

CONFELEFE

LFB meetings
11 January
Branch AGM and elections

8 February
Journalism and equalities – tbc

See back page & www.twitter.com/NUJ_LFB

Branded content?

SHOULD freelancers consider being a part of the increasing market for branded content? Explaining to LFB how branded content works was Graham Hayday, Head of Studio at the *Guardian's* branded content operation Guardian Labs. Also speaking at London Freelance Branch's October meeting was Tony Hallett, managing director of Collective Content, an agency who "create contact directly for brands" mostly in the technology sector.

Branded content's been around for ages. The *Michelin Guides* started because the tyre manufacturer "wanted people to use tyres to travel around" more. Today, some 80 per cent of *The Onion's* revenue is branded content. Buzzfeed has no banner advertising – its advertising is all branded content.

Apparently, 80 per cent of business decision-makers prefer to get

“company information” via articles, not ads. Tony described how one company (unnamed) recently pulled all their advertising and put it all into an online publication launched at the 100 decision-makers they *had* to reach.

Digital advertising hasn't turned out to be the cash cow that media outlets hoped it would. Some of the world's most popular recent downloads of software and apps have been for ad blockers. With ad blocking so big, content is increasingly "one of the only games in town." Journalists should be paying attention, as up to now it's always been ads that paid for the journalism.

Guardian Labs did 360 campaigns last year. It has a very clear labelling structure to differentiate its different categories of content, including “Sponsored by” and “Brought to you by” – see www.theguardian.com/

sponsored-content – and Graham insists the *Guardian* is not trying to hoodwink people. Core *Guardian* editorial staff can't work on Guardian Labs. The *Guardian* can knock a branded content item on the head at any time.

Tony says branded content works best when it tries to communicate an advertiser's values, rather than plug its products. Take the "advertising feature" label off and it should stand up as a feature in its own right. That's "not always possible, but it's what we strive for."

There's also more work for journalists in "owned media" these days – retweets, sharing the company's Facebook page, and so on.

What does Guardian Labs need from journalists? You're not writing about a brand, but about something of interest to the people who this brand want to reach. They need journos with niche interests, and those who understand what content works in a tiny mobile phone screen. (Tony predicted "mobile" will mean more video branded content.)

How can a journalist credibly do both their regular journalism and a lot of branded content at the same time? The short answer is: you can't. Tony advises "work out of sector." Graham noted Guardian Labs advertising features are never bylined.

By all means send Guardian Labs a CV, but there's no forward features list, nor a news agenda. It's hard to predicted which clients will approach them and when. Tony noted that the growth of branded content opens up "a thousand times more places to pitch to, a thousand times more brands than publications."

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- There's a longer version online, with links.



Graham Hayday (main photo) and Tony Hallett (inset).

Photos: © Hazel Dunlop

NUJ to photographers: watch out!

YOU MAY be aware that BAPLA, the British Association of Picture Libraries and Agencies, has issued a press release announcing that it is planning to set up a collecting society in competition with DACS, the Design and Artists Collecting Society. DACS is the collecting society through which many or most NUJ photographers currently get payment for their secondary rights, those that it is impractical for them to collect themselves, for example, photocopy-

ing of publications containing their work. The NUJ is looking for details of what BAPLA is proposing. In the meantime, your Union's advice is: **do not** sign or accept any new deal that you may be offered or presented with.

Some agencies may take the view that it is implicit in a photographer's contract that they collect everything, including secondary rights, and therefore do not need to ask permission to switch collection of your money to a new agency. Beware any

letters “clarifying” arrangements. Contact **freelanceoffice@nuj.org.uk** about challenging them.

Those photographers who signed the new DACS agreement last year, before receiving their annual payment, granted DACS the exclusive – repeat, *exclusive* – right to collect on their behalf.

If you have not already signed up to receive money through DACS, you can do so at **www.dacs.org.uk**

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