

Words and pictures

UPROAR has been followed by constructive discussion... In May, the NUJ training website announced a course to “show you how to transform photography, using inexpensive ‘compact’ or smartphone cameras, into high-quality images”.

Hack or photographer, you’ll recognise the alarm bells that rang. Many photographers got on the networks arguing forcefully that the union would be teaching “reporters to take good enough snaps to take work from photographers”.

London Photographers’ Branch (LPB) got on the case. Chair John Rogers attended the Professional Training Committee (ProfCom), raised the lack of prior consultation with photographers about the course – and got results... namely, the May LPB meeting was told the course content and ad presentation would be reviewed by ProfCom and photographer reps.

But LPB took the chance to address the fundamentals behind the flare-up by inviting ProfCom chair Chris Wheal, NUJ General Secretary Michelle Stanistreet, Freelance Organiser John Toner and assorted London Freelance Branch reps and members to debate “Digital Convergence & The NUJ: what do photo-journalists and videographers want from our union?”

Comprehensive resolution of that one remained in the in-tray, but various speakers – including the odd wordsmith – explored the difficulties. During a massive economic crisis for professional journalism, how do we frame practical policies to support members, freelance and staff, who do *only* lenswork, or *only* word work, or mostly lens but some words, or mostly words but some lens... and all points in between; not to speak of the designers, cartoonists, illustrators... as well as all other

members in the Branch.

Michelle said that in reality NUJ staff and members dealt with these tricky matters sensibly all the time, but that a fresh think in the National Executive and then a clear statement of where we stand would be useful.

Back at the original hooah, several members urged ProfCom to consult with the reps of members who might be interested in or affected by any new training course before launching it.

Michelle said that the union is developing further courses on working abroad, working in “hostile environments”, on how journalists can protect their own information and data – and that ProfCom remains open to considering all new course proposals: see the note on a presentation by the Federation of Entertainment Unions to the June Branch meeting on page 2.

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Column of Shame

The *Freelance* has received reports that www.dailymail.co.uk is making online photographs link to advertisements. We have explored as much of its Column of Shame as we can stomach, and found only tools to “share” photos – and the newspaper offering “branded content” or “advertorial”. If you find news websites linking photos directly to advertising please let us know at advertorial@londonfreelance.org, and please include the links.

Central London camera theft alert

THE FOLLOWING alert came to the *Freelance* from Adam Christie, freelance rep on the NUJ’s Health and Safety Committee, and incoming job-share NUJ President.

Please inform colleagues that the Health & Safety committee was on 5 May alerted by an NUJ National Executive Committee member at the BBC in London of thefts or attempted camera thefts recently, apparently by “what appears to be a gang of organised criminals around W1. One incident was inside a BBC building and another outside the High Court”.

BBC, Sky and ITN crews have reportedly been affected. BBC management in London has been asked to review risk assessments for the area. If we get further information, I will try to ensure that it is circulated. In

the meantime, freelances thinking of shooting material in that area should take extra care.

Also, chapels in newspapers where reporters are required to shoot video should also get their health and safety reps... to ask local managers for copies of risk assessments regarding the theft risks of photographic/video equipment – probably in any busy town/city centre – and ask for this to be reviewed urgently if necessary in light of this information.

If you have further questions or can contribute helpful advice from colleagues or management, please email healthsafety@nuj.org.uk. As the *Freelance* went to press in early June, Adam was expecting an update from the BBC: check back at www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1407chef.html

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Visual journalist beware! Camera theft warning! The press pack in Piccadilly, London W1, last summer.

Photo: © Matt Salusbury

Getting a Press Card? Here’s how

THE NEW processes for getting and renewing NUJ Press Cards seem to have been under-publicised, so the *Freelance* is reminding you that you now need to do it online via bit.ly/NUJcard and you can no longer obtain a new Press Card by appearing in person at NUJ HQ.

You’ll need to have your NUJ website username and password. If you’re not sure whether they sent you a new one when they re-designed the NUJ website, call 020 7843 3705, ask to speak to Membership and tell them you’ve forgotten

your password. (You’ll need your NUJ membership number to hand when asking Membership over the phone to re-set your password.) Please do *not* ring the Freelance Office about Press Cards, nor the *Freelance* editor or assistant editor for Press Card enquiries either.

Be aware also you can no longer expect an alert telling you your Press Card’s about to expire. It’s down to you to keep an eye on this. Members report being turned away from the Met’s cordons because their Press Cards are *slightly* out of date.



The author’s newly-renewed Press Card

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