Institution:	**GOLDSMITHS, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON**
Unit of Assessment:	**Panel D, UoA36: Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management**
Title of case study:	***Spaces of the News***

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

Research by members of the Department of Media and Communications on news and journalism in the digital age has been critical in three main areas of impact. Most importantly, it has been used to develop civil society engagement and high-level recommendations to media policy-makers and politicians, on media reform and the Leveson Inquiry. Secondly, this research has been used by the news industry itself in developing its practice for the digital age. Thirdly, recommendations made in the research on collaborative relationships between news organizations and civil society associations have been implemented across the country by the Media Trust.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

From 2007 to 2012 the Goldsmiths Leverhulme Media Research Centre ran a £1.25 million grant from the Leverhulme Trust (2007–12): one of the five projects, *Spaces of the News*, involved James Curran, Natalie Fenton, Des Freedman, Peter Lee-Wright, Angela Phillips and others; all those named have been employed as academic staff at Goldsmiths throughout the period of that grant to the present date [1]. The project investigated the nature of news in the digital age, exploring the changing dynamics of news production through 170 interviews with news media professionals, mini-ethnographies in three news production sites and a qualitative analysis of online news content.

The research challenges utopian visions of the internet as a brave new world with everyone connected to everyone else. 'New' media have not expanded the news that we read or hear, or changed mainstream news values and formats; neither have they connected a legion of bloggers to a mass audience. Instead, professional journalism suffers as the economic model for traditional news production falls apart in the digital age. There is pressure in the newsroom to fill more space at greater speed, with fewer journalists in permanent positions and more job insecurity. Journalists are thrust into forms of news production which are more akin to creative cannibalisation than the craft of journalism. While having improved access to stories and sources online, they talk less to their sources and are captured in desk-bound, cut-and-paste journalism. Ready-made fodder from tried and tested sources takes precedence over the sheer difficulty of dealing with the mass of user generated content or the overload of online information. This leads to the homogenisation of content as ever-increasing commercial pressures add to the temptation to rely not just on news agencies but also on all cheaper forms of news gathering.

Follow-up work, supported by Carnegie, considered the role of civil society in news media, in the context of the recommendation (now abandoned) for Independently Funded News Consortia. It revealed that Civil Society Associations can play a key role in the extended news environment of the digital age. They can act as wardens of and contributors to news media; facilitate deliberation; expand the diversity of views on existing news platforms; and even develop news platforms of their own.

Additional work supported by the Media Trust explored the news needs of local communities via four in-depth case studies, including a study of community news outlets and their relationship with mainstream news media. The methodology involved interviews with key news providers and protagonists, community focus groups, and interviews with news policy leaders. The research supports the link between local news and democracy by interrogating how it functions and what is required for it to thrive. It also considers in detail the demand side of news. What do people want from their local news and why does it matter to them? It then puts these into an economic, regulatory and technological context in order to understand the changes that are taking place. This research offers a direct response to the current crisis in local news, with concrete suggestions on how to deliver an independent local news service that meets the needs of local communities.

Most recently, funding from the OSF and the Andrew Wainwright Reform Trust has enabled us to set up the Coordinating Committee for Media Reform with the explicit task of seeking to impact upon the Leveson Inquiry, the Communications Review and the subsequent white paper on the basis of our research in this field to date.

Research outputs underpinning the wider public impact have included numerous books from prestigious publishers [2–4], as well as 14 peer-reviewed journal papers and chapters (e.g. *Journalism Studies; International Journal of Press/Politics; Journalism Practice; European Journal of Communications; Convergence; Global Media and Communication*) [examples at 5-6], 60 conference papers and 5 submissions to government consultations [example at 7].

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3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

All the outputs listed below are available on request from the Goldsmiths Research Office (including complete volumes where only chapters are submitted to REF2).

Evidence of the international quality of the research: the large grant [1] was obtained after rigorous national competition, while the books at [2–4] are published by two of the most respected publishers in the field. [2] has been adopted as reading in 73 UK and five overseas universities.

1. The Goldsmiths Leverhulme Media Research Centre: £1.25 million grant from the Leverhulme Trust (2007–12), including *Spaces of the News* as one project of five, involving Curran, Fenton, Freedman, Lee-Wright, Phillips and others.

2. Fenton N (ed.) (2010) *New Media, Old News: Journalism and Democracy in the Digital Age.* London: Sage. *[chapter in REF2]*.

3. Phillips A, Lee-Wright P, Witschge T (2012) *Changing Journalism.* Abingdon and New York: Routledge. *[chapter in REF2]*.

4. Curran J, Fenton N, Freedman D (2012). *Misunderstanding the Internet.* London and New York: Routledge. *[chapters in REF2]*.

5. Fenton N (2012) Online journalism – the de-democratisation of the news? In E. Siapera and A. Veglis (eds.), *The Handbook of Global Online Journalism.* Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. pp 119–135.

6. Fenton N (2013) Cosmopolitanism as conformity and contestation: the mainstream press and radical politics. *Journalism Studies*, 14, 172–186. DOI:10.1080/1461670X.2012.718546 *[in REF2]*.

7. Fenton N, Curran J, Freedman D (2009) Submission to the DCMS Consultation on *Sustainable independent and impartial news; in the Nations, locally and in the regions.*

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4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The Leveson Inquiry and media reform

To increase the impact of its work, the Spaces of the News team founded the Coordinating Committee for Media Reform (CCMR), later renamed the Media Reform Coalition (MRC), which consists of 30+ pressure groups and numerous academics. Each section has an elected chair, all of whom are members of the Spaces of News Research team, to campaign on a specific issue. Fenton was asked to join Hacked Off's Board in July 2012 and later became Vice-Chair.

The proposals for media reform developed from this research were adopted by the TUC as policy, with the full endorsement of the NUJ and BECTU. Five written submissions were made to Leveson, one requested by Leveson himself, and Curran and Phillips each gave evidence to the Leveson inquiry. The Leveson report refers to the work of the CCMR in volumes 1 and 4 [1]. It has been presented at meetings around the country co-organized by the NUJ and associated pressure groups, and at a special TUC conference and numerous other public meetings in London. In association with NUJ and Hacked Off, fringe meetings were held along with private dinners for MPs at all the party conferences in 2012 as well as a fringe meeting at the TUC congress in the same

year. MRC also organized a public lecture by Baroness O'Neill on media regulation; a conference on internet and the law with the NUJ; an Early Day Motion on the issues; two well-attended public rallies addressed by politicians and civil society representatives; plus a lobby of Parliament on the recommendations of the Leveson report.

This work has brought the team into regular contact with many parliamentarians. Fenton has presented the work of the MRC to Harriet Harman, the Shadow Cabinet Minister for Culture Media and Sport, and Fenton and Curran presented the work to the Shadow Minister Helen Goodman. The work is feeding Labour policy on media ownership for the Party's next election manifesto. Goodman used the research on local news for a speech referring to Goldsmiths [2]. Harman referred to the research in a speech she gave to the Westminster Media Forum [3].

The researchers took part in a stakeholder discussion at the DCMS concerning amendments to the Crime and Courts Bill that affect online journalists and small publishers. MRC held a public consultation and recommended that cost benefits available to those who sign to any new recognized self-regulatory body should be extended to small-scale news bloggers, and that micro-businesses should be exempt from the Crime and Courts Bill which defines penalties and exemplary damages for those who refuse to join a regulator. The government adopted and enacted these recommendations.

In her role as Vice-Chair of Hacked Off's Board, Fenton has played a major role in trying to ensure that any media reform relating to press regulation complies with the recommendations in the Leveson report and is independent and effective. Unprecedented and historic progress has been made towards the achievement of these objectives, and Hacked Off has been instrumental in this. In March every party in parliament gave its backing to a Royal Charter with underpinning legislation that will implement the Leveson recommendations – providing for effective press self-regulation that is independent both of government and of editors and proprietors. In October 2013 this Royal Charter was sealed. In seven decades of controversy on this issue no parliament has ever gone nearly so far (and this without impinging in any way on freedom of expression).

Hacked Off drove this process, both in the public sphere by articulating the case for Leveson implementation, mobilising and focusing opinion, and in the political sphere by ensuring that key politicians understood the issues, were aware of strong public feeling, and had the means and tools to implement Leveson. Hacked Off lobbied, rebutted, drafted, persuaded, analysed, reported, denounced, advocated, briefed, argued and manoeuvred at a high level of intensity working closely throughout with victims of press abuses and with other reform-minded groups. It also operated in the teeth of relentless and often bitterly hostile resistance from leading national newspaper groups, making Hacked Off the most successful media campaign in history.

The state of news in the digital age

This research was cited extensively in the Parliamentary Select Committee Report on Media Ownership in 2008, in the Ofcom report on the proposed complete purchase of BSkyB by News Corporation, and in Ofcom's advice to the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport [4]. It contributed to NUJ strategy, and the NUJ's then General Secretary, Jeremy Dear, quoted it in a speech to the European Parliament [5]. The Chartered Institute of Journalists has also used the work in its lobbying [6].

Fenton and Freedman have held regular meetings on the state of the news in the digital age with key personnel at Ofcom and DCMS. The work has also informed news organisations' own internal reviews and discussions. This has involved engagement with prominent journalists from the Guardian and Radio 4, as well as ITN's own research into the future of news. The Principal of ITN Consulting commented that the meeting held between Fenton and himself was 'extremely useful' [7].

Local media and citizen journalism

This research led to the launch of the Media Trust's Newsnet, an online project giving people the unique opportunity to connect, share and learn to tell their local story. Newsnet is a UK-wide community of citizen journalists, community reporters and local storytellers, which gives them the

tools, skills and connections to get more from their local news. The marketing director of Media Trust has said that 'if Goldsmiths hadn't identified citizen journalism as having such potential, we may never have taken this approach' [8].

The work also triggered the development of the East London Lines, a successful local news website run out of the department.[9]

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5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

All sources listed below are available in hard or electronic copy on request from Goldsmiths Research Office.

1. 'An inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the press' [Leveson report], Vols. 1 and 4

2. Speech by Helen Goodman MP, Shadow Media Minister

3. Transcript of speech by Harriet Harman MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, in Westminster Media Forum briefing document, 'The Communications Green Paper' (March 2012) available on request.

4. (i) 'The Ownership of the News Volume I: Report' (2008)

   (ii) Ofcom, 'Report on public interest test on the proposed acquisition of British Broadcasting Group plc by News Corporation' (2010)

   (iii) 'Measuring media plurality: Ofcom's advice to the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport', Annex 7: Media plurality and news - a summary of contextual academic literature

5. Text of speech and related NUJ emails available on request.

6. Email from the Chartered Institute of Journalists available on request.

7. Email from the Principal of ITN Consulting available on request.

8. Email from the marketing director of Media Trust Media Trust available on request.

9. http://www.eastlondonlines.co.uk/