



Understanding the Industrial Process of News – News Production

The aim of this **Media Studies Factsheet** is to:

- Provide an overview of the industrial practices involved in news production.
- Identify the key roles and professional practices which are involved in news production.
- Offer some discussion of issues and debates around news production.

Activity 1

Look at the following two headlines:

- 1) Dog bites Man
- 2) Man bites Dog

Which do you consider to be news and why?

What is news?

To be 'news' an event needs to be important, or at least interesting to a lot of people. Dogs bite people all the time: it can happen in any place at any time, it has happened in the past, it happens all over the world. It is not an important or interesting story for anyone not connected to the event. But the second one, a man biting a dog is interesting because it is contrary to what normally happens.

Lots of things happen all the time, but they don't all 'make' the news, they are just everyday occurrences and offer nothing new or of interest. However, once a news story has been reported it could have the potential to offer something fresh for audiences. Events can develop or be expanded on in all sorts of different ways and can remain on the **news agenda** for a quite some time depending on how relevant it is to society. Eventually though the ability to make this story relevant will fade because new and more pertinent stories will happen and they will become the news of the day, the 'man bites dog' story will become, as the old phrase says, 'yesterday's news.'

The News Media

The news media is known as **the 'Fourth Estate'** – so called because the press (newspapers are produced on a printing press) and the news media (all other types of news media) are said to be the fourth power in society behind; royalty, law and religion.



The production of news is big business and has immense power. It's one of the oldest forms of mass communication and in the age of digital media there are hundreds of news institutions across the world offering us different stories and perspectives and they employ thousands of people; editors, journalist, photographers, camera people, sound engineers, production managers, studio-runners and printing press operators to name a few. James Ettema argues that news production is an activity **'where news workers/journalists are engaged in the production of the written, visual, or audio texts designated as news and information appearing in print media and on broadcast and cable television, radio, and the Internet,'** this sounds quite straightforward but the production of news is complex and based on the relationship between what's happening in the world at any given time and the multitude of news institutions that produce the information we consume.

News shapes the world which we live in, it can be extremely powerful, it does not just inform, it can persuade and entertain its audiences as well offer a window to events, people and places that we do not encounter in our everyday lives. At the time of writing this Factsheet there are people clapping all over the U.K every Thursday at 8pm to acknowledge NHS workers and key workers during the Corona Covid 19 pandemic (#ClapForCarers #ClapForOurNHS). This is a news story that has persuaded people to come out of their homes at a given time on a given day in support of people they do not know but have read or heard about in the news media; news is powerful indeed.

Where does news come from? – Newsgathering

Newsgathering, as the name suggests, is the process by which news institutions gather news stories that they feel are relevant to context and their audiences. Some larger news institutions like the BBC have a lot of resources available to them and they have planners and staff, known as **news organisers** who are able to deploy in advance correspondents, producers and camera crew. For example, the daily briefings on the Coronavirus pandemic are scheduled so that journalists and crews can be there to question the government on what is happening as well as broadcast live what the politicians are saying.



A scheduled press conference from Dominic Raab – Foreign Secretary giving a briefing on the Coronavirus Pandemic April 22nd 2020

Activity 2

Watch the news story on the clapping: <https://twitter.com/SkyNews/status/1253397339743514624>

This story was broadcast live but not everyone agrees with the story's positive sentiment. Take a look at the responses to the tweet. What kinds of responses are people offering to the story?

How are tweeted stories different to watching this news story live on television?



Other newsgathering can be done on the spot and can cover unpredictable events such as murders, floods, transport crashes, earthquakes and wars and rumours of wars. In this case foreign correspondents, producers, camera crews, fixers and translators frequently risk their lives to draw attention to the news stories of the world as they unfold and move quickly from one news story to another. The BBC, for example, has a helicopter so it can fly journalists to stories of immediate interest to report on stories as they unfold.

Activity 3

Watch Huw Edwards explain how journalists gather news here: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schoolreport/27696362>

Explain in your own words what 'impartiality' is?

Go to the bbc.co.uk website and choose a story and identify:

- Who was involved?
- What happened?
- Where did it take place?
- Why did it happen?
- And how?

Journalists source news stories from all sorts of places and they should always check their sources for credibility (is it true?) and accuracy (is it correct?). Journalists look for **leads**; as the name suggests leads are pieces of information from which a journalist can write a story of interest for their audiences. Other potential news sources include:

News Source	Explanation
Press Releases	These account for the majority of news production and they come from individuals or organizations seeking coverage for an issue or an event. A press conference is a press release in real-time, but reporters get to those press conferences by invitations that come in the form of press releases. (see above – Dominic Raab).
News agencies	A news agency is an organization that gathers news reports and sells them to subscribing news organizations. United Press International, Associated Press, Reuters and Agence France Presse are the 'big four' news agencies - provide over 90 per cent of foreign news printed by the world's newspapers.
Advertisements	Advertisements may sound like an unlikely place for news stories to be gathered but they can offer unusual news stories.
Legal notices	Births, deaths, marriages, bankruptcies, court appearance and many other legal affairs can create leads a news story.
Letters, blog pages,	These can offer potential for all sorts of different news stories. They could be personal stories that have wider appeal.
Tip-offs	These could come in many forms: text, phone-call or even just hearsay.
Other news institutions	News institutions pick up on other stories from other news institutions and can recycle and or re-use.

The story and image of Prince Louis will have been released to the press via the official channels of Buckingham Palace Press Office such as <https://pa.media/royal-family-collection/> that offer Royal content; images, etc:- to news institutions.



Harry and Meghan say they won't cooperate with UK tabloids



The second story is a report on how 'Harry and Megan' are establishing a new way of dealing with the mainstream media and how they will no longer allow access to stories about them to be used by the tabloids.

Meghan, The Duchess of Sussex, is suing Associated Newspapers, owner of the *Mail on Sunday* and *MailOnline* for the use of private information in a letter to her father.

Social Media



Increasingly, journalists are using social media to gather news sources. First-hand interviews with people are a common type of news sourcing. Owen Jones, a journalist who writes predominantly for *The Guardian*, often makes use of social media to reach-out to news sources. He recently tweeted asking for people to contact him and talk about the news story of the lack of PPE (Personal, Protective, Equipment) for frontline workers during the Covid 19 pandemic. Notice that he states his DMs are 'open in confidence' this is so that people can tell their stories and remain anonymous to avoid any consequences that could happen to them, in this case for example, they might be afraid to lose their job by giving information away. Two days after this tweet was sent out Jones wrote an article in *The Guardian* about lack of PPE.

Activity 4

Owen Jones is an opinion writer, but he uses sources and facts to strengthen his argument.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/apr/23/uk-key-workers-ppe-ministers-clapping-protect-nhs>

- Read the article and identify what sources Jones uses
- How does he keep them anonymous?
- What other facts does he use?
- Discuss your responses to his argument. Do you agree or disagree with him?

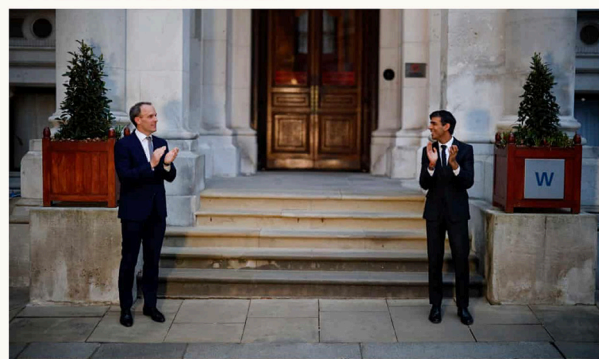
While the UK's key workers lack PPE, ministers clapping for them is an insult

Owen Jones



Tonight, politicians will join millions to #ClapForOurCarers - as the government still fails to protect NHS and frontline workers

- [Coronavirus - latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



▲ Dominic Raab and Rishi Sunak clap for frontline workers outside the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London, 16 April 2020. Photograph: Tolga Akmen/EPA

Who produces the news?

The production of news takes place through the constraints of a power hierarchy within news organisations. There are levels of **editorial** decision-making that impact on what stories get into the news. Editorial refers to the commissioning and publication of stories and or the expression of an opinion of a journalist on a given topic. Editors- whether they make broadcast news programmes, newspapers or online news websites, make decisions on a daily basis as to the kinds of content they want to include. These decisions take a lot of things into account: the audience first and foremost, the timeliness (why this story? why now?), the quality of the idea or content, and their own editorial guidelines that can differ from news institution to news institution and from publication to publication.

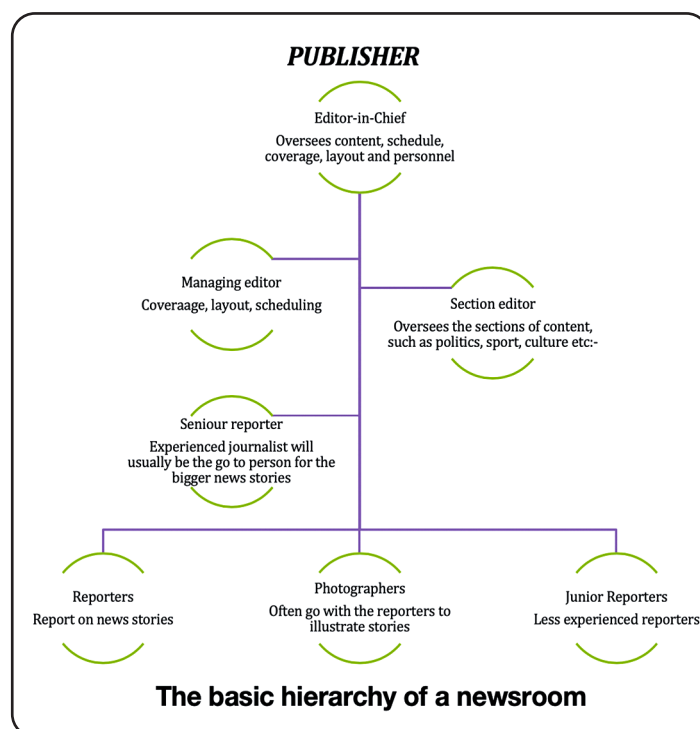


Image of a newspaper newsroom, increasingly journalist work on a freelance basis and write their articles anywhere they can.



When a story gets the green light to be written/broadcast it goes through a process of **mediation** which in effect alters the 'reality' of the story. Cohen calls this 'manufacturing news' a process by which a story takes on the meaning of the institution that produces it. This mediation maybe in part due to the professional constraints that editors and journalists need to consider such as:

- 1) **Legal issues** – Does the story abide by the law which are in place to restrict journalists from reporting things which may damage or harm other people or organisations?
- 2) **Ethical issues** – Are the journalists they employ following good, ethical journalistic practice?
 - Good practice detailed in the codes includes:
 - the double-checking of sources.
 - giving those criticised the 'right of reply'.
 - respecting people's privacy, particularly in times of grief, illness or shock.
 - protecting the vulnerable, e.g. children.
 - avoiding subterfuge, e.g. using hidden recording devices – unless this is a last resort to expose corruption, harm or any other serious crime.

Editors, especially, have a lot of power in the mediation of news production. For example they can say yes to some news stories and no to others.

News Production – The Conflict of Commercialism and Quality Journalism




News production has changed so much in a digital age, by default news institutions have had to radically change their business models to ensure they are targeting and keeping readers. This is not easy to do, people have come to see news as a product they should get for free and the 'cost' of journalism seems to be something that most people do not really appreciate. Online newspaper paywalls, branded content, sponsored podcasts, even donations and crowd-funding are keeping the news business alive but this is all happening amid the background of declining advertising revenues and hard copy sales. Quality journalism costs money, when you factor in wages and production costs John Thompson owner and publisher of Journalism.co.uk. suggests that the average cost of a news article in a major newspaper is around £400 and online this drops to £37.

Activity 5

Research who owns the following mainstream newspapers.

Who is the Editor-in-Chief for the following mainstream news institutions? Include an image.

What is the motto for their newspaper? Provide an analysis of its use.

News Institution	Ownership Publisher	Editor-in-Chief	Image	Newspaper Motto	Analysis
The Telegraph	Barclay Brothers	Chris Evans		'Was, is and will be.'	Suggests that the newspaper will provide news stories from the past, presents and also about the future. It seems to imply that their journalism is capable of offering very definitive information on the happenings in the world.
The Times					
The Guardian					
The Daily Mail	D.M.G.T <i>Daily Mail</i> and <i>General Trust</i>	George Carron Greig known as Geordie Greig		'Dieu et mon droit' – French for God and my right – it is the motto of the British monarch	Usage of the coat of arms motto in the Daily Mail's logo is presumably just a show of patriotism
The i		Oliver Duff		'The Paper for Today'	Implies it is contemporary and up-to-date, which it is. It is the youngest mainstream newspaper. It was established in 2010.
The Mirror					
The Sun					

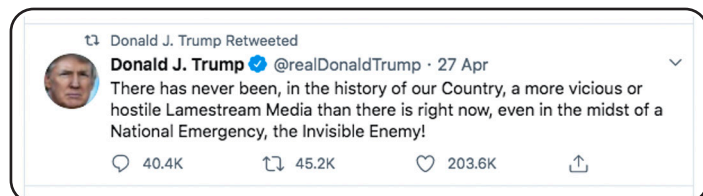


The expansive nature of the web and the need to generate more and more stories to ensure traffic comes to their sites and the changes to how search engines work via algorithms means that news institutions are churning out (**churnalism**) more and more stories quicker and faster and often at the expense of fact-checking. A local website editor might be under pressure to write between five to ten short stories daily. A specialist correspondent for a major national broadcaster, however, could spend a week on a single news feature. News institutions are expected to be making news in the public interest while pursuing profits for their corporate owners, the result often is a clash of commercial imperatives and the need for quality journalism. This conflict along with social media criticism of journalism has led to a greater mistrust of news providers. Donald Trump has often used this feeling of mistrust of the media to avoid any debate over his words and actions as President. In the space of 15 tweets he posted several tweets criticising the media's coverage of him.

Donald Trump – prolific tweeter criticises the media's coverage of his word 'hoax'.



'Lamestream media' – lame is an Americanism for pathetic.



Boyle's use of humour to express his antipathy to mainstream media news outlets.



Frankie Boyle a famous British comedian also recently tweeted this in response the news that *The Sun* newspaper recorded a £68 million profit loss as of April 2020. *The Sun* has been involved in a series of scandals regarding their lack of ethical journalism: misrepresentation, fake news and false stories. Others like *The Daily Mail* and *mailonline* are considered to be unreliable in their reporting of facts, James Cracknell recently used Twitter to draw attention to the Daily's Mail's misrepresentation of his visit to his father. This demonstrates the way imagery and anchorage can construct a different 'reality' which suits the message the news institution wants to communicate. *The Daily Mail* businesses made £284 million pounds profit last year 2019 mainly due to the amount of traffic they get online approximately 60 million views per month.

Frankie Boyle tweeting about the demise of newspapers.

James Cracknell challenging mailonline's representation of his social distancing with his father.



Exam Boards

All exam boards require you to discuss the theoretical concepts behind the news industry and news production using specific newspapers.

- AQA – The Daily Mail and The i
- WJEC – The Daily Mirror and The Times
- OCR – The Daily Mail and The Guardian

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