

Summary



Where's the News? / Digital Journalism in Search of Its Identity. Perhaps That is What Society Needs in the Long Run (Boris Hänßler)
(pp. 182 – 184)

In recent years journalism has suffered a lot. The American President Donald Trump never tires of accusing the mainstream media of publishing so-called fake news whenever a news item runs counter to his taste. Meanwhile these very media, for their part, are doing battle against fake news in the social media. But these are not the only problems brought on by digitalised communication. Income from advertising has dropped, there is a lack of sound ideas for the best presentational format of journalistic work, a lack of a clear vision for the future. The challenges which digital journalism is facing include how to sell readers digital-based journalism in place of the classical form of reporting in a way that can be both taken seriously and sold profitably.

Digital journalism wants to disseminate truth as opposed to fake news. But this requires, at least to some extent, taking leave of the clickbait strategy. Clickbait involves the use of sensationalised headlines in the social media in order to attract readers, even though the story behind the headlines won't necessarily deliver what the readers were led to expect. Clicks produce income, but also the impression that a news item has been doctored to make it seem more spectacular.

Lately, online news portals have moved toward setting up paywalls. These have both advantages and disadvantages for society. On the one hand, news portals can once again concentrate on quality; on the other hand, journalism again becomes one step removed for individuals who are not prepared – or are unable – to spend money on such products. And that in turn leaves the field open for unchecked news.

The Press – Yesterday and Today / Introducing: The Institute for Newspaper Research (Astrid Blome)
(pp. 188 – 193)

The Institute for Newspaper Research (Institut für Zeitungsforschung (ZI)) is the oldest research institute in Dortmund and combines, due to its very heterogeneous collection, the tasks of an archive, a library, a research institute, a municipal service provider and much more in the field of print media. The institute holds one of the largest collections of German newspapers and magazines published primarily in the 19th and 20th century, as well as historical special collections such as the literary estates (Nachlässe) of journalists and an extensive collection of works on the topics of publishing and mass communication.

The original periodicals in the collection extend back to the 17th century, the first century when newspapers were printed. While there are gaps in the collections of the earliest newspapers -- both abroad and in Germany, since they were at first regarded as consumable goods and not considered worth keeping – the situation for magazines of historical interest is notably better. The institute holds examples from the entire spectrum of the magazine market which arose in the last third of the 17th century and developed into a diverse and flourishing market in the 18th century. A particular focus of the collection and of visitors' interest is the political press of the 19th and 20th century, by which time publishing had become a mass phenomenon.

The concept of the collection is aimed at preserving as complete an image of the daily press as possible. For historical titles gaps are still being closed and when only a few issues of a title are held, these may be sent off to complete a collection elsewhere. With regard to current subscriptions priority is given to completeness in order to document the scope of contemporary newspaper publication for future generations.

Lateral Entrants in the Library / The Library as Workplace: On Integrating Diverse Professional Backgrounds within a Library Staff (Karin Holste-Flinspach)
(pp. 200 – 202)

In addition to their staff of individuals trained or educated in library-related professions, libraries have always employed people with other kinds of job training. Classic examples are employees with secretarial training, custodians or room cleaners, as well as, in recent decades, people with computer and data processing backgrounds. In recent years the diversity of library staff has become noticeably greater.

Even though pronouncements about the future fields of activities within libraries are subject to uncertainties, there is a basic agreement that newly added tasks will require staff with commensurate competencies. As the library undergoes changes due to the steady rise of automation and digitalisation, the classical job descriptions are losing their meaning. Greater importance is being placed on media pedagogy, designing the library to function as a “third place,” cultural management or researching user needs.

Along with these substantive changes, demographic trends, the lack of trained professionals and inadequately qualified job applicants are forcing libraries to seek out staff in other branches. The results of a survey by the Commission on Training and Job Profiles within the German library association Berufsverband Information Bibliothek (BIB) only solidify the impression that – as has long been the case in other countries – library staff teams will become increasingly multi-professional. Strengthening the image of library professions by underscoring their unique competencies and what distinguishes them from other professions, as well as adjusting the content of study programmes and examination criteria for library assistants are indispensable steps toward ensuring that library training and study programmes continue to have a future.

Translated by Martha Baker