

BBC: appealing to everyone

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Caroline Thompson is the BBC's Chief Operating Officer, the woman who drives major projects such as the relocation of production to centres outside of London. On Tuesday she speaks at Polis in the latest of our media leadership dialogues. Her subject will be "The challenge to appeal to all audiences". How can the BBC keep everyone happy?

One way is to put your programme-making where people are: in what metro-centric folk like me used to call 'the provinces' but what are now referred to as 'nations and regions.' Hence the multi-million pound move to Salford for some BBC programmes and departments.

But the challenge is much wider and even brings us back to the dreaded Brand/Ross debacle. People are in different communities according to their taste, age, intelligence, education, interests, beliefs and attitudes. How can one media organisation appeal to them all?

For some people Russell Brand and Jonathan Ross are a complete waste of money. Why not let the commercial channels or Channel 4 serve up that sort of crowd-pleasing light entertainment? [Minette Marin](#) articulated this stance elegantly:

The corporation should drop most of what it does. It shouldn't be providing silly chat shows, game shows, local radio, pop stations, breakfast television, bought-in programmes and all the low-skilled, low-grade rest. The simple way to make these cuts is to remain firmly on the right side of Gallagher's divide – the side of civility and maturity, of high standards, of education, even of elitism, of fairness and decency, of the good and of the best. That's what the BBC is for.

"First of all, it should abandon the commitment to serving every audience, a pledge made long before the explosion of the commercial media: others can do that. Besides, plenty of audiences are actually undesirable, such as the hard porn community and the paedophile community and the Wossy apologists. The BBC should ignore them and serve audiences that need protection from the cold winds of the market or the stale breath of populist taste; it should dump programmes that others do as well unless it can do them better and stick to doing well things that others do badly or not at all. Quality news, documentaries, drama, education, religious programmes and comedy come to mind"

The BBC argue that they have a mandate to serve all licence-fee payers – so who decides what to lose?

If you wish to come to the Thompson lecture at 5pm on Tuesday, contact us at polis@lse.ac.uk

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