

# Reporting the Olympics in London

CAN FREELANCES get a look-in on reporting the Olympics? Our March speaker, Maxine Newlands, is convenor of the sports journalism course at the University of East London, in an Olympic Borough and senior lecturer on the "reporting the Olympics" module on that course. It being LFB, it turned out we had another expert in the audience, freelance athletics correspondent and branch member Matthew Brown.

Branch secretary Tom Davies told how we approached organisers LOCOD over a year ago, and were told it was far too early. More recently, we were sent a 24-page "speakers' bureau" form, and told that we'd have to change the name of our event since "London Olympics" is copyrighted (in fact trademarked).

And 14 March would not be possible, that evening being the official starting of the Olympics countdown clock in Trafalgar Square. This response was signed by someone whose job title is "Trailblazer volunteer".

Maxine said that at the heart of the Olympics is the scheme whereby top sponsors pay the International Olympic Committee (IOC) for a

ten-year deal under which they get a "clean space" – only one soft drink company will showcase its product within that zone; only one electricity supplier; and so on. The same spirit pervades the rights to media coverage. US broadcaster NBC is by far the biggest payer, and therefore the biggest media player in the Olympics.

Matthew Brown said that for previous Games he'd always been turned down for accreditation via the British Olympic Association (BOA). One channel through which freelances might be able to get in is the Olympic Broadcast Service, which includes Maxine's students, who will get hourly pay – just 1.6 per cent above minimum wage.

There's an independent news centre for non-accredited journalists in the shape of the "Twitter hash-tag" #media2012 – see [www.media2012.notlong.com](http://www.media2012.notlong.com) – the brainchild of Professor Andy Miah, and which will be covering the Cultural Olympiad and legacy issues.

An Olympic News Service will produce newsletters for competitors, mostly on a shoestring, with a few paid positions available, only for journalists with a track record of

reporting a specific sport. Matthew also advised that the BOA may get some more accreditation places in from IOC in next few months: ask to go on their waiting list, as Matthew currently is.

It seems that the numerous outrages around the Olympics – legacy projects that turn out to leave no legacy, bans on street traders, Olympic-only VIP traffic lanes, exclusion zones reminiscent of the G20 (the US "security people" for the Olympics have been in London for the past two years) – present the best opportunities for freelances. If you can't get to cover the Games themselves, "do some sniffing around".

Tom Davies flagged up the case of Frank Morris, an electrician apparently blacklisted from working at Olympic Media Centre for his union activities, and the subject of a demo there a couple of weeks ago: see [www.hazards.org/blacklistblog](http://www.hazards.org/blacklistblog)

Alternatively, the Olympic legacy company seems to have some PR vacancies.

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• Read more: [www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1104olym.html](http://www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1104olym.html)

## Penny Tweedie

The *Freelance* is saddened to hear of the death of pioneering photographer Penny Tweedie, whose distinguished career included ground-breaking coverage of wars and social issues. There is an appreciation of her life and work, by Freelance Organiser John Toner, at [www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1103pt.html](http://www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1103pt.html)

## Bruce Birchall

The *Freelance* is informed that Bruce Birchall, long-standing member of London Freelance Branch and campaigner for the rights of people with disabilities, died in March after a year in hospital. If any member has more information, please get in touch..

## International Press Cards' new format

THE FORMAT of the International Press Cards issued by the NUJ as an affiliate of the International Federation of Journalists has at long last been updated, to a plastic credit-card-type, much less open to abuse. This will, we hope, mean that its bearers will be taken more seriously around the world.

Some NUJ members have experienced long waits while some IT glitches associated with the system for issuing the new-style cards were ironed out. But we are pleased to report that at the time of writing these issues have been solved and if you've been waiting for an International Press Card, it is already in the post.

The changes have also raised the price to £46. See [www.londonfreelance.org/IPC](http://www.londonfreelance.org/IPC) to apply.



NUJ members demonstrated outside the Department for Culture, Media and Sport immediately the Minister, Jeremy Hunt, announced on 3 March that he was minded to allow the Murdoch clan to buy the 61 per cent of Sky that it does not already own, in return for spinning off Sky News with the existing 39 per cent stake and an independent editorial board: as the *Freelance* said before, that worked so well with the *Times*, didn't it? Minister Cough has since received 38,000 submissions to a consultation on this, including one from the NUJ. Above, Tony Lennon, recent President of sister union BECTU, speaks.

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## Newsquest & MPs

Please write to your MP asking them to sign an Early Day Motion (EDM) urging Newsquest to negotiate with the NUJ and to protect jobs and invest in journalism – see [www.parliament.uk/edm/2010-11/1152](http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2010-11/1152) – and if your MP is one of the 48 who have already signed up, it's still helpful to write to them congratulating them and expressing support, so they know they're not working in complete isolation. [www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com) will tell you who your MP is and which EDMs they've signed..

## Judge rejects Google Books settlement

JUDGE Denny Chin in New York has rejected the proposed settlement over Google's scanning of 15 million books without permission of authors or publishers.

Reports indicate that Chin's major concerns included the "near-monopoly" that the settlement would have given Google in the exploitation of "orphan" works whose authors cannot be traced; and the

"opt-out" nature of the deal, by which authors were considered parties to it unless they opted out before 28 January 2010. Both of these issues were raised in submissions to the court by the US Department of Justice, giving Chin a very strong hint.

He is also reported to have been impressed by arguments that the terms of the settlement, arrived at under the US copyright régime,

would breach international law on authors' rights.

Scott Turow, president of the US Authors' Guild, whose class action lawsuit against Google prompted the settlement negotiations, responded that it plans on "talking to the publishers and Google with the hope that we can arrive at a settlement within the court's parameters that makes sense for all parties."

## GS election

The NUJ is holding elections for a new General Secretary to lead the Union for the next five years. If you are a full member of the NUJ, your ballot papers for the General Secretary election should arrive by post some time not long after April 26, and once you've voted, you need to post your ballot to arrive before 24 May. Vote early!