

# Celibates, priests or toffs? The future of freelance

 [blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2009/09/05/celibates-priests-or-toffs-the-future-of-freelance/](http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2009/09/05/celibates-priests-or-toffs-the-future-of-freelance/)

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This should be the golden age of freelance journalism but instead it is in danger of turning into a hobby. New media technologies combined with economic shakedown should mean that flexibility and innovation should thrive. Freelancers – in my experience as a lifelong member of the salariat – have both in spades.

For example, [here is a great article](#) from about a year ago by a journalist who thought that the future is freelance.

But a journalist friend of mine, who has thrived as a brilliant freelance film journalist and as an outstanding TV news programme executive, feels that there is a danger that freelancing won't pay in the near future.

He warns that diminishing editorial budgets mean that we will be left with:

Celibates: (people without families who can afford the low wages)

Priests: (people who are evangelical about their subject and don't do it for the money)

Toffs: (people with enough private income/wealth not to need to work for the money)

His claim that Old Etonians are taking over the freelance film-making world accords with [my fears for equality](#) of access to journalism more generally. To a degree though, UK freelance TV journalism has always been a rather posher affair. They don't make a lot of money but they do all seem to live in the more agreeable parts of north London.

Of course, this is not an attack on citizen journalism. The problem is not that the work is being done by the public instead of professionals. Although personally I would welcome that if it was the case. I think that the pressure on freelancers is part of a much broader industry trend towards some fundamental restructuring which will have already seen widespread job losses with more to come. Meanwhile, the Etonians fill the gaps.

I think that the reality is that all journalists will have to become more like freelancers. They will have to be multi-skilled opportunists who relentlessly self-promote (no change there for some...) They will have to use their own initiative to find as well as cover stories. Career and editorial development will become an entirely personal responsibility. No more can we depend on either Human Resources or the News Editor.

Luckily, the same Internet and digital technologies that are making it tough for mainstream media businesses also offers us the tools to thrive in a networked world. Let's not leave it all to the Etonians eh?

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