Pirates & buggers

A REFRAIN in our campaigning for journalists’ copyright over the past year has been “the pirate that journalists are most worried about is called ‘Rupert’.” We weren’t entirely aware how right we may be: we were thinking of the contracts issued by Rupert Murdoch’s News International (NI) that say “You keep copyright...” but (in essence) “we, and only we, can do whatever we like with your work, forever, in universes yet to be invented, for no extra money, and if you don’t agree you never darken our doors again.”

Now, as the Freelance goes to press, we have the BBC Panorama programme featuring the owner of a hacking website called “The House of Ill-Compute” claiming that NI paid him to distribute pirate access codes for Sky Digital. That company went bust in 2002, to the great benefit of NI’s Sky services. The Independent weighed in with a reminder of a continuing trial in Sicily, alleging NI-sponsored hacking of similar pay-TV access cards for its own Sky Italia, shortly before the contract for the cards was switched to an NI company. NI strenuously denies involvement in either alleged wrongdoing.

All this will doubtless provide grist for the next milling of a Murdoch at the Leveson inquiry – according to the Evening Standard pencilled in for the week of 23 April.

This is early in the inquiry’s “Module 1”, on relations between government and the media. The inquiry arose, of course, from allegations of bugging and tapping by NI.

The NUJ has Core Participant status in Lord Justice Leveson’s inquiry into the culture, practice and ethics of the press. Michelle Stanistreet, the union’s General Secretary, will be updating the May meeting of London Freelance Branch on the union’s evidence and proposals on press regulation – see back page.

Tweeting meeting

TWITTER AS a tool for journalists was the subject of an interactive demonstration at the March London Freelance Branch meeting.

Janet Awe (@AwesomeComms) was our trainer for the evening. She runs LFB’s Twitter feed, which, as several members noted is worth taking a regular look at, especially for the job alerts.

Janet was assisted by Tom Davies (@tomdaviesE17) and Sonya Thomas (@writehandmedia) who helped members set up Twitter (www.twitter.com) accounts and download Tweetdeck – www.tweetdeck.com – free Twitter content filtering software that you run on your computer to help sort out the deluge of stuff on the Twitter website.

It was an all-singing, all-dancing and much appreciated multimedia PowerPoint presentation: members had brought their own laptops, iPhones and other devices, and there was even Janet’s guide to Twitter and other social media circulated in “old school” hard-copy paper format.

Janet also uses Twitter professionally, running Twitter accounts for PR clients. You need to spend time engaging with people to make Twitter to make it work for you. Topics covered included:

• “hash tags” – strings of letters starting with the # symbol, Alt+3 on a Mac, used to aggregate topics for discussion – and how to use #leveson and so on to seek topics.
• How to find people of interest to you through Twitter and its search functions.
• Using Twitter for short updates and to verify stories.
• How to use Tweetdeck and its tools (such as “mentions”) to tune out the “white noise” of cyberspace and let you focus on what content interests you. It’s like cable TV – there are many channels you’ll never watch and you need to take time to find the few channels of interest.
• Following other people on Twitter and accumulating followers of your own; using Twitter to get yourself a reputation as an expert.
• Retweeting – forwarding others’ tweets – and how it helps this.
• Tom Davies added that the well-timed sending out of the online versions of articles via Twitter as they are published is now part of what production journalists’ jobs.
• Virus awareness, other online hazards including using Tweetdeck to block “creepy” followers.
• Sending “DM” (Direct Message) tweets that go only to named individuals and not to absolutely everybody in the Twittersphere.
• Deleting your account if you decide Twitter is not (yet) for you. One member whose beat is higher education said she doesn’t have to read the HE press any more: she just picks up on pre-sorted Twitter links to articles, retweeted by others who’ve read them and whose judgement she has come to value.

Twitter ye not!

Some who came along as Twitter sceptics said they could see that it would be useful to them in the future. Several who are not yet Twitter users observed that it would be invaluable in promoting their books. Some job ads for work as a press officer already demand that you come to an interview with a “social media profile” pre-prepared.

Others who came to observe rather than to sign up said they would give very serious and detailed consideration to exactly when and how to join Twitter when the time was right for them.

Look for the blue birdie “Follow @NUJ-LFB” button at the top right of www.londonfreelance.org to see LFB’s Twitter feed. Freelance articles going online from now on have a “Tweet” button at the top right allowing you post a comment via Twitter and alert others.

© Matt Salusbury
The Rate for the Job

FEES for translation are included in this month’s crop of Rates for the Job, and an expenses-only gig for Resonance FM radio. In the experience of the Freelance editors, even getting 20 quid in expenses out of them was quite a coup.

Thinking about work for a company you’ve not dealt with before? Simply look at the Rate for the Job to find out what companies in similar niches have paid. Then aim higher.

You can submit rates online, in confidence, at any time, at www.londonfreelance.org/rates – please give not only the basic rate (e.g. for FBS, First British Serial rights) but extra payments negotiated for extra uses, like the Web – or for print if it’s a Rate for the Online Job. These are shown as (eg) £400 + 100. We now record rates paid in Euro as well.

Rates marked X are, in the editor’s fallible opinion, below par. Treat all rates as minima, even perhaps the happy @ few.

Broadcasting: Zuendfunk 10 min radio feature Euro 150 X; Resonance FM community radio: podcasts: exes only £20 XX.

Photography: Mojo cover plus 4/5 cover story pics all rights £2000; Sogo magazine feature (a day’s work) FBS £1000; Mojo full-page portrait plus two other pics, all rights £800; Country Life day, exes up to £200, all rights (negotiable) £500; baby contest PR photography, 2 hours £465; shipping company photography for PR, 2 hours £350 @; The English Garden feature FBS £350; National Geographic Traveler 1/4 page magazine £275; textbook (Pearson) 1/8 page photo Australian edition £190; the @ paper, images + 300 words £150 XXX; Demotix news photo online £120; Indy 2 pics £80.

Shifts: Sunday Times late night regional/national desks print subbing, exes £15 for taxis, £174.40; The Times subbing for iPad/tablet, exes as above £155.97.

Translation: Daily Mail 2 days’ work, gut a book and translate key passages 5-600 words £450; ICT Update 1000 words £60 XX.

Words, per 1000: The Lady £250; Elle Decoration £700 @; Economist £417; Open Democracy 3500 words online, travel exes, creative commons licence £350 XXX; Yahoo £333; Shortlist feature £200.

Words, other: science press releases, research, writing, formatting (9 hr) £300; Right Start (Needmarsh) feature FBS £250 @; EYE (Early Years Educator) £250; First Eleven feature with case studies FBS £208 @; Sunday World page lead Euro 130 X; Yorkshire Post half page £100

Small Claims on track

THE FINAL hurdle on the route to a “Small Claims Track” in the courts, that can deal with copyright claims, has been crossed. On 26 March the government published its response to a final consultation exercise – and agreed with practically everything the NUJ had said.

The proposal originated within the NUJ in the autumn of 2006, as Freelance Organiser John Toner and Freelance editor Mike Holderness discussed responses to the Gowers Review – the last-but-one overview of copyright law. We noted the case of a member who had successfully claimed £400 damages – but was ordered to pay £2000 toward the defendant’s costs. The Court was annoyed at being bothered with, in its terms, a small claim.

We understand informally that the Small Claims track will open for business this autumn, as a part of what is currently called the “Patents County Court”. Six years from introduction to instalation isn’t bad for the UK legal system.

It will work pretty much identically to the Small Claims procedure for non-copyright cases. Initially, it will handle claims up to £5000 – an increase to £10,000 is expected in 2013. Fees start at £30 for claims up to £300 and generally there’s no risk of being lumbered with the other side’s legal costs – though the losing side may be ordered to pay witness travel fees. Initially, the “money claim online” process will not be available.

Legal representation from a solicitor is not required: the NUJ can advise members on bringing claims and may be able to send someone as a “litigation friend” – this is someone who can help you present the case in court. Note that the NUJ will not advise anyone on cases that arose prior to their membership: tell all your colleagues that it’s best to join the union now.

Making journalism pay: sequel

IN January 2010 London Freelance Branch held a well-received conference on New Ways to Make Journalism Pay (see www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1002ways.html).

Since then, journalism has continued to change and evolve – and things have remained very difficult. We have thought it might be helpful to run a second similar conference theme.

We’re now asking for your help: what aspects of freelancing you think might be most helpfully addressed at such a conference. Some possible options – about which we’d be very grateful for your thoughts – might include panels on pursuing freelancing through social media, smartphone apps, collective endeavours, working for overseas and especially BRIC markets in slow times, diversifying outside the sort of journalism we usually do, going into consultancy, PR work for local “small and medium-sized enterprises” and so on.

Please tweet responses with tag #MakingJournalismPay2, email them to editor@londonfreelance.org or, if you’ve time, take our quick survey at http://svy.mk/MakingJournalismPay2-survey.

For inspiration, take a look at the http://newmodeljournalism.com blog which is run by two NUJ freelances and actually makes some money from advertising.

More online...

Check soon at www.londonfreelance.org/fl for longer versions of the meeting reports from this issue, and more stories:

• Trafalgar Square and Westminster – “authorisation” notice you can wave at wardens
• Taking on the media barons – report on TUC conference
• Pitching for photographers – it’s all done electronically, says editor
• News photography now permit-free – win for NUJ Bristol Branch!
• The Right to Report updated
• Training alert – upcoming courses from NUJ Training
• Flipper – new email discussion list for Penguin/DK freelancers
• Mag-Net – NUJ’s email list for magazine contributors
‘How to pitch to me’

WE HEARD from editors on how to pitch to them at the February London Freelance Branch meeting – specifically from Economist deputy book and arts editor Emily Bobrow, and from Mark Wagstaff, art editor of music magazine Mojo.

Mark was gloomy about the increasingly limited market for commissioned photo shoots. Mojo was now more likely to use library pictures of established acts it specialises in than to need new artists depicted – though the rates for a cover or main interview shoot weren’t to be sneezed at, if you could break into the magic circle.

Emily said that, in contrast, her “magazine has surprised everyone by doing really well, even though it is so boring and uncool.” The Economist has stayed afloat partly by being slow to embrace new things: a reliable, dependable brand in an information glut. But it has now become a model of how to use the internet.

We speak up for libraries

IN APRIL 2011 London Freelance Branch passed a motion arguing that libraries are more than mere collection of books that provide internal access to the public, offer students quiet spaces for their homework and jobseekers a place to pursue employment. Increasingly, they furnish a workplace for freelancers.

Of 4612 libraries in the United Kingdom, an estimated 10 per cent have closed in the past two years, or hover under threat of closure. We supported a lobby of Parliament on 13 March: for more see www.speakupforlibraries.org – and to find your Member of Parliament to tell them of your support go to www.theyworkforyou.com

Possible Newsquest action

The result of an NUJ “indicative ballot” of staff working for Newsquest titles suggests they would be prepared to take industrial action over a pay freeze and Newsquest’s refusal to give them a pay rise this year. The NUJ would legally have to hold another ballot of Newsquest workers before any strike or other industrial action. Watch www.nuj.org.uk for updates, and (eventually) possible strike or industrial action dates on which you may choose to find yourself unavailable for work with this media group.

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Rights ranks rearrange

THINGS are changing on the copyright front – some for the better, with widened support for some of our central demands. On 13 March the Creators’ Rights Alliance – the CRA, of which the National Union of Journalists is a founder member – co-organised a meeting at the House of Commons with Consumer Focus, the statutory consumer champion, of the bodies most active in pressing for changes to allow it to do more without asking individual creators – notes that “as creators have to assert their moral rights and they can be waived, this in itself may have a causal effect on the number of orphan works. We therefore believe that the government should consider these issues.”

The NUJ has also submitted to Leveson (page 1) that journalists having moral rights is essential to ethical and accountable reporting. The NUJ’s submission to the consultation – all 15,000 words – is available at www.londonfreelance.org/ajr and summarises the points we have made in an intense round of meetings, including one with the Minister responsible, Baroness Wilcox. The nitty-gritty concerns the conditions that would have to be met before proceeding with proposals for “extended collective licensing.” That would allow organisations like the British Library or the BBC that want to put archive material online to pay one cheque to each collecting society for it to distribute to members and non-members alike.

Echoed by many other respondents, the NUJ says that “at the heart of the present consultation… is an economic illiteracy: through-out, income from licensing copyright works is counted as a cost to the economy – whereas fashion design, for example, is counted as income. The NUJ shares the British Copyright Council judgement that this represents an ‘unjustified ideologi-cal shift.’” And we are working with many others in opposing cuts to income from educational institutions.

The government is due to report on all the submissions in June. Then later – O frabjous joy! – there will be another consultation on detailed proposals to change the law.

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Office of London Freelance Branch

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Photographers say work ‘doing our back in’

THREE OUT of four NUJ photographers have experienced health problems from carrying their equipment. Reported problems include tendonitis, cracked vertebrae, trapped nerves and chronic back pain. Adam Christie of the NUJ Health and Safety Committee says: “Our survey had one of the highest levels of response from photographers have we seen, suggesting the problem is both serious and widespread”. The H&S committee organised the survey with the NUJ’s Freelance Industrial Council following a motion at last year’s Delegate Meeting (conference).

Though camera technology has been transformed in the last 15 years, the design and weight of cameras has largely remained the same since the days of film: 71 per cent of respondents carry between 5 and 15kg, with nine out of ten frequently carrying additional equipment bags.

A third of those aged 50 or over have had to take time off work to recover from injuries sustained carrying their equipment.

Only two-fifths of respondents use a main camera bag that employs the approved methods of spreading weight evenly over both shoulders: a third use a main bag with one shoulder strap. Three-quarters of NUJ photographers are freelance, and as one put it: “freelances cannot afford to be off work for long periods… we struggle on regardless”.

One staff photographer reported having to carry cameras openly in a town at night, because their employer refused to provide a wheeled bag.

Photographers also report hearing damage at concert venues, repetitive strain injury and lung damage from working with darkroom chemicals. One added: “I also get piles from sitting about waiting for the phone to ring, Does this count?”

Photographers who had experienced health problems reported that carrying their equipment in camera rucksacks, wheeled bags or bicycle panniers had improved their health. Other solutions included using an osteopath, carrying less equipment or improving general fitness.

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To non-members and for commercial purposes, £10 for this much. Acceptance is at the editor’s whim; appearance or obstruction at work may well be called upon to do so again.

The union has defeated legal challenges by media groups which aimed to prevent Michelle presenting anonymous testimony from journalists on their experiences of a bullying culture in national newsrooms. Michelle Stanistreet, including her written submission with anonymous testimony on bullying, is at www.lesvensoninquiry.org.

Leveson inquiry update & getting paid online

THE LONDON Freelance Branch meeting on Monday 14 May will feature the NUJ’s General Secretary Michelle Stanistreet, who will update us on the ongoing Leveson Inquiry into the culture, practice and ethics of the press. The NUJ has Core Participant status at the Inquiry and Michelle has already given evidence and made several written submissions, and may well be called upon to do so again.

The NUJ’s Health and Safety Committee says: “Our survey had one of the highest levels of response from photographers we have seen, suggesting the problem is both serious and widespread”. The H&S committee organised the survey with the NUJ’s Freelance Industrial Council following a motion at last year’s Delegate Meeting (conference).

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WE MUST NOT “waste a crisis”, NUJ General Secretary Michelle Stanistreet told a conference at the TUC on Taking on the Media Barons on 17 March. That would be the fallout from the News International phone-hacking scandal and the resulting discussion about what to do about press regulation.

Shadow Culture Secretary Harriet Harman opened the conference by challenging newspaper editors to come up with a system in which they would all be bound to join. Why should this be in the hands of the editors – why not include journalists? Is statutory regulation desirable?

Tony Lennon of broadcast union BECTU maintained that such regulation had not infringed freedom in the broadcasting sector. Why is it always assumed that it would do so elsewhere in the media?

Harman also looked at ways to test whether those taking over media corporations were “fit and proper persons”: Such tests, she felt, should be made before any applications for takeovers were made. Professor James Curran of Goldsmith’s University of London suggested limiting corporations’ holdings to around 15 per cent, and demanding a public interest mandate.

Peter Lazenny, Father of Chapel at the Yorkshire Post (its NUJ workplace rep) described how profits once made in local papers had been squandered, and staff cuts and production changes had combined with falling sales, lower quality, reduced coverage – and the loss of titles.

Professor Natalie Fenton from Goldsmiths College emphasised how the decline in local news is dangerous to local democracy – as she had to London Freelance Branch (see www.londonfreelance.org/ fl/1112lev.html). Several speakers called for new funding ideas, including subsidies.

Links were made between the declining media standards revealed by the hacking scandal and trade unions’ lack of influence in the sector, stemming from Thatcher-era laws not put right under Labour.

While the conference heard of numerous failed attempts at statutory press regulation over the years, the NUJ’s Irish organiser, Seamus Dooley, gave up his St Patrick’s Day holiday to give a positive example: the still-imperfect but encouraging system in place in Ireland, where representatives from both the media industry and civil society serve on a more active Press Complaints Council, which heard more than 100 cases last year.

More at www.cbpf.org.uk © Jenny Vaughan

The Authorisation of Trafalgar

THOSE carrying out news photography in Trafalgar Square can now download a Greater London Authority “authorisation notice” to wave at uniformed “Heritage Wardens” in their red-trimmed caps and red epaulettes who may try to give us a hard time while we are working in “their” square. New Greater London Authority byelaws appear to be in effect which seem to require expensive permits for “commercial photography” and filming (see www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1202traf.html). Wardens have been enthusiastically trying to enforce this. Recently a warden scuppered a gathering making an amateur video for a friend’s birthday present.

The “Authorisation Notice” is addressed to “Dear UKPCA Press Card Holder,” (the PCA is the Press Card Authority; that runs the scheme under which NUJ Press Cards are issued.) So in conjunction with an up-to-date press card, you should be able to use the authorisation notice to stop the wardens hassling you during your news photography shoot. It’s online as a pdf at http://authorisation.notlong.com

There may still be occasions on which photographers in the Square will need to stand their ground. The notice states that “this permission is limited to hand carried, self-supported equipment” and expects photographers to comply with Wardens’ “reasonable instructions” in relation to the health, safety and welfare of people in the Square.” The key word is “reasonable” – and there’s a number to contact if the instructions start to get unreasonable. Parliament Square Gardens – subject to the same byelaws – are also mentioned by name in the notice.

Meanwhile in Bristol, the Bristol Film Office, following a very positive meeting with NUJ Bristol Branch, have confirmed that “media press (news) film and photography crews are not required to apply for permission to film” on Council land and property. See www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1203bfo.html © Matt Salusbury

Pitch your photos: email a link to them

MARK Wagstaff, an art editor who has worked with monthly rock magazine Mojo for about 15 years, gave tips on pitching words: see p 3)

Mark described how Mojo (like a lot of periodicals) has recently seen “[a] shrinking of editorial teams, shrinking of reliance on the freelance writers, designers and photographers.” In this climate, Mark concedes opportunities for freelance photographers to sell to magazines aren’t what they were: “A lot of the stuff that’s commissioned is columns and regular aspects of the magazine, front and back section stuff which now is just being written in-house, and I guess the company now being able to hold on to copyright.” Mojo’s website doesn’t generate much revenue, so there’s almost no paid commissioning for web-only.

And Mojo is a “heritage rock magazine” with lots of “Beatles, Stones, Bob Dylan,” so “the majority of stuff we do is archive” because “Dylan’s not interested in being photographed by Mojo unfortunately.” (But see www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1110magn.html for a successful example of a syndication site for mostly 1980s rock photos founded and still run by an NUJ freelance photographer.)

Mark says there’s always a market “if stuff takes our breath away” and “there is a core of photographers that we commission” but “you have to keep popping away” and have the patience and persistence for “dealing with breaking into that inner circle of freelances.”

Practical advice? Pitching is not so much a face-to-face thing now: “If I left my desk to talk to everyone, I wouldn’t get the job done... pretty much everything these days done electronically.” Mark recommends the best way to pitch to picture editors now is to “get a website, send an email with a clickable link to a website: it’s really important that isn’t clunky”. (It should be user friendly and load quickly.) © Padraig Belton and Matt Salusbury