

## Libel reform promised

DEPUTY Prime Minister Nick Clegg promised in early January to introduce a draft libel reform bill. Clegg described the current UK laws "an international laughing stock", and the bill will include restrictions on "libel tourism". It is being prepared by the Ministry of Justice's Lord McNally, and is expected to become law in 2013, after a lot of lobbying. Watch this space.



## The Trireme Award

This month's Trireme Award – for conditions "worse than when I was last chained to the oars" – goes to a work proposal so opaque we think it might be a rip-off, but we're not sure. The work is advertised on PeoplePerHour, a site that allows you to "hire freelancers remotely." The ad in question proposes a "project" in which the client will "Supply an article for spinning. You will need to create a spun version that can (a) pass Copyscape for at least 5 iterations of the article and (b) is at least 30 per cent different from the original article on each of these iterations." Apart from it having such a nebulous description, we also wonder about the advisability of getting involved in a business model (apparently) based on changing an existing article just enough for... what? (Another editor writes: there will be a deeply geeky explanation, online.)

# The Rate for the Job

THIS MONTH'S crop of rates includes highly-remunerative written work for high-circulation "red tops", as well as a commission for which tax was not deducted at source, although it's unclear how you'd deduct tax from a £0 fee.

Thinking about work for a company you've never 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 con-

fidence, at any time, via [www.londonfreelance.org/rates](http://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.

**Photography:** OK! per photo £50 **XX**; Prince's Trust/local council, 14 portraits £500; event company 3 hours' work £390; *Songlines* photo + blog £150; Rex Features, photo syndication, 50% of sales.

**Shifts:** BBC multimedia news content editing (10 hours) £140; Channel 4 News online (8 hours) £130; collecting society day consultancy/research on media issues £300 ☺; Express Group Newspapers, activity unspecified, day £135; Snowsports websites content management (7 hours) £120 **XX**.

**Teaching:** IFJ projects, ethics training for journalists (international) Euro 400.

**Words, per 1000:** *Daily Mail* 400 words, FBS, @ £300 = £750 ☺; *News of the World* TV page £750; *Audi Magazine* (Northstar) 300 words @ £150 = £500; *Spectator* 700-word review @ £200 = £286; *Northcliffe TV Guide* 1800 words @ £500 = £277.78; *Country Life* 400-word book review @ £100 = £250 **X**; *Leeds* (university alumni magazine) features, web rights only £380; *3Fox International* ("regeneration" mag) £275; *Frieze* arts feature £250; *Dredging & Port Construction* £250 + £10 for photo; *Forty Fourth Publishing* arts reviews for new website: 800 words @ £200 = £250 **X**.

**Words, other:** BMJ Learning online, all-rights, £1500 **X**; *Sun* "small page lead" story, length unspecified £500; *Daily Mail* diary piece £100 **XX**; *Open Democracy* report/comment pieces @ 800-1500 words, no exes, not taxed at source, £0 **XXXX**.

## Just a written biog then, nothing else involved?

ARRIVING at the appointed venue to interview a middling rock star for a PR "biog" commissioned by a publicist for a new album's press release, a fellow music writer found a camera crew installed too.

The PR said they were going to do an Electronic Press Kit (EPK) too, while she was at it. EPKs involve an interview, some music and other material neatly edited into a little publicity film – ever more popular in the music world these days because of their ease of transmission.

My colleague had been offered

a very acceptable 600 quid for the written biog, but hadn't signed up for the movie version. Having done an EPK before and aware what they're worth, she politely advised the PR that this would mean an extra fee. For historical reasons, EPK fees reflect the film world's financial practices – a good thing, as it means an EPK can earn journals £1500 and up for sitting on (or off) camera and asking questions. My colleague accepted the PR's protestation that he "hadn't thought", and eventually reached an amicable agreement to double her

money and preserve their existing working relationship.

Today's mixed-media fiscal culture means we need to politely press our clients to describe the job and the usage required fully so we know what it is we're negotiating a fee for. As in, "So's we know, this interview is just for the 1000-word biog then, nothing else involved?"

Be clear in advance that if any extra work or usage should emerge while you're on site, you will negotiate extra cash.

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## Access to courts abroad could get easier

THE EUROPEAN Federation of Journalists (EFJ, of which the NUJ is a part) is working on a model agreement between journalists' unions in various European countries to provide mutual legal assistance for affiliates (these would include national journalists' unions and their freelance members, for example) to fight legal cases in courts in each other's jurisdictions.

We've heard from the NUJ Brussels Branch, for example, that there's more work around for journalists writing in English as more EU publications switch from French to English. Currently it's next to impossible in practice or too expensive – to wring money from copyright pirates or non-payers in other countries.

However, some LFB members have had some success in that area – LFB's Andrew Mueller, for example, through his own efforts managed to extract money from a copyright abuser in Germany (and also outside the EU in Australia and India).

The EFJ's model agreement on union members going to court in other countries should eventually make it a lot easier for NUJ freelancers to pursue through the courts copyright infringers and late-paying clients based in other European jurisdictions.

Some bilateral agreements are already in place – the NUJ has one with a French journalists' union, and we understand there may be such an agreement in place with a Belgian-

journalists' union. There's already a mutual agreement between Danish and German journalists' syndicates to support members seeking legal remedies in each others' countries courts. The journalists' unions of Nordic countries (Scandinavia plus Finland and Iceland) have had a similar deal in place for some time.

The current EFJ initiative came out of a London Freelance Branch motion tabled at a Delegate Meeting way back in the 1990s, thence to an international meeting in Moscow. As we went to press, a model agreement that would cover all EFJ affiliate unions across Europe was with the NUJ's National Executive Council for consideration. Watch this space.

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