

Trust and truth: time to embrace diversity

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Blue Skies Thinking

You get a wonderful view from the top of London's gherkin, but it's a long way up from the real world. That's a little how it felt with this morning's entertaining but slightly frustrating launch of Julia Hobsbawn's book [Where The Truth Lies](#).

The [panelists were all excellent people](#) and I didn't disagree with much said about how we should all care deeply about having open and accurate news media.

But the debate never really moved away from quite simplistic notions of trust and truth at a time when the Internet is challenging just what they mean.

First of all, I am sick of hearing how opinion polls tell us journalists are 'not trusted'.

The public now think it's clever not to trust anyone. And anyway, [that might not be a bad thing](#). I like the idea of a sceptical citizenry and I don't want to be loved because I

am a professional journalist. We bring bad news and (should) ask awkward questions. But we should be transparent and accountable. If we are not, then the public will ignore us (which is what is happening to vast swathes of news).

[Robert Phillips from Edelman](#) said this is the age of transparency – I wish it was [see comment]. MSM continues to resist the kind of oversight and disclosure that it insists on from MPs and the like. There is still routine distortion and concealment for political and commercial reasons. And this is a problem for journalism, not to be blamed on PR.

Peta Buscombe from the PCC claimed they are doing a good job in policing newspapers. The PCC certainly has upped its game in the last few years, but until newspapers are forced to give apologies and corrections the same prominence as the original error, then there is no real accountability.

Ultimately, trust in the Internet age is won by being genuinely open throughout the news production process and allowing immediate and thorough-going interactivity. As Julia Hobsbawn said, you might not like everything that Paul Staines publishes as Guido Fawkes but he is a lot more open and accountable than most of the professional political media.

And truth? Well, I don't think you have to be a philosopher to believe that there isn't one version of the truth. The internet allows us the possibility of almost infinite perspectives but in practice, as Claire Fox said from the floor, mainstream media spends most of its time supporting not challenging orthodoxies. How will we ever know what is trustworthy or truthful unless there is a diversity of sources and contributors – including many from outside the professional media?

That is what you get when you go to the Internet. As Panorama's John Ware (who is no geek) said, the Internet provides untold riches for investigative journalists, so why doesn't MSM reflect that more in its own work?

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