

# **Newspapers' e-business models: A survey of attitudes and practice at UK news websites**

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31 March 2007

**Jack Herbert and Neil Thurman**

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON  
ONLINE JOURNALISM

# Interviewees

Richard Avery



Peter Bale



Alistair Brown



Richard Burton



James Montgomery



Pete Picton



Steve Purcell



Alan Revell



Annelies van den Belt



Simon Waldman



Richard Withey

# Types of content

1. News
2. Comment & columnists
3. Archive
4. Digital editions
5. Email alerts
6. Mobile services
7. Crosswords & games

# Charge for news?

DailyExpress.co.uk	-
DailyMail.co.uk	-
DailyStar.co.uk	-
FT.com	Some
Guardian Unlimited	-
Independent.co.uk	-
Mirror.co.uk	-
Scotsman.com	-
Telegraph.co.uk	-
TheSun.co.uk	-
ThisisLondon.co.uk	-
Times Online	-

# Charge for news?

“There’s so much for free out there, I can’t see that a general news and feature site like ours is going to be in a position to charge.”

Steve Purcell   
(interview with Neil Thurman)

# Charge for news?

“We think we produce valuable, price sensitive and exclusive information that has a value that can be charged for”

James Montgomery   
(interview with Neil Thurman)

# Charge for news?

“Those with a unique flavour to them, like the *FT* and the *Wall Street Journal*, will continue to be the ones who charge most and have the highest walled gardens. Those of us who provide generalised news will find it more difficult to do that.”

**Richard Withey**



(interview with Jack Herbert & Neil Thurman)

# Charge for news?

DailyExpress.co.uk	-
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DailyStar.co.uk	-
FT.com	Some
Guardian Unlimited	-
Independent.co.uk	-
Mirror.co.uk	-
Scotsman.com	-
Telegraph.co.uk	-
TheSun.co.uk	-
ThisisLondon.co.uk	-
Times Online	-



# Charge for columnists?

DailyExpress.co.uk	-
DailyMail.co.uk	All
DailyStar.co.uk	-
FT.com	Some
Guardian Unlimited	-
Independent.co.uk	All
Mirror.co.uk	-
Scotsman.com	-
Telegraph.co.uk	-
TheSun.co.uk	-
ThisisLondon.co.uk	-
Times Online	-

# Charge for columnists?

“[Charging for comment articles is] probably the most successful strategy we’ve adopted in terms of paid for content”

**Richard Withey**



(interview with Jack Herbert & Neil Thurman)

# Charge for columnists?

“We don’t know how to price [columnist content].  
We don’t know whether they should be  
bundled or not. It’s really a sandpit for us,  
frankly.”

Alan Revell    
(interview with Neil Thurman)

# Charge for columnists?

“We’re getting closer to being able to provide the sort of [columnist] content that readers might want to pay for.”

Richard Burton **Telegraph.co.uk**  
(interview with Jack Herbert & Neil Thurman)

# Charge for columnists?

DailyExpress.co.uk	-
DailyMail.co.uk	All
DailyStar.co.uk	-
FT.com	Some
Guardian Unlimited	-
Independent.co.uk	All
Mirror.co.uk	-
Scotsman.com	-
Telegraph.co.uk	-
TheSun.co.uk	-
ThisisLondon.co.uk	-
Times Online	-

# Charge for archive?

DailyExpress.co.uk	-
DailyMail.co.uk	-
DailyStar.co.uk	-
FT.com	Some
Guardian Unlimited	-
Independent.co.uk	All
Mirror.co.uk	-
Scotsman.com	Paid digital archive
Telegraph.co.uk	-
TheSun.co.uk	All
ThisisLondon.co.uk	-
Times Online	All

# Charge for archive?

“Where brands have some authority, or some expertise, or are famous for certain areas of content, then [charging for archive access] is potentially an attractive area”

Alan Revell    
(interview with Neil Thurman)

# Charge for archive?

“Our archive is huge and extensive but it is far too difficult to access at the moment and it is not promotable enough on the site. What I’ve done instead is to make a lot of that archive available for free on the site”

Peter Bale **TIMESONLINE**  
(interview with Neil Thurman)



# Charge for archive?

DailyExpress.co.uk	-
DailyMail.co.uk	-
DailyStar.co.uk	-
FT.com	Some
Guardian Unlimited	-
Independent.co.uk	All
Mirror.co.uk	-
Scotsman.com	Paid digital archive
Telegraph.co.uk	-
TheSun.co.uk	All
ThisisLondon.co.uk	-
Times Online	All

# Charge for digital edition?

DailyExpress.co.uk	Yes
DailyMail.co.uk	Yes
DailyStar.co.uk	Yes
FT.com	Subscribers only
Guardian Unlimited	Yes
Independent.co.uk	-
Mirror.co.uk	-
Scotsman.com	Yes
Telegraph.co.uk	Yes
TheSun.co.uk	-
ThisisLondon.co.uk	Yes
Times Online	Yes

# Charge for digital editions?

“[Digital editions] are a niche product, but they’re important for that niche. Ours works really well, it’s relatively low maintenance and that’s it. Is it going to take over the world? No.”

**Simon Waldman**

**Guardian**  
Unlimited

(interview with Neil Thurman)

# Charge for digital edition?

“We have a digital edition with a handful of subscribers worldwide. Somehow, the model’s still not attractive enough for any of us to make a lot of money with this sort of edition.”

Annelies van den Belt   
(interview with Neil Thurman)

# Charge for digital edition?

DailyExpress.co.uk	Yes
DailyMail.co.uk	Yes
DailyStar.co.uk	Yes
FT.com	Subscribers only
Guardian Unlimited	Yes
Independent.co.uk	-
Mirror.co.uk	-
Scotsman.com	Yes
Telegraph.co.uk	Yes
TheSun.co.uk	-
ThisisLondon.co.uk	Yes
Times Online	Yes

# Charge for email alerts?

DailyExpress.co.uk	-
DailyMail.co.uk	Free
DailyStar.co.uk	-
FT.com	Subscribers only
Guardian Unlimited	Some paid
Independent.co.uk	Free
Mirror.co.uk	-
Scotsman.com	Free
Telegraph.co.uk	Free
TheSun.co.uk	Free
ThisisLondon.co.uk	-
Times Online	Free

# Charge for email alerts?

“We think that our email services and alerts are going to be very attractive, lucrative areas for us to monetise”

Alan Revell    
(interview with Neil Thurman)

# Charge for email alerts?

“[The email alerts service] is very, very lucrative because it can be targeted to a specific audience.”

**Alistair Brown** 

(telephone interview with Neil Thurman)



# Charge for email alerts?

DailyExpress.co.uk	-
DailyMail.co.uk	Free
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FT.com	Subscribers only
Guardian Unlimited	Some paid
Independent.co.uk	Free
Mirror.co.uk	-
Scotsman.com	Free
Telegraph.co.uk	Free
TheSun.co.uk	Free
ThisisLondon.co.uk	-
Times Online	Free

# Charge for mobile services?

DailyExpress.co.uk	-
DailyMail.co.uk	-
DailyStar.co.uk	-
FT.com	Paid
Guardian Unlimited	Free
Independent.co.uk	-
Mirror.co.uk	-
Scotsman.com	-
Telegraph.co.uk	Mixed free/paid
TheSun.co.uk	Free
ThisisLondon.co.uk	-
Times Online	Mixed free/paid

# Charge for mobile services?

“Mobile operators in Europe have kept a strangle hold on the lion’s share of the content fees. It’s difficult to build a revenue stream when somebody else is getting most of the money.”

**Richard Withey**



(interview with Jack Herbert & Neil Thurman)

# Charge for mobile services?

DailyExpress.co.uk	-
DailyMail.co.uk	-
DailyStar.co.uk	-
FT.com	Paid
Guardian Unlimited	Free
Independent.co.uk	-
Mirror.co.uk	-
Scotsman.com	-
Telegraph.co.uk	Mixed free/paid
TheSun.co.uk	Free
ThisisLondon.co.uk	-
Times Online	Mixed free/paid

# Charge for games?

DailyExpress.co.uk	-
DailyMail.co.uk	Free
DailyStar.co.uk	-
FT.com	Free
Guardian Unlimited	Mixed free/paid
Independent.co.uk	-
Mirror.co.uk	Free
Scotsman.com	Subscribers only
Telegraph.co.uk	Paid
TheSun.co.uk	Free
ThisisLondon.co.uk	Free
Times Online	Paid

# Charge for games?

“Our crosswords are really, really popular, but I would rather keep them as a free-to-use traffic generator”

Steve Purcell   
(interview with Neil Thurman)

# Charge for games?

DailyExpress.co.uk	-
DailyMail.co.uk	Free
DailyStar.co.uk	-
FT.com	Free
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Independent.co.uk	-
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Telegraph.co.uk	Paid
TheSun.co.uk	Free
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Times Online	Paid

# Conclusions

- Experimental attitude
- News is free
- Charge for unique content