

# **Innovating for Survival in a Convergent Newsroom Environment**

**Martin Hamer**

*School of Arts and Media  
University of Salford, Greater Manchester  
United Kingdom*

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# Statement on the Published Works

## The Author/Authorship of the Outputs

The author, who has been a journalist since 1983, was appointed Digital Editor at the *Lancashire Evening Post* in April 2006 and left in May 2011. In addition to having worked at several newspapers since qualifying professionally through the National Council for the Training of Journalists, he has also had roles at the Press Association, the national news agency for the UK and Ireland, and at BBC News Online. He spent three-and-a-half years as an academic at the University of Sheffield, where he set up and taught an MA in Digital Journalism (2001-2005). It was at Sheffield where he completed an MEd in E-learning and also co-authored *Key Concepts in Journalism Studies* (Franklin, Hamer, Hanna, Kinsey & Richardson, 2005), which is referenced in the Critical Commentary. He later wrote a book chapter, *Trading on Trust: News Agencies, Local Journalism and Local Media*, in *Local Journalism and Local Media: Making the local news* (Franklin, 2006, Ed).

Some – but not all - of the published works put forward for this thesis, have by-lines or credits to show they were written or produced by the author. He also played the leading role in the live news coverage and community/interactive media projects produced by the newspaper from 2006 to 2011.

Deputy Editor Mike Hill wrote the following statement<sup>1</sup> (personal communication, 18 April 2017) to demonstrate the range and depth of the author's contribution to the work critically analysed here, highlighting in particular the fact he oversaw both the creative and production elements of the digital operation.

It reads: "Martin had a key and influential role in our converged newsroom. Martin joined the newsroom as an industry acknowledged pioneer in digital journalism to play a key role in the change of the Evening Post newsroom to a multi-platform operation. From a strategic point of view, he was instrumental in creating new workflows for content, training on new technologies and both identifying and

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<sup>1</sup> This is a truncated version of the statement; see Appendix A for the unabridged version.

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implementing best practice in the newsroom. He helped redesign the website and source the necessary new technology for the digital news operation.

“On a day-to-day basis, in addition to producing multimedia content himself, such as features which were published in print and online (e.g. Jester for a day), he managed the website on a daily basis and liaised regularly with the newsdesk and senior management with regards to workflow and staff roles.

“Martin regularly broke stories online and was actively involved in our coverage of many high-profile news events, including royal visits (most notably the Queen at Preston Barracks) and live forums with leading politicians. He also masterminded a special project at a Preston pub, in addition to overseeing interactive features such as News Idol and Comic Idol. He also co-produced our Royle Christmas messages (text and videos).

“Features like the Community Calendar and the Christmas Advent Calendars were also designed and delivered by Martin and the small digital team he led. He was always keen to cross-promote the website in the newspaper – and vice versa.”

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## Abstract

The beginning of the twenty-first century can be viewed as a critical period for the UK's local and regional press. Many newspapers, faced with falling circulations and increasing competition due to the emergence of the internet, began converging their print and digital news operations in an attempt to halt the long-term decline by exploring new ways of growing their readership and attracting more income.

This thesis examines the Published Outputs of a senior journalist who played a leading role in managing the transition to a convergent newsroom at the *Lancashire Evening Post*, a regional newspaper in Lancashire. The innovative content produced by the author, and the new editorial processes which he and fellow managers implemented, are critically analysed through the application of key insights from academic literature on media management and multimedia.

It is argued that editorial innovation can help boost website traffic and increase audience engagement, while not necessarily damaging newspaper circulation figures; in fact, there is evidence to suggest they can even slow down the fall in sales. However, this research also demonstrates that these alone are unlikely to generate sufficient digital advertising revenue to help reverse the steep decline being experienced by the industry.

# Chapter One

## The British Press ‘in a State of Flux’

Local and regional newspapers were established in the 1700s, though it was the following century which saw the real growth of the provincial press (Franklin, 1997). Their principal business has been journalism, the “practice of regularly producing and disseminating information about contemporary affairs of public interest and importance” (Schudson, 2011, p. 3). Randall (2016) describes the role of a newspaper as being to discover new information on public interest matters and then get it out “as quickly and as accurately as possible to readers in an honest and balanced way” (p. 31). As a result, these media organisations have been credited with having a vital part to play within society: “Research affirms that there is an explicit relationship between local and community news, local democracy, community cohesion, and civic engagement” (McChesney, 2013, p. 181).

Meikle and Young (2012) describe news as the “organised daily production of, distribution and use of non-fiction drama... journalists are licensed to ask questions on our behalf and to tell stories to us about what they are told in return” (p. 49). Smith (2007) contends that “the media’s most important role is to tell the public what is going on in the world and why, whether it be roadworks delaying their journey to work or a declaration of war threatening their lives” (p. 1).

Cole (2006) insists that local journalism is about local issues, local politics and local people, and cites the relaunch of the Birmingham Mail in October 2005 with a series of localised editions as an example that local is what sells throughout the regional press. Nielsen (2015) argues that for more than a century, the majority of people in the Western world have taken local journalism for granted, with newspapers being an “integral part of local life”. This has included having a watchful eye on those in power and holding them to account, thereby keeping the public informed about public affairs as part of the idea of journalism being a ‘fourth estate’. A growing number of studies show that local journalism is “genuinely informative and that it increases significantly people’s civic and political engagement” (pp. 39-40).

Singer (2011) contends that as the internet has become an increasingly dominant source of information, journalists have gone through several significant changes, including their self-perception as information gatekeepers, their work practices and newsroom environments, and their relationship with the audience. Aldridge (2007) accepts local media may lack glamour, though she insists there is no doubt about their importance where “ordinary citizens may not muse abstractly about the lifeworld but they demonstrate that news of the locality is valued both in their attitudes and by their behaviour” (p. 161). Local media also has its critics, being described as superficial and skirting controversy since “local journalism does not always play its roles well, but the roles it plays are important” (Nielsen, 2015, pp. 19-20).

Franklin (2006) points out that studies of local journalism conducted during the 1970s described a relatively stable world in which journalists, the newspapers and the production processes and technology which produced them had not changed significantly across the previous half-century. Local newspapers earned their name because they were “locally owned, locally produced, employed local people as journalists, reported local concerns of consequence and were read by local people” (pp. xx-xxi). He argues the UK local press had enjoyed “a distinguished history of journalism” (p. 4), but that times were becoming difficult and that 2005 was a particularly bad year for them: “The latest news about industry trends included the long-running story about the declining number of local newspapers, their falling circulations and disappearing readers.”

Franklin argues that whilst the press had previously “survived endless precocious valedictories by pundits” (p. 3), these media organisations – and the journalists themselves – were in reality facing major challenges at the turn of the twenty-first century.

“At their peak in 1989, almost 48 million local newspapers were sold each week, but by 2004 it was 41 million. Local newspapers remain highly successful and profitable business organisations despite these long-term downturns in circulations and readerships. The explanation of this apparent paradox is the adoption of a business strategy designed to maximise revenue, especially advertising revenue, while minimising production costs” (pp. 5-7).

Thurman and Myllylahti (2009) contend that the “death of the printed newspaper has been an increasingly common subject of speculation”, citing Philip Meyer’s prediction that print newspapers would “[run] out of daily readers late in the first quarter of 2043” (p. 691). The arrival of the internet was not just hitting newspaper sales, but the profession in general and McChesney (2013) portrays journalism as being “in severe crisis” (p. 176). The internet, he argues, has “taken the economic basis away from commercial journalism, especially newspapers, and left the rotting carcass for all to see” (p. 172). Nielsen (2015) agrees that the business models which local newspapers have based themselves on are under a lot of pressure with readership eroding, advertising declining and total revenues falling. “Digital growth has far from made up for what has been lost on the print side of the business” (p. 22).

The result is that most newspaper companies have had to cut costs to stay profitable, or at least to limit operating losses, with potential investors losing interest. There has been inconclusive evidence so far, he argues, to suggest that digital-only operations can sustain local journalism on any significant scale. Newspapers had, in fact, lost complete categories of advertising, such as classifieds, while digital media had provided local governments with the opportunity to produce their own so-called ‘town-hall Pravdas’ to report council business, showing “local journalism does not have a monopoly on providing local information” (p. 31).

Williams (2006) contends that newspapers should provide information about local government and local communities, and help people to make informed choices on issues affecting their immediate environment, but that economic pressures resulting from structural mechanisms in the industry threatened that role. Aldridge (2007) argues how regional newspapers survived terrestrial and then cable television, but that real changes in the ecology of the media landscape had put their advertising-driven financial logic under threat.

Küng (2015) contends that the internet and the world wide web had been part of the media world for more than two decades, with a new landscape of digital media products, platforms, devices and consumption patterns emerging and evolving, bringing challenges for all established organisations. However, she insists that success can only be viewed in a qualified way due to the divergent and disrupted

state of the industry and with there being profound differences in key areas such as digital and analogue revenues. Lowrey and Gade (2011) demonstrate how the mass media model of the twentieth century positioned journalism as an influential institution, but that this has quickly eroded as digital media has empowered the public which can create its own products (sometimes termed as 'citizen-based media') and can interact with elected officials as well as journalists and each other.

Additionally, these technological and social developments have challenged the economic prominence of news media in the information marketplace. They argue that the public's consumption habits have also changed and many expect online media to be free, making traditional media outlets hesitate in putting up paywalls for digital content. Hollifield (2011) contends that the disruption from technological change has put the long-term survival of many traditional news media companies in serious doubt, not helped by the erosion of the audience's attention to news, particularly among younger people. Franklin (2006) insists that the new digital technologies posed both economic and journalistic challenges for the local press.

Singer (2010) contends that journalism as a practice, product and profession has been undergoing rapid and dramatic change in four main areas: economic, organisational, narrative and relationships with the public. Digital media appears here to stay and hence their economic impact is more significant. Online advertising revenue has grown significantly over the past fifteen years, but not nearly enough to compensate for the large revenue losses of traditional media products. Singer argues that changes in newsrooms stemming from these economic pressures and the need to maintain a website along with a traditional news product began in the mid-2000s under the moniker of convergence, with managers pushing newsroom journalists to develop a version of their stories for online or to at least work closely with those who could do it. Some did incorporate the internet into their thinking, while others put it off as much as they could and for as long as possible.

Shifting circulation and advertising patterns would have already alerted British newspaper editors to the scale of the change facing them, when in late 2005 the Daily Mail group put its regional newspaper operation, Northcliffe newspapers, up for sale (Pilling, 2006). Tim Bowdler, Chief Executive of the rapidly growing local press

group Johnston Press, which was achieving operating profits of more than 30 per cent at that time, noted his surprise at the decision to sell and insisted that “local newspapers have tremendous brand strength and connections with their communities. We are better equipped than anybody to manage that challenge” (Rushe & Kleinman, 2005, cited in Pilling, 2006, p. 105).

Greenslade (2005) suggests that the Daily Mail group had “failed to embrace the internet as enthusiastically and intelligently as its rivals”. He argues the likes of Johnston Press and Trinity Mirror had set out via different paths – one by acquisition and the other by organic development – “to create a synergy between papers and websites”. While highlighting 2004 figures from the Advertising Association showing that online recruitment advertising on the regional press's websites had more than doubled in two years, Greenslade was realistic about the stark reality facing the industry:

“Never in the history of the newspaper industry has there been a period of such rapid and profound change... we have to appreciate that our future is tied to wooing an audience that is gradually turning its back on our inky output. And we have to do it fast. Everyone is struggling for existence by trying to predict the future” (2005).

Pilling (2006) contends that his study of local newsrooms in the late 1990s found them to be getting smaller, with fewer journalists covering fewer stories, and that courts and councils were now sparsely covered. He found that most journalists, particularly on weeklies, were trainees and not well paid. It was feared a ‘sweatshop culture’ was emerging. Cole (2006) shows how the pay situation had worsened over the years with few signs of improving, while the big corporations which owned most of the local and regional press were enjoying profits of more than 30 per cent of their turnover. Job cost-cutting had become a fact of life “to the detriment of local journalism” (p. 82).

Aldridge (2007) also notes that regional press journalism has become much less secure and that during the mid-2000s, the major owning groups entered a new round of cuts, “partly in order to compete with each other over their already remarkable

profit levels, and partly as a defensive move against the perceived threat from internet-based advertising” (p. 155). She argues that regional newspapers have been among the most profitable of all industrial sectors, with conglomeration allowing economies of scope and scale, hence reducing costs. The subsequent high rates of return make shares in these organisations attractive, but also “create an expectation that this exceptional situation will continue” (pp. 162-163). Aldridge questions how long it will be before the cutting of roles, both back office and editorial, will impact negatively on a product that is labour intensive and exploitative in terms of pay.

Franklin (2006) argues that having fewer journalists increases local papers’ editorial reliance on news agencies and public relations sources based in both local and central government in addition to other local interest groups. Hamer (2006) notes how some regional newspapers increasingly rely on both local and national news agencies for a significant amount of their content. Aspinall (2005, cited in Williams, 2006) contends that the Press Association (PA), a multimedia news agency operating in the United Kingdom and Ireland, fills part of the void left by empty journalists’ desks as it has contracts with the majority of publishers and broadcasters, and often provides most of a news organisation’s basic material.

Pilling (2006) insists that new technology led to inevitable changes in production, altering some traditional practices and putting some long-standing roles under threat, with the Guild of Editors calling for reporters to become multi-skilled. Technological change gathered pace and “a more radical strategy for the future of local papers was emerging”, one which involved changing the mindset of journalists and exploiting the distribution capability of the internet (p. 106). At least one high-profile newspaper group had “begun to innovate energetically” (p. 113).

Phillips (2014) argues that early adopters of this new way of thinking felt they were well placed to ride out the storm, but that in terms of their own businesses, the newspapers were looking in the wrong direction as the real commercial competition came not from other news providers but from new entrants into the advertising business. “News organisations innovated their news products (some better than others), but their innovations turned out to be non-refundable expenses... if they had innovated their business models at the speed with which they innovated their

journalism, they might have survived in better shape” (p. 108). She contends that Gumtree, the Australian version of US classified listings company Craig’s List, scooped up the UK market, and an even bigger attack came from Google, followed by Facebook.

Part of the problem was a global recession triggered by the 2008 bank crash and, with the threat of new rivals in the advertising market, news organisations panicked and began looking for ways to cut costs rather than accepting lower returns. Companies had borrowed money to buy newspapers but then had to repay the loans and provide dividends as the crash occurred, amid plummeting advertising revenue, according to Felle (2013, cited in Phillips, 2014). Phillips argues that news organisations responded by cutting staff and consolidating local newspapers into regional centres, making it harder to offer compelling local coverage. Dooley (2011, cited in Singer, 2011) maintains the result is that once-loyal readers are disappearing as local papers are printed earlier and further away from home, carrying less news of any relevance to their communities.

Franklin (2006) agrees that local newspapers have become local in name only, with most of them now owned by monopoly newspaper groups which have head offices in remote towns or cities where all the major decisions and editorial policies are made. Cole and Harcup (2010) argue that the story of the regional press over the last twenty years has been one of concentration and change of ownership, along with the highly profitable management of decline.

Allan (2010) recalls that this ‘crisis’ within the industry was highlighted by media magnate Rupert Murdoch in April 2005, when he acknowledged the industry’s problems in relation to digital media. In a speech to the annual meeting of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Australian-born American Murdoch – founder of News Corporation and owner of several newspapers including *The Times* in the UK – talked about a “fast-developing reality” confronting the press, saying:

“Scarcely a day goes by without some claiming that new technologies are fast writing newsprint’s obituary. Yet, as an industry, many of us have been remarkably, unaccountably complacent... The peculiar challenge

then, is for us digital immigrants – many of whom are in positions to determine how news is assembled and disseminated – to apply a digital mindset to a set of challenges that we unfortunately have limited to no first-hand experience dealing with” (Allan, 2010, p. 2).

However, Murdoch also saw among these difficulties an opportunity to “improve our journalism and expand our reach... our industry has the potential to reshape itself, and to be healthier than ever before” (pp. 2-3). But he insisted journalists needed to embrace the digital revolution or newspapers would become the “also rans” of the media. He cited statistics which showed that 44 per cent of 18 to 34-year-olds used the web once a day to find news, but that only 19 per cent of them used a printed newspaper. (Allan, 2010). Ponsford (2005) quotes Murdoch as saying: “What is required is a complete transformation of the way we think about our product. Unfortunately, however, I believe too many of us editors and reporters are out of touch with our readers.”

Allan argues that the reaction to Murdoch’s comments was “remarkably muted” with “the near-absence of hard news coverage of the speech in the press”, though he did get recognition from some media commentators (2010, pp. 3-4). Williams and Franklin (2007) describe his “landmark speech” as a “turning point” (p. 45), and that it “acted as a wake-up call to newspaper owners about the necessity and urgency of developing online news content”. There was now general agreement amongst local and regional newspaper owners that falling print circulations and the prospect of losing advertising revenue to online competitors, as well as the changing patterns of media consumption, meant that “the move to digital news was inevitable” (p. 50).

Cole and Harcup (2010) argue that Murdoch’s speech was one of three major milestones in digital terms for the press at the start of the twenty-first century, the others both occurring in 2006 when the *Financial Times* ran a report that in the UK the internet would shortly be overtaking national newspapers to become the third biggest advertising medium by spend and *The Economist*, the international news and business magazine, devoted four pages to the death of newspapers debate. It noted that print sales had been falling continuously in America, Western Europe, Latin America, Australia and New Zealand, and that the decline was not just down to

the internet, but also content, price and spin-off businesses from newspapers. Cole and Harcup contend that some newspapers were finally beginning to get serious on the web.

The Cardiff School of Journalism clearly felt that the situation was serious enough to merit a series of academic discussions and it hosted the inaugural *The Future of Newspapers Conference* on 13 and 14 September 2007, which provided a wide-ranging forum for more than 170 scholars from 29 countries [it is felt that the event merits mention here due to the strength of these figures]. Franklin (2008) contends that the intention was to analyse and to debate recent developments in newspapers and their implications for journalism practice and studies. It focused on five main themes, including new media, newspapers as businesses and local/regional/community newspapers. Peter Preston, former editor of *The Guardian*, delivered the opening plenary, which was broadcast live on the web, saying: “Newspapers around the globe are in a state of flux, reflecting the influence of a number of technological, cultural, economic and political changes. It is undeniably a pivotal moment in the history of newspapers” (p. 630).

Franklin argues that some observers were pessimistic about the future of the industry, highlighting the sustained decline in newspaper titles, the dramatic drop in circulations, the growing attractiveness of the internet and recent scandals which undermined public trust in media credibility (2008). One of those scandals featured Jayson Blair, who resigned as a staff reporter for *The New York Times* after it was discovered by the newspaper’s own journalists that he had misled colleagues and readers with dispatches that claimed to be from Texas and other states, when in fact often he was in New York. It was also reported that he had made up comments and lifted material from other sources (Barry, Barstow, Glater, Liptak, & Steinberg, 2003).

Williams (2010) notes that faith in newspapers has been eroding rapidly since the 1980s and that fewer than one in five people believe what they read in them. “The crisis of confidence is reflected in fewer people reading newspapers; even amongst better-educated and higher-income groups, newspaper readership is collapsing” (p. 233). Franklin (2008) argues that the more optimistic pundits insisted newspapers were adapting their contents and formats to meet the challenges posted by

developments in media technology, the pressures of market forces and the changing needs of the audience. The survival instinct of newspapers, described as an “editorial Darwinism”, has always been there (p. 631).

However, Franklin points out that the statistics were not looking promising. Regional evening newspapers like the *Birmingham Mail* had lost 54 per cent of their readership between 1995 and 2005, and the morning daily *Yorkshire Post* 36 per cent of circulation across the same decade, though the paid and free weekly papers “enjoyed relative stability”, with some “showing a modicum of growth” (2008, p. 632). Franklin contends that it was not just the internet to blame for this dramatic decline, pointing to long-term sociological factors such as changes in lifestyle and work patterns of the audience. He also highlights the resistance of journalists and their trade unions to new technology, insisting that the impetus offered by technological developments can be lessened by political, economic and cultural factors.

Deuze (2007) argues that there have been both positives and negatives to the changing media climate: “The success of journalism in reporting news across all media has always been influenced if not determined by technological advances... at different times in the history of the profession, technology was (and still is) heralded as the bringer of all kinds of new threats and possibilities” (p. 153).

Allan (2010) contends that the result of news organisations – newspapers in particular – struggling to remain financially viable under severe market pressures, has been management-driven “reorganisation”, with remaining staff members being forced to ‘multi-task’ and ‘converged’ content being ‘repackaged’. These ‘efficiencies’ meant that quantity, and often quality, of output shrank. “The language of ‘innovation’ and ‘experimentation’ failed to conceal the unspoken fear that such a bold ‘initiative’ [such as abandoning the print edition in favour of an internet-only news source] may soon prove to be too little, too late” (p. 9). Allan argues that attempts to produce multimedia content and make it sound more exciting were probably not going to work on any level.

## Johnston Press – Expansion and Extrapolation

Twelve months after Rupert Murdoch's stark warning, journalist Alison Hastings summed up succinctly the seemingly apocalyptic state of the UK's regional press: "Job cuts, budget cuts, discretionary spend, consultants, fewer editions, advertising going through the floor, media fragmentation – and now the worst set of ABCs [circulation figures] across the board that anyone can remember" (2006, p. 16).

Johnston Press (JP) was one of the big newspaper groups which found itself in the middle of this media maelstrom, having undergone a major transition in size over the previous decade. Engel (2009) describes it as "the jumped-up weekly paper group from Falkirk that, after two centuries of quiescence, grew to become the most significant (if not the largest) local newspaper power in the land and the dominant force in the industry's culture" (p. 57).

It was in 1994 that JP expanded out of the weeklies for the first time by buying the *Halifax Evening Courier*. It grew rapidly in the 1990s, doubling in size with the acquisition in June 1996 of EMAP's regional newspaper business for £210 million. Three years later, it paid £266 million for Portsmouth and Sunderland Newspapers and in 2002 bought Regional Independent Media's (RIM) 53 titles (Williams, 2006). RIM's owners earned £560 million from the sale, a profit of £200 million in four years (Cole and Harcup, 2010). Within another three years, JP had continued its expansion with the acquisition of Scottish Radio Holdings' newspaper division Score Press for £155 million, two Irish newspaper groups for £160 million and Scotsman Publications, whose titles include *The Scotsman*, from the Barclay brothers (Williams, 2006).

Engel (2009) argues that consolidation had obvious financial advantages as the big groups could buy paper more cheaply and also merge back-office departments. "All of this might have created opportunities to invest in their own product had they been minded to do so. But by and large they weren't" (p. 59). Cole and Harcup (2010) contend that Johnston Press was not averse to taking a high rate of profit from its newspapers. As a public company listed on the stock market, it was like many other

media organisations whose share price is influenced by the bottom line and affected by revenues from circulation and advertising and efficiencies within its newspapers.

Williams (2006) contends that in January 2006, the top four groups had two-thirds of the local and regional newspaper market in terms of circulation: Trinity Mirror 21.5 per cent; Johnston Press 15.25 per cent; Newsquest 15.2 per cent; and Northcliffe 13 per cent. Cole and Harcup (2010) cite Newspaper Society figures which show that in 1998, JP owned 142 titles and circulated 4.5 million copies a week; by July 2008, it owned 294 with a total circulation of 9.1 million copies a week.

Cole and Harcup argue that Johnston Press has probably been best known for setting the trend, as well as the expectation, for impressive figures for profit on turnover, which was considerably more than 30 per cent at the start of the 2008 recession. Other publishers followed suit, all during a period of ongoing circulation decline (2010). In its 2004 Annual Report and Accounts, Johnston Press announced an operating profit margin of 34 per cent, the best performance in the industry, but the following summer, the four big regional newspaper groups all issued profit warnings based on a drop of advertising revenue. At the JP-owned *Yorkshire Post*, letters were sent out to editorial staff aged over 55 asking if they wanted to take early retirement. Williams argues that it was a knee-jerk reaction in an effort to shore up profit margins and a failure to recognise the ebbs and flows of advertising expenditure. "It is a response which speeds the cycle of decline" (2006, pp. 90-91).

Engel (2009) argues that Johnston Press had used debt to keep expanding and, at first, the London Stock Exchange was impressed but this was not to last. "[Chief Executive] Tim Bowdler was supposed to add shareholder value: he succeeded in demolishing it" (pp. 59-60). Engel says Bowdler accepted the failure of the strategy and admitted that he did not anticipate the speed and ferocity of the advertising recession, but rejected claims the company's expansion resulted in the degradation of the newspapers' journalism, insisting the company was extremely interested in content and did not until recently reduce the number of journalists.

Cole and Harcup (2010) reflect on the paradox that until the recession following the credit crunch of 2008, falling sales over a long period did not lead to a drop in profits

or a lack of interest by investors. There was still plenty of money to be made, particularly if costs were being constantly pared down. However, the downward trend of sales continued. The audited ABC figures for the second half of 2007 show that evening sales were down 5.2 per cent year on year, mornings 3.6 per cent, weeklies 1.6 per cent and Sundays 6.5 per cent. “These figures cannot be regarded as other than poor, and the fact that they are repeated year after year provides little hope for optimism” (pp. 97-98). Engel (2009) is even more damning: “Circulations of once-great local newspapers are humiliatingly low... Britain’s local newspaper groups compounded their problems by their ill-judged expansion of the past few years and decades of editorial neglect before that” (p. 61).

Singer (2011) demonstrates the severity of the situation with figures taken from JP’s own website in 2010, saying the company’s recent financial losses were “staggering” as its operating profit plummeted from nearly £187 million to £72 million, while its share price (in pence) dropped from nearly 500 in spring 2007 to below 10 by March 2011 (p. 3). Print advertising revenue fell another seven per cent in 2010, while the already small digital ad share grew just four per cent. Chief executive John Fry and long-serving finance director Stuart Paterson both resigned (Sabbagh, 2011). It was during these turbulent years that some of the major newspaper owners, including Johnston Press, began to grow online offerings in an effort to increase digital revenue and offset the declines elsewhere within their businesses.

Engel (2009) argues that by the turn of the millennium, the future of ink on paper was already starting to be questioned, but that the new powers of the regional press had pushed on regardless. Though they did invest in the internet, they did not have a clear idea of how it would pay for itself. “There was an assumption that their traditional small-ad revenue would migrate to the web with the readership. It didn’t” (p. 59). Cole and Harcup (2010) reflect that following a decade of (profitable) complacency over the threat of internet publishing, the regional press was now developing its online business recognising that the main source of advertising revenue – classifieds like property, jobs and cars – was migrating quicker than expected to the web, which was seen as a more appropriate and user-friendly medium. Johnston Press was increasingly keen to develop its newspaper websites from 2006 onwards.

## **The *Lancashire Evening Post* and the *Newsroom of the Future***

One of those newspapers was the *Lancashire Evening Post* (known locally as the LEP and renamed in recent years as simply the *Lancashire Post*), which has been based in Preston, Lancashire, in the North-West region of England, throughout the whole of its history. It was first published in October 1886 by George Toulmin and Sons as a daily newspaper designed to appeal to a far reaching and diverse readership, according to historian Keith Johnson (2016). Its news and features included reports from Blackburn, Darwen, Bacup and Haslingden, areas of east Lancashire which are no longer covered by the newspaper. The popularity of the daily newspaper grew and it thrived with a circulation far beyond the boundaries of Preston by the time George Toulmin died in 1888, leaving his sons in control of the business.

It was retitled the *Lancashire Daily Post* in 1893 before reverting to its previous name more than 50 years later. The LEP enjoyed a readership of more than 50,000 in the mid-1940s. In 1989, the newspaper moved from its familiar city-centre location in Fishergate to a greenfield site at Fulwood on the edge of Preston. In 2009, three years into the period being critically analysed here, the LEP was a three-edition newspaper with a daily sale of around 26,000, merely half of what it had been 70 or so years earlier. It covered central, west and north Lancashire [the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph* reports on the eastern part of the county] and employed 60 journalists (see second slide in Appendix C).

The *Lancashire Evening Post*, like a host of other local and regional newspapers in Lancashire and Yorkshire, was to have no fewer than three owners in four years around the turn of the millennium. Cole and Harcup (2010) recall that, along with other titles such as the Leeds-based *Yorkshire Post* and the *Sheffield Telegraph*, the LEP had been owned by United Newspapers, which was formed in 1918. Among the leading players in the regional market, United also acquired the Express national newspapers in the mid-1980s, which led to the regionals forming a separate part of the company called United Provincial Newspapers (UPN). They record that in 1998, UPN was put up for sale in two parts, with its much larger section, that consisting of

Lancashire and Yorkshire, being bought by a venture capital group called Candover for £360 million, resulting in the creation of Regional Independent Media (RIM). However, within another two years, RIM was sold to Johnston Press in April 2002. [JP is now under different ownership again after being taken over by a newly formed company, JPIMedia, having briefly been placed in administration (Linford, 2018).]

If the numerous recent changes in ownership had not created enough uncertainty across JP titles like the *Lancashire Evening Post*, then the inexorable rise of the internet and the well-documented desire of the parent company to maximise profits from its media business were posing undeniable challenges. It was against this backdrop that the LEP – and the author of this thesis – were to become central actors on the Johnston Press stage.

In early 2006, courtesy of an initial £200,000 investment by JP (Press Gazette, 2006a), the *Newsroom of the Future* project was undertaken by the *Lancashire Evening Post*, where major organisational and operational changes took place, the primary aim being to create a converged newsroom as quickly and as smoothly as possible. LEP Editor Simon Reynolds called the pilot digital project “brave”, saying he spent the money on training, a basic editing suite, cameras and reorganising the office: “They invested a lot in terms of technical equipment... we’ve invested in people and had a lot of training done with new skills for staff. It was a bold move and I think it needs to be applauded, because we were first off the blocks” (Press Gazette, 2007). Chief Executive Tim Bowdler said he did not expect to spend a similar amount of money at all 70 newsrooms in the group (Press Gazette, 2006a).

The LEP newsroom was rearranged to accommodate the new convergence philosophy and way of working, the intention being for all journalists to create content for both the newspaper and website at the same time where possible. The regular editorial conferences (sometimes several a day) and the inclusive approach of the author and other managers also instilled what might be termed a cross-media mindset, highlighting to people working on one or both platforms about the importance of promoting the other.

Fisher (2009) notes that the Ifra Newsplex at the University of South Carolina was also built with a view to fostering convergence, with desks positioned in a circular format to encourage discussion and the sharing of ideas across different media. The shape of the central desk (with reporters and sub-editors surrounding it) at the LEP was more horseshoe than circular (there had to be an exit point) but it was otherwise similar, in concept at least, to the Newsplex one. Several senior journalists, including the Head of Content, news editors, Deputy Editor and the Digital Editor (the author) were based in this space, meaning they could easily turn around and talk to each other or face outwards and communicate comfortably with most members of staff as and when necessary. A space in the middle of this 'horseshoe' allowed for a meeting involving the various desk editors to be called quickly when necessary. It also meant they were all constantly thinking about both platforms, something it was hoped would filter out to the rest of their colleagues too.

The author's roles and responsibilities were as follows (M. Hill, personal communication, 1 July 2008):

- \* Oversee and manage the digital content on a daily basis, which includes liaising with news desk constantly on stories and also with sports desk, subs, features, researchers and designers. Usually attend both daily editorial conferences
- \* Upload breaking news stories, video and audio, and help to share articles to various sections
- \* Commission unique news and sport content for website
- \* Manage all moving and still images online
- \* Manage audio broadcasts online (including podcasts)
- \* Manage (partly through the community reporter) external contributions from agencies, citizen journalists and other sources
- \* Commission and co-ordinate online polls and other interactive elements including blogs
- \* Responsible for the strategic overview and long-term planning of website content, including innovative features like LEP Live, podcasting and the traffic and travel section
- \* Oversee major outside filming, including the first two historic LEP Live broadcasts in which I [the author] helped out with the filming

It was a wide-ranging and demanding remit that involved a substantial amount of managing and commissioning, though there was also a big hands-on element to the

work. Not specified here was the training – often impromptu – that the author gave to colleagues both at the *Lancashire Evening Post* and elsewhere within Johnston Press, or that the author regularly produced his own multimedia content. The fact that as Digital Editor he attended all editorial conferences as and when possible indicated that the web side of the business was felt to be vital and this underlined the clear policy of the LEP – and JP – to make the process as converged as possible in purposing content specifically for the web as well as the newspaper.

Many of the breaking news stories were written by the author who also produced his own features, video and audio; some of this published work is presented in this thesis for academic analysis and will be discussed in more detail later. Mike Hill, who was the LEP's Deputy Editor during the period analysed in this Critical Commentary, reflects that in addition to the management role outlined above, the author helped to redesign the website and source the necessary new technology for the digital news operation, while also producing multimedia content himself (see Appendix A).

The group's intentions were for something similar to subsequently be replicated at other newspapers across the country. Quinn (2004) contends that several factors had influenced and driven the adoption of convergence – also described as multi-platform publishing – not least the need to deal with an uncertain future. He argues that “successful convergence satisfies the twin aims of good journalism and good business practices” (p. 109). Singer (2004) recalls that convergence had become a “media industry buzzword” in the US (p. 3) and it seemed this was also going to become the case in the UK at this time.

In the face of all the uncertainty and instability, many newspapers – including the *Lancashire Evening Post* – had begun transforming their newsrooms in the hope that they could make the internet pay and compensate for the seemingly inevitable continued decline of their print editions. The author was the lead player in the creation of a convergent environment at the LEP, where it was intended that every journalist would (ultimately) be involved in the process of radical rethinking and restructuring.

Williams and Franklin (2007) included a case study of the *Lancashire Evening Post's* multimedia pilot project (see Chapter Two) in research which focused largely on Trinity Mirror, one of JP's main rivals at that time. The LEP's new-look newsroom and online operation were copied to varying degrees by hundreds of other Johnston Press titles across the UK (Kirkby, 2007), suggesting that its goals had been achieved to some extent through the *Newsroom of the Future* project.

This move towards digital journalism was evidenced in substantial online readership growth: unique users for August 2007 were 260,231 (up from 117,765 twelve months earlier and 40,000 in 2005 (Press Gazette, 2007)). Page views and website visits followed similar patterns. The first major spike in the figures was in May 2006, a few weeks after the author started there, with one of his first tasks having been to increase the amount of online content, particularly video, and also web traffic. Page impressions and unique users both virtually doubled within a month, the latter rising from 56,181 to 109,396 (see Appendix D for *Newsroom of the Future* website statistics).

The LEP won six industry awards and was shortlisted for other accolades between 2006 and 2009 for its innovative work, including the Digital Innovation Award at the national Advertising and Digital Media Awards (Lancashire Evening Post, 2006). The LEP's ground-breaking achievements were recognised globally; this included a group of Arab editors being invited to join the World Editors Forum for an "exclusive study tour to some of the most important newspapers in the UK... to get an insight into cost-effective integration strategies for the newsroom crisis". They had a tour of the Preston offices to find out "the secrets to LEP's astounding online growth, community engagement strategies and innovative newsroom atmosphere" (Arab Press Network, 2009). It was just one of numerous visits by representatives of media companies from around both the UK and the world.

Due to the fact that the author did not work in the advertising department, and that revenue details tend to be sensitive and confidential information anyway, there is not much evidence to show how much was being earned (or not) through adverts on the LEP's website. If percentage figures from February 2009 (see Appendix E for the monthly report) – almost three years after the start of the *Newsroom of the Future*

*project* – were reflective of many other months, it would indicate that the various types of adverts (banners, skyscrapers and MPUs - mid-page units) tended to yield low digital revenue, locally at least.

## Conclusion

How much of an effect was the newly converged newsroom – and the rising web figures – having on newspaper sales? LEP editor Simon Reynolds reported that in the first six months of the project, the number of page impressions on its site had increased "four or five-fold", with a "fantastic level of interaction", and that there had so far been nothing to suggest that newspaper sales had got worse, though they were "still disappointing" (Press Gazette, 2006a). Newspaper sales had continued to fall, but not necessarily at the speed at which they had done previously – for a few years at least. Circulation fell by 2,268 from the first six months of 2005 to the last half of that year. The drop during the next six months – which covered the start of the newly converged newsroom – was "only" 727. Subsequent six-month drops were 1,367, 605, 1,711, 751, 1,441, 846, 469 and 455, showing that the fall for each recorded half-year was substantially below that of the immediate pre-*Newsroom of the Future* period (see Table One). It was not until the last six months of 2010 that there was another steep half-yearly drop – of 2,750.

These were crumbs of comfort, but they did not reverse the inexorable downward spiral for the print edition of the LEP and, despite its record-breaking figures, there was no still obvious indication that the website was producing the digital revenue desperately being sought.

**Table One – ABC Circulation figures for the *Lancashire Evening Post* from 2005 to 2010 (M. Hill, personal communication, 3 September 2018)<sup>2</sup>**

January to June 2005	37,145
July to December 2005 <b>Cover price was 35 pence*</b>	34,877
<i>Fall of 2,268 (pre-Newsroom of the Future)</i>	
January to June 2006	34,150
<i>Fall of 727</i>	
July to December 2006 <b>Cover price was 37 pence</b>	32,783
<i>Fall of 1,367</i>	
January to June 2007	32,178
<i>Fall of 605</i>	

<sup>2</sup> Note: These figures are 100% paid (that is, with the bulk sales and free copies excluded).

July to December 2007 <b>Cover price was 38 pence</b>	30,467
<i>Fall of 1,711</i>	
January to June 2008	29,716
<i>Fall of 751</i>	
July to December 2008 <b>Cover price was 40 pence</b>	28,275
<i>Fall of 1,441</i>	
January to June 2009	27,429
<i>Fall of 846</i>	
July to December 2009 <b>Cover price was 42 pence</b>	26,960
<i>Fall of 469</i>	
January to June 2010	26,505

<i>Fall of 455</i>	
July to December 2010 <b>Cover price was 50 pence</b>	23,755
<i>Fall of 2,750</i>	

\* The basic cover price is the standard published price for an issue against which circulation is reported, ie what a print edition of the newspaper would usually sell for in newsagents and other stores or through the door

(<https://abcstandards.org.uk/other-general/basic-cover-price/179-categories/sector/344-basic-cover-price-national-newspapers#r1>)

## Chapter Two

# The Challenges of Managing 'a Necessary Evolution'

The *Newsroom of the Future* project, introduced at the *Lancashire Evening Post* in 2006 and subsequently rolled out across many other Johnston Press titles, would inevitably change the roles and responsibilities of many of the journalists working for those newspapers. In an article on the *Press Gazette* website, JP Chief Executive Tim Bowdler was candid in his analysis of the challenges, arguing that the changes were a “necessary evolution”, adding starkly: “Let's face it. If we bury our heads in the sand, this industry is going to go nowhere apart from deeper into the sand. The opportunity to multi-skill and be comfortable in a variety of platforms will be increasingly commonplace”. LEP Editor Simon Reynolds acknowledged it would not be easy, but insisted a few months into the *Newsroom of the Future* project: “The staff here have been fantastic in embracing the challenge” (Press Gazette, 2006a). The assertion might lead to the conclusion that management had been successful in the way in which it had presented the project to the workforce and that the majority of editorial staff had responded to it positively. But was that actually the case?

Williams and Franklin (2007) argue that JP's outlined digital media strategy in 2006 was very similar to that of most of its competitors, with its own website that year making the following statements: “Grow digital classified advertising businesses to attract new markets”, “extend local market leadership by becoming the preferred provider of local news and community content”, and “enhance skills, processes and culture to embed digital thinking and practices” (p. 52). They observe it was generally acknowledged that JP was leading the field for the last two aims above and was becoming a market leader in investing in the digital future of news. They based their case study of the Preston project on interviews with staff and management sources. They contend that “hyperbolic claims about the revolutionary nature of the pilot aside, it is clear that there has been real change in the nature of the content produced and the work conducted by the editorial and production staff” (p. 53).

Williams and Franklin argue that Johnston Press was committed to the newsroom convergence of news and web operations into one integrated team, the formation of centralised multi-channel news desks, the appointment of digital editors to manage online content, reporters who produce video and audio as well as text, sub-editors to work on both the print product and the website and the introduction of a web-first news publication policy. Web-based content was to consist of online polls, forums, video, readers' pictures and blogs. The pilot was to involve a restructuring of the LEP newsroom, an extensive retraining programme for staff, and "(crucially) the appointment of experienced experts and staff to plan, implement and carry out the changes" (2007, p. 53).

The author of this thesis was the most senior journalist recruited as part of the investment, arriving at the LEP in April 2006, a few months into the project. Mike Hill, the LEP Deputy Editor during the five-year period being analysed here, says: "Martin had a key and influential role in our converged newsroom. Martin joined the newsroom as an industry-acknowledged pioneer in digital journalism to play a key role in the change of the Evening Post newsroom to a multi-platform operation. From a strategic point of view, he was instrumental in creating new workflows for content, training on new technologies and both identifying and implementing best practice in the newsroom" (see Appendix A).

Williams and Franklin (2007) contend that while JP managers were understandably willing to proclaim its online strategy a success, it would be completely incorrect to portray the company as a model practitioner in the field, and that the rhetoric from senior management differed somewhat from the experiences of editorial staff on the ground. "Workers with knowledge of the pilot project have only muted praise for (and some criticism of) the way it has been instituted, and NUJ members in Johnston's Leeds newsroom have boycotted all digital media training because they see it as an excuse to get them to do more work with no extra financial incentive" (p. 53).

They cite a JP journalist with knowledge of the pilot project as saying there had been an increase in workload and that only two extra people had been introduced into the newsroom, though the author can state accurately that, by the April of 2006, three new editorial people had been appointed specifically for the online side of the

operation – two Digital Reporters and a Digital Editor – and that a fourth web-based journalist (Community Reporter) was recruited soon afterwards. The source acknowledged that most reporters did not have to take on any extra video duties, but that the sub-editors were tasked with the extra work of ‘subbing’ content to go online, in addition to that crafted for the print edition of the newspaper.

Williams and Franklin (2007) argue that it was virtually unheard of for any of the regional newspaper groups to take on extra staff for a converged newsroom, which was in addition to the extra resources like video cameras and editing software. Despite this investment, staff still felt stretched and thought that more people were required to sustain the quality of the product. Money was also spent on training in using the new equipment at the Preston-based University of Central Lancashire, though there had been technical issues, which staff felt were inevitable. Williams and Franklin contend that their senior source accepted LEP Editor Simon Reynolds’ claims that the pilot was a success to a large extent, much of it being down to the introduction of web content, which in turn was attracting a valuable new audience for the company in terms of potential advertising revenue.

Reynolds explained that JP’s policy of synergising the online and print products had been an important part of “winning around” those journalists who had initially been sceptical and suspicious of the project, though some were still worried that the web-first strategy would damage future newspaper sales (2007, p. 57). According to Williams and Franklin, the management source noted that some people originally resistant to the plans later wanted to get involved once they realised there were opportunities to learn new skills. An editorial staffer at JP echoed this view but said that colleagues had not received extra money for the added work and extra duties, though there was relief that there were unlikely to be any job cuts in the near future.

Singer (2004) argues that some issues could be resolved by management offering training and making changes to work schedules to allow journalists to do different things which they might enjoy, “not just to do more things, which adds to the pressure of an already-stressful job” (p. 852). So how crucial were senior managers, such as Editor Simon Reynolds, and desk editors like the author to the actual, or at least perceived, success of the pilot and in what ways does prevailing academic

literature inform us about the major issues which arose during the project, including those highlighted by Williams and Franklin in their case study?

Fisher (2009) argues that much of the discussion of media convergence has left out one key component – the role of media managers in shaping convergent news operations, as well as guiding and managing the newsrooms through the process of change and development. She argues that while there was no general agreement on what exactly convergence was and what were the best ways of implementing it in newsrooms, it was here to stay, with media managers having a key role. It was up to these managers to develop a positive attitude about the changes within the evolving news operations. The challenges of this transformation included training and organisational culture. Fisher cites research by Lawson-Borders (2003), which led to seven “observations of convergence” as a form of “best practice”. These were: communication – across the whole newsroom; commitment – at all levels; cooperation – among staff; compensation – financially due to more work, longer hours and more responsibility; culture – bringing different practices together; competition; and putting the focus on the customer – the owner is the audience (2009).

An early move towards convergence at the BBC in the UK was met with resentment and frustration from journalists who felt their specific skills were not valued as highly as previously and that the accompanying changes within the newsroom had “unsettled ‘professional status, traditional hierarchies, (and) career opportunities,’ among other negative effects” (Cottle & Ashton, 1999, p. 39, cited in Quandt & Singer, 2009).

Killebrew (2005, cited in García-Avilés, Meier & Kaltenbrunner, 2017) contends that the ability of newsroom leaders to innovate in cross-media management is just as important as innovation in products or services, as management has a direct bearing on journalistic standards and the quality of the news output. The fact that the author of this Critical Commentary was helping to produce some of the innovative news content as well as managing staff and overseeing the digital operation could be seen as a major factor in why live coverage such as the ground-breaking LEP Live

(Published Output 1) was deemed to be an important part of the convergent operation.

Fisher (2009) argues that the final measure of convergence success lies with media managers who understand it and believe in it, and who “are willing to work with reporters to build a convergent relationship... they must address personnel and resource management issues as well as determining the best methods for handling cultural differences” (p. 144). Quinn (2004) notes that amongst the most successful factors in converged media operations are management buy-in and a change of mindset (attitude of journalists), but insists the transformation must occur first in the minds of editorial managers since: “Under wise leadership, convergence offers opportunities to do better and more socially useful journalism” (p. 121).

Scholars contend that organisations must show their commitment to convergence by making it an integral part of the way they conduct business (Lawson-Borders, 2003, cited in Quandt and Singer, 2009), while clear communication from management that convergence is supported and expected is imperative (Quinn, 2005, cited in Quandt & Singer, 2009). Killebrew (2003, cited in Quandt & Singer, 2009) argues the need for thorough and specific staff training, a plan to foster understanding across all organisational levels, and open, ongoing conversation.

Editor Simon Reynolds told desk editors early in the project that the LEP “faced tough technical challenges” and that everybody was “on a steep learning curve” (S. Reynolds, personal communication, 5 May 2006). It was a struggle at times to win over the hearts and minds of some journalists in the newsroom and regular newsletters were used to keep LEP staff abreast of developments in the digital project, in addition to detailing training and other opportunities available to journalists.

Staff were invited to complete a digital newsroom questionnaire (see Appendix F) after a number of people had expressed an interest in getting more involved in the project in an attempt to identify and use people’s skills and knowledge appropriately (M. Hill, personal communication, 27 April 2006). The newsletters were also used to update people on website and newspaper figures, the former being made possible

following the delivery of software that facilitated how many times online stories had been read. “If we compare our top ten most popular web stories of the past two months with newspaper sales on the same day, we find week-on-week sales show an increase on six of the ten days which suggests a good story will still sell the paper, regardless of the web” (M. Hill, personal communication, 18 May 2006). Staff were also invited to be shown around the new audio-visual suite by the Digital Editor.

Ekdale, Singer, Tully and Harmsen (2015) show how research has found that technological changes within a news company undergoing significant change face the lowest resistance as journalists realise the need to update their practices. Responses to changes to the professional culture of journalism remain the biggest challenge. They argue that: “Any innovation that affects journalists’ norms and practices has cultural implications... such efforts, typically spearheaded by organisation management, challenge widely held beliefs about the profession and ask those in the news industry to rethink what it means to be a journalist” (p. 942).

Managerial efforts to reduce negative responses to organisational change have little effect on journalists’ job satisfaction (and commitment), which tends to decline during times of cultural change (Daniels & Hollifield, 2002). Gade (2004) contends that news managers sometimes see newsrooms as laboratories where they can test out new initiatives, which leads journalists to feel they are more like victims than participants in the changes being carried out.

Martha Stone, media industry author, speaker and consultant, argues it is not the “do-it-all journalists” that are needed to propel media companies into the multimedia age, but that the fundamental changes need to take place with top-down management’s support and action, and that the development of multimedia journalism must be an investment (2002). Huang et al (2006) contend that a reporter in a converged news environment is expected to do more than simply know how to write, and that most news professionals are keen to learn new job skills, though it is important management provide mid-career professionals with both resources and time to learn multi-platform reporting skills. Bartosova (2011) emphasises the importance of training both media workers and media managers in gaining new sets of skills and knowledge in the new media ecosystem.

Küng (2015) argues that digital media pioneers need to be visionaries and fully comprehend the nature of the challenges they face. She contends that *The Guardian*, a national newspaper in the UK, was an early digital mover which managed to maintain its momentum. “It was lucky in having a strong cadre of senior managers who understood the strategic importance of digital and had the stamina to push their vision” (p. 26). She insists that ‘successful’ organisations such as *The Guardian* have exceptional individuals who develop a genuinely original vision and strategy, and can influence others to help achieve it. The leaders ‘get’ digital and understand the broad trajectory of the industry and hence the importance of digital technologies and data analytics. “Pockets of digital obduracy can persist”, including for nostalgic reasons, plus a sense of threat to the older journalists not brought up with social media and the like, leading to cultural rigidity (pp. 95-96).

Additionally, Küng contends that a strong newsroom culture can be traced back to a strong leader, whose vision “accelerates the adoption of strategy and eliminates cultural obstacles” (2015, p. 97). Traditional print organisations are aware that they need to integrate the technological side of the process with the editorial element, but find that it requires both hierarchal and structural changes, including to office layouts and to relationships between reporters. Küng stresses the importance of physical proximity of all teams involved in this process. She argues that digital innovators will most likely be given more autonomy, which allows organisations to evolve to keep up with the industry. The *Lancashire Evening Post* underwent a dramatic physical transformation of its newsroom, while also introducing a small web-based team headed by a Digital Editor, the author of this thesis, who was situated in the central news desk operation. “Online news is at the centre of news organisations’ recent efforts to innovate in times of uncertainty” (Lowrey & Woo, 2010, p. 42).

Hollifield, Wicks, Sylvie and Lowrey (2016) underline the importance of strong leadership in troubling times. Assertiveness and conflict-management (negotiating) skills are particularly important for media leaders. Problem solving, motivation, strategic planning and goal setting are the core of every leader’s responsibilities. They argue that media managers must be prepared to lead their companies through constant change processes, which can create tension and uncertainty. Leaders should openly, clearly and regularly communicate with staff about the changes and

how they will occur. “The need for strong, gifted and visionary leaders who can find and inspire talented professionals has never been greater. The critical changes the industry faces demand flexible, knowledgeable, innovative leadership capable of navigating the fast-changing, uncertain media environment” (p. 18). They contend that media leaders must be adaptable, insightful and strategic.

The author did encounter resistance and suspicion from colleagues, particularly during the six-month project when there was uncertainty in terms of how it would ultimately evolve despite the detailed strategic planning that went into it. He was regularly asked questions about whether the web-first policy would harm the newspaper’s print sales and why journalists should do more work for no extra pay. The approach was to highlight the potential multi-skilling opportunities being made available through training (that is, it was an investment), and also point out the impressive web figures that might eventually result in increased advertising revenue.

The leadership attributes referred to by Hollifield et al (2016), including being adaptable, flexible and innovative, were certainly required by the author during the *Newsroom of the Future* project. Reporters were offered training – nobody was forced to do it – and they were encouraged, rather than coerced, into taking out cameras on assignments. Discussions would take place before any decisions were made, while support and advice were offered throughout the process.

The author had previously been in academia as the leader of an MA course in Digital Journalism and, even more recently, had worked as part of an online news team at the BBC, so believed he had both the knowledge and the practical skills to be able to advise and lead fellow journalists at the LEP. He was allowed the time, space and autonomy to come up with several innovative news products and news event coverage, which often required a large team effort and which resulted in some of the Published Outputs featured in this thesis. The principal philosophy behind all this was to make the newsroom more converged and attract more visitors to the website, while also being able to promote the innovation both within and beyond parent company Johnston Press.

Franklin (2008) argues that a range of political, economic and cultural reasons may provide resistance from journalists (and their trade unions) to technological change, while other factors influencing a newspaper's future might relate to circumstances faced by specific titles (profitability, for example) and the willingness (or otherwise) of different companies to commit resources to meet the challenges in addition to the preferences of the readers. "The internet has exercised a more discernible effect on daily journalism practice in local and national newsrooms" (p. 635).

Franklin contends that most print journalists are expected to work across different media platforms, including producing video clips, something viewed sceptically by the trade unions who complain newsrooms are already understaffed and that this could affect the core – print – business of the newspaper. The move to an 'online first' policy for news reporting could leave the print edition without a strong front-page story and poses dilemmas for journalism practice, such as how much editors should be swayed by how popular an online story is with the audience when choosing stories for the newspaper. He insists there has also been an enhanced editorial emphasis on news and features about lifestyle-related topics, as well as on celebrity and human-interest stories (2008).

At the *Lancashire Evening Post*, the decision was taken on occasions by editors to do a follow-up story if the original article had done well online in terms of views (even more so if it attracted a substantial number of comments from readers). Also, some – though not all by any means – of the innovative features focused on celebrity and lifestyle.

## Conclusion

There were a host of challenges facing LEP management both during and after the *Newsroom of the Future* project. These included changing the roles of reporters, resulting in inevitably more work (without any extra pay) for some, and making radical changes in the newsroom, both in terms of culture and physical shape. There were – understandably – dissenting voices, largely borne out of fear over the new ways of working and at a possibly even more uncertain future than previously,

though there was never any real threat of union action in Preston and some journalists did embrace the fresh opportunities that convergence brought with it.

Communication by management was crucial throughout the process. Staff were made fully aware of the investment in personnel and training (particularly through the newsletters early in the project), which was available to anyone who desired it. Everybody was offered the opportunity to get involved but nobody was forced to do something they did not want to do, though newsroom processes and policies were changed and adopted whether people liked it or not.

As Digital Editor, the author did come up against occasional resistance from a reporter or desk editor, usually because it was felt that the website's success (in terms of figures) was damaging the sales of newspapers. However, opposition was neither particularly fierce nor long-lasting and it was recognised by management that it would take time for the new practices and philosophies to be accepted and followed. Patience and understanding were required by everyone.

## Chapter Three

# Going Digital – the Risks and the Rewards

Nobody at the *Lancashire Evening Post*, and around parent company Johnston Press, could be in any doubt that the transition from print to digital media was going to be challenging, but it was deemed by management to be essential to attempting to safeguard the future of the business. It required journalists, reporters in particular, to rethink the way in which they approached stories and produced them. For many, multimedia meant retraining, multi-skilling and, inevitably, more work.

A large part of the literature discussed in this chapter relating to multimedia is relatively outdated as it represents contemporary experiences and understanding of the term at the time that the author undertook his work at the LEP. Multimedia has been given many meanings and assumed different identities, depending on the context (Feldman, 1997; Wise, 2000; De Wolk, 2001, cited in Franklin et al, 2005). Deuze (2004) defines multimedia journalism in two ways: firstly, as the presentation of a news package on a website using two or more media formats, for example text, images and video; and, secondly, as the integrated (though not necessarily simultaneous) presentation of a news story package through different media (website, online, etc).

Journalism for multiple media platforms has also been termed convergence journalism (Huang, Rademakers, Fayemiwo & Dunlap, 2004). Quinn (2004) highlights several factors influencing the pursuit of media convergence, also known as multi-platform publishing, centring around the necessity to deal with an uncertain future. He argues that “successful convergence satisfies the twin aims of good journalism and good business practices”, with some media organisations eagerly embracing it and others waiting to see what happens (p. 109). He quotes media consultant Martha Stone as contending that “the benefits of convergence were overwhelming” (p. 110).

The convergence of different technologies of communications has enabled journalists to tell their stories using different platforms [like print and online], engage

consumers on different levels [such as allowing them to comment on articles and even submit their own stories] and use different media at the same time, according to Deuze (2007). He also argues that the introduction of new technologies has speeded up the creative process and contributed to “a sense of having to do and learn more on top of one’s existing competencies, skills, and talent” (p. 73). Erdal (2009) contends that “the essence is whether the different media platforms ‘talk to each other’” (p. 216) and Harcup (2015) notes that editorial conferences tend to look at how stories can run across different platforms, making audio-visual integral to the process rather than an after-thought.

Pavlik (2001) describes journalism’s transformation as “perhaps the most fundamental since the rise of the penny press of the mid-nineteenth century... there is emerging a new form of journalism whose distinguishing qualities include... instantaneous reporting, interactivity, multimedia content and extreme content customisation” (p. xi). He argues that new media has changed the journalism landscape in several respects: the way journalists do their work in the digital age; the restructuring of the newsroom and the news industry in general; and a realignment in the relationship between news organisations and their journalists, and the many audiences.

Franklin (2014) contends that the age of digital media is seeing innovation and radical change across all areas of journalism, creating financial problems for traditional media and prompting a frantic search for alternative business models, with virtually every aspect of the production, reporting and reception of news changing. Multimedia – also known to some as trimedia [the combination of text, audio, and video] – was already being delivered at national level by the London-based *The Guardian* newspaper in the late 1990s, as the world wide web became more popular (MacGregor, 2003).

Quandt and Singer (2009) argue that journalism researchers have primarily focused on ‘newsroom convergence’, particularly in relation to changes in work routines and organisational structures linked to the production of content across media platforms. This has also included associated changes in skills and newsroom culture. The *Huffington Post* has only existed online and so journalists are required to think

naturally of audio-visual material as being integral to a story. Jenkins (2006) contends that convergence requires “both a change in the way media is produced and a change in the way media is consumed” (p. 16).

Grant (2004) argues that few topics in the academic treatment of convergence journalism have generated as much debate as the “multi-skilled journalist”. Gordon (2003) agrees that the subject has polarised opinion within the industry and has been particularly controversial for print reporters, though Allan (2010) insists: “Today’s reporter is increasingly expected to be multi-skilled in order to work comfortably across a range of digital platforms” (p. 93). Harcup describes these journalists as “all-rounders” (2015), while Kolodzy terms them “one-man bands” (2006). This one-does-all approach is often seen as synonymous with new media journalism (Bulla, 2002), while Larrondo, Erdal, Masip and Van den Bulck (2017) argue that the multimedia approach increases the level of journalists’ multi-skilling, but also necessitates the merging of different cultures and work rhythms.

The new converging newsrooms mean that media literacy in as many fields as possible is more important than specialisation in only one for journalists (Bradshaw and Rohumaa, 2011). Huang et al (2006) argue that, willingly or otherwise, a reporter in a converged news environment is expected to do more than simply know how to write. However, most news professionals are keen to learn new job skills, though it is important that management provide mid-career professionals with both the resources and time to learn multi-platform reporting skills. There is evidence that quality is still valued: “Therefore, there is no reason to be concerned that future journalists who are being trained on multiple media platforms and better prepared for convergence will be jacks of all trades but masters of none or will produce worse reporting” (p. 94). Singer (2004, cited in Deuze, 2007) finds that on a personal level, journalists appear to agree that the ability to work in more than one medium could be seen as boosting their career or at least be a useful addition to their résumé.

Pilling (2006) states that many local journalists are intent on embracing the capability of the new technology to give their stories a wider audience and they are increasingly becoming content producers for a range of media. Craig (2011) argues that multimedia is a positive development in what continues to be an age of rapid

change: “In the online world, what excellent journalism means is evolving as the roles of professional journalists and users become increasingly intertwined and as online journalists keep experimenting to find the best ways of telling stories and engage audiences” (p. 1). Grant (2004) contends it is more about the journalistic thought process than the integration of roles, insisting: “The primary concept of the multi-skilled journalist is not the mastery of a particular set of skills but simply the mindset that the information being gathered will be distributed through a variety of media” (pp. 142-143). Hill and Lashmar (2014) argue that professional journalists should adopt a “digital mindset”, which includes actively seeking out new opportunities offered by technology and being flexible while delivering on the core principles, emphasising that it is still the story which matters the most (p. 9).

Singer (2011) contends that journalists must adapt to new media technologies, capabilities and responsibilities. Proficiency with computer technology has become central to the ability of journalists to do their work, which now involves “the use of multiple tools to produce multiple types of content for multiple delivery platforms” (p. 217). She argues that media managers like the idea of newsrooms filled with people who are able to produce stories for more than one format. However, this has meant more work for journalists at a time when there are fewer of them due to shrinking newsroom budgets, making their job more difficult. Singer contends that journalists covering a breaking news story are expected to update it continually as an online report, produce another one with images and quotes, and then a third for the following day’s newspaper. “Multi-faceted news tools and platforms have become integral to their [journalists’] working lives” (p. 223).

Williams and Franklin (2007) argue that conventional wisdom suggests regional newspaper companies have to find ways of gathering and reporting news for presentation on multiple platforms, which will be “mutually supportive and synergetic of companies’ financial and journalistic ambitions. Regional newspaper organisations are currently developing and implementing multimedia and online strategies to achieve these objectives” (p. 7). Online news is a risky business and few regional news companies have so far made any significant commitment to digital media, any progress being “fairly small-scale and quite piecemeal” (p. 51). The wheels of convergence have certainly turned slowly and the process can be considered as

very much an ongoing one. *The New York Times*, now seen as a 'model of convergence', only moved its print and web journalists into the same building in 2007 (Bradshaw & Rohumaa, 2011).

Quandt and Singer (2009) contend that in Germany, early approaches to converging newsrooms resulted in professional and on occasions personal differences between journalists with contrasting backgrounds. Quinn (2005) argues that the pioneers in media convergence early this century have included *The Guardian*, *The Financial Times*, the BBC in the UK, the Marca group in Spain, *Aftonbladet* and the Bonnier group in Sweden, Norway's *Aftenposten*, and The Turun Sanomat Group in Finland. He contends that a "radical change in approach and mindset among journalists and managers" is needed to achieve full media convergence. This requires a shared desk where key staff like multimedia editors would assess news stories on merit and allocate them to the most appropriate journalists (p. 14).

Verweij (2009) cites *The Times* in Johannesburg, South Africa, as a good example of a converged newsroom, where the photos, multimedia, features and news editors sit next to each other along with sub-editors at a central desk (with three meetings a day) where they can work together on breaking news stories and cross-reference. A new workflow, database and organisational structure have been introduced. At midnight, the newspaper is put online and updated with breaking news. "*The Times* has tried to position itself in the market as a print newspaper with a strong presence in online and multimedia" (p. 79).

Thurman and Lupton (2008) conducted a study involving qualitative interviews with managers and senior editors from some of the UK's national online news providers. They found that "in a period of declining newspaper readership and TV news viewing, editors are keen to embrace new technologies, which are seen as being part of the future of news" (p. 439). Their study was prompted by "the substantially increased prominence being given to multimedia by the UK national and regional online news providers, and the parallel investment in technology, staff and training" (p. 440). It showed that the speed and extent of the changes in these newsrooms was dramatic, and that there was a considerable degree of multimedia experimentation on the part of the traditional news publishers without any obvious

certainty of what would work. They argue, nevertheless, that the willingness to invest was there (2008), as it was with Johnston Press through the *Newsroom of the Future* project led by the *Lancashire Evening Post*.

Thurman and Lupton (2008) argue that academic literature on the adoption of multimedia by news websites often focuses on the US version of convergence: the bringing together of previously separate print, broadcast and online news organisations. In the UK, in distinct contrast, it is usually internal integration between online and print or broadcast newsrooms within the same company that has characterised change, not least because the UK's cross-media ownership rules prevent newspaper organisations from controlling TV or radio stations. They point out that there had not so far been many studies of UK convergence in journalism.

Their research suggests that journalists still need to have the core skills like being able to write quickly and accurately, whereas they can be taught the technological skills if necessary. Some of the newspapers questioned in their research had offset any potential conflict with staff by making engagement with multimedia environments voluntary [as was the case at the *Lancashire Evening Post*]. The extra work entailed in the change nonetheless had resulted in some friction, while some journalists remained sceptical about the merits of change, per se. It was also argued that in addition to training existing staff, it was felt there was a need to bring in specialists. Their study showed a high degree of experimentation in the approach by traditional news publishers to multimedia but that there was no clear picture of what would be popular or profitable (2008).

Saltzis and Dickinson (2008) carried out interviews with 20 journalists at British national media organisations during 2002 and 2003 as part of research into the impact on the working practices of journalists of the process of production convergence [which involves sub-editors checking and often correcting reporters' content intended for more than one platform]. They claim their study was the first to focus on journalistic practice in a converging media environment and say it found that while multimedia news is becoming well established, the multimedia journalist has been slow to arrive because of the extra pressures it brings to the working routine and also concerns over the quality of the output.

They argue that the “future of the media seems to be digital, yet the implications of these developments are difficult to predict. Changes occurring at different levels have raised questions about the way traditional media organisations will adapt to the new environment or even whether they will survive at all” (2008, p. 217). Saltzis and Dickinson also contend that multi-skilling has become increasingly accepted in news media, with journalists having to cope with a widening range of responsibilities. New integrated newsrooms are being conceived to share resources and to manage a multimedia production process. It is clear there is a growing demand for multi-skilled journalists and, in news organisations that are becoming multimedia, for versatile journalists who can take advantage of the new capabilities provided by digital technology such as video journalism (2008).

Saltzis and Dickinson argue that multi-skilling is less controversial in newspapers as the skills employed in both print and online journalism are very similar, with reporting for the internet offering new opportunities not possible with the traditional platform. They say there were growing concerns among the journalists in the study about the effects of commercial competition and the seeming obsession with speed on the overall quality of the news output with the multi-tasking and the need to be quick adding to the workload and increasing stress levels. Their research suggests that traditional news organisations are “undergoing significant changes in terms of strategic thinking and work reorganisation, which ultimately affect the work and role of journalists” (2008, p. 225).

Singer (2010) contends that the skills of journalists have been stretched in unfamiliar directions to meet the expanding content production needs where a “newspaper story must wait a whole day to be updated or amended; an online one can change many times an hour” (p. 94). O’Sullivan and Heinonen (2008) argue that increased pressures for profitability, changes in media consumer behaviour and evolving technology have transformed both practices and values of working life – or at least resulted in expectations towards them being transformed. Journalists are still grappling with ideas of change. As print circulations continue to fall, and online adoption strengthens, it is inevitable that, at some point, newspapers will need to “unshackle themselves from their print origins and redefine themselves as online

entities, potentially with attendant fundamental changes in practice, culture and content” (p. 367).

O’Sullivan and Heinonen produced findings based on interviews conducted with 239 journalists in 40 news outlets in both 2005 and 2006 across 11 European countries, including the UK. Results show that as a group, journalists are comfortable with adopting the internet and view it as essential, ranking online story research techniques among some of the most important skills in their repertoire. They do not perceive a threat from the internet to the quality of journalism. They contend that scepticism about convergence emerges when the issue of recycling, or ‘shovelware’ [the wholesale transfer of content from one medium to another with little or no alteration (Franklin et al, 2005)] is raised. O’Sullivan and Heinonen (2008) argue that “trust is seen to reside more in print media than online” (p. 368), while Pavlik (2001) contends that online journalism is “potentially a better form of journalism” in that it can “re-engage an increasingly distrusting and alienated audience” (p. xi).

Despite culture clashes and other compatibility issues, journalists see clear advantages in convergence, according to Singer (2004). As well as perceiving it as a potential career booster, they enjoy working with colleagues whose strengths differed from their own. She contends that convergence has even led to respect for people in other parts of the journalism organisation. However, Singer also argues that cultural and technological differences in approaches to newsgathering and dissemination, as well as a lack of training, could hinder the convergence process. Verweij (2009) emphasises the importance of having a small group of so-called ‘early adapters’ in each newsroom aiming to be converged; these people can encourage cooperation and help with technological issues. He contends that “a multimedia state of mind of reporters and editors is vital for successful communication”, where “convergence... is not only a technological process, but much more a social process as well” (p. 86).

In June 2007, one of the UK’s largest newspaper publishers, Trinity Mirror, announced it was going to place a bigger emphasis on multimedia as part of an overhaul of its regional newspaper websites, at the same time that Johnston Press

contemplated creating a true multimedia experience for its users (Stabe, 2007, cited in Thurman & Lupton, 2008).

## Conclusion

Deuze (2004) links innovation and multimedia with newsroom convergence, which is generally seen in terms of (increasing) cooperation and collaboration between previously distinct newsrooms and other parts of the modern media organisation. He argued at the time that examples were emerging all over the internet, even though issues like profitability (or lack of profit) were “still problematic for an effective and innovative pursuit of this kind of multimedia journalism” (p. 140). Overall, “a ‘one way’ approach of doing things can never work in today’s converging media world” (p. 149).

The *Lancashire Evening Post* was publicly recognised as a “model as to what regional newspapers can do... with online content discussed at every editorial conference” (MacMillan, 2009). Schudson (2011) is favourably disposed towards the convergence of technologies, platforms and outputs in journalism where “not only have newspapers added an online product to their print editions, but their online journalists are increasingly well integrated into the news operation as a whole rather than set apart in a secondary newsroom of their own” (pp. 216-217). The Published Outputs presented in this research can be seen as evidence that multimedia should be an integral part of a convergent newsroom, but it is not an easy process.

## Chapter Four

# Analysis of the Published Outputs

The author joined the *Lancashire Evening Post* as Digital Editor from BBC News Online in April 2006. He managed three members of staff initially: a Digital Reporter (News) and a Digital Reporter (Sport), who were both trained in video and audio work, and had also just joined the company; and a Digital Researcher (M. Hill, personal communication, 25 April 2006). A Web Designer, whose previous role had been solely on the commercial side of the newspaper, was also assigned to working on digital content for both editorial and advertising. A Community Reporter, who was appointed later in 2006 and was already trained in filming and editing video, also reported to the author. Smith (2007) argues: “The ability to work with video and audio has become a highly prized asset among editors looking for new journalists” (p. 155). Uploading completed articles to the web and story research were added to the role of several news desk secretaries by management. All the staff mentioned here also contributed content to the newspaper.

In Forrester (2006), LEP Deputy Editor Mike Hill notes that the newspaper, which had four daily editions at that time, had been talking about improving its website around the time that Johnston Press was determined to improve the websites of its titles, in particular with the addition of video and audio content. The central news hub of the LEP newsroom was reconfigured to a U-shape to include the news editors, the Digital Editor (responsible for all website content), the News Content Director (who had an overview across the website and paper), the Picture Editor and the Duty Editor. A plasma screen above the hub displayed the website, at that stage called *prestontoday*; the thought process was that online content would constantly be there for everybody to see.

Stories for the web were usually “repurposed” (that is, rewritten to be shorter and with a different headline that contains keywords to help readers looking for similar stories on search engines) by the Digital Editor. The news editors also did some rewriting of stories for the web. The LEP sub-editors were not involved initially in the

copy process for the web. The author was hoping they would be able to starting subbing web copy in the first few months of the project, but it was about a year before they became an integral part of the convergent process.

In Forrester (2006), Hill says the LEP staff were told they filed for several deadlines, the two main ones for the newspaper of 9.30am and midday and for the website at any time, adding that it was a matter of getting the story out to the reader first, often through breaking news. The hope was that online coverage would help to drive sales of the newspaper, as often only the first few paragraphs of articles were put on the web prior to the publishing of the print edition. The website was staffed from 7am into the evening and featured a 24-hour rolling newsfeed from the Press Association (which cost around 20,000 pounds a year). The author was able to post stories from home if there was important breaking news outside those times; previously, stories were not uploaded to the website until they had appeared in the newspaper. As part of a training programme run in conjunction with the Preston-based University of Central Lancashire, reporters were taught how to write for the web and how to find information on the internet, in addition to receiving video and audio tuition.

Forrester (2006) reports that early in the project, the two new multi-skilled journalists produced the video for the website even if another reporter had written the story for the newspaper. The idea was that once reporters had been trained, they would write for both print and online, and do whatever audio or video was required for the website (though it was not always needed).

Verweij (2009) argues that regular joint converged newsroom meetings are essential, although there could be additional contact during the day. This was the case at the *Lancashire Evening Post* where all editorial conferences (at least two each day and sometimes more depending on what was happening news-wise) judged content with both the print and online platforms in mind.

In Forrester (2006), Hill indicates he wanted to see more cross-referencing and promotion between the two platforms; the newspaper was already carrying prominent web-specific promotions each day, including on the front page, and references on stories to video clips and special features, such as, somewhat light-

heartedly, Preston residents doing their own versions of England footballer Peter Crouch's robotic goal celebration dance. Hill argues that in those first few months he wanted the website to highlight more content in the newspaper. The author notes that the website and its print counterpart were continually signposting the other's strengths once the project was properly under way, though it is acknowledged that not enough promotion was done by the web initially. However, the newspaper's circulation figures analysed in Chapter One provide some evidence that newspaper sales did not necessarily suffer as a result though they might have been better.

The author wrote several newspaper articles at the request of the Editor highlighting online innovation and the success of the website (Published Outputs 2, 3 and 4). Forrester (2006) argues that there was discussion from a fairly early stage of the project about changing the name of the website, *prestontoday*, for the LEP brand. Johnston Press research showed that 48% of its web users were under 35; seven per cent who visited *prestontoday* online never read the newspaper; and 78% both used the website and read the paper more than once a week. In the LEP circulation area, 71% of adults had online access, making it an internet-savvy area, well serviced for web usage. Average daily internet use in the UK doubled in 2006 (White, 2007, cited in Thurman and Lupton, 2008). That was a key factor in the substantial increase in online traffic (Forrester, 2006).

There was a concerted effort by the author to get fellow managers, including those on the sports and feature desks, as well as news sub-editors, into thinking more digitally as part of the hoped-for move towards a completely converged newsroom. It was clear from early in the process that it was going to take time. An email to Editor Simon Reynolds (P. Storey, personal communication, 2 June 2006) explained how the sports desk had decided to run with a breaking news story online "after a brief debate" rather than holding it until about 10am, which was around the time that the newspaper was scheduled to be published.

The author remembers the scenario somewhat differently in that his initial approach to the sports desk for immediate publication was declined on the grounds that it would damage newspaper sales, with the decision to publish the story online only actually made when it was realised that Preston North End Football Club were going

to reveal the news imminently on their own website. Despite the initial frustration for the author, it was a satisfactory outcome all round as the newspaper contained exclusive content from the club's chairman and promoted the fact that the website had broken the story. Emails containing fans' reaction were then used both online and in the newspaper.

The following month, a "convergence" meeting was held with the features desk at which both short-term and long-term plans were discussed for multimedia expansion and training on the content management system, so that everybody could potentially upload to the website (S. Reynolds, personal communication, 31 July 2006).

The manner in which newsroom roles were changing was raised as a concern at a meeting of the Joint Negotiation Board held between LEP management and staff representing members of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ). Clarification was sought about who was expected to edit audio/visual material and what the role of sub-editors would be. The recorded minutes for the Joint Negotiation Board meeting show that, in reply, Editor Simon Reynolds expressed his delight at the hard work and positive response in the newsroom, saying that the project was "crucial to the paper's future success and this had become even more important given the incredibly difficult trading conditions in the industry". He said some media companies had seen losses in editions and jobs, while the LEP had invested in extra staff, made possible through tightening cost controls. Reynolds added that the roles of most staff would not change unless they wanted them to and that journalists had been given the opportunity to develop their skills on a voluntary basis. In terms of the roles of the sub-editors, he said the workflow [the process by which content is moved from creation to publication] was still evolving (see Appendix G for the full minutes of the meeting).

Even by the late summer of 2006 (as the formal part of the project was coming to an end), it was still unclear how the subbing of web content by sub-editors would work, due largely in part to questions over staffing levels (J. Thompson, personal communication, 14 August 2006). A guide to uploading content online was subsequently produced by the author for the benefit of sub-editors (see Appendix H).

New websites and content management systems were introduced group-wide by Johnston Press several times between 2006 and 2011. As the LEP was deemed to be the flagship website for JP for much of that period, having led the pilot project, the Digital Editor was often asked to test the systems from a journalist's point of view. There were plenty of technological issues on both the website and content management system, in addition to delays in fixing them (M. Hamer, personal communication, 21 November 2006 and 8 December 2008).

The primary aim of the *Newsroom of the Future* project at the *Lancashire Evening Post* had been clear from the outset: to increase, as much as possible and as quickly as possible, the amount of traffic going to the website. This was in the hope and expectation that the increased online readership might help to generate more revenue from digital advertising. It was felt that breaking news regularly, publishing more video and audio, and producing innovative and interactive features might help to attract extra web readers and encourage more engagement with the audience.

As a result of the LEP pilot, a Digital Editor was appointed at all the other daily titles across the Johnston Press group and some of these subsequently in turn became 'Digital Champions', which involved training reporters and/or web designers to create and upload online editorial content on the weeklies within their respective regions, also helping these titles to go live with newly designed websites (J. Bowman, personal communication, 9 April 2008). The author hosted visits from other JP Digital Editors and journalists from external organisations who wanted to see the 'convergent newsroom' in operation.

The author's Published Outputs, both digital and print-based, which are presented as part of this thesis – are clustered into four categories – News, Politics, Community and Entertainment – with the aim of providing a better understanding of how these contributions attempted to enrich the appeal of the LEP's website to its readership during this experimental period. It is argued that in the light of the limited number of studies of UK convergence in journalism up to and during much of the period covered by this research (Thurman & Lupton, 2008), the range of content analysed here provides evidence of a significant contribution to knowledge on innovation in a convergent newspaper newsroom. The Published Outputs are critiqued through the

application of key findings from the body of academic work on journalism, particularly on media management and multimedia in a converging newsroom environment (see Chapter Two and Chapter Three).

The origins of the author's keen interest and close involvement in newsroom convergence and innovation could be traced back to 2005 - the year before he joined the LEP - when he was part of a team of academics from Sheffield University who co-wrote *Key Concepts in Journalism Studies* (Franklin et al, 2005). The researcher was responsible for defining 42 concepts, several of them relating to the digital side of the industry – including Multimedia and Interactivity – which provided context for various journalistic terms and processes, situated in academic references. Some of the author's concepts are included in this thesis to show their conceptual contribution to, and complementarity with, elements of his Published Outputs.

## **Presenting the news in new ways**

Singer (2011) argues that journalists covering a breaking story are expected to update it continually as an online report. The *Lancashire Evening Post* covered news events of both local and national interest in a way it had not done previously. Live text blogging – at that time not particularly widespread in journalism – and live video broadcasting provided fresh ways to be experimental and innovative, while also attempting to boost online readership and encourage interaction with the audience. Kolodzy (2013) argues that one of the most effective ways of meeting the news and information needs of the audience is with fast and immediate coverage.

The LEP used live video and a blog to cover breaking news events like the 2008 visit by Queen Elizabeth II to Preston (Published Output 5), the coverage of which attracted nearly 17,000 page views. The author oversaw the event in terms of digital content and cross-promotion with the newspaper. He also filmed a ceremony involving Her Majesty at Fulwood Barracks, home of the 42 (North West) Brigade. In addition, there was a slideshow of 48 pictures, six videos and 29 comments from readers on [www.lep.co.uk](http://www.lep.co.uk) about the royal visit to the city, providing evidence of significant readership interactivity with the site. The live streaming from the barracks

lasting around an hour was interrupted – and became even static – at times, showing that live filming at that time for a non-broadcast media organisation such as the LEP was problematic and unreliable. About £300 in sponsorship was secured for the web coverage of the royal event and there were plans to produce a DVD, but these did not materialise. On the back of the coverage and despite the technical issues, a Digital Producer on a sister newspaper praised the LEP's “innovative use of web tech and the high quality of news reporting” (see Appendix I).

*LEP TV* was a news, sports and weather bulletin, which usually lasted for around three minutes and was broadcast around lunchtime from Monday to Friday. Two presenters – taken from the newsroom - were used for each bulletin. Smith (2007) argues that competition for online traffic was intensifying at a time when audiences expected to see exciting and relevant video and audio content on the websites of newspapers who were attempting to produce polished news bulletins and special video reports to enhance their offerings to readers. The author introduced *LEP TV* (Published Output 6) to help meet these expectations and also in the hope that advertising could be sold as part of the bulletin; for example, by way of a commercial break. Unfortunately, this was never achieved, though there was some small money sponsorship generated through businesses having their name linked with the bulletin.

The LEP also broadcast live debates involving leading local business people discussing the main financial issues of the day – the author often did the filming for these events which took place every few months. There was no money generated from these events either. The editorial and advertising departments rarely worked together on digital projects as, particularly in the early years of the convergent newsroom, sales staff concentrated largely on newspaper adverts as that was far more familiar to them and where the revenue traditionally was sourced. Web classified advertising for products like motors and property was controlled and supplied centrally by the group.

The video and feature about the Morecambe coastguards (Published Outputs 7 and 8) comprised one of the more serious multimedia pieces produced by the author. He decided – with the agreement of the news desk – that it would be useful to go out for

a day with two coastguards, whose area covers Morecambe Bay which is notorious for its fast tides and quicksand, and report on their work. It meant taking a camera on location to film the coastguards while on duty and record any incidents they might get called out to deal with. The video footage captured one such incident, while the author's newspaper feature concentrated on the story of the Chinese cocklers tragedy several years earlier and the coastguards' part in the rescue attempts. The video is not the best quality by current standards, but the Digital Editor was using the exercise to try to encourage colleagues in the newsroom to innovate and do something similar with their own stories. It should be noted that the web article tactically consisted of only a few paragraphs and urged readers to get the newspaper if they wanted to read it in full.

The Interactivity entry in *Key Concepts* developed the term already being used by scholars such as Pavlik (2001) and Levinson (1999) to show how the one-dimensional consumption of traditional media like newspapers and magazines had started to become a two-way process through the online experience. This resulted in new forms of storytelling and encouraged contributions and participation from the audience. Ward (2002) had previously discussed a two-way model of mass communication which gave users choice in what news they wanted to consume and the opportunity to contribute (Franklin et al, 2005).

The author's *Key Concepts* entry highlighted the increasing trend of reporters including their email addresses at the end of a story, so readers could contact them directly if necessary, also arguing that archives were another useful online resource facilitated by interactivity, as evidenced in the LEP's News Review map (Published Output 9), which allowed readers to select archived month-by-month stories based on the district in which they had happened. The map displayed the local region with small balloon icons pinpointing specific areas which had been in the news; these then linked to headlines down the side which were categorised under month of the year and a specific topic (News, Sport, Travel, Weird [stories about strange occurrences]). Readers could choose a month and then click on one of the stories under a topic to read the full article. It was intended to be an interactive and innovative way in which to present archived news articles. The author thought of the idea, co-designed the map and selected the articles and pictures that featured on it.

It was hoped this would become a customised version of the general website search facility provided centrally by Johnston Press and be adopted by other titles in the group, but this did not happen and its success in terms of wider interest and web traffic was very limited.

## **Live coverage of political events and debate**

Cole's contention that local journalism is about local issues, local politics and local people (2006) was evidenced in the considerable level of coverage provided by the *Lancashire Evening Post* for local elections each year, both in print and online, with the Lancashire County Council elections on 4 June 2009 demonstrating the range of the content produced digitally. A special local elections section was created and this included a map of all the seats being contested across the region. The author curated the digital content during the night, which largely involved breaking news on the various online platforms as the count results were revealed. He also uploaded stories, photographs and videos to the website.

It was an eventful night across Lancashire with the far-right British National Party (BNP) winning the Padiham and Burnley West ward, their first seat on an English county council. Unfortunately, the links to the various stories and local elections map are no longer available online as much of the content was later deleted by Johnston Press's digital division to free up server space. However, email correspondence (M. Hamer, personal communication, 9 June 2009) displays the headlines of many of the articles published online during the night and in the days that followed. These included results pages in addition to news articles.

By Tuesday, 9 June 2009, there had been more than 12,000 views across 5,216 visits of the page containing the map. The 14 articles created during and soon after elections night attracted more than 27,000 page views and 434 comments from visitors to the website, showing that the audience was keen to get involved in the debate, particularly about the BNP. The article on BNP winning the council seat in Lancashire had 8,789 reads and 173 comments, with the election of the party's leader, Nick Griffin, as an MEP for North West England attracting more than 3,000

page views and over 100 reader comments (M. Hamer, personal communication, 9 June 2009). There is little doubt that the controversy surrounding the BNP and their seat victory made Lancashire the focus of political attention that night, thereby boosting the LEP's online traffic, though due to the national interest in the story the likelihood is that a large percentage of it was not local.

Later in 2009, the then-Prime Minister Gordon Brown visited the LEP's Fulwood offices for a live question-and-answer session with readers (Published Output 10). A large variety of content was published, both live and post event. The author coordinated the production of the digital content and filmed some of the discussion (see Appendix J for photograph), with some footage going out live and other clips being used for a highlights package. *HoldtheFrontPage* (2009) reported that business leaders, teachers, community champions and families of serving soldiers were seated in the atrium of the LEP building for the forum, which was covered live on the web using *CoverItLive* software, while *Johnston Press's Westminster* reporter Mark Hookham interviewed Mr Brown in the newsroom.

Live updates from the web broadcast were posted on Twitter, which automatically updated the newspaper's Facebook page. The visit was covered in print with a picture on the newspaper's front page and three pages of interviews and analysis inside. A visit by the Prime Minister clearly provided a valuable opportunity by the LEP to provide a range of content on both platforms and what were at the time relatively new social media channels. The LEP had already hosted similar forums with the then-Conservative leader David Cameron and Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families Ed Balls (*HoldtheFrontPage*, 2009). For each of these events, live text updates, video, audio and a slideshow were produced.

Similar extensive coverage online was provided for the 2010 General Election by the *Lancashire Evening Post*. The author oversaw all the content that went online and produced all the live updates that went out digitally during election night, on the local and national scenes. An interactive map contained lists of all the constituency candidates across Lancashire (Published Output 11). These were replaced instantly by the results as they were announced, while the relevant segment displayed the colour of the winning party. Above this was a bar graph which showed how many

parliamentary seats had been won by each party across the UK as they were being announced, indicating on a gradual basis who was leading.

There was video of the newsroom during the night to give the audience an insight into the movements of staff responding to events as they unfolded. The author was constantly communicating with reporters who were feeding back live news, views and results from the local counts, in addition to monitoring the national picture. The daily online poll, which was promoted regularly in the newspaper and online, often attracted a large number of votes, one of the best examples being when almost 2,000 people indicated which party they would be voting for about a month before the 2010 General Election took place (see Appendix K for the full statistics).

The LEP also reported in some detail on the British government's annual Budgets: coverage of the statement given by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in March 2007 is an example of what could be provided in real time online. The author provided a minute-by-minute account of the speech given by the then-chancellor Gordon Brown (Published Output 12). Immediate analysis at the end was provided by the then-LEP business reporter David Coates. A special website section entitled 'Budget 2007' provided the latest analysis, news and opinions from the event, while there was video of business experts giving their opinions on what it all meant.

## **Attempting to interact with the community in innovative ways**

*Lancashire Evening Post* Editor Simon Reynolds highlighted the importance to the newspaper of the local population (effectively its core customer base): "The community has always been the most important thing to us" (quoted by the author in Published Output 2). The LEP attempted to continue this relationship online through a variety of innovative editorial products designed to encourage more interaction with residents on its patch. These included a Community Calendar (Published Output 13), which the author co-produced with colleagues. Community groups could sign up to the service and input their own events.

He also filmed footage for a children's *Countdown to Christmas* calendar (Published Output 14) and collaborated with a local society for the blind to produce the daily *Talking Newspaper* podcast (Published Output 15), which provided a spoken version of the LEP's top stories and was specifically designed for visually-impaired people. The author wrote an introductory article (Published Output 16) for the audio service, which was available on iTunes in addition to the website. Something of an experiment in community-based online content provision – though pointing towards the later growth of hyperlocal news - the potential audience for all these was small from the outset, with the result that none attracted significant web traffic or generated any revenue, and the number of local people they engaged was relatively low, for example, the Community Calendar received around 10 entries a week during 2008 (see Appendix M).

Deuze (2007) argues that the convergence of new technology has enabled more audience interaction. There were LEP web forums on various topics, the most popular being *Expats Corner* (46 threads and 2042 replies) and *Where are they now?* (61 and 126 replies), while others covered sport and the safety of students, though engagement in some of the forums was very low (see Appendix L for forums list). Readers were also allowed to post comments at the end of most online news stories; thousands of comments were published monthly, though some were blocked for legal and/or ethical reasons (for example, possible libel or obscene language).

The monitoring of so many comments was a time-consuming exercise on occasions and the review procedures were raised as an issue by Editor Simon Reynolds in May 2008 “to ensure that they are watertight should we ever get quizzed about them in a court room”. The author queried whose role it was to oversee the monitoring system and that it might require somebody working almost full-time to do the job properly (M. Hamer, personal communication, 23 May 2008). The Digital Editor and the newsdesk ended up doing the monitoring between them, with others helping out as and when needed.

The LEP hosted about 100 blogs, written by a range of people including members of staff and website readers. The author oversaw the daily online poll, which was promoted regularly and prominently in the newspaper. A total of 60,000 votes were

cast in the daily web polls in the whole of 2008, reflecting an average of around 165 each day (see slide two in Appendix M). A story would occasionally be written based on the outcome if considered substantial and significant. A web article written by the author entitled 'Make your vote count' (Published Output 17) encouraged readers to vote in the daily poll; the story attracted more than 112,000 page views over a near four-year period (see Appendix N).

It should be pointed out that the same set of statistics display high traffic figures for some stories of national (and international) interest and not just local articles, including a tin opener winning the worst gadget award (100,000-plus) and model Jodie Marsh searching for a husband (47,499). This demonstrates the global potential of the web as opposed to the parochial nature of a newspaper. It is also not surprising that stories about local football club Preston North End were popular on a regular basis; the top one here, about a special bus being unveiled by club legends, attracted more than 32,600 views.

The author suggested the idea for the *LEP Live* event in May 2008, a two-hour transmission from the Black Horse pub in Preston, which focused on the state of the drinks industry. It was pre-promoted on lep.co.uk and in the newspaper while on the day itself, a flashing tile appeared on the homepage to show it was happening at that time. The author organised the multimedia coverage and also directed the filming at the pub on the day itself. It was filmed using a Nokia N95 mobile phone which recorded the footage to a website called Qik.com which in turn streamed the video live on to lep.co.uk. The pub's wireless network was used to transmit the stream, meaning it cost the LEP nothing to send the data over the internet. It also meant the transmission was much quicker than it would have been using a network card (which would also have been very expensive). The TV coverage ran alongside a live blog and forum, which allowed readers to interact directly with the pub landlord and others. Live interviews were conducted with the landlord, the chairman of a local CAMRA (Campaign for Real Ale) group and pub regulars (see Appendix O).

The Editor expressed his delight at the project in an email sent to all staff (S. Reynolds, personal communication, 20 May 2008), while Journalism.co.uk described it as "the first live coverage of such an event hosted by a UK regional newspaper"

(Oliver, 2008). In addition to gaining publicity in the trade press, the event could be seen as engaging with a particular part of the community though it was a resource-hungry experiment and was never repeated.

## **Jesters, comedians and ‘Royle’ messages**

Franklin (1997) argues that the primary role of newspapers has often been perceived as informing public opinion and debate on all the prevailing major issues, while another viewpoint is that they should also amuse, with the editorial emphasis tending to move more towards entertainment. He contends that the changing economy of the local press resulted from the 1990s onwards in the emergence of newspapers changing in size from broadsheet to the smaller tabloid and – like the national titles – making their content ‘livelier’. “Newspapers seek to entertain and divert rather than inform and engage readers with the affairs of their community” (p. 113).

Kolodzy (2006) argues that the consumption of news has changed because of differences in lifestyle habits, with people developing shorter attention spans. Franklin (2008) contends that there has been an enhanced editorial emphasis on news and features about lifestyle-related topics, as well as on celebrity and human-interest stories. The *Trends in Newsroom 2007* report argued that one of the challenges facing online newspapers was keeping visitors on their site as readers in the digital age “are impatient and unfaithful” (p. 18). The solution was to present ‘stickier’ content, including features that attracted users to their websites and keep them there. This content included multimedia features, and entertainment and gossip news; some of the author’s Published Outputs fall into these types of categories. A key metric indicating the ‘stickiness’ of web content is the average length of time spent on a site by a visitor. This tended to be between five and six minutes on lep.co.uk (see Appendix E), though comparison figures from rival newspaper owners are not available and it is difficult to gauge how impressive or not this was at that time.

*Comic Idol* involved a local ‘celebrity’ and was created purely for entertainment purposes. The author wrote an introductory article (Published Output 18) and co-

ordinated the competition from start to finish. A camera crew went on to the streets of Preston and asked members of the public to tell a joke (Published Output 19). These were then judged by well-known local comedian Steve Royle, who told a video joke a day on lep.co.uk for a month. The winner got four tickets to see Royle top the bill at a local comedy night and to tell the winning joke on stage in front of a live audience. The competition winner reported he had been recognised in the street following his appearance on the LEP website. Small-scale sponsorship of 750 pounds was sought for *Comic Idol* (R. Hewitt, personal communication, 22 January 2007), though this was never achieved.

*News Idol* (Published Output 20) was another interactive competition run in the autumn of 2006 in which members of the public auditioned at Preston City Council's Guild Hall to read the newspaper's popular daily news bulletin, *LEP TV*. While this event involved a news-based product, it was mainly intended as an entertaining way to promote *LEP TV* and publicise the imminent arrival of a newly designed website. Editor Simon Reynolds and the Mayor of Preston judged the 18-strong shortlist.

The author, who came up with the original idea after the regular bulletin reader left the company, was quoted as saying: "The daily news bulletin has proved really popular and we thought this was a great way to generate interest in the new website, which we are all excited about" (Press Gazette, 2006b). He managed the project from start to finish, which included writing the initial newspaper article (Published Output 21), supervising the auditions and overseeing all the print and online content. The competition was promoted heavily in the newspaper, with videos of all the entrants auditioning being published online. Like so many other innovative features introduced by the LEP, no substantial advertising or sponsorship was achieved through *News Idol*.

The author created his own cross-platform features, including being a Camelot jester for a day. He produced a written feature and video package about himself playing the part of a medieval jester at the now-defunct Camelot Theme Park in Lancashire (Published Outputs 22 and 23). The intention here was to produce a humorous video package for the website and a first-person feature (with photographs) for the newspaper, demonstrating the multimedia capabilities of the online medium and how

different content could be used in varied ways on separate platforms. Intra-organisationally, this work – while it would not be considered as high-quality video or content that would attract a substantial web traffic – was intended to encourage some of the news reporters to start taking video cameras out with them and to think about the web as well as the newspaper.

Another innovative feature involved veteran Northern Irish comedian Jimmy Cricket and centred around St Patrick's Day. The main piece was a seven-minute video of Cricket performing (Published Output 24), with a story appearing in the newspaper (Published Output 25) and on the LEP website (Published Output 26). For a few years, the website presented its own version of the *Queen's Christmas broadcast*, courtesy of local entertainer Steve Royle (Published Outputs 27, 28, 29, 30 and 31) entitled the *Royle Christmas Message*. The researcher wrote the articles and directed the filming. The intention was to provide an alternative review of the year in an unusual way to website visitors in the hope the novelty value would attract more online readers through innovation and experimentation.

The content created by the author was intended to show that archived news could be presented in a more innovative and interesting way than by simply writing an article for the newspaper as had happened in previous years. The video and involvement of a comedian was also intended to demonstrate journalism could entertain as well as inform and, in the process, gain large audience attention. However, the web figures for the Christmas message stories and videos were not highlighted or recorded anywhere, suggesting they did not have the intended impact.

## **Cross-promotion needs to work both ways**

The website's success and cross-promotional activities did not appear to have a noticeably negative effect on the paper's print circulation. In the early days of the *Newsroom of the Future* project, it was claimed that newspaper sales at the *Lancashire Evening Post* actually went up on days when the web was most popular, bucking the national trend (M. Hill, personal communication, 16 May 2006). The decline in newspaper sales slowed in the six months to July 2007 (Kirkby, 2007) and

that general pattern continued until the second half of 2010 (see Table One at the end of Chapter One). However, like the vast majority of newspapers, the underlying trend was a steady drop in sales.

Kawamoto (2003) argues that promoting the print brand online could be beneficial in that digital news sites increase named visibility, thereby benefitting the traditional news product and also providing “interactive, engaging content that can build more positive and loyal audience relations” (p. 25). Kawamoto identifies the “nagging question”, which was asked regularly by ‘sceptics’ at the *Lancashire Evening Post*: if people started reading their news online, why would they want to continue buying or subscribing to the newspaper? “The answer was that traditional media and digital journalism should work in tandem, cross-fertilising each other by driving audience members back and forth between them” (p. 11). Bradshaw and Rohumaa (2011) contend that in the aftermath of the dotcom failures, post-2000, most newspaper websites suffered cutbacks; journalists started to work in teams and operations began to cross-promote.

The increase in the LEP’s digital audience, as detailed earlier in this study, could to some degree be put down to cross-platform promotion to which the author contributed with some of his newspaper content (Published Outputs 2, 3 and 4). The extent to which the website was regularly promoted by its print counterpart is illustrated specifically by these three articles written in 2007. Each one reports on the success of lep.co.uk and highlights its innovative features. For example, the newspaper article on 15 August that year (Published Output 4) detailed how the company had continued to break its own records online in terms of unique users (individual visitors) in July, with a month-on-month increase of nearly 700% from two years earlier. It declared that on one day alone, 174 stories, 373 photographs and 45 videos had been published.

The author wrote: “We put this success down to our innovative and dynamic approach to online content, which includes publishing news as it happens – from Preston and beyond.” Special online features mentioned here included an imap, which covered the North-West region for general news and around-the-clock traffic updates, plus a Weird World section. Details of how readers could contact the Post

or provide comments or content were also listed, including for email, text and MMS (multimedia messaging service).

The *LEP TV* bulletin (Published Output 6) and *Talking Newspaper* podcast (Published Output 15) also signposted the newspaper; both were conceptualised and managed by the author who tried to ensure that the respective platforms were promoted by the other as often as possible.

The fact that newspaper sales continued to fall throughout the period in question inevitably casts some doubt on the effectiveness of web promotion of the print product. This could have been better. The author left the LEP in 2011, partly because he was offered the opportunity to fulfil a long-held ambition of working for the BBC Sport website, the operation for which had just moved to MediaCityUK in Salford, and also due to the fact that Johnston Press appeared to have begun to focus most of its efforts on its print edition again. The author got this message loud and clear when he was moved out of the central hub in the newsroom to a nearby desk, having been at the forefront of things since being appointed five years earlier. Perhaps someone had realised that digital had not been the saviour people had hoped it would be, after all.

## Conclusion

The author's Published Outputs analysed in this chapter were created within a challenging context and against a background of uncertainty and continuing decline. There was never going to be any guarantee that the experimentation and innovation would result in tangible success and the harsh reality is that they did not, particularly financially and in the long term. Carlson (2003) contends that after the initial hesitation of newspapers to go online, some had since found that giving content away [as opposed to putting it behind a paywall] brought in enough readers to attract advertisers who would then pay to reach that audience. It would appear this did not apply to all or many newspapers, including the LEP.

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Johnston Press did introduce a paywall experiment at six local newspapers but there was reportedly negligible take-up from readers of those websites (Greenslade, 2010). Nearly a decade later, JPI Media is reported to be considering putting up paywalls on some of its newspapers' websites over concerns about advertising revenues (Sharman, 2019a). Analysis of the Published Outputs suggests that plenty of publicity and record web traffic – helped by cross-promotion in the newspaper – were generated during a period of innovation and experimentation at the LEP. Yet for all the investment and claims of a convergent newsroom, it would appear that there was no substantial financial return from advertising or significant reversal in the decline of newspaper sales.

## Conclusion

This conclusion will first summarise the principal issues discussed in the various chapters of the Critical Commentary, centred around the attempts by the author and his colleagues to create a convergent newsroom at the *Lancashire Evening Post*. It will reflect on how his raft of Published Outputs, some of which are described as innovative, and the *Newsroom of the Future* project can be linked to key points made in academic literature, relating specifically to the increasingly fragile state of the local UK press, the challenge of managing a newsroom in transition and the radical shift to a multi-platform way of working.

It will consider what lessons were learned during the LEP project and how this significant contribution to knowledge might help to address the industry's continuing problems, which have prompted a government review into the state of the UK press (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2019). This thesis will conclude by indicating what future academic work could be done by the author on the back of this research – which has its limitations in that it is based on only one newsroom case study – to understand better what is happening in an attempt to find much-needed solutions to a seemingly terminal industry decline.

## Climate of Change and Uncertainty

The Critical Commentary first examined the importance of local and regional newspapers historically. The literature reviewed in Chapter One argues that newspapers have had a crucial role within society, keeping a watchful eye on those in power and holding them to account on behalf of the people. They enhance the public's civic and political engagement (Nielsen, 2015). Local journalism is about local politics and local people's lives (Cole, 2006), though it does have its critics, including being accused of sometimes avoiding controversy and being superficial (Nielsen, 2015). Studies during the 1970s portrayed the world of local journalism as being stable, having not undergone any significant journalistic or technological changes for decades. Local newspapers had in this period remained local in every

way. However, the beginning of the twenty-first century brought with it a drastically evolving media landscape (Franklin, 2006).

The literature has contended that faith in newspapers had been eroding since the 1980s, with fewer than one in five people believing what they read in them. Fewer people were reading newspapers and, as a result, sales were falling (Williams, 2010). Advertising was also declining (Nielsen, 2015) as local and regional newspapers faced intense and increasing competition for consumers' time and money from the internet (McChesney, 2013). The emergence of digital media empowered citizens to create their own online content cheaply (Lowrey and Gade, 2011). Younger people appeared not be as interested in news as older generations have been (Hollifield, 2011), while the public in general did not expect to have to pay for online content as they had done with buying newspapers (Lowrey and Gade, 2011). The industry was changing radically and quickly, leaving local and regional newspapers facing tough times and tough challenges ahead.

It has been argued that the working environment was also becoming vastly different for journalists. The big corporations which owned most of the local and regional press were enjoying healthy profits (Cole and Harcup, 2010), largely down to cost-cutting (Cole, 2006). It meant fewer journalists producing fewer stories, resulting in a bigger reliance on PR (Franklin, 2006) and news agency content (Hamer, 2006). Local titles were concentrated into regional centres, with news becoming less local (Phillips, 2014). Journalists' pay had worsened (Cole, 2006). In order to tackle the threat of the internet, over which they had been complacent, some newspaper groups decided to embrace it (Cole and Harcup, 2010).

They began to invest in websites in an attempt to grow a large (younger) online audience, which might in turn generate digital revenue from advertisers attracted by healthy traffic figures. The new technology potentially meant new roles for many journalists on local and regional newspapers (Deuze, 2007). It also signalled fresh opportunities (Saltzis and Dickinson, 2008) and new ways of working, which would challenge traditional newsflows (Franklin, 2014) and hierarchies (Cottle & Ashton, 1999, cited in Quandt & Singer, 2009). It was during this period of great uncertainty

and adversity for the local press and journalists that the Published Outputs presented for analysis as part of this Critical Commentary were created.

## Managing the Digital Transition

Johnston Press was one of the big regional newspaper groups which found itself in the middle of what was in effect a media maelstrom. It had itself undergone significant changes since the mid-1990s, growing substantially in size, readership and profit in less than a decade (Engel, 2009; Cole and Harcup, 2010). However, drops in advertising revenue and continuous circulation decline led to substantial financial losses, which saw both operating profit figures and its share price plummet (Singer, 2011). It was towards the start of this particularly turbulent time – in 2006 – that the company started to concentrate on the development of its websites and a move towards convergent newsrooms, which would mean journalists working for both the print and digital operations of a newspaper.

As outlined in the Critical Commentary, JP invested in extra staff, training and audio-visual equipment (Williams and Franklin, 2007) as part of a digital project entitled *Newsroom of the Future*, based at its regional title in Preston, the *Lancashire Evening Post*. It was intended that successful aspects of the LEP experiment would be reciprocated at other newspapers across the group. The project would require major organisation, cultural, operational and structural changes. The author had a range of roles as Digital Editor, which included trying to make the newsroom more converged by encouraging reporters to create multimedia content and also to involve sub-editors in the cross-media operation (M. Hill, personal communication, 1 July 2008). He enjoyed more success with the reporters, particularly early on in the process, as some of the younger journalists recognised the opportunity to expand their skillset, which might in turn enhance their employability.

The web traffic statistics, as documented in Chapter One, showed substantial growth in the first few years after 2006, while six-monthly circulation figures provided evidence that this did not have a noticeably negative effect on the newspaper's print sales and may even have halted the sharp decline temporarily. Elements of the

remodelled LEP newsroom were copied at many other JP titles (Kirkby, 2007), while the project in Preston attracted considerable interest externally too (Arab Press Network, 2009). However, converting the relatively large number of digital visitors into increased advertising revenue proved to be the most difficult challenge of all.

Academic literature has acknowledged that Johnston Press – initially, through the *Lancashire Evening Post* – was leading the field (though not necessarily as a model practitioner) for the local and regional press with its digital strategy (Williams and Franklin, 2007). The *Newsroom of the Future* project was certainly an enormous step into uncharted territory, which made it all the more difficult and unpredictable for those attempting to guide it towards a more secure future. Management, including the author, faced the formidable task of attempting to convert a newsroom that had been solely print-focused for more than a century into one that would also become involved – almost overnight - in the production of digital content. LEP Editor Simon Reynolds acknowledged from the outset that this would not be easy.

As Digital Editor, the author's roles included creating new content workflows and introducing best practice into the newsroom during this transitional period. There were murmurs of discontent among LEP staff, but that was all they appeared to be for the most part. Managers regularly highlighted the positive elements of the 'brave, new world', including the training in video and audio, and the opportunities this might present for a journalist's future career. Clear and regular communication – as discussed in Chapter Two – was seen as crucial at the LEP to ensuring that staff knew what was available to them; periodic newsletters sent out by email in the early part of the project made people aware of training and other opportunities, demonstrating a recognition by management of the importance of making everybody feel involved and keeping them informed of significant developments (M. Hill, personal communication, 18 May 2006).

Financial compensation to journalists is one of Fisher's seven "observations of convergence" (2009), as cited in Chapter Two. This relates to extra work and additional hours resulting from expanded roles. There was no additional money on offer at Preston – and most likely nowhere else within JP; it was deemed not to be necessary as nobody was forced to get involved on the digital side and the fact that it

took longer to get the sub-editors on board demonstrated that management were prepared to take a more gradual route towards a convergent newsroom if necessary.

Culture was always going to be a barrier to have to overcome as this was an attempted conjoining of different teams and new ways of working. Patience was again the key here, as was having digitally minded staff like the author showing colleagues the potential for online innovation and an increase in website traffic, which was not necessarily to be achieved at the expense of newspaper sales. Tangible and visible results such as these helped to bring some journalists on board quicker than others, though it was obvious some remained unconvinced by not putting themselves forward immediately. Members of the National Union of Journalists in JP's Leeds newsroom even boycotted all digital training for a time (Press Gazette, 2007), demonstrating the strength of feeling at some centres within the group about the transition to a convergent operation. The fact that this did not happen at the LEP at any point suggests that management's approach there worked, though the investment in extra staff that other titles did not necessarily receive no doubt also played a major part.

## **Making the Move to Multimedia**

Academic literature cited in this Critical Commentary has contended that the convergence of different communication technologies has brought with it benefits, including the capacity to produce multimedia material and increased engagement with the audience (Deuze, 2007). This requires an approach that makes audio-visual integral to the newsflow process rather than as an after-thought (Harcup, 2015). It usually has meant more work for the journalist, but also the acquisition of new skills (Huang et al, 2006). Stories going online as well as in the newspaper also potentially represents a wider audience (Pilling, 2006) and the opportunity to interact more with readers (Pavlik, 2001).

The negative aspects of organisations going down the convergent and multimedia route include the disturbance of professional status and traditional hierarchies, while some journalists feel that their skills are not valued as highly as others (Cottle &

Ashton, 1999, cited in Quandt & Singer, 2009). Academic literature discussed in Chapter Three argues that a digital mindset (Hill and Lashmar, 2014) needs to be adopted by all those involved, as many journalists are not familiar with the speed and regularity with which content can be published online (Singer, 2010). There is also a worry that some journalists might end up as ‘jacks of all trades but masters of none’, though Huang et al (2006) argue there is no reason to be concerned about this. In studies, some journalists have felt that in addition to training for existing staff, specialists need to be brought in (Thurman and Lupton, 2008). This was the case at the start of the LEP’s *Newsroom of the Future*, with the appointment of three digitally focused journalists, including the author.

The *Lancashire Evening Post*’s newsroom was structured to accommodate a convergent-minded operation, with the author joining other desk editors in a central hub, so that they could discuss regularly content for both the newspaper and website. A large television screen displayed the website to everybody in the newsroom throughout the day. Reporters were told that the deadline for content going on to the website was any time, emphasising the immediacy of the platform (Forrester, 2006). Regular convergent editorial conferences were held and sometimes impromptu ones in the event of a big news story breaking.

The primary aim of the *Newsroom of the Future* was to create a convergent newsroom in which all journalists were involved in the creation and/or processing of content, which could be distributed on both the print and online platforms. It was hoped that enriching the website with multimedia content and breaking news, while encouraging more interaction with readers, would attract more online visitors. This might potentially attract digital advertisers to generate much-needed revenue and help to rejuvenate interest in the ailing print edition, particularly through cross-promotion. Some of these targets were reached relatively quickly at the LEP – and some hardly at all.

Website traffic increased dramatically almost immediately after multimedia had begun to appear with articles, with news being published online throughout the day helping to retain that sizeable audience. Investment from the start in audio-visual equipment and also in journalists who could use it appears to have been a prudent

one. In terms of the mindset of editorial staff, it is clear some people in the newsroom remained sceptical of the project, questioning the wisdom of putting so much resource into something that produced so little financial return. They also felt that putting stories online before they went in the newspaper would prevent people from buying the print edition.

Others – mainly the reporters – were happy to get involved whenever they could. It is difficult to account for every journalist at the LEP, particularly as there was an inevitable turnover of staff over a five-year period, but the author can say with some confidence that every reporter and sub-editor who worked there for any reasonable length of time got involved in both web and newspaper production to some extent. In some cases, it was not always necessarily enthusiastically and at times it was difficult to do so anyway; for example, not every reporter could film or edit video due to a lack of time or training. But everyone was part of the process at some stage, eventually.

Fears were often voiced about the effects a successful website would have on sales of the newspaper, though circulation figures would indicate it was not damaging and, if anything, cross-promotion from the website might have actually slowed the decline slightly, albeit not in the long term. No evidence has been presented in this Critical Commentary to be able to show that healthy online traffic yielded decent digital advertising revenue; that in itself is revealing. Maybe it was because journalists like the author creating the innovative content rarely worked alongside their advertising counterparts in an attempt to find ways to make money from those projects.

The substantial increase in online traffic to the LEP website meant that the *Newsroom of the Future* project was deemed to be a success on almost that achievement alone and the plan was for something similar to be subsequently rolled out to other titles across Johnston Press. There was a mixture of dailies and weeklies, meaning that different-sized newspapers would adopt different convergent strategies and ambitions. A Digital Editor was appointed at all the other daily titles within the group and most of those were ultimately tasked in being ‘Digital Champions’ for the weeklies in their respective regions, training reporters and web designers to create and upload editorial content for their website. The author hosted

visits to Preston from fellow JP Digital Editors and other journalists who wanted to see the 'convergent newsroom' in operation.

There were signs by early 2011 that much of the momentum around the LEP website was starting to wane, possibly as it was earning insufficient digital revenue and also because social media was probably seen as a cheaper alternative for some aspects of the web publishing. Attention appeared to be turning back towards the print edition and the *Lancashire Evening Post's* circulation figures offered up some clues why; the last six months of 2010 showed a steep half-yearly drop of 2,750 to 23,755, worse than any decline during the previous four years.

The periodic redesign of the Johnston Press websites and lack of web space meant that much of the multimedia content was erased from the company's servers, leaving no lasting legacy or rich archive for readers, historians or journalists. Ironically, JP revealed plans in 2014 for another *Newsroom of the Future* pilot project which would involve restructured newsrooms, new websites, fresh investment in digital, better working conditions for journalists and further brand relaunches (Sharman, 2015). It all sounded very familiar.

## Lessons Learned

The published works presented for this thesis were created during a risky, experimental and ultimately highly innovative period in a newly convergent newsroom. The eclectic mix of projects led by the author and the wide range of content produced at this time demonstrated that journalism on the web could and probably should be different to that offered in print. Live coverage of general news and political events took advantage of the relatively new medium, with the live broadcasts and regular story updates demonstrating that newspapers were no longer providers of solely static and often out-of-date content. Results from local and general elections could be delivered in real time, for the first time. It also gave the audience an instant opportunity to interact with both the publisher and other readers in a way that was not previously possible, and many of them took the opportunity to do so.

The daily *LEP TV* bulletin showed that a newspaper could mirror a TV channel, albeit only on a very small scale, and the *Talking Newspaper* podcast offered each day's top stories for a specific audience in an audio format which had been unavailable to print publications before the arrival of the internet. Calendars allowed local residents to publicise their own – mainly parochial – events to a relatively large audience while other parts of the community, including schools and local celebrities, could be involved in different ways. Web polls were popular, showing that people appreciated the opportunity to take a stance with one simple click of a computer mouse. It was thought that light entertainment, principally using video, would provide a welcome alternative to hard news for some readers - and possibly for some journalists too. However, there is no specific feedback or evidence from the website statistics to show that they were particularly liked by the audience, and no potential opportunities for sponsorship or advertising materialised from them either, indicating that they were not as effective or as popular as had been hoped.

It is acknowledged that cross-promotional content was usually more to the benefit of the LEP website than the newspaper and the author's articles highlight this. More attention should have been paid to promoting the print edition on the website (as indicated by Deputy Editor Mike Hill in Chapter Four), particularly earlier in the process as that was still the area of the business paying the wages. Not using the sizeable online audience to do this more regularly and prominently was an opportunity missed.

As discussed in the Critical Commentary, some of the author's Published Outputs and some aspects of the editorial strategy from the *Newsroom of the Future* project and beyond, which he led along with others, could be deemed to have been relatively successful and provide significant indicators for the future. They demonstrated that with some modest investment and a readiness to experiment, online innovation could increase web traffic substantially and attract both national and global recognition, not necessarily at the expense of the newspaper's print sales. In fact, there is evidence to show that a popular website may help to slow the decline, particularly if it is supported by effective cross-platform promotion.

Mark Woodward, who was a senior Digital Executive at Johnston Press during the period under analysis in this thesis, told the author in personal communication in 2017: “I use your name in vain every now and then when we are talking about things we should do now that you were doing 10 years ago!” (see Appendix B). However, despite the perceived success in some areas of editorial, it did not result in increased advertising revenue.

## Future Research

The *Lancashire Evening Post*'s print circulation in the six months from July to December 2018 was 7,916 (stripping out free copies and bulk sales) – a year-on-year drop of 13.01% compared with the same period the previous year. The latest Audit Bureau of Circulations figures also showed that there was no circulation increase at any title in the UK regional press (Sharman, 2019b). At least the LEP, now owned by JPIMedia after Johnston Press briefly went into administration (Linford, 2018), has survived to the time of writing this Critical Commentary. *Press Gazette* research shows that there have been 245 UK local newspaper closures from 2005 to the end of 2018 (Mayhew, 2019).

The news coincided with the publishing in early 2019 of the independent Cairncross Review into the future of the UK news industry (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport). *The Guardian* reports that Dame Frances Cairncross had been appointed by the government to look at ways of trying to secure the future of high-quality journalism in the UK. Her review notes how sales of printed newspapers had collapsed during the last ten years, with revenue from print advertising also on a steep decline. Audiences have switched to the web, but even national publishers have struggled to make sufficient revenue from digital advertising due to opposition from the likes of Facebook and Google.

Research commissioned for the Cairncross Review found that the number of frontline journalists in the UK has fallen from an estimated 23,000 in 2007 to 17,000 in early 2019, with redundancies and title closures expected to continue. Local newspapers have been very badly hit, particularly in the classified market (Waterson,

2019). The report, which also states that the number of local newspapers dropped from 1,303 to 982 between 2007 and 2017 (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2019), warns that local news coverage could disappear unless the government provided direct financial support and said that the industry's collapse would pose a threat to the "long-term sustainability of democracy" (Waterson, 2019).

It concludes that many local newspapers are owned by debt-laden publishers who have sacked hundreds of journalists and cut investment in an attempt to maintain profit margins (Waterson, 2019). The word "innovation" is prominent in the Cairncross Review; in fact, it appears 61 times in the main body of the report (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2019), which says that large financial liabilities mean the likes of Reach plc and JPI Media have had "less money available for investment in the substantial innovation that a successful digital future requires" (Waterson, 2019).

The author's innovative work at the *Lancashire Evening Post* within a convergent newsroom environment attempted, with limited success, to address a series of issues facing the UK regional and local press, some of which a decade or so later have finally begun to be tackled at national media policy-making level through Cairncross. This emphasises that more academic work needs to be done to understand the reasons behind what has happened to the local press in the intervening years and to examine whether innovation could yet be one of the ways forward.

Future research could focus on what has happened at the LEP since the departure of the author in 2011; for example, has the newsroom remained convergent to any significant degree and are journalists still creating innovative content? There is plenty of scope for additional research into the local news audiences, including whether they would be prepared to pay for content, premium or otherwise. What exactly do users want from a regional newspaper website if it is not innovation?

There might also be an investigation into the prominent role that social media now plays in the editorial strategy of a regional newspaper like the *Lancashire Evening Post*. Commercial issues around digital content at a local level could be another

interesting area for further exploration. Why was no significant digital revenue generated on the back of the LEP's healthy traffic figures and how can the local press make significant amounts of money out of the internet? Answers to some of these questions might be key to its survival.

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## Summary of the Published Outputs

The published work is a mixture of print articles, online articles, video, audio and web landing pages (the latter usually hosted a wide range of material relating to a specific event or topic). They were all published by the *Lancashire Evening Post*, in the print edition and/or on the newspaper's website.

(1) Lep.co.uk. (2008, 20 May). LEP Live. (PDF containing article, screengrabs and explanation of the whole process.)

(2) Hamer, M. We're making it easier to find what you want on award-winning website. (2007, 4 January). *Lancashire Evening Post*, p. 4.

(3) Hamer, M. Bigger, better lep.co.uk. (2007, 10 March). *Lancashire Evening Post*, p. 14.

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(5) Lep.co.uk. (2008, 23 July). Queen's Visit. (Screengrab.)

(6) *LEP TV Bulletin* (2008, 25 June) [Multimedia]. (Video is no longer online but is available separately.)

(7) Hamer, M. (Producer). (2006). Coastguards in action. [Multimedia]. (Video is no longer online but is available separately.)

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- (19) Lep.co.uk. (2007, April). Comic Idol. (Screengrab.)
- (20) Lep.co.uk. (2008, October). News Idol Event (PDF.)
- (21) Hamer, M. (2006, 29 September). Be the News! *Lancashire Evening Post*, p. 3.
- (22) Hamer, M. Jester Moment (2009, 16 May). *Lancashire Evening Post*, p. 17.
- (23) Hamer, M (Producer). (2009). Camelot jester for a day. [Multimedia]. (Video is available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PWmOWJlgAhA>) & digitally.
- (24) Hamer, M. (Producer). (2009). St Patrick's Day special. [Multimedia]. (Video is no longer online but is available separately.)
- (25) Hamer, M. You'll be bowled over by Cricket's readers' special (2009, 17 March). *Lancashire Evening Post*, p. 7.
- (26) Hamer, M. Want a good laugh? Come 'ere...there's more (2009, 15 March). Retrieved 30 June, 2016, from <http://www.lep.co.uk/news/want-a-good-laugh-come-ere-there-s-more-1-162362>
- (27) Hamer, M. Make a Royle Appointment. (2006, 21 December). *Lancashire Evening Post*, p. 9.
- (28) Hamer, M and Watt, W. (Producers). Royal Christmas Message 2007. [Multimedia]. (Video is no longer online but is available separately.)
- (29) Hamer, M. Sideways look at the year on lep.co.uk. (2007, 24 December). *Lancashire Evening Post*, p. 13.
- (30) Hamer, M and Watt, W. (Producers). Royle Christmas Message 2009. [Multimedia]. (Video is no longer online but is available separately.)
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## Appendices<sup>3</sup>

**Appendix A:** Hill, M. (18 April 2017). Statement on the Published Works (unabridged version).

**Appendix B:** Woodward, M. (20 January 2017). Permission to use all the information in this thesis relating to the *Lancashire Evening Post* and the *Newsroom of the Future* project. (Email)

**Appendix C:** *Lancashire Evening Post*. (29 April 2009). *Who We Are* (slides one and ten of a company PowerPoint presentation titled *Road to Convergence*).

**Appendix D:** *Lancashire Evening Post*. (January 2008). *Newsroom of the Future* Website Statistics for lep.co.uk.

**Appendix E:** Lep.co.uk (16 March 2009) North-West Website Monthly Report.

**Appendix F:** *Lancashire Evening Post* Digital Newsroom Questionnaire (n.d.).

**Appendix G:** Joint Negotiation Board Minutes (1 June 2006).

**Appendix H:** Hamer, M. (n.d.). Web Guide for Subs.

**Appendix I:** Hamer, M. (30 June 2008). Queen's Visit Statistics and Quote. (Email.)

**Appendix J:** Lep.co.uk. (15 October 2009). Prime Minister's Visit. (Photograph.)

**Appendix K:** Hamer, M. (15 April 2010). General Election Web Poll Statistics. (Email.)

**Appendix L:** LEP Forums List (Retrieved on 28 February 2019).

**Appendix M:** *Lancashire Evening Post*. (30 April 2009). *User Generated Content* Statistics (slides one and two of a company PowerPoint presentation titled *Innovation and interaction*).

**Appendix N:** Johnston Press Digital Publishing. (3 February 2010). Editorial Article Views.

**Appendix O:** Hamer, M. (21 May 2008). Updated LEP Live. (Email.)

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<sup>3</sup> *Permission was granted to use information – published or otherwise – relating to the Lancashire Evening Post in this thesis. This was obtained on behalf of the author from Johnston Press's Head of PR Jane Muirhead by Mark Woodward, who was a senior digital executive at JP during the period under analysis in this thesis. See Appendix B for the confirmation email.*

# **APPENDIX A**

**Statement on the  
Published Works**

## Statement on the Published Works

To Whom It May Concern,

I understand Martin Hamer is currently undertaking a PhD by Published Works at Salford University, based on his role as Digital Editor at the Lancashire Evening Post in Preston between 2006 and 2011.

As Deputy Editor for both the LEP newspaper and website throughout that five-year period, I can confirm that Martin had a key and influential role in our converged newsroom.

Martin joined the newsroom as an industry acknowledged pioneer in digital journalism to play a key role in the change of the Evening Post newsroom to a multi-platform operation.

From a strategic point of view he was instrumental in creating new workflows for content, training on new technologies and both identifying and implementing best practice in the newsroom. He helped redesign the website and source the necessary new technology for digital news operation.

On a day-to-day basis, in addition to producing multi-media content himself, such as features which were published in print and online (e.g. Jester for a day), he managed the website on a daily basis and liaised regularly with the newsdesk and senior management with regards to workflow and staff roles.

Martin regularly broke stories online and was actively involved in our coverage of many high-profile news events, including royal visits (most notably the Queen at Preston Barracks) and live forums with leading politicians.

He also masterminded a special project at a Preston pub, in addition to overseeing interactive features such as News Idol and Comic Idol. He also co-produced our Royle Christmas messages (text and videos).

Features like the Community Calendar and the Christmas Advent Calendars were also designed and delivered by Martin and the small digital team he led.

He was a major part of everything that went online, even if he did not always have the time to produce much of the content himself, and he was always keen to cross-promote the website in the newspaper – and vice versa.

Mike Hill,  
Former Deputy Editor,  
Lancashire Evening Post

Personal communication on 18 April 2017.

# **APPENDIX B**

**Confirmation Email**

**from**

**Johnston Press**

Re: Hi

Mark Woodward [mark.woodward@jpress.co.uk]

To:

[Hamer Martin](#)

20 January 2017 12:57

Hi Martin

Message back from Jane:

'Hi Mark - no problems at all as far as I can see....my only request is that he data sources everything (as much as he is able)....which I guess he'd be doing anyway.

Thanks for passing that one - would be genuinely interested in having a look once he's done (not to pick it apart but just for my own interest)'

So it's a go.

Mark

**Mark Woodward**

Johnston Press  
+44 (0)7889 987103  
[@markwoodward](#)  
[www.johnstonpress.co.uk](http://www.johnstonpress.co.uk)

---

**From:** Mark Woodward [[mark.woodward@jpress.co.uk](mailto:mark.woodward@jpress.co.uk)]

**Sent:** 20 January 2017 09:52

**To:** Hamer Martin

**Subject:** Re: Hi

Wow Hi Martin

Great to hear from you. I use your name in vain every now and then when we are talking about things we should do now that you were doing 10 years ago!

I can't see any issues at all although it's always good to run by our head of PR Jane Muirhead ([jane.muirhead@jpress.co.uk](mailto:jane.muirhead@jpress.co.uk)) out of courtesy.

I am leaving JP in a month's time and joining Countrywide plc to look after their estate agents websites but happy to have a chat sometime in the next couple of weeks about your doctorate, if you want.

Meanwhile I can forward your email below to Jane or leave you to contact her directly. Let me know.

Cheers!

Mark

**Mark Woodward**

Johnston Press  
+44 (0)7889 987103  
[@markwoodward](#)

[www.johnstonpress.co.uk](http://www.johnstonpress.co.uk)

On 19 January 2017 at 20:50, Hamer Martin <[M.Hamer@salford.ac.uk](mailto:M.Hamer@salford.ac.uk)> wrote:

# **APPENDIX C**

***Who We Are*** was slide two on a  
company PowerPoint presentation  
titled ***Road to Convergence***

**(29 April 2009)**

# ROAD TO CONVERGENCE

LANCASHIRE  
**Evening Post**  
prestontoday.net



# WHO WE ARE

- Three edition evening newspaper
- 26,000 daily sale
- 60 journalists
- Cover central, west and north Lancashire
- Newsroom converged 2006



# **APPENDIX D**

**Newsroom of the Future**

**Website Stats for**

**lep.co.uk**

# NEWSROOM OF THE FUTURE

site – [lep.co.uk](http://lep.co.uk) 2005/2006/2007

Month	Page Impressions			Visits			Unique Visitors		
	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007
January	356,542	442,055	1,863,978	100,894	205,364	315,649	36,743	50,406	146,502
February	296,222	454,794	1,697,605	84,497	182,202	292,652	30,538	48,171	127,187
March	345,151	634,733	1,799,560	104,255	213,220	311,580	33,820	52,820	131,760
April	313,866	743,329	1,502,874	108,727	207,303	277,764	32,833	56,181	117,437
May	355,446	1,436,280	1,857,539	110,951	344,541	347,225	37,051	109,396	150,894
June	340,807	1,524,943	1,757,465	115,194	355,951	369,604	37,462	98,004	176,785
July	351,293	1,379,298	2,669,696	117,304	319,026	526,750	37,292	111,744	259,223
August	352,205	1,431,870	2,749,488	118,440	288,218	570,098	40,582	117,765	260,231
September	380,066	1,237,393	2,068,277	117,690	242,177	489,805	40,411	100,196	226,863
October	424,467	1,488,004	2,342,700	125,411	263,062	582,900	39,449	104,505	293,201
November	395,991	1,492,754	2,980,473	146,314	256,112	641,914	40,582	112,480	297,257
December	323,028	1,143,532	<del>1,083,503</del>	141,981	144,196	247,007	39,382	60,053	<del>138,158</del>

2,805,073

283,599

LANCASHIRE  
**Evening Post**  
[prestontoday.net](http://prestontoday.net)



# **APPENDIX E**

**LEP North-West Website**

**Monthly Report**

lep.co.uk

Report for February 2009

**Unique users 2009**

250,438

**2008**

257,198

**Page impressions 2009**

1,898,512

**2008**

1,901,527

**Top ten stories of the month (inc. page views)**

£24m Brazilian star set for shock switch (17,854)

Sven in line for Premiership return (17,286)

Kop to target £9m England man (13,318)

Star ready to commit future to club (8,124)

Club launch bold bid to lure top striker (7,523)

Irvine explains PNE clear-out (7,450)

Man murdered and dumped at reservoir (6,582)

French ace set to sign for English club (5,897)

Student charged with resort blaze (5,698)

The 'nice bloke' who was £1m thief (5,596)

**Top ten referring sites**

Direct Traffic

<http://www.newsnow.co.uk/><http://www.google.co.uk/><http://www.lep.co.uk/><http://www.tottenhamhotspur.com/><http://news.google.co.uk><http://www.google.com><http://news.bbc.co.uk/><http://uk.search.yahoo.com/><http://mobile.newsnow.co.uk>**Top 10 key search phrases**

lep

preston news

lancashire evening post

jade goody wedding

preston today

lancashire evening news

lep.co.uk

evening post

lancs evening post

www.lep.co.uk

**Average visit length (mins)**

00:05:44

lep.co.uk

FEB 2009

Ad size	Total imps	Local sold imps	% sold
Banner	2,717,190 (£32,606)	680,417 (£8,165)	25%
Skyscraper	3,082,248 (£43,151)	196,427 (£2,749)	6.3%
MPU	1,854,832 (£37,096)	50,672 (£1,013)	2.7%
L_boards	476,173 (£7,142)	170,189 (£2,552)	35.7%

**motors**today

	Total imps	Local sold imps	% sold
Banner	14,745 (£176)	2,675 (£32)	18%
Skyscraper	22,413 (£313)	0 (£0)	0%
MPU	1,784 (£35)	0 (£0)	0%

**Private motors revenue***£531 (Budget £300)***property**today

	Total imps	Local sold imps	% sold
Banner	20,525 (£246)	9,203 (£110)	44%
Skyscraper	4,763 (£66)	3,096 (£18)	65%
MPU	0 (£0)	0 (£0)	0%

**Private letting revenue***Nil (Budget £120)***Property of the week revenue***Nil***jobs**today

	Total imps	Local sold imps	% sold
Banner	83,497 (£960)	75,461 (£725)	90.3%
Skyscraper	78,138 (£1,044)	49,023 (£372)	62.7%
MPU	9,774 (£209)	0 (£0)	0%

**CV Matching***£3,750 (Budget £1,000)***Jobs of the week***£15,794 (Budget £5,400)***Leveraged jobs**

# **APPENDIX F**

**LEP Digital**

**Newsroom Questionnaire**



# **APPENDIX G**

**Joint Negotiation**

**Board Minutes**

## Minutes of the Joint Negotiation Board held at the LEP on June 1, 2006 at 10am.

### **Present**

Simon Reynolds – Editorial Director of Lancashire Evening Post (Chair)  
Brian Low – Divisional HR Manager  
Jo Powell – Deputy MOC for the Lancashire Evening Post  
Tim Gavell – former FOC  
Richard Bean – FOC for Wigan

### **Apologies**

Gillian Gray – LPL Editor and Director

### Meeting

Simon Reynolds asked the NUJ team to outline the detailed rationale behind this year's claim.

### NUJ Submission

Jo Powell said chapel members recognised they were working through a period of change, which they were willing to embrace. They accepted change was required. Jo said members were unhappy with last year's pay rise and emphasised the changes being made by staff to help restructure the newsroom and undergo training associated with the digital newsroom project. She said the changes being made by staff should be reflected in a higher salary. It was accepted that staff were expected to be flexible, but felt that this should also be reflected in the pay they received.

Tim Gavell agreed that the general feeling among members was that journalists' wages were too low in comparison to other professions. 

He pointed out that meal expenses had not changed since 1994. It was felt that £3.00 did not adequately reflect the work done and it was time for the meal allowance to be increased. He referred to Blackpool's meal allowance being £5.80 and asked for this to be clarified.

Jo Powell raised concerns over the way workers' duties and roles were developing. She said it was not clear what the eventual impact of the digital newsroom would be on all staff. She asked if clarification could be made about who was expected to edit audio and video and what the role of subs would be.

Jo Powell also raised the issue of the pool cars, where some members, particularly in the Sports department, felt they were losing out financially because of the 50 mile rule.

Richard Bean raised concerns over staffing levels at Wigan caused by non-replacement. He said the Wigan team was currently 3.5 staff down and this would shortly become 4.5. As a result, workers are covering more weekend shifts on a regular basis which was causing some discontent. Richard Bean asked whether there was a recruitment freeze. Whilst staff were professional and would always do what was required to get the paper out he believed staff shortages impacted on the quality of the product and staff morale.

Richard Bean referred to the syndication scheme. It was felt that stories were being sold by the MEN and that there was no recognition to staff. He said it was understood that this was a trial project and he asked SR if there would be any payback to employees as per other newspapers companies e.g Trinity Mirror.

#### Simon Reynolds Responses.

Simon Reynolds explained that he would make initial comments on the pay claim after which he would formally respond to the Chapel.

He started by expressing his delight at the support and hard work shown by all the staff involved in the digital newsroom project. He welcomed the positive response shown by the team and the willingness to accept change. He stressed that the project was crucial to the paper's future success and this had become even more important given the incredibly difficult trading conditions in the industry. He said it was well known that most newspapers had seen a severe down turn in advertising revenues and circulations.

He said it was almost impossible to understate the seriousness of the situation which was being reflected in measures being taken by other media companies like Northcliffe, Trinity, and latterly Newsquest and the Manchester Evening News. Some centres had seen editions lost and editorial job losses. He said that this situation had been avoided at our centre due to controlling costs. We had invested in extra staff and adopted a strategy to improve our business. But this had only been possible because of tight cost controls.

He stressed that extra staff with the different skills had been brought in as part of the Digital project. Other staff had been given the opportunity to develop their skills if they wished, this had been progressed on a purely voluntary basis.

The reality was that most staff's roles would not change, unless they wanted to. The newspaper had to be produced each day and the core product was still priority. He said the pilot project would end in August and if successful would hopefully roll out to the rest of the group.

SR said he was confident Wigan would become involved in the digital project but recognised that the Wigan newsroom operated differently to Preston so a clear strategy would have to be put in place first. This could not be confirmed until the trial period had been concluded.

SR said the company had, despite difficult trading conditions, still issued free shares. He said that local centres, including Blackpool had settled their claims, but hoped this would not prevent constructive talks. He said that since discussions last year, the inflation figure had improved to a current level of 2.6% and was projected to reach 2.3% in the second half of this year. In this context a five per cent claim was almost double the rate of inflation.

On meal allowances SR said he felt the same argument held this year as in previous years. He does not want to encourage working excessive hours or encourage people to work late without good reason. Time off in lieu as compensation was the preferred method of recompense.

TG stressed that staff were expected to work late night council meetings and anti-social hours. He said a few hours off during the day was not deemed sufficient compensation.

RB said there was some inconsistency between Preston and Wigan over time off for working evenings.

SR said he would discuss this with Gill Gray when she returned from holiday and they would report back. He said he was always interested in fairness but Wigan was different operationally to Preston and there may be sound reasons for doing things differently.

In terms of subs roles, the workflow was evolving and many ideas had been discussed. The most recent model being considered involved a copy taster at the front end of the content desk sifting copy with a "web sub" at the back end. This proposal had not yet been confirmed. There were also changes being recommended to the Miles system to make the entire process much easier. This included tackling existing concerns raised by staff about the Miles system.

He said the main concern was quality control. It was essential that whatever workflow we finally adopted, high journalistic standards must be maintained. The Digital Project would not change the role of reporters. They will continue to write stories, hopefully in a more concise way. The main change would be on the content desk.

He said an update presentation on the digital project was being made to all staff next week and he would answer any questions people wanted to ask then.

On pool cars he said the situation had been discussed before and the situation had not changed. Costs had to be managed within budgets and that included mileage claims. We simply could not afford to send people on jobs at a cost of £200 to £300 if the train or pool car only cost £30. In some cases we would simply have to stop covering some events if they were not cost-effective. Staff were merely being asked to be sensible with the amount they claimed. He stressed that the vast majority of staff had adopted this common sense approach.

On staffing levels SR said there was no recruitment freeze. As always expenditure was under tight control but this did not amount to a recruitment freeze. This was understandable given the current financial climate. He said that overall editorial staffing levels had been maintained unlike the situation in other companies which had seen job cuts. He said he hoped this situation could be continued.

He said he would report back on the syndication issue as soon as possible.

The meeting concluded with Simon agreeing to formally respond to the pay claim in time for the next meeting.

Next meeting will be Friday June 9 at 10 am.  
Liz Payne will stand in for Jo Powell at that meeting.

# **APPENDIX H**

**Web Guide for Subs**

# Web guide for subs

## Text

Always remember to update any changes you have made in MK Admin or they will not take effect

Avoid time references in intros unless essential; at all times say on Monday, on Tuesday, rather than today, tomorrow (check for this all through the story)

There should always be white space (one paragraph return) between pars; also make sure that sentences run on - sometimes there is an invisible par mark in MK Admin

Try to use the related story facility for relevant articles as much as possible (though I realise it is not easy) - use up to six related archived stories with any one article, but please check for any legal issues that may arise from publishing an archived article

Lower case first words on stories (as opposed to them being all caps as they are in the paper)

Headlines should be straight forward, contain a verb and be kept to one leg for the web

*- apart from homepage stories - see next page.*

Take crossheads off web stories (they shouldn't be needed or the story is too long!)

All court stories should be tagged as Legally Sensitive (means story will not be archived when it falls out of the live queue to avoid possible contempt, etc)

To delay publish: After you have successfully added a story to the editorial system, go to Manage Section and after the box Not Live, there is another one (under the Go Live date heading) which should be blank. If you want the story to go live at, for example, 3.30pm on Sunday August 6, you would write into the box: 06 August 2006 15:25:00 (for some reason, the story will go live five minutes after the specified time)

Web polls and forums: We should cross-link (in bold) to these from the bottom of a story, eg

**Have health and safety rules gone too far? Vote now in our homepage poll.**

To create a hyperlink from a word or phrase to a page or document elsewhere on the web (as with homepage above), define the word in the story article in MK Admin, go to the tool bar at the very top of the page where you bold things up (B), italicise them (I), etc, and click on the globe/chain icon (fourth from left), a separate window comes up where you will copy and paste the homepage address (ie <http://www.lep.co.uk/>), ok that and then go to the actual page on the web to make sure the link works ok - also use this facility for linking to a video or audio file (you need the specific address of the file first, though) - you always need to include the FULL webpage address (including the http://)

Only one video can be uploaded to a story (no audio at all at present) - if there is more than one video with a story, you will need to link to one of them using the system; to upload the first or only video to a story, you need to know the keyword (probably from the reporter who did the video) and an idea of when it was filed into the system go to Assign Video, put a timescale from the dropdown menu and input a keyword, then press Search; if the right video appears in the window below, click on it but ADD A CAPTION (eg Watch CCTV footage of the robbery) **before** pressing Assign Video and then finish (note you can preview a video before assigning it)

For the top stories in the news, sport and entertainment sections (ie those which appear on the homepage), the headline and abstract all need to be the following in terms of word count: Headlines - approx four to six words (two legs max); Abstract - approx 20-25 words (so one full-ish line goes under the picture) - you can check on the template preview

## Photos

The first picture on all web stories should be sized at approximately 200pixels wide by 215px deep and always be low resolution for the web (see comment directly below this one); where there is a gallery (ie more than one picture), they should be sized at 600px though you ideally need Photoshop for this - Sam Reynolds' your man

To publish a low-res picture for the web... ~~Open the pic on Mediagrid, scroll across the picture to crop it - it should be generally square, with the height 0.5cm or 15px more than the width; publish the pic as you would for the paper, but choose InternetPics (no need to name the pic as it automatically keeps its file name though it might help to make a note of it); browse for the pic in Preston on pre-pix1/pictures/Ad LEP pics; publishing a picture for the web will leave the original on the grid to be used in the paper~~ *but if any deeper than wider ;*

There is a **WEB GENERIC** folder in Pictures (see above) - this contains general pictures which may be used as the first pic for a breaking news story until the "live" photo arrives - example a picture of an ambulance if there has been a big accident with injuries - or simply for a story which has not got a specific pic with it

We shouldn't lead off a story by referring specifically to a picture that may or may not be accompanying it (the newspaper will do it, but the web story shouldn't as two pics may be needed side by side and this is not possible on the web)

**Picture captions:** Do not state the obvious (eg this is Liz Holden) and try to be a bit descriptive (ie name and something about the person's situation) but restrict to no more than two lines (12 words max) - eg Liz Holden ~~has~~ picked up a special award for her anti-crime efforts It would be ideal to actually include some info in the caption which is not ~~included~~ in the story itself, though this is not always possible

You may find that the thumbnail picture does not appear in MKAdmin immediately after uploading it. It is usually there, so be patient - otherwise you might find you have uploaded the same picture ~~five~~ *several* times! The best way to check is to put the story live and check on the website

If you are switching the order of pics (eg when you are deleting a Breaking News image if it has been on the story for more than half-an-hour), make sure the new picture is made the Start image **before you delete the previous image - then you will save the changes (ie giving the new order) and then you delete the first pic** (ie press Update and then Finish)

# **APPENDIX I**

**Queen's Visit**

**Statistics and Quote**

**Martin Hamer**

---

**To:** Colin Ainscough  
**Subject:** RE: Queen's visit

**Figures to 8am on 30/06/08** - <http://www.lep.co.uk/CustomPages/CustomPage.aspx?pageid=73925>

Almost **17,000** page views on six stories covering the Royal visit

**1,322** page views (804 on the day itself) and **821** visits (444 on the day itself) to the Royal Visit custom page in four days

LEP LIVE - nearly **one hour of live footage** from the event

Slideshow of **48** pics

**Six** videos

Nearly **60** postings on live blog (ATTACHED) plus **29** comments on the various stories

**£300** in sponsorship (motor dealer)

We are planning to produce a professional-looking DVD on the Royal visit in the hope that we might be able to sell a few. The plan is to include all the content which has been published online, plus some raw footage previously unseen. We should also plug Photos Today in the hope that the slideshow might produce some more sales, while we could offer a copy of the special eight-page supplement as an extra gift with the DVD...?

Congrats on the coverage of the Queen's visit yesterday. I keep a keen eye on what you guys do, and I'm constantly surprised at your innovative use of web tech, and the high quality of news reporting.

Well done to all the team.

Gary.

**Gary Myers**, Digital Producer  
Isle of Man Newspapers Ltd,  
Publishing House, Peel Road,  
DOUGLAS, Isle of Man IM1 5PZ  
British Isles  
DDI: +44 (0)1624 **695643**  
Tel: +44 (0)1624 695695 ext 5643  
Fax: +44 (0)1624 611149  
Web: <http://www.iomtoday.co.im>  
E-mail: [gary.myers@newsiom.co.im](mailto:gary.myers@newsiom.co.im)

# **APPENDIX J**

**Prime Minister's Visit  
(Photograph)**



Evening Post  
lep.co.uk  
NEWS • SPORT  
TRAFFIC & TRAVEL  
OUT & ABOUT  
HEALTH  
LEISURE  
LIFESTYLE  
BUSINESS

Evening Post  
lep.co.uk

Evening Post  
lep.co.uk

backing young train

The South West's  
Premier  
Wedding Fair  
's Bristol  
Shire

# **APPENDIX K**

**General Election**

**Web Poll Email**

**Martin Hamer**

**From:** Martin Hamer  
**Sent:** 15-04-2010 08:30  
**To:** Mike Hill  
**Cc:** Martin Hamer  
**Subject:** General election web poll  
 FYI - poll has now finished and results are below...

Who will you vote for in the General Election?
--

Labour	34%	388
Conservative	30%	361
Lib Dems	9%	113
Other	10%	120
Don't know yet	10%	123
None	7%	84

**1,189 people voted over first two days (April 7 and 8)**

**End of poll (after all four days - April 7, 8, 13 and 14)**

Labour	33%	608
Conservative	29%	582
Lib Dems	9%	189
Other	12%	237
Don't know yet	10%	199
None	7%	149

**1,964 people voted over all four days**

# **APPENDIX L**

## **LEP Forums List**



Click to enable Adobe Flash Player

Most of the content on this site is created by our forum members, who are members of the public. The views expressed are theirs and unless specifically stated are not those of Johnston Press plc. Johnston Press plc is not responsible for the content of any external sites referenced.

In the event that you consider anything on this forum to be in breach of the site's House Rules please contact the Forum Moderator

Members: 484  
 Threads: 176 , Posts: 2483  
 Welcome to our newest member: ham

**Quick Login**

Username:  Password:

[Register](#) | [Sign In](#) |

[/ Forum Home](#)

**Forum Topics**

	Forum Name	No of Threads and Replies	Last Post
	<a href="#">Preston</a>	31 and 41 Replies	26/06/2006 17:18:56 By LilDevil88
	<a href="#">Where are they now?</a>	61 and 126 Replies	29/06/2006 20:10:44 By jonners
	<a href="#">Expats Corner</a>	46 and 2042 Replies	11/07/2006 02:55:31 By Tess
	<a href="#">Sport</a>	1 and 3 Replies	28/12/2005 12:39:25 By lockittproductions
	<a href="#">Are Preston people the most content in Britain?</a>	3 and 10 Replies	29/04/2006 09:45:17 By Tess
	<a href="#">ARE students safe in Preston?</a>	3 and 2 Replies	27/04/2006 20:54:07 By wxs2005
	<a href="#">Are you a commuter who has to fight...</a>	1 and 2 Replies	02/02/2006 21:42:21 By Tess
	<a href="#">"Brat Camps"</a>	1 and 2 Replies	20/04/2006 14:49:22 By purplegirl
	<a href="#">Gas price rises</a>	1 and 2 Replies	27/04/2006 21:46:23 By wxs2005
	<a href="#">Would you be prepared to die for your country?</a>	2 and 5 Replies	05/05/2006 12:37:39 By carz
	<a href="#">CAN Preston North End go all the way?</a>	1 and 4 Replies	21/03/2006 15:59:51 By gitsmyth23
	<a href="#">The Future of Preston</a>	4 and 7 Replies	24/04/2006 15:08:20 By mazie
	<a href="#">Sing when your winning</a>	2 and 1 Replies	26/02/2006 19:28:43 By Dave Jones
	<a href="#">Rock FM's - The Voice</a>	2 and 6 Replies	27/02/2006 11:59:12 By Paul72

# **APPENDIX M**

***User Generated Content*** was slide ten  
on a company PowerPoint  
presentation titled ***Innovation and  
interaction*** (30 April 2009)

# Innovation and interaction

LANCASHIRE  
**Evening Post**  
prestontoday.net



# User Generated Content in 2008

- **PICTURES:** 4,000 (including from PR, Retro and sport)
- **WEB POLL VOTES:** 60,000
- **GENERAL:** 2,500 articles (sport, reviews, schools)
- **LETTERS/EMAILS/TEXTS:** 3,500 (news) and 100 (sport)
- **SHORT STORIES:** 148 stories submitted to group-wide competition from lep.co.uk, 2,000 registered voters
- **AUDIO AND VIDEO:** 25 videos & 60 audio files (plus school podcasts)
- **EDITORIAL SNAP SURVEYS:** Thousands of responses (campaigns)
- **BLOGS:** 100
- **FORUMS:** 900 postings
- **STORY COMMENTS:** Up to 4,000 a month
- **COMMUNITY CALENDAR:** 500 entries  
(most uploaded by users)



# **APPENDIX N**

## **Editorial Article Views**

# Johnston Press Digital Publishing

## Editorial Article Views

	Headline	Article Views
M	I believe...God is a man	124059
A	Make your vote count	112741
M	Tin opener wins worst gadget award	100148
L	Son 'in plot to kill his parents'	91420
M	'Star Wars' helmet to help cyclists	67736
L	Anger over decision to defer new mosque plan	56529
M	'Manboobs' victim refused NHS help	51936
	Busty barmaid prepares for topless skydive	49303
	Films 'robbed' of an Oscar	48362
	Jodie Marsh launches husband search	47499
	Potato with the human face	46735
L	Penalty for being nude at home	38040
A	Send us your content	36448
	£15m Brazilian set for London club	35627
	Girl dies fighting mystery illness	35522
	Councillor's spy camera anger	33332
	Legends unveil special North End bus	32605
	Footballer scores own goal with naked photo	32527
	Police oppose mass pub crawl plans	31164
	Huge bill for overstaying pizza welcome	30831
	Lego toys for Olly the Octopus	30716
	Kids more familiar with Daleks than barn owls	30485
	Family hounded for dead student's rent	29461
	Patient takes drip to shop - see amazing picture	28944
	Clubs agree £7m deal for striker	28570
	Bonfire Night rioters jailed	28178
	Ghost hunters uncover old murder	27424
	Harry eyes up £10m swoop for Samba	26915
	Everton make £12m offer for skipper	26844
	Midfielder joins on a season's loan	26794
	Bentley poised for £15m move to City	26353
	Pupil walks out over 'racist book' scenes	25854
	O'Neill on brink of £14m double swoop	25819
	£18.5m offer for England star 'accepted'	25614
	Robin Hood and his merry men...all 1,116 of them	25541
	Man drank 48 cans of lager a day - court told	25205
	Man, 36, can only go to the pub with mum or dad	24786
	'Restaurant manager offered woman for sex'	24145
	Spurs close in on £25m pair	23809
	Former 'Yuppies' struggle for cash	23218
	Latest transfer gossip: Dramatic Brazilian swoop	22994
	Rafa set to seal £13m double swoop	22769
	Lancashire's clumsiest dog (photo gallery)	22497
	Man drowned swimming to the pub	22009
	Taxi driver clashes with pop legend	21589
	Nasa beams Beatles' song into space	21535

Report ran at 2/3/2010 11:11:00 AM

Page 1 of 3

24/04/06  
→ 03/02/10

FARU  
Not for kids (news now)

# **APPENDIX O**

**Updated LEP Live**

## Martin Hamer

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**To:** Blaise Tapp  
**Cc:** Mike Hill  
**Subject:** Updated LEP Live

LEP Live was a live two-hour transmission from the Black Horse pub in Preston city centre on Tuesday May 20.

It was first promoted on the homepage of lep.co.uk four days before the event and a story ran in the Lancashire Evening Post on May 19.

Journalism.co.uk ran a positive preview of LEP Live at <http://www.journalism.co.uk/2/articles/531615.php>

It was filmed using an N95 mobile phone which recorded the footage to a website called Qik.com which in turn streamed the video live onto lep.co.uk.

The pub's wireless network was used to transmit the stream, meaning that it cost us nothing to send the data over the internet. It also meant that the transmission was much quicker than it would have been using a network card (which would also have been very expensive).

A custom page was set up to show the footage as it was broadcast live.

The TV broadcast ran alongside a live blog/forum, provided by Cover It Live, which attracted almost one hundred comments.

A photo gallery was put on the custom page the day after the event.

Up to the morning of Wednesday May 21, 220 people had visited the custom page, resulting in 347 page views - 146 and 237 on the day itself.

Live interviews were conducted with the landlord, the chairman of a local CAMRA group and pub regulars.

Five people were specifically involved - Colin Ainscough, Will Watt, Matt Squires, Steve McDade and Martin Hamer.

Group editorial content manager Mark Woodward was at UCLan during the event and said that he managed to get the broadcast up on a large screen which was watched by around 20 people, involving several from the US.

It is believed to be the first time this type of broadcast has been done by the regional media in the UK.

<http://www.lep.co.uk/leplivepub> (this URL should be live in the next day or two); otherwise it is:  
<http://www.lep.co.uk/CustomPages/CustomPage.aspx?pageid=73280>