

# Data protection and you

ALMOST CERTAINLY all freelance journalists need to register with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) as a holder of personal data. This currently costs £35 a year. Back in 2004 we warned against companies that contact you, giving the impression that they are the ICO, but in fact offering to fill out forms for you, for a hefty fee. Use only **ico.org.uk/for\_organisations/data\_protection/registration**

When registering, you must provide the ICO with your address. You must also provide an address at which a "data subject" can serve notice, for example asking what information you hold on them. And who better than the ICO to keep your home address confidential?

You must also:

- be open and honest wherever possible: in general, people should know if you are collecting information about them, and what for, the exception being when that would prevent a story that is in the public interest;
- ensure that information you hold about others is secure – for example by having a strong password on your computer and on your backups;
- protect the identities of your confidential sources;
- reply within 21 days to requests to stop using someone's personal data – either agreeing to stop, or explaining why you think their objection is unjustified;
- collect information about some-

one's health, sex life or criminal behaviour **only if** you are very confident the public interest overrides their right to privacy;

- obtain information by deception ("blagging") hacking or exploiting poor security **only if** you can convince a court that this was absolutely necessary in the public interest.

The NUJ aims to issue further advice, including notes on responding to "subject access requests" when the ICO has finished consulting on guidelines for the application of data protection law to journalists and journalism.

We would appreciate information in confidence from members who have had to deal, as freelances, with subject access requests..

## Training alert

Upcoming NUJ training courses include "getting started as a freelance" on **Friday 16 May** and "pitch and deal" on **Friday 23 May**, both at the NUJ's Headland House London HQ. Veteran tutor on these courses Phil Sutcliffe is joined by Louise Bolotin as co-tutor. Louise has over 35 years of experience as a journalist, and has been freelance since 2005. She has written for a wide range of newspapers and magazines, worked in BBC local radio and was co-founder of hyperlocal news website *Inside the M60* in Manchester. And NUJ Brussels Branch has a "Confused by Twitter? What you need to know" course on **Wednesday 18 June**. Details are at **www.nuj.org.uk/events**

## LinkedIn for journalists tips

ABOUT A THIRD of the journalists present at the March LFB meeting already had a LinkedIn "profile". LinkedIn's Richard George and Darain Faraz were on hand to demonstrate some of the site's lesser-known features that might help journalists "find stories, find sources... keep an eye on the beats that you cover."

Most people land on your LinkedIn page because of the "professional context": it's basically a kind of living, breathing, online version of your CV or portfolio. You've got just your "one and only photo" of yourself on your LinkedIn page, which

should be "not necessarily you at your last birthday party." A striking proportion of LinkedIn photos – including Richard's – are in black-and-white. (Increasingly these are done by a professional – photographers please note!)

The ideal LinkedIn profile has a "summary" of a couple of paragraphs about what you're doing "currently", "specialities" and also "prior" work. The summary should include lots of those keywords that commissioning editors should be looking for.

Richard points out that you have to give some thought to the invi-

tations you get to join someone's "network" on LinkedIn – "It's up to every member how free they want to be in accepting invitations" or how close they want to keep their LinkedIn network. Financial industry people tend to have very small LinkedIn networks, as "trusted, one-to-one relations" are important to that sector, while PRs like Richard tend to have bigger networks, making connections being part of the job.

Your LinkedIn network should contain "people you trust and know in the real world". The quality and credibility of your connections says more about you than who's collected the most so-called "friends".

LinkedIn can help you "identify potential contacts and contact them." Using its "Interests" navigation bar, Richard and Darain demonstrated how to find experts. One member was working on a medical story on tongue-tie, a congenital condition in babies. The LinkedIn search produced one expert on it, showing that they had a mutual acquaintance among Richard's "connections", so Richard would be able to ask for an introduction.

There's a LinkedIn for journalists group that offers free training sessions: a much longer online version of this has more advice and links.

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Darain Faraz (seated) and Richard George (standing) demonstrate a LinkedIn profile (onscreen): Image © Matt Salusbury

## Get in the Freelance Directory

If you're currently on LinkedIn or considering joining it (see at left) you should also be aware of the NUJ's own dedicated listing of its freelance journalists – the NUJ Freelance Directory. It currently has 1400 members, all of whom have actually had to demonstrate that they are working journalists rather than just saying they are. Entries are free to paid-up NUJ freelance members, both full and temporary. One advantage is that it's owned not by a corporate, but by the NUJ. Go to **www.freelancedirectory.org**

## No charge against *Student* editor

POLICE HAVE dropped their case against Oscar Webb, the editor of *London Student* arrested in a demo at the University of London's Senate House after showing his Press Card. (See **www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1401osca.html**). Oscar, a full member of the NUJ, was on "pre-

charge bail" for over three months. He was arrested while photographing a 4 December "Cops off Campus" protest. His bail conditions originally banned him from attending protests around the campus, but were subsequently altered to allow covering protests as part of his job.

Somewhat unsurprisingly, the Met eventually said in March they'd take no further action against Oscar. He reports that the University of London's High Court injunction banning Senate House "occupational protests" until the tail-end of the academic year in June remains in force.

## Press Cards at HQ no more

You can no longer apply for a Press Card or renew one by turning up in person at the NUJ's Headland House HQ – you have to use the online form on the NUJ website to do this. See **www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1403card.htm** for details.