

What Is Responsible Journalism? (Analysis, BBC Radio 4)

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Thanks to my mum for spotting my latest appearance on the airwaves. I was on BBC Radio 4's [Analysis](#) programme defending journalism and in particular the [networked](#) kind.

I found myself in the company of New York University's [Jay Rosen](#) in suggesting that a more open and public form of news media might actually create a more 'responsible' journalism.

Irresponsible journalism

The programme was presented by the former Today programme editor [Kevin Marsh](#) who is now an executive at the [BBC College of Journalism](#). Kevin knows all about being [accused](#) of irresponsible journalism. He edited the [Today programme](#) where Andrew Gilligan made his remarks which led to the [Hutton Report](#). Which only goes to prove either, that even the best of us make mistakes, or, that judges make very poor investigators of the media and politics (it's the latter, obviously...)

Kevin's programme is an excellent inquiry into how British newspapers have lost the public's confidence. [Jean Seaton](#), [Mike Jempson](#) and [Martin Moore](#) make the traditional accusation that this is because they have lost the customer's trust. They argue that this has been part of a downward spiral in quality and honesty. [see Martin's response in the comments to this post]

The former Sun editor [David Yelland](#) accepted that tough competition can drive down standards.

Behave yourselves

Jean, Mike and Martin know a lot about media but they all share an assumption that it must be regulated, organised and educated to be 'more responsible'. They have a particular standard of a high-class, intelligent liberal norm to which they believe everyone should adhere.

All of us can give examples of the inadequacies of the newspapers. They can be partial, brutal and plain wrong. This is partly because all daily news journalism is a compromise between limited time, resources and knowledge. I think many critics ignore these basic facts of newspaper life. They also ignore the vast amount of good coverage and entertainment they provide. We have much better newspaper journalism than many other countries and they are more widely read.

Worse online

Newspapers aren't really in trouble because of trust. They are suffering because they have lost advertising and public interest to the Internet. Jean Seaton fears that this means even worse news online because she can't see any journalists in the Google Newsroom. That's missing the point.

No-one expects Google to save journalism. It will be current news brands going online and working with the public. It will be the citizen themselves. As Martin Moore says, news organisations are going to have to provide the tools to help the citizen to feel more empowered, to find the data and information for themselves. He doesn't think that journalists will enjoy that role but I don't see why not.

I like Kevin's conclusion that "it will be the public that saves the press for the public".

For more details including Listen Again and a Transcript of the show click [here](#).

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