

Reith Reinvented: BBC boss explains how new newsroom will ‘allow us to do what we do better.’

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Mary Hockaday at Polis, LSE

“How many of you would be comfortable explaining quantitative easing to a friend in the pub?”

In the room full of LSE students, not a single hand went up in reply to the question posed by Mary Hockaday, Head of the new multimedia integrated BBC Newsroom. Ms Hockaday was making a point about the continuing importance of good journalism in a digital age, a point that she continually returned to throughout her inspiring presentation on the future of professional journalism in a changing media landscape.

(This report by Polis Intern Madeline Storck)

Hockaday, said that “we do live in an extraordinarily newsy and changeable world,” and the public still relies on journalists to help them make sense of what is going on around them, and then consequently, what the changes mean for their own lives.

But we don’t rely on just any journalist to help us make sense of the world. “Even for people who don’t turn to us as their main news source, we rate highest for trust.,” said Hockaday. That the BBC is

the most trusted news source in the UK today is not a shock. What is more surprising is the mediums in which their news is predominantly consumed. Of all the TV news broadcast in the UK, “BBC News is responsible for 27 per cent of the hours broadcast, but 72 per cent of the consumption,” said Hockaday. What the audience wants from journalists has not changed; what has changed is the way they want to receive it.

A quick survey of the audience revealed that most LSE media students get their news from the Internet, either on news websites or through social media. Only a minority still relies on TV broadcasts, radio or newspapers. And the BBC is doing its best to respond to these kinds of changes in what their audience wants. This is reflected in the structure and layout of the BBC’s New Broadcasting House, which according to Hockaday, “will allow us to do what we do better.” Significantly, the BBC’s social media team is now located in the heart of the newsroom. But the inevitable question was asked: does a reliance on social media as a story source threaten the values of accuracy and impartiality that the BBC holds so dear?

Hockaday insisted that the same procedures about accurate reporting that have for decades applied to all types broadcast journalism, still apply to social media. Digital technology is encouraging more interactive, participatory journalism, which on a whole Hockaday sees as a good thing for society. However, she was quick to point out that accuracy has not fallen by the wayside as a result of the immediacy of social media:

“We have a team that works to analyse and verify this material. As they comb the emails, texts and tweets sent to us they are doing do with the impartial and critical rigour they would bring to any story source,”

Though new media technology is changing how journalists tell stories, the story is not dead. “A very deep human impulse is not going to vanish overnight,” remarked Hockaday. The challenge ahead lies in preserving the traditional values of journalism, whilst simultaneously embracing the communication advantages of the digital age.

This report by Polis Intern Madeline Storck

Listen to the podcast of this talk [here](#)

You can read a pdf text of the speech by clicking on this link: [Mary Hockaday Polis Media Agenda Talk 8th October 2012](#)

You can watch [a video about the new newsroom here](#)

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