

<p>Institution: University of the West of England (UWE), Bristol</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 36 – Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management</p>
<p>Title of case study: The Bristol-BBC Anchor Group: ensuring plurality in local digital news.</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>UWE research insights into a sustainable future for local digital news and the democratic deficit of declining local news coverage focused on the need for Public Service Broadcasters (PSBs, here the BBC) to support the input of semi-professional and amateur news producers by creating partnerships and developing co-production and training models between BBC and community news media. These informed UWE leadership of the Bristol-BBC Anchor Local News and Journalism Group which tested out ways of creating change in Bristol’s media ecology: brokering partnerships between the BBC and community media companies and networks; devising co-production practices between PSB/voluntary sector journalists as a way of opening up the news agenda to voices outside the mainstream; testing out practices for skills sharing and training. Through its influence on the design of the Newshare pilot, UWE research findings created benefits: for the BBC in meeting its Public Purpose remits; enhancing the sustainability and diversity of Bristol’s media ecology by providing co-production and training initiatives and business intelligence; and for the public by strengthening relevance and diversity in local news content.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Dr Janet Jones (Senior Lecture in Journalism at UWE October 2006-June 2013) analyses the impact of the weakening of the economic foundations of local news publishing in the UK 2007-2011 and the associated decline in local news reporting (R4). She argued this has resulted in a democratic deficit. In light of a contraction in local newsgathering, she investigated new practices based on the affordances of ‘prod-user’ (user-led) content creation as part of Web 2.0 news media, such as viable grassroots digital business models, networks and collaborations (R1, R2, R3, R4).</p> <p>Jones argued that in the light of the shrinking of the local broadcast news sector, there was an over-dominant supply of state-sponsored news, leaving the BBC exposed as an over-dominant player and impeding deliberative democracy in the limitation of diverse voices. A perception that local news services were no longer located within and did not adequately reflect their communities has led to a trend towards ‘hyper-localness’ in UK. PSBs worldwide are seeking to legitimise and renew their services in the light of significant digital, economic and cultural challenges (R1, R4, D1 P9 Para2). Jones addresses the recommendation of the review of the BBC’s Charter in 2005 that it should engage with a broader section of the population for its present funding regime to continue after the 2016 charter review, arguing that the BBC has continued to marginalise citizen content as a superficial extension to top-down coverage (R3). She argued that the success of the BBC in meeting the primary recommendation of the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) review of the BBC’s Charter in 2005, to gain legitimacy by engaging with a broader section of the population, would rest on it supporting the development of community media training initiatives and acting as curator to the content of citizen journalists and consumers (R1, R4).</p> <p>Jones also identified important shifts in recent journalism practice contending that the rapid expansion of digital technologies has challenged the normative culture of the newsroom (R4). Although large corporate producers attempted to revive the industry, innovations were brought about by ‘digital natives’ developing new modes of grass roots journalism (R4). In its response to digital innovation, the BBC struggled to embrace external voices and create a genuine interactive and participatory culture while retaining authority and credibility (R3). To stay relevant, BBC journalists need to change their cultural outlook and take on a curatorial, co-creative role (R1, R4). Professionals and amateurs could work together on local news using new alignments of productive power and distributive capacity to foster ‘enhanced localness’. A complementary news ecology could bring new models of digital journalism to flourish on a civic and commercial basis (R4).</p> <p>These insights led Jones to identify to a shift from a model of Public Service <i>Broadcasting</i>, to Public Service <i>Communication</i> (R1) as the key to industry revival and local relevance, prefiguring the BBC Anchor Group Newshare project. BBC partnerships with local community news producers, and professionals with amateurs, would foster a participatory culture and achieve a new kind of</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

authority and credibility through the expansion of the plurality of voices informing news content, and its support for professional skills development in the community news sector (R2, R4).

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

R1: Jones, J. (2009a) 'Changing Auntie – a case study in managing and regulating user generated news content at the BBC', S. Tunney and G. Monaghan (eds) *Web Journalism: A new form of citizenship?* Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, pp 150-167.

R2: Jones, J. (2009b) 'PSB 2.0 - UK broadcasting policy after Peacock' in T. O'Malley and J. Jones (eds) *The Peacock Committee and UK Broadcasting Policy*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp 187-206.

R3: Jones, J., Martin, R. (2010) 'Crypto-Hierarchy and its Discontents: Indymedia UK' in Laura Stein, Dorothy Kidd, and Clemencia Rodriguez (eds), *Making Our Media: Global Initiatives Toward a Democratic Public Sphere, Volume I, Citizens' Movements and the Democratisation of the Public sphere*, New York: Hampton Press, pp 223-244.

R4: Jones, J. Salter, L. (2012) *Digital Journalism*, London: Sage. (Sole-authored chapters Ch 3 pp 34-54; Ch5 'Public Service News', pp 73-91; Ch6: 'Local Digital Journalism' pp 92-107; Ch7 'News Customisation' pp 108-120; Ch8 'Mobile Journalism – from Desktop to Pocket' pp 121-130).

4. Details of the impact

The Bristol-BBC Anchor Collaboration was formed in 2009 to create a stronger presence for the BBC in Bristol's media landscape. To this end, a Memorandum of Understanding was created to shape the BBC's engagement with key regional agencies (including SWRDA, South West Screen, Skillset, Bristol City Council, Bristol University and the University of the West of England, Watershed Arts Trust), signed by the BBC's Director General (2009). Under Stage 1 of the Collaboration, four working groups were established: Innovation, Archiving, Skills, and Local News and Journalism. These explored ways for the BBC to work with local media agencies to strengthen news culture in Bristol. The Group was managed for the BBC by Diversity and Communities Editor for the English Regions and reported to the Chief Operating Officer, BBC (see T1 below).

Jones was appointed Chair of the News Group (2010-12), her research directly influencing its work and the design of the Newshare pilot (see below) (T1, T2, T3, T4). The BBC's Editor, English Regions, says Jones' research informed the Group's 'analysis of the problems and agendas for the BBC in the context of increasing use of participatory digital media by a wide range of semi-professionals and amateurs and the way the BBC could build links with community media organisations rather than maintaining a "top down" approach to newsgathering' (T1). The Chair of the Community Media Association (CMA) states that Jones' 'longstanding research into the importance of the BBC adapting to new digital news platforms and the role of user-generated content ensured that she identified priorities that were cognisant with the needs of both the BBC and the dispersed network of semi-professional and amateur local news content developers that the (CMA) represents' (T3).

Jones led the Group to initiate: (i) sustainable models for local digital news content origination and delivery; (ii) partnership and co-production models to create a more permeable and diverse local news landscape, involving citizen journalists; (iii) newsharing initiatives providing access to BBC archive content; (iv) skills sharing and access to BBC training provision (T1, T2, T3). Gibbons confirms that these priorities flowed from the argument made in her research that partnerships would strengthen the content of both parties (T3). The BBC's Editor, English Regions, says Jones was 'influential in the Group identifying co-production and partnership models as a key to harnessing locally relevant news content' (T1, T2). The Group designed the Bristol Newshare pilot (June 2011-April 2012) to test these initiatives (T1). The pilot was the first experiment of its kind in the UK and was used as a model for similar experiments in other UK regions (Norfolk, Luton and Northampton) (T1, D4).

Key Outcomes from the work of the Group and the Newshare pilot include:

1. A pioneering system of co-production embodied in the partnership between BBC and community media radio stations Ujima and BCFN: supporting a burgeoning community of semi-professional

Impact case study (REF3b)

and amateur news producers; engaging local and hyper local news sources; and opening up the news agenda to voices outside the mainstream via voluntary sector journalists (T2).

2. A multilateral, multiplatform local news archive sharing system between the BBC and local not-for-profit news providers who were signatories to the CMA's Memorandum of Understanding 2009, to strengthen both sectors' content (T2). This resulted in local stories grounded more firmly in local knowledge, reflecting a more representative range of community interest groups through neighbourhood partnerships (D5) and adding to the richness of news content.

3. Skills sharing and volunteer training programmes design to enhance local news reporting. The BBC's Editor, English Regions, confirms Jones was influential in the Group's 'consideration of innovative training models to give community and amateur journalists insight into professional newsroom standards' (T1). To this end, she commissioned a research report by Senior Lecturer in Journalism at UWE Phil Chamberlain to map the ecology of local news supply and training needs, and develop methods for offering skills-based courses to deliver local news training. Pilot 'Taster Sessions' were conducted to test out models. His report was submitted to the group in 2011 (D4).

4. The Group's key strategic finding was that local news initiatives should be embedded in a wider 'cultural ecology', 'harnessing the input of key talent incubators in Bristol' (T2). The Chair of Bristol Media, a member of the News Group and part of the BBC Anchor Collaboration in Phases 1 and 2, confirms Jones' key role in briefing the Group in this regard: 'conducting research on models for TV delivery of digital news content - extending her published research on the role of PSBs in collaborating with community media networks' (T2). This finding informed the design of Phase 2 of the Anchor Collaboration (signed for 2014-2017), as a further step in diversifying Bristol's news media ecology (T2).

Benefits to Stakeholders

The Bristol Newshare pilot offered an opportunity for Jones to test out her arguments that the BBC should identify ways of moving from a PSB to a model of Public Service Communication, and examine the viability of solutions she identified in a real situation. This provided a model for BBC local news partnerships across the UK and tested measures to create (i) a sustainable news ecology with (ii) greater diversity of voices, which (iii) strengthened local content, (iv) leading to a change in thinking in the BBC and Bristol's media networks which will inform change in the future.

BBC: Public Service Communication

1. The Groups designed and tested initiatives to create a paradigm-shifting model of digital local news content curation and delivery for PSBs (T1, T2). The 'challenge of ...the digital revolution' for the BBC is to distribute its resources effectively to meet its Public Purpose Remits' (D1). These include 'sustaining citizenship and civil society', 'stimulating creativity and excellence' and 'representing the UK, its nations, regions and communities' which instructs the Trust to ensure that the BBC 'reflects and strengthens cultural identities through original content at local...level' and 'promotes awareness of different cultures and alternative viewpoints, through content that reflects the lives of different people and different communities within the UK' (D2, pp 3-4).

The 2006 Royal Charter adds that these should be achieved through 'helping to deliver to the public the benefit of emerging communications technologies and services' (D3, p3). Principal benefits identified by the BBC's Editor, English Regions, in this regard were: (i) expanding the range of communities of interest represented in order to address diversity in content and users addressed; (ii) challenging orthodox news agendas by expanding the pool of contributors to BBC news; and (iii) extending the Corporation's reach and increasing licence fee payers' access to the BBC as listeners, through the provision of more locally grounded relevant, accurate and culturally attuned content (T1). The Editor confirms the testing of models 'allowed us to reconceive of our relationship with community news media groups, and to consider our role as curators of local content, originated by small entrepreneurial companies, semi-professionals and amateurs (T1).

2 Significant commercial impact flows from the Group's demonstration of the viability of partnership models. The BBC, as part of its licence fee arrangement, is required to contribute £25 million towards the development costs of the new Local Media Companies in the UK. Some, if not all, of this contribution will be 'in kind'. Their Editor confirms the Group's testing of this partnership, co-

Impact case study (REF3b)

production and training model 'contributed to the BBC's thinking as we consider how to channel our resources to support the development of a new generation of local media companies and to create new newsroom practices for digitally-enabled news-share environments' (T1).

Wider Industry Benefit: Supporting the Sustainability of the Local News Sector

1. A key benefit was training opportunities as BBC offered community media companies insights into professional content-development practices and access to training resources for volunteer news producers (T1). This included on-the-job skills development with amateurs working alongside BBC personnel and access to BBC training resources, e.g. 40 Bristol volunteers attended a day of BBC Bristol Training Workshops (T3). As Chair, Jones brokered these arrangements (D4).

2. Further industry benefit derived from community radio stations exploiting BBC archive content during this period for their broadcasts. The Chair of Bristol Media confirms this led to BCFN and Ujima radio stations strengthening their brand and achieving a higher profile, while Bristol's media sector's commitment to audio as a medium for news delivery was also strengthened (T2).

3. Stakeholders have a clearer view of the conditions for, and obstacles to, effective partnerships and the best conditions and mechanisms for creating change' and working together towards industry innovation benefits (T2, T3). A direct outcome in this respect was a rewrite of the BBC's 2009 Memorandum of Understanding defining the partnership between the BBC and the Community Media Association (CMA) (February 2013, awaiting BBC signature) (T2, T3). This business intelligence will inform future rollout (T2, T3).

4 The News Group enabled a conversation between a disparate group of key stakeholders from PSB to community-based and open-source media (T2, T4). Jones 'created a vibrant and energised group...to respond to the challenges of news provision in the digital age' (T4). Bristol Media's Chair confirms that this 'has continued to influence the development of Bristol as a media city' (T2).

Public Life and Community Benefit: Diversity and Community Relevance

1 Public and community benefit is created by enabling new kinds of content with local relevance and authenticity and the inclusion of a wider range of voices, to revitalise public culture. CMA's Chair says this was a key interest for CMA and 'was achieved through the BBC working with a wide range of volunteer reporters, and its involvement of BCFN as a partner' (T3). He sees this as a change flowing from Jones' leadership (T2). The BBC's Editor confirms Jones' commitment to these objectives (T1). Bristol Media's Chair agrees: '(Jones') research has impacted upon the strategic input of stakeholder groups in Bristol's media sector, and informed future debate on the news culture of Bristol as a media city, and the BBC within this ecology, ensuring local digital news provision is sustainable and reflects a diverse community of voices' (T2).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (all available from UWE, Bristol)**Testimonials:**

- T1. Editor, English Regions – Diversity and Communities, BBC.
- T2. Chair of Bristol Media and member of the BBC Anchor Group in Phases 1 and 2.
- T3. Chair of Community Media Association and BCFN.
- T4. Tomas Rawlings, Design & Production Director, Auroch Digital Ltd.

Other Sources:

- D1. DCMS (2005) *Review of the BBC's Royal Charter*, London: The Stationery Office Ltd.
- D2. DCMS (2006), *Broadcasting: An agreement Between Her Majesty's Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and the British Broadcasting Corporation*, Crown Copyright.
- D3. DCMS (2006) *Broadcasting: Copy of Royal Charter for the continuance of the British Broadcasting Corporation*, Crown Copyright, 2006.
- D4. *Community News Training Pilot Report*, commissioned by Jones on behalf of the Local News Group, and authored by Phil Chamberlain (UWE), August 2011.
- D5. Bristol-BBC Anchor Collaboration, Local News and Journalism Working Group, Minutes 1/2012.