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
Conference theme

• “Digital and interactive technologies have revolutionised the way people use and consume media content . . .”
Conference theme

• “Digital and interactive technologies have revolutionised the way people use and consume media content to learn”
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]”
Live Blogging

Changing mainstream online journalistic practice in:

- Verification
- Subbing
- Sourcing
- Reader involvement
- Story structure
- Deadlines
- Corrections
Aggregated hourly page view data for 10 Live Blogs at Guardian.co.uk, March-May 2011.

Source: Thurman and Walters (2012)
‘News at Work’ consumption patterns....

- Methodical & comprehensive 1st 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
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
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

Average visits or page views over 24 hours

Median visits

- Live Blogs
- Articles
- Picture Galleries

Data from March-May 2011
Live Blogging – prevalence

• **Adopted worldwide** e.g. NYTimes.com, BBC, Guardian, Al Jazeera, Telegraph.co.uk
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.
Live Blogging

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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
“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)

“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)
Reverse chronological order with latest update at top
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
“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
Live Blogging – key characteristics

Usually signpost 3\textsuperscript{rd} 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
Live Blogging – key characteristics

Corrections flagged explicitly

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

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.

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.
“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)
The story so far...Live Blogs:

- 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
END OF PRESENTATION
References


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