

Institution: University of Central Lancashire
Unit of Assessment: UOA36 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management
Title of case study: Enhancing the digital news production capabilities of Johnston Press
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This case study shows how high quality research into the digital newsroom and means of interacting effectively with the site users of Johnston Press (JP) publications, together with the interactions of the researcher involved (Jane Singer) with JP journalists, company trainers and senior executives, had a significant effect on the company's ability to respond effectively to some of the key changes that have swept through the news industry as a result of the digital revolution. Singer's research and knowledge exchange role with JP supported the decision-making and change-management processes, helping the company reposition itself in a multi-platform environment [Material redacted].</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Singer was a member of the Journalism team at UCLan between January, 2007 and the end of December, 2010. She has long been an active and internationally respected leading figure in the academic debate about the future of journalism in the digital era and her considerable body of published research relating to this fed indirectly and directly into the advice that she gave to the Johnston Press group during her involvement with them.</p> <p>An example of her work in a high profile industry non-refereed publication is Singer, J. B. (2008). "Creating an Integrated Newsroom: The Lancashire (UK) Evening Post," <i>Trends in Newsrooms 2008</i>: 87-90, World Editors Forum / World Association of Newspapers. She also gave numerous conference presentations which fed directly and indirectly into the advice that she gave to Johnston Press. The following are examples and give a flavour of her work: Singer, J. B. (2011, August). "Community Service: Editor Pride and User Preference on Local Newspaper Websites," presented to the International Communication division, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication St. Louis, USA; Singer, J. B. (2009, September). "Separation within a Shared Space: Perceived Effects of User-Generated Content on Newsroom Norms, Values and Routines," presented to Future of Journalism conference, Cardiff, UK; Singer, J. B. (2009, August). "Quality Control: Perceptions about User-Generated Content among Local British Newspaper Journalists," presented to the International Communication division, AEJMC, Boston, USA; Singer, J. B. (2008, May). "Hearts in Highlands, Fingers on Keys: Online Discourse and 2007 Scottish Elections," presented to Political Communication division, International Communication Association; Montreal, Canada.</p> <p>The key fact about Singer's research, which was the reason the Johnston Press were enthusiastic about her appointment, is that it had mapped out in advance and continued to map during her period working with the company, many of the key issues and challenges that their move to digital would face. Her research enabled her to feed into company discussions ideas and recommendations that she had been developing for several years [Material redacted].</p>
<p>3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)</p> <p>1) "<u>Five Ws and an H: Digital Challenges in Newspaper Newsrooms and Boardrooms</u>", <i>International Journal on Media Management</i>, 2008, Vol. 10, No. 3: 122-129.</p> <p>2) "<u>Implications of Technological Change for Journalists' Tasks and Skills</u>", (Philips, Singer, Vlad and Becker), <i>Journal of Media Business Studies</i>, spring 2009, Vol. 6, No. 1: 61-85.</p> <p>3) "Shared Spaces: Discourse about the 2007 Scottish Elections on a National Newspaper Web Site", <i>International Journal of Press/Politics</i>, 2009, Vol 14, No.4: 477-496.</p>

4) "Quality Control: Perceived Effects of User-Generated Content on Newsroom Norms, Values and Routines" *Journalism Practice*, 2010, Vol. 4, No. 2: 127-142 (*top five most-cited journal article, as of 2/13*)

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The impact of Singer's work on Johnston Press, one of the UK's leading media conglomerates, is confirmed by **[Material redacted]** Development and **[Material redacted]**. That impact is best appreciated on two levels: that relating to specific local titles and that relating to the group as a whole, including its strategic objectives.

[Material redacted] confirms that because Singer *worked across the entire Johnston Press group* she was able to help editors in different regions share knowledge more easily and gain insights from what was happening in the rest of the world.

Singer's research was translated into formats that the industry could engage with via a number of different routes, which included presentations to company executives, editors and journalists. These included, for example: "Barbarians at the Gates? Journalism in a Shared Space," Invited speaker, Johnston Press Daily Editors Forum, Leeds, UK, January 2009; "Managing Change," Invited presenter, Johnston Press digital editors (regional groups), Preston, May 2008; and "User-Generated Content," Invited presenter, Johnston Press digital editors (regional groups) Chesterfield, February 2008; Preston, December 2007; Edinburgh, November 2007.

At the overall company level, according to **[Material redacted]** her work had a considerable impact on *every level* of the organisation's efforts to re-orientate itself towards the needs of a digital news production environment. He observed that,

"Her research work gave us invaluable insights into the changing digital world, the need for and route towards multi-platform content gathering, production and dissemination."

Her direct, specific role in enabling the senior management to realise and understand the need for and route towards multi-platform content gathering, etc. is an example of a specific, crucial impact right at the top of one of the UK's leading media conglomerates. He continued,

"As a result we were able to equip our journalists with the skills necessary to meet the above challenges in areas of website preparation, content gathering, social media and crowd-sourcing (*this is yet more specific evidence of crucial impact across the group from a key senior manager*).

Jane also spent time in our newsrooms observing and interviewing our journalists to help us to identify issues and areas of improvement in the multi-platform sphere.

We also used the material she researched and produced as valuable learning documents - for our senior managers to develop strategy; our editors to understand the changing marketplaces we were operating in; our trainers to develop learning programmes; and our journalists to develop their newsroom skills." (*This is again very specific evidence of crucial impact across the group from a key senior manager.*)

This is by any standards an impressive list of crucial impacts on a major player in the UK news media. In short, the significance of Singer's work was that it provided the company with vital skills and understanding relating to the needs of digital transformation *at every level of its operations*. Very specific examples have been given above. **[Material redacted]**. In addition, the two detailed testimonies from company managers provided above make it clear that the impact was considerable and they have furnished specific examples of crucial impacts. As far as the *reach* of the impact that her research-based advice has occasioned, the various testimonies clearly establish that it stretches through *every level* of the company's work and operations and continues

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to affect the way that Johnston Press is practising journalism within a digital environment down to the present. Fuller versions of these testimonies are available if required and the managers who provided them will also confirm directly the significance of the impact.

The work that she started is being continued through the School's Media Innovation Studio and the work of Francois Nel. The former currently is working with Johnston Press as part of the studio's involvement in the development of interactive newsprint and Nel has been actively researching and publishing on the topic of the key predicaments of newspaper groups such as Johnston Press within the digital environment. At the invitation of groups such as Trinity Mirror, Nel has been passing on the insights gained from his research (he has also worked with Singer in the past) directly to key editors in the industry's continuing attempts to find profitable and sustainable ways to do business across the range of platforms now available.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Contact 1: [Material redacted]

Contact 2: [Material redacted]