

Page

| | |
|----|--|
| 2 | Introduction |
| 4 | Existing research |
| 7 | The New Zealand experience |
| 11 | Overseas newsrooms: <i>The Independent</i> , <i>The Telegraph</i> and <i>The San Francisco Chronicle</i> |
| 13 | Training leaders: The <i>BBC</i> |
| 18 | Google: Accessible technology for training journalists |
| 20 | Massive Open Online Course: Amy Schmitz Weiss journalism professor |
| 24 | The Poynter Institute: 10 years of online training |
| 29 | Conclusions and recommendations |
| 31 | Resources |

Cover image: Google Day at the Poynter Institute was run online and in-person simultaneously.

The pressures on journalists are constantly changing. From filing for online and their print or broadcast medium, to writing blogs, having a social media profile and taking photos and making videos, journalists are expected to do more. But while demands are increasing the amount of

training being offered to reporters is not keeping pace with the continually evolving environment they are reporting in. One thing is evident: everyone has the same dilemma. News organisations benefit from training, but with more demands on a limited staff finding both the time and resources to provide meaningful training is a quandary newsrooms worldwide are all struggling with.

On the surface, the simplest answer seems to be to find new ways to offer training. Digital technology and the internet give newsrooms the ability to offer training on new platforms, in more easily digestible chunks. Rather than simply offering multi-day courses that require expenses such as flying people to the same place and putting them up in hotels for two nights for intensive three day in-person courses, now leading institutions are looking to options such as interactive webinars – online lectures run via a webcam, training focused in-house websites and modules, full online courses run over a period of weeks, and mixed courses which combine new methods of online learning with traditional in-person sessions. Indeed, there are clear opportunities for these forms of learning to be adapted to a New Zealand media landscape.

Certainly this is something that Kiwi newsrooms are eager to investigate, with editorial leaders

That is not to say that e-learning is redundant. Rather, the answer lies in a mixed approach. The message from those at the *BBC* who are expanding their programmes, and those at The Poynter Institute who have been doing it for 10 years, is that a mixed approach is practical and effective, provided it is combined with traditional in-person training methods. Small webinar sessions for about an hour with a smaller audience covering an easily digestible topic would be achievable for newsrooms and could offer an easy way to inject more short training sessions into daily newsroom life. However, it has to be fully supported by managers with staff given both the time and incentive to complete the learning and attend sessions. Further, a mixed approach where online sessions and web-based modules can be used to make better use of in-person courses is both practical and worthwhile. Both the BBC Academy and Poynter are shifting to models where theoretical work is done online before arriving at the course, so the face-to-face portion can be spent better discussing and working with the techniques being taught, allowing for shorter but more focused training.

This mixed approach is what newsrooms should aim for, but it needs to be done carefully and

the initial training of interns at tertiary level, those that do look at ongoing development state

This desire to learn transfers to a willingness to learn through new mediums – such as online. The Knight Foundation’s report found that journalists were open to changing methods of training: “Seven in 10 journalists who participated in online learning says it was as good as, or better than , in-person training,” the report stated. Further to that, 80 per cent of the international reporters who took online courses through the foundation reported that they found the training “as good or better than” in-person training. However, that figure dropped to a third amongst American journalists. One Argentine reporter Ana D’Onofrio described online training thus: “The opportunity to learn remotely from trainers that are working in the best places, in experience and

THE NEW ZEALAND EXPERIENCE

The international situation is well reflected in Kiwi newsrooms. Editorial leaders spoken to in New Zealand have all expressed a desire to implement more training, as well as emphasising the importance of training when it comes to keeping editorial staff abreast of changes in the industry. However, problems such as cost and – above all – time were consistent areas people were battling, with the need for training competing with the need for bodies on the newsroom floor.

south – with the biggest focus on young reporters and making sure they are meeting company expectations. “Above all it’s about writing, good writing, what editors want, good interviewing – making sure they can deliver.” In addition the c

company could do more, conceding that there “probably isn’t enough of it”. Like Fairfax, much of the focus is on younger reporters, with senior newsrooms members providing the training while also acting as mentors to young staff. “Our junior and intermediate reporters from around the country are flown to Auckland for one or two day seminars. They are coached in writing, building contacts, dealing with confidential sources, defamation and broadcasting standards, and on-camera presentation. The sessions are run by our top Producers, Presenters and Reporters.” Consultants are also employed to teach interviewing techniques to intermediate reporters and there are voice coaching sessions led by senior presenters. Most staff get training at least once a year. “It is very practical – hands on from our best practitioners.” Like other companies, freeing up staff was the biggest barrier to training, he says. “Everyone has a day job.” A particular benefit of digital learning would be the ability to tackle the time dilemma, he says. “It could be done out of work time. Staff would not need to be brought to one location.” However convincing staff to do it is the biggest hurdle he says, with most staff likely to be open “some more than others” open to self-directed learning. There is also the loss of face-to-face training which staff may reject. “They like the hands on coaching they get and the opportunity to be with colleagues who are facing similar challenges etc.”

At Radio New Zealand the lack of motivation from staff was a barrier to attempts at providing online training resources. As Gael Woods pointed out when asked about Radio New Zealand’s training, the broadcaster offered access to the online resources provided by the *BBC*’s extensive online training resources, however few took that opportunity up. At the moment Radio New Zealand National has an audience of 502,000 a week. Woods explains that the state broadcaster

and style. There are also regional Maori language courses, some statistics training, regular training as new technology is introduced, and social media training is being planned. All training is done in person, she says. While there is “great enthusiasm” for training, shift work makes the logistics difficult. There are no issues from above – “management here’s very keen about training” – but like other organisations money and time were consistent barriers. “That’s a lot of our people out of the system.” However, while digital techniques were used for things like board meetings, it was not seen as “user friendly” for training. In-person is better as “it’s the interaction that makes it stick with people”, she says. Self-directed training is also something the company has dabbled in but they have not found it to be overly successful. After paying for staff to access

been a period of change for the company, buying and turning around *The Evening Standard*, while pushing to keep *The Independent* relevant in a market with plenty of competition. In addition this year the television station *London Live* was launched by the group, in a latest position to diversify after *The Independent* started struggling financially. “We’re still in a place where the [*Independent*] is loss making, but losses are down.” The shift and improvement has been a tough ask in a competitive market for a relatively small player, Gore says. “We have rationalised in a way that has allowed us to retain quality.” However, with the focus on rebuilding a struggling brand, the onus to provide ongoing training, while important, has been one thing that had fallen by the wayside. “It doesn’t leave an awful lot of room to maneuver in terms of some of the non-core aspects of what we want to do as a business, and actually the question of continuing professional development is something that we have thought quite a lot about over the last couple of years but we have not developed actually a proper program of it, and it tends to be a place that training happens on a pretty ad-hoc basis.” Training that has occurred in recent times has focussed on regulatory issue refresher courses and training for the launch of *London Live*. In particular, keeping up with a diversifying media brand, with more focus on different mediums aside from simply print, was a big area that needs to be addressed, he says.. “We want our guys to be able to do lots of different things, you can only reasonably expect that if you offer to help them learn.” Ideally Gore says he would like to be running seminars every couple of weeks on various topics. Online learning through webinars and modules has been discussed at the company, however there are concerns that people will find it “gimmicky”.

The key to good training is making sure the information is presented in a way that keeps people engaged, something that was easier to gauge and do in a traditional training environments.

“Personally I think face-to-face is the best way to do it.”

learning can be just as meaningful. In part that is because most of the college's current online training is mandatory, and has the appearance of being a chore, he says.

lifting the quality of the online content to make it more engaging. “Interesting isn’t good enough – it’s got to be practical, intelligent and useful.” They also need better ways of measuring the usefulness of the site, he says. There are between 20,000 and 25,000 page views a week, but no means of measuring how many of those are *BBC* staff. The website is another platform where there is potential to make digital and face-to-face training resources compliment each other, with people inspired to come back to the website to seek more information on a topic, he says. “You have to connect it all up.” That is an area the *BBC* has to improve on, with little if any connection

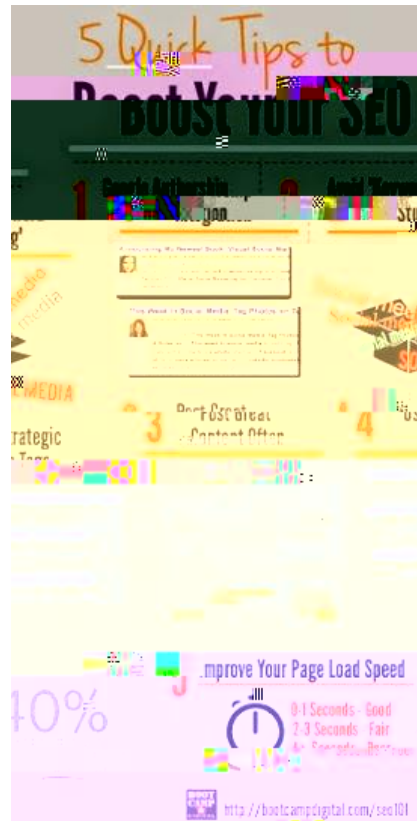
worksheets that people completed before attending the in-person session where they were tested on their skills and given feedback. That model is dependent on people doing the required work before arriving at the face-to-face sessions, she says. It is also reliant on the academy staff who work in the online and face-to-face areas working together. “The online and the face to face in the academy have to talk to each other.” The final area that needed addressing for digital training to be successful is incentives to make staff willing to commit to training, she says. “There has to be some sort of reward system – it has to build towards something.”

GOOGLE: ACCESSIBLE TECHNOLOGY FOR JOURNALISM TRAINING

When it comes to the digital realm, Google is the company creating much of the technology that can be utilised not only for journalism, but also for training. Indeed, from the reporting point of view, much of what Google has developed – from maps to data crunching tools – is helping change the way journalists both gather and deliver news. International media liaison Maggie Shiels says the ability of Google to assist in different means of reporting is something the company is aware of and keen to assist in. “We found people were using it but we could show them how to get more out of the tools.” Maps are a key example, she says, because they are easy to use and can “instantly make a story pop”. “They’re great for telling another part of the story. They’re great for adding another layer.” There is also now Google News Publisher Centre which enables news organisations to update its details to optimise visits to their website through Google, ensuring the all important clicks on pages. The centre’s home page explains: “If you're a news publisher, your website has probably evolved and changed over time – just like your stories. But in the past, when you made changes to the structure of your site, we might not have discovered your new content. That meant a lost opportunity for your readers, and for you ... We are letting you make changes to our record of your news site.”

All of these tools are helping improve journalism delivery, and one of the ways Google is helping promote those tools is through regular road trips to newsrooms helping to teach journalists how the different programmes it offers can be used to greatest effect. But in addition to that face-to-face offering, it is also using its own digital platforms to deliver training on its resources to journalists. Through its Google+ social-media site it has a *Google for Media* page

which offers tips and guides on how to use the different online tools to best advantage, such as the image below, information that is constantly updated as the technology also evolves. “They’ll give you all the latest of how the tools are being used and some examples,” Shiels says. Indeed, Google also runs a YouTube channel that includes tutorials on how to use its tools and a section on how to use media tools. There is also Google for Education which offers online courses, covering topics such as how to make the most out of data, which while not targeted at journalism would apply to the profession.

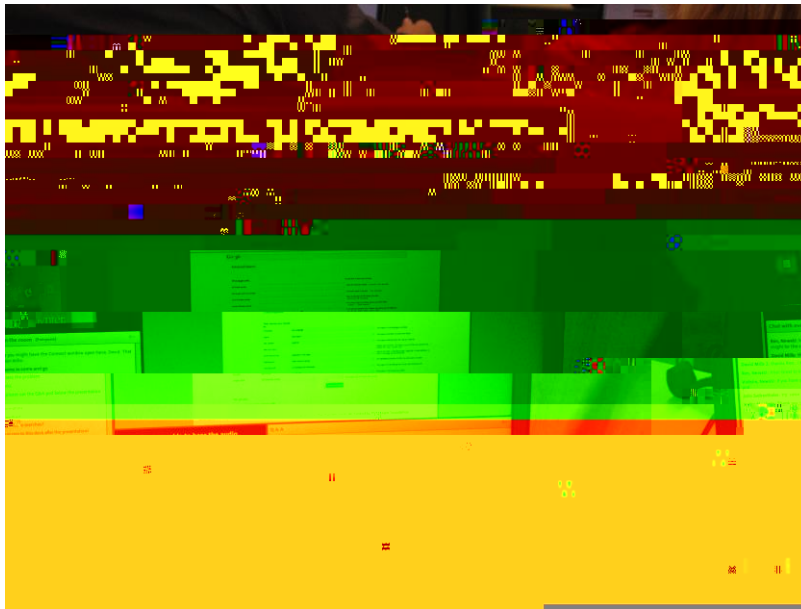


Training information on the Google+ *Google for Media* page.

But as well as offering training opportunities itself, the tools offered by Google also offer platforms on which to improve in-house training for journalists. Google hangouts – whether it’s an onscreen chat, voice-call or video conference – are available to anybody with a Gmail account, which means that video conferencing, for example, which used to be something that required planning and equipment is now available to anybody with a web camera built into their

reducing it by half to make sure it would be a manageable amount of course material for the

MOOC, with the sheer scale of such a course being one of the main challenges her co-



The view online during Google Day at the Poynter Institute compared to the view in the room.

Vanessa Goodrum, interactive learning producer at Poynter, says interactivity is key to successful online learning as it keeps people engaged. “If it can be interactive it should be interactive.” For companies looking to introduce e-learning, slick productions are not a realistic starting point. The easiest platform would be a simple webinar. However, it is important not to

some of their magic online the main benefit from the course being walking away with new ideas and drive along with new contacts. Much of the debate was very much driven by people reacting quickly to each other's points and talking over each other – something that would turn into white noise in an online environment. Certainly, the endearing memory of head faculty Tom Huang, editor of *The Dallas Morning News* Sunday and Enterprise, quietly reading out his moving feature to talk about feature writing, or Tompkins leading a stirring debate in real-time forcing the group to make snap editorial decisions for a heated ethical debate, are both aspects of the course that would have lost that sticking power had they not been in person. But even that course, which was very much designed for the face-to-face experience, benefitted from online resources, with a Facebook page set up ahead of time allowing people to connect even before they arrived, and stay connected in a more immediate way than would have been traditionally possible – helping bring home the point that face-to-face and online are not always disparate teaching methods.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Through this research, the lessons learned from newsrooms in London and San Francisco, The BBC, Google, a leading academic and the Poynter Institute proved that e-learning is a legitimate path for New Zealand newsrooms to embark upon to help improve the level of ongoing training to help keep journalists' skills fresh and up-to-date. Certainly there is a clear desire for more

training, not just among Kiwi journalists but also among our peers overseas. But, while online learning is definitely possible, it is also clear that it needs to be carefully considered and requires dedicated resources to ensure it is valuable for both companies and reporters. It should not

6. Give staff time. If you commit to training that means giving staff the time to do it. If there is a video from a webinar allow staff an hour to sit through it, uninterrupted. It is easy to

20-Plus Reasons Why Investing in Media Creates lasting Change, International Centre for Journalists, 2011, online.

5 tips on how to teach a successful MOOC in journalism based on the Knight Center's "Data-Driven Journalism", Knight Centre News, 2013, online.

Professional Development and Journalism Education, The Centre for International Media Assistance, online.

Teaching a Journalism MOOC: 5 Tips and Techniques, Amy Scmhitz Weiss, PBS, 2013, online.

Media Assistance: Challenges and Opportunities for the Professional Development of Journalists, Marguerite Sullivan, The Centre for International Media Assistance, 2007, online.

Creating a learning culture in the newsroom, Amy Scmhitz Weiss, Journo.biz, 2012, online.