

Live notes from the [Digital Editors' Network](#), at News UK

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The comments are open so feel free to dive in

Apologies for typos etc. These are rough notes

François Nel, researcher, academic & consultant on newsroom & digital business innovation and director of the Journalism Leaders Programme at UCLAN.

“We need to keep learning,” says Nel. “This is not a conference, it’s a conversation.”

Katie Vanneck Smith, chief marketing officer at News UK

For News UK smart content is about content you can sell and charge for through the subscription business, says Vanneck Smith.

News UK measures by asking “is it going to grow sales?” and “is it going to increase engagement and dwell time?” explains Vanneck Smith.

“We have a clear but unified strategy.” It’s not about digital first, it’s about the different platforms.

3 pillars.

1. We are paid for. There are editions within that bundle, including print and online.
2. Being distinctive and differentiated. We are competing with free - so we need to be different.
3. We want to build a business that’s built on customer relationships.

Focused on total paid for sales. That’s the single metric. That allows us to talk about growth, explains Vanneck Smith.

Don’t make digital too cheap, she says. Otherwise print takes a tumble.

“News rarely sells, we don’t sell subscriptions from news.” We sell it from evergreen content, the Good Uni Guide, opinion. News is critical for retention and engagement but it’s not going to differentiate us.

This means we can invest, such as in Goals, says Vanneck Smith.

Times Plus, a loyalty scheme offering events, offers readers to “get closer to the brand they love”. They like to get close to journalists.

Digital wasn't the threat we thought it was. It enables us to build relationships with customers.

Today 530k sales on a daily basis. More people are buying than ever before. 15-months after paywall launch, in July 2010, we were making more money than pre-paywall.

Times engagement time has increased. Was 40 mins, now 53 mins. More people spending more time with our journalism.

Times Tutorials business has just launched. For “pushy parents”. £96 pa to tutor your child.

Q: What were the most difficult things you encountered? A. Culture was the biggest challenge for us.

Find the rally cry metric that is important to your business. For us it is total sales.

Towards a Smart Content Strategy: how publishers are approaching digital at a strategic level (Chair: Lucia Adams)

Mary Beth Christie of the FT: making a success subscriptions and digital transformation

Asks how many people have a mobile phone? All. How many people have a Nokia? 1
How many people had a Nokia 10 years ago? Most. This illustrates how turbulent businesses are.

“Our industry faces huge challenges,” says Christie. But the FT is thriving. 2.1m readers across print and digital. The largest ever. 100,000 more digital subs than print. More than 50% of pageviews from tablets and phones.

24% digital subs to FT originate from mobile.

Streamlining newspaper to be one international edition.

“Everyone - and I mean everyone - at the FT believes content is valuable and should be

paid for,” says Christie.

Wanted a better idea about anonymous readers. The strategic shift to the **metered model**. “We started a trend.” Now more than 150 in US.

“We know our customers,” says Christie. Metered model allowed us to shift from being B2B to B2C, directly to customers.

“Knowing readers helps improve their experience,” she says.

“We know more than I ever thought possible.” We can steer individuals towards types of content.

For past four years have been running “teas with the FT”. 15-20 readers have tea with us. Talk about what they like and don’t like. This is in addition to focus groups. Readers “are not just trends and data points”.

There’s a gravitational pull of the print newspaper” says Robert Shrimley.

[FastFT](#) , a live stream of 'market-moving news', is a success. “We are finally working out how to defy that gravitational pull of print,” says Christie.

Q. How have people responded to a single international edition? A. Well. Now UK and international. Q. What is the driver? A. Less investment in print, more in digital.

Q. Why did you reject a paywall and what do you think of The Times paywall? A. It was unclear before. You have to look at the model that is going to work best for you. For us the metered model has opened up more doors than the hard wall model.

Q. How did you manage the shift to understanding the data? A. It’s an investment. A technical team and an analytics team. With investment we could make that money back many times over. 8 people on technical side, c. 6-8 on front end / analytics.

Kevin Delaney, disruption and the Quartz journey

Was managing editor of WSJ.com for several years. Quartz is “digitally native”. The aim is to reduce friction so people share. Have hit 5m uniques in the 10th month.

People check news several times during the day.

The challenge is to create distinctive content that stands out in Twitter streams. Paywalls make it harder for people to find your content.

The Quartz U-shaped curve: People read short, fast content on the web. But also long-form, analytical pieces are popular. 500-800 words = no pay off for readers. Too long to be sharable, too short to be long and in-depth.

“The web is a visual medium,” says Delaney. Charts do well, he explains.

Make money through advertising and events.

Work on both ends of the curve: short journalism and long-form. “Too much reporting is 700-word articles that everyone else has got.”

If he went back into mainstream media, Delaney would focus on fast, creative journalism and long in-depth articles.

Ditch the 700 word articles.

Julia Hutchison of FMG Group on how brands are getting into the editorial game

Content marketing. Brands are increasingly owning the conversation.

Strategy in motion: case studies of how news publishers are crafting smart content

Jo Alicata, ex ESPN, now at Chartbeat on the challenges of data and cultural change

The “right data” changes everything, says Alicata.

Teams need to be aligned. You need to know what to pay attention too. Most readers aren’t engaged at all. You need to focus on loyal readers, those that will come back.

80% of readers who come direct return later that week, compared with 30% overall.

Here’s more on the Chartbeat study:

<http://www.journalism.co.uk/news/study-twitter-referrals-homepage-traffic/s2/a554427/>

Dan Owen, digital editor for Daily Post, Wales, on piloting Trinity Mirror’s Newsroom 3.0

35-40 journalists producing 6-day-a-week daily (2 editions), + weeklies. Wanted to create a new newsroom and put digital at the heart.

The changes: structural, organisational (tools etc), cultural.

The biggest step was the cultural move. Happened last Oct. Took 6-months in the lead up to prepare people. Some people who had been in place for 50 years!

Was going to be a digital enhancement. Digital first where possible. But requires content specific to the platform.

Introduction of a breaking news team. A 3-4 person team. Key drivers of the breaking news liveblog.

Social media is key.

Daily liveblogs:

<http://www.journalism.co.uk/news/why-trinity-mirror-launched-daily-liveblogs-regional-news-websites/s2/a550878/>

Short, sharp, snappy. It's not a one-stop-shop but "is part of the journey", says Owen.

The tone was critical. Could have been a vanilla, bland product without feeling. But the key was engagement with journalists. Needed to be conversational.

Shows a moving element. Has to be focused on users. Owen said they used to offer "a newspaper online" pushing out content in one short space of time. Now it's constantly moving and updated.

Stopped talking in terms of stories and pictures. Now talk in terms of packages.

It's not rocket science, says Owen, we are simply telling a story. Reporters trained in Dipity timelines, Storify etc.

No longer deal in words and pictures. Use tools to tell a story.

UGC - uses UGC for breaking and diary

Page impressions up 72% 171% 43% - up 40% year-on-year.

No plans to run down print. Q. Do you hold anything back for print? A. If something won't work online we won't put it there.

"We have a healthy relationship with hyperlocals." Wrexham.com, for example.

Ola Henriksson of Svenska Dagbladet on experimentation in the newsroom

Smart data comes from smart people, says Henriksson.

Est 1884. News on net since 1995. Mobile and web is "booming"/ 1.5m uniques. Owned by Norwegian regional group Schibsted.

"Old tools are not enough," he says.

Data journalism:

Asked readers to reveal the interest rate their banks offered. Huge success in crowdsourcing. More than 150 stories generated from this map. Other media copied. Received 5 awards.

People love to see the mortgage rates of their neighbours.

Finnish news site Helsingin Sanomat has done a similar crowdmapping exercise.

<http://www.journalism.co.uk/news/why-data-journalism-is-the-new-scoop-for-a-finnish-news-site/s2/a554423/> [not sure which came first]

Enablers for digital journalism - include GPS and GoPros. Used GPS for a story on a stolen bike.

Angus Phillipson of Byte9 on smart content curation

Software development company. Create scalable web solutions. Focus on "editorial assistance" and "content marketing".

Use Blaze "a smart content toolset". Media Briefing uses the software.

Tom Whitwell, of The Times and Sunday Times, on paywalls and using CIA-grade tech

to better understand reading habits.

Background on tracking readers across devices:

<http://www.journalism.co.uk/news/-mms13-tracking-times-and-sun-subscribers-across-devices/s2/a554267/>

The joys and sorrows of editorial data

Using editorial data to make decisions. Use Chartbeat etc - but how to keep existing customers / subscribers happy? How do we optimise for serendipity?

Times iPad edition has “about the same number of paying subs as the Independent”. Arranged into books. Error put Bricks & Mortar section in the wrong place. Therefore had 2 comparable bits of data. Is it better in the main edition? After the section was moved, pageviews went down.

If this is the problem, then considerations for The Sunday Times, which has lots of sections.

Fewer people get to the section if it's at the end - but engagement is up. Time engaging with that section is up.

Times and Sunday Times data journalists looked at the graphs. Two interesting observations: People went back on a Saturday and Sunday to read B&M (published Fri). But drop in readers happened in Aug - when people don't buy and sell houses.

Marissa Meyer said the web had caused the atomic unit of consumption for news to migrate from the newspaper to the individual article. But people get value from curated, collections of articles, says Whitwell.

iPad edition. Readers spend 30 mins a day reading. People read it differently than how they read the web. People read thetimes.co.uk by going back and forward to the homepage. They read the iPad edition differently, a commissioned story shows. Whitwell showing “navigational flows”.

Times is “prioritising” development of sharing on the iPad. Will be introduced in the next couple of months, says Whitwell.

Roundtable on Implementing SMART / Leading Innovation

François Nel explaining an annual survey on opportunities and expectations of news publishers.

2012/2013 - Fewer people think they revenues come from just print. Some now saying 70% of income will have to come from alternative sources.

Alison Gow, editor of Daily Post, Wales

On her first day in the role two years ago, Gow was asked to develop a digital newsroom.

Audience, content, platform. In that order. Also needed to enhance print.

And of course there were questions of job losses. Launched in Oct 2012, 4-month trial. From day one it went brilliantly. Reporters embraced it.

Lucia Adams, deputy head of digital for The Times and Sunday Times

Started at The Times 10 years ago. And much has changed.

Now all about the quality of conversation.

Sunday Times NHS campaign was about harnessing the power of the readership. Book Club has small following but “tremendous results”.

Goals coverage.

Stijn Debrouwere, Knight-Mozilla OpenNews fellow working at the Guardian

A must-read: <http://stdout.be/2013/08/26/cargo-cult-analytics/>

Most news outlets use 3+ analytics platforms - but most “are not very good at using analytics”.

3 rungs to analytics

1. Pageviews, making money - it's the lowest rung. CEOs want to know these things, but not that useful to those building things.

2. Need metrics that go deeper. That tell you how people use a product. Newsrooms often look at analytics tools. People stare at certain numbers and say that they are

going to focus on something. But why? Why focus on new users / engagement / super sharers / co-creators. All interesting but no one thinks about why they use them. People use them to justify their own decisions. To back up why they want to do a project! Cook up the numbers you want to prove that the project is worth doing.

3. The root cause of these problems is you have metrics for learning and accountability. It's too early to worry about analytics before a project. But if you do it afterwards the damage is already done. For example, Reuters spent two years working on their website - and then dropped it.

What you want to do is learn from your data but get into a learning loop. Build something and measure. But that needs to measure one specific thing. You can then test and improve. DeBrouwere talks about this here:

<http://blogs.journalism.co.uk/2013/09/13/podcast-shedding-light-on-dark-social-and-other-mysterious-analytics/>

Closing remarks: John Witherow, Editor of The Times

How a newspaper man has entered the digital age. It's got more complicated, more complex. Newspaper editors have often ignored websites, says Witherow.

Tablets and smartphones make life more complex. "The idea of the editor knowing what's going on can be cast out the window." Witherow says looks across smartphone, tablets and the website.

"The problem will only get exacerbated." With print you control the process. "With digital I am amazed how long it takes to change things." "I once naively thought that digital changes were quick".

People use website for snacking - and spend longer on tablets. Happy that the tablet app flows like the newspaper. "We quite like our paywall and are not tempted to make any more of it free."

One day we will all be reading digitally, but that will not be any time soon.

Our role is to cross the divide and carry readers with us.

It's wine time... Thanks for following. Sarah

I wrote one piece up. Here's a piece on Quartz:

<http://www.journalism.co.uk/news/-smartden-why-quartz-does-not-publish-500-to-800-word-articles/s2/a554444/>