

Pitch to pic people

THE “most important thing about a photograph is that it tells us as much as it can about the story we’re covering”, that it can “encapsulate everything” about that story. The October Branch meeting heard this from Helen Healy (@hheals), Head of Pictures at the *Financial Times* (FT). She has previously worked with – among others – the *Independent*, the *Guardian* and the *Times* – and has worked as a freelance at many other publications.

The FT picture desk uses stand-alone photos – just a photo with a caption story, not illustrating any other news story on the page – less than most newspapers do. It’s unlikely the FT will use photos of celebrities at photo calls. They do often use a front page photo to flag up an important story inside. For example, they’ll use Angela Merkel to illustrate a German fiscal policy story inside.

Charlie Bibby is “our one staff photographer” at the FT, says Helen. There are now “very few staff photographers” left in UK newspapers. The profession is “largely freelance these days” and fees for photographs are not as high as they used to be.

Helen does commission from freelancers “quite a lot of photos in other parts of the world, some in London: we don’t commission so much stuff as other newspapers”. She can use many more pictures for long-form journalism online, where there’s space to “illustrate quite widely” compared to the relatively small print edition.

Then there’s metadata and captioning. From a computer’s point of view, the tones and shades in your photo are data: also in the file is information about the image, which is metadata. It’s “really important that everyone... puts as much information as possible on their pictures”.

Always have a date at the top of the photo caption field, as well as in the date field of the metadata.

Keywords are of key importance, particularly if you hope to resell photos through an agency: “if your keywording is good, picture editors will find your photograph”. You should set your system up so that your credit in the “Creator” metadata field is filled automatically.



Helen Healy: photo © Miss Gemma Young

All picture desks use “quirky” content management systems in which sometimes “for some reason the photographer’s credit falls off. We have to fill it in again”. Often there will be others working “out of UK hours” who “aren’t necessarily photo editors”. These people may sometimes leave off a credit. Helen runs workshops for the overnight sub-editors on how to do photo credits and metadata.

Helen is “critical as well of the size of bylines... I think they are too small... credits are not big enough”. This is the production editor’s decision, not hers. Ensuring photographers are credited adequately can be “an uphill battle”.

On meeting photographers and looking at their portfolios, Helen says, “I don’t really have time to meet the photographers any more.” Rather, “email me, send a link to your website” which Helen will look at. They “don’t have enough work to give any to new freelancers” right now, although “I do try... I try to give more (work) to women.”

For international work Helen will contact photographers through the Blink network’s “upload location” feature. Helen will use Blink to look for, say, a photographer in Kathmandu, then “I’ll have a look at their portfolios”. While photographers in the audience said they tend only to put their location into Blink when they go abroad, Helen said “it could be useful” for photographers to fill in their location in the UK, especially if they are outside London: “We often need to find photographers in other British locations.”

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• See our much longer report at www.londonfreelance.org/fi/1911phot.html

Should you be getting holiday pay?

A SURVEY reveals that 88 per cent of the NUJ’s members – some of whom have been working for the same organisation for many years – are not given holiday pay. However, many freelancers and casuals are entitled in law to paid leave. In response the NUJ has launched a campaign to help members demand their rights.

In the UK, workers are entitled to paid holiday of 5.6 weeks a year – 28 days for someone on a five-day week. Many media workers are labelled as “casual” or “self-employed”, but they work in ways that gives them “worker” status. You could be entitled to paid holiday if:

- You do most of your work for one organisation, and you could still be eligible if you work for more than one organisation;
- You work under any contract, which doesn’t have to be in writing;
- You do shifts in a workplace; and
- Someone else controls when and how you work.

Organisations often use standard contracts that state an individual is self-employed or an independent contractor. The NUJ has successfully disputed this, winning members holiday entitlement and back pay. It’s already won an important tribunal decision – NUJ freelance member

David Walsh was recently awarded £8,360 based on his right to holiday pay – see www.londonfreelance.org/fi/1909back.html for details.

Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, says: “the proportion of freelancers in our industry is greater than at any time, and many are denied holiday pay to which they are legally entitled. In court, the NUJ has secured holiday pay for numerous casuals and other regular freelancers. We will continue to pursue such cases when they arise.” NUJ members who think they could be due holiday

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LFB meetings

13 January

Branch AGM

Thursday 30 Jan

New members meet

10 February

Reportage illustrator

David Ziggy Green

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