

# Pander to quality demand!

APPARENTLY, even the people at Google are uneasy at the vast oceans of “content-farm” dross out there in cyberspace, some of it computer-generated. Their “Google Panda” robot is cruising the internet as we speak, downgrading in its search result rankings unreadable content that’s obviously been produced

solely with the intention of fooling search engines and their users.

More importantly, it is claimed that Panda will upgrade in Google’s search result rankings “quality” content by someone who can actually write (demonstrating humanity).

This may be worth mentioning when pitching online written con-

tent work from website people who may be hesitating about whether to outsource their “content” to the Philippines for \$5 per short article, or whether paying actual money to a proper journalist might prove more effective in the long run. Other search engines are available.

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## Freelance summit meeting coming

The union’s Freelance Industrial Council is planning a summit conference in London to discuss, among other things, responses to publishers’ redoubled attempts to impose unfair contracts (see page 1). Please watch [www.londonfreelance.org](http://www.londonfreelance.org) for details.

## Conviction at last for Gongadze murder

A FORMER Ukrainian Interior Ministry surveillance chief was convicted by a Kiev court in January for the murder of journalist Georgy Gongadze, founder of the internet journal *Ukrainska Pravda*.

Gongadze was kidnapped in 2000 and his body was later found beheaded. He had been investigating corruption at senior levels in former President Leonid Kuchma’s Ukraine government.

General Oleksiy Pukach – who headed the Interior Ministry’s surveillance department – was sentenced to life imprisonment after being found guilty of strangling and then beheading Gongadze, a crime he confessed to in 2009. Pukach then told the court the murder had been

ordered by former President Leonid Kuchma, his chief of staff and a former interior minister.

Prosecutors brought charges against in 2011, after secret tape recordings emerged of Kuchma ordering Interior Ministry people to kill Gongadze. These charges were later dropped for “lack of evidence”.

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has welcomed the conviction, which comes at the end of a trial held behind closed doors, and “after more than a decade of tireless pursuit of justice for Gongadze,” said Jim Boumelha, IFJ President. He described the decision as “partial justice, as others involved in his murder are still being shielded.”



Georgy Gongadze: photo courtesy *Ukrainska Pravda*

## Payout for Guy – after nine-year battle

GUY SMALLMAN, the NUJ freelance photographer injured by a flash-bang grenade thrown at him by Geneva police while covering the G8 protests in Geneva in 2003 – has finally won 75,000 Swiss Francs in compensation. He stands to get around £40,000 after legal costs. The settlement follows a 2009 court ruling in Switzerland in Guy’s favour. Back in 2003, Guy was with London Freelance Branch which, together with the Union’s General Secretary and Freelance Office, arranged support for Guy when he was in hospital with his injuries. This included mobilising the NUJ’s sister union in Switzerland and NUJ members in Geneva, including outgoing Committee member Pennie Quinton, supporting Guy in hospital, laying on a driver to meet him at Gatwick on his return to take him straight to his GP, and organising NUJ hardship pay for him when he was ill off work.



Guy Smallman speaking at last year’s LFB “New Ways” conference: photo © Tony Rizzo

## The press after Leveson: a debate

WHAT NEXT for press regulation and ethics after the Leveson Inquiry? How, for example, can conscience clauses in journalists’ contracts work and be enforced?

This is the topic of a meeting on **Thursday 28 February** with speakers including NUJ General Sec-

retary Michelle Stanistreet and Helen Goodman MP, the Shadow Minister for Culture, Media and Sport, who has specific responsibility for media reform. The meeting is called by the NUJ PR and Communications Branch, London Freelance Branch and London Magazine Branch and

is at 6:30pm, at NUJ headquarters, 308/312 Gray’s Inn Road, London WC1 8DP – nearest Tube King’s Cross. Refreshments will be provided. Space is limited: registration is essential, to [freelanceoffice@nuj.org.uk](mailto:freelanceoffice@nuj.org.uk) with subject line “After Leveson”.

## Better bargaining: courses for freelances

THE RECENT “Pitch & Deal” course, sharpening freelances’ bargaining skills, saw 15 enthused NUJ freelances geared up to put their all into pitching and dealing. The course will be repeated on **24 May**, again in London and again at the heftily-reduced price of £70 for the day to NUJ members, £130 to non-members and £60 to student members.

Before that, the popular and self-explanatory Getting Started as a Freelance course returns on **17 May**, at £60 for members, £100 non-members and only £40 for student members. To book on to the courses, email [training@nuj.org.uk](mailto:training@nuj.org.uk)

One example of good bargaining practice is the experienced freelance who was foaming after a feature idea

was enthusiastically received by an online mag – which asked for 2500 words for £200. He cooled down, then told them he wouldn’t do it for less than £450. They said “all right then” so quickly he thinks he should have asked for more: hence the emphasis in these courses on asking for more as a first move – and letting them suggest an amount.

### More online:

- Guess who’s paying to give away photos?
  - ‘Educational use’ Gangnam style: *Economist* sues
  - Work Your Proper Hours Day is **Friday 1 March**
  - Photographer Daniel Morel wins against Agence France Presse in New York District Court
- > [www.londonfreelance.org/fl](http://www.londonfreelance.org/fl)

## Using the Small Claims Court – course

THE NUJ is organising a one-day training course for members on taking copyright claims to the Patents County Court (PCC) Small Claims Track: it’s on **Thursday 28 February** at Headland House from 10:00 and is all day. It will be tutored by Isabel Jamal, an IP Barrister from 8 New Square Chambers, and Kate Fox, Solicitor at Thompsons, the

Union’s solicitors. It’s intended for members who want to take claims to the PCC Small Claims track, and also activists who may be interested in supporting others.

There is a charge of £10 for members, to cover refreshments and course material, and numbers are limited, so book via [freelanceoffice@nuj.org.uk](mailto:freelanceoffice@nuj.org.uk)