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## Live Blogs - verification

“we’re letting you in on the workflow of the journalist...saying... help us verify it.”

With Live Blogs “you can be more open about whether you’ve verified this or not.”

—stakeholder interviews, pers. comm, Aug ‘11



## Usually signpost 3<sup>rd</sup> party content transparently citing sources

Here's some more of the email exchange from Ed Llewellyn, the No10 chief of staff, to John Yates:



*On the other matters that have caught your attention this week, assuming we are thinking of the same thing, I am sure you will understand that we will want to be able to be entirely clear, for your sake and ours, that we have not been in contact with you about this subject.*

*I think it would really be appropriate for the PM, or anyone else at No 10, to discuss this issue with you, and would be grateful if it were not raised please.*

**16.15 Paul Farrelly** is quizzing **James Murdoch** about which people on the News of the World knew about hacking, names newsdesk members who allegedly contacted Mulcaire.

**16.10 Rupert Murdoch's** demeanour is proving almost as interesting as what's actually being said.

Columnist and Telegraph blogger **Janet Daley** writes:



*Rupert Murdoch is an old man. Indeed he has been described as "old for eighty" – which is something of a testimony to how our expectations*



Murdoch: 'the most humble day of my life'



Committee: key people and questions





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## Live Blogging – key characteristics

Corrections flagged  
explicitly

theguardian

News | Sport | Comment | Culture | Business | Money | Life & style | Tr

News > Media > Phone hacking live

# POLITICS BLOG



**12.37pm:** Nick Raynsford did not say who he was referring to, but on Twitter my former colleague Gaby Hinsliff suggests this might have been a reference to Jenny Watson, head of the Electoral Commission. Watson has complained about being the victim of some particular hostile briefing from an unnamed government source.

**Correction:** We now understand it was not Watson. Apologies.

In response to another question about whether BSkyB came up in his conversations with Brooks, Cameron says the point he is trying to make is that he was not involved in BSkyB decisions. He did not even know when announcements were going to be made.

**12.42pm:** Penny Mordaunt, a Conservative, says the aid agencies are saying that donations to famine relief in east Africa are down because the phone hacking scandal is taking up too much media attention.

Cameron says that is why he wanted to press ahead with his visit to Africa.



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“You’re supposed to show your workings. If I’ve posted a wrong link I’ll apologise” –  
**Matthew Weaver,**  
**Guardian.co.uk**  
**Live Blogger**  
**(Middle East Live)**

“If I’ve got something wrong I’ll acknowledge that asap. Then I’ll insert a [transparent] correction within the original post.” –  
**Andrew Sparrow,**  
**Guardian.co.uk Live**  
**Blogger (Politics**  
**Live)**





- Suited to consumption of 'news-at-work':
  - Follow up information in digestible single page
  - Textual format suits privacy concerns
- Changing mainstream online journalistic practice:
  - Compressing deadlines
  - Forcing looser culture of corroboration
  - Making:
    - ...corrections more explicit,
    - ...sources more transparent,
    - ...giving reporters and readers a subbing role, and
    - Altering story structures





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END OF PRESENTATION





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## References

Boczkowski, P (2010) *News at Work*. University of Chicago Press

Gallagher, P (2011) Speech at Sheffield University,  
[http://www.shef.ac.uk/journalism/news/paul\\_gallagher](http://www.shef.ac.uk/journalism/news/paul_gallagher)

Thurman, N., and Walters, A. (2012) “Networked Journalism's Pivotal Platform?: Live Blogging at Guardian.co.uk, an exploratory case study”. Paper presented to the 10th World Media Economics and Management Conference, Thessaloniki, Greece, May 23-27.

