

# What do you need to learn about journalism to be a (global) journalist? (Polis in Paris)

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What do you need to learn to be a journalist in a world where everyone can be a news producer? No-one taught the Twitterers in Tehran so why spend years (and a lot of money) on a news media degree?

Here at [Sciences Po](#) a group of journalism educators from around the world have gathered to justify their existence and, more importantly, work out exactly what journalism education looks like in the age of Google, Twitter, and Facebook.

I will be updating through the day. You can read the [full text of my speech here](#).

Bruno Patino, the head of Sci.Po's J-school sets the right tone: "the only thing we can be certain of is uncertainty"

He is followed by the grandee of American journalism studies Nicholas Lemann, Dean of Columbia's Journalism School who pointed out that journalism education is older in the New World than Europe.

*"The Internet is the greatest thing that ever happened to American journalism schools...it seems like a medium that deprofessionalises our medium but it actually requires MORE skills if it is to be more than just posting information to a website"*

*"A significant part of Internet journalism is made up of small organisations with big ambitions...journalists just out of school are covering stories that previously it would have taken years to be allowed to cover"*

*"students need an overall sophistication about the methodology, history and business of journalism – it is relatively easy to acquire that knowledge at a school, it is nearly impossible to acquire it when at work"*

*"we will find certain types of journalism practice with their primary home in journalism schools"*

Nicholas presented a generally rosey picture, which may have surprised those who saw him as something of a defender of more traditional views of journalism. But he correctly pointed out that journalism studies or training is still the exception globally rather than a rule.

It is still the preserve of wealthy nations and even there depends either on the strength of exceptional public service broadcasters, like the BBC, or in the American case, on high fees and philanthropic support.

Lemann was confident that Universities are the best place to preserve and improve journalism and that quality institutions like Columbia will still be around in a century, 'unlike Google perhaps' said Lemann.

*"it entails maintaining an ongoing rigorous professional discourse...and if done well can stand alongside the other professions that have found their home in Universities...the Internet provides a richer set of presentational tools and it opens up journalism's social and cultural role...we should not*

*only conceive it in terms of its practice-facing implications...it is also possibly the largest leap forward in the history of journalism education.”*

Frederic Filloux of the excellent [Monday Note](#) warned that there will be fewer traditional jobs out there for J School graduates but more opportunity through new media. Opportunity doesn't pay bills, of course, but Filloux is convinced that the demand for news is still there.

Lynette Sttenveld from Rhodes University brought the perspective of someone teaching journalism in a 'developing' country, but her questions felt applicable more widely than South Africa:

*“We are educating for citizenship (as well as journalism), local indigenous citizenry or a universal sense of who we are in the world. So what kind of knowledge does that citizen need? how we educate on the moral, cultural, political issues with respect to journalism? How do you prepare for a journalism economy?”*

*“We teach Development and democracy as issues and then practical work on what that means as journalism, based on themes such as environmentalism. So we will bring in environmental scientists and then get the students to work on stories in local areas to produce journalism.”*



Now you don't much further from Rhodes than Lucerne where the private Journalism school MAZ, funded by media companies teaches Swiss students. Director Sylvia Egli Von Matt says that in the face of the economic crisis, the attitude of students has changed in the last few months:

*“Young people are more hungry – to work hard and to ask questions – until now they would all have found jobs easily – now they realise they have to think again and that might be a good thing”*

Doreen Weisenhaus from Hong Kong University said that J Schools have to think about what their market wants. This means thinking about what kind of journalism the media industry needs, but also what the community needs and what the School thinks journalism SHOULD need. So teach financial journalism to fill the Asian newsrooms of people like the WSJ and Dow Jones but also think about what wider society might require.



There was a good debate about specialisations. J Schools like Columbia and City University in London now have a rich programme of specialist courses that are informed by the wider knowledge of experts at the University.

But others stressed that specialisation can be a distraction from learning to ask the right questions of the experts. As Nick Lemann said, specialisation should not breed certainty:

*“The job of a professional school is to orient and disorient at the same time”*

David Klatell (Columbia) asked a great question about specialist journalism training: “Who does the teaching?”

Should faculty be generalists or specialists themselves?:

*” Our philosophy is not to turn journalists into experts – the role of the journalist is to interpose themselves between the experts in the field and the public. So some of the best education we provide is from the other schools in Columbia”*

This is, in effect, teaching “expert literacy”.

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