

News from Auntie: a brief history of national BBC Radio News

Des nouvelles de « tantine » : un bref historique des informations radiophonique de la BBC nationale

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Résumé. Cet article décrit quelques-uns des principaux changements survenus dans la manière dont la BBC écrit, produit et présente l'information à la radio nationale depuis sa fondation en 1922. Les lecteurs de la presse écrite lisent pour la première fois des articles fournis par l'agence de presse Reuters, mais la BBC crée un département de l'information distinct en 1935. L'évolution technologique – comme, à titre d'exemples, l'enregistreur midget, la VHF, les radios à transistors, l'introduction de la FM, l'enregistrement et le montage numériques et la diffusion en continu sur Internet – a eu un impact significatif sur la manière dont les journalistes de radio ont accompli leur travail ainsi que la façon dont les auditeurs ont pu consommer le média radiophonique. Les journalistes de radio, outre la collecte d'informations et de la rédaction, ont dû acquérir de plus en plus de compétences complémentaires. Les changements dans les formes culturelles, les valeurs et les goûts de la société ont également eu une influence sur la sélection des histoires et les formats de production et de présentation.

Mots-clés. BBC, informations radiophoniques, journalisme, histoire des médias.

Abstract. This article describes some of the major changes that have taken place in the way the BBC has written, produced and presented the news on domestic radio since its founding in 1922. Newsreaders first read out stories provided by the Reuters news agency, but the Corporation created a separate News Department in 1935. Technological developments, including but not limited to the midget-recorder, VHF, transistor radios, the introduction of FM, digital recording and editing, and internet streaming, have both had a significant impact on the way radio journalists have carried out their job and the way listeners have been able to consume the medium of radio. Radio journalists have had to increasingly master skills besides newsgathering and writing. Changes in society's cultural forms, values and tastes have also had an influence on story selection and production and presentation formats.

Keywords. BBC, radio news, journalism, media history

1 Introduction

In June 2013, the Queen opened the BBC's new Broadcasting House building, home to "more than 30 domestic and World Service radio stations, three 24-hour TV news channels, all of the BBC's main news bulletins" (BBC, 2013). The new Broadcasting House is actually the refurbished old Broadcasting House with a major modernist extension. For the BBC radio newsroom the move to Central London marked a home-coming after having left the old Broadcasting House for the BBC News Centre at White City fifteen years earlier; except that now the radio newsroom no longer existed as a separate entity; rather, radio news production had become merely one of the functions of the multi-media national and international BBC news provision. Furthermore, news production for Radio 5-Live, previously produced by the radio newsroom, was moved to Salford in the north-west of the UK. The move to a new building is was simply the latest development in the history of national BBC radio news. This chapter will trace some of the major changes that have taken place in the way the BBC has written, produced and presented the news¹ on domestic radio since the founding of the Corporation² more 96 years ago. While the quality and reach³ of the BBC's World Service is undoubtedly the major reason why the BBC (still) has an unrivalled reputation for journalism in the world, the international service deserves its own historical account and is not part of considerations here. Similarly, regional radio broadcasting, which also constitutes an important task for the BBC, will not be covered in this chapter, save in those few instances where it impacts on the story of national radio news.

2 The early years

The BBC began in October 1922 and its first radio news bulletin was broadcast on 14 November of that year: copy from the Reuters News Agency was read out on air by the Director of Programs, Arthur Burrows. The script was read once slowly and once at normal speed to give listeners time to take notes (Briggs, 1985; Crook, 2004). Arthur Burrows had told the Broadcasting Editor of Reuters that he was keen to avoid too much crime or sensationalism in the radio bulletins, because he felt that the "*informational role for broadcasting is opposite to trends in the popular press [and] what is fit to print is not necessarily fit to hear*" (Scannell et Cardiff, 1991, p. 107-108). Until the Great Strike of 1926, the BBC was not permitted to broadcast any news until 7 p.m., so as not to compete with newspapers. The strike led to many newspapers ceasing publication and as radio became "the only real source of information" (Street, 2002, p. 34), the BBC was permitted to air additional

1 In common usage the term 'Radio news' is often used to refer to both news bulletins, i.e. a selection of news stories with or without headlines at the top of the hour (or half hour), and current affairs programs or news programs. However, at the BBC, Radio News is only used to denote the news casts which are round-ups of individual stories, linked by a news reader and tightly scripted, with or without short audio clips (normally not without 'live' inserts). The current affairs or news programs are much longer, have one or more presenters and include interviews with correspondents (known as 2-ways) or newsmakers, often have longer weather and sports reports and longer items with several clips of actuality. This split between news and current affairs is essentially an artificial one, created by a BBC that instituted separate production teams.

2 Initially the BBC stood for British Broadcasting Company; it became the British Broadcasting Corporation on 1 January 1927

3 figures from 2013 estimate that 192 million people tune into the World Service on a weekly basis (Halliday, 2013).

bulletins at 10 a.m., 1, 4, 7 and 9.30 p.m. The ban on airing any controversial material and editorial opinions was suspended in 1928 following intense lobbying by the Corporation's first Director-General, John Reith (Crook, 2004).

The BBC decided that it should become a major provider of news in its own right and on 10 February 1930 its 'News Section' broadcast the first bulletin. A separate News Department, with John Coatman as editor and just five members of staff, was created in 1935. Four years later, the number of staff had risen to 39 (Scannell et Cardiff, 1991). The traditional form of recitation of news by announcers changed during the Second World War as correspondents could use portable midget recorders to produce radio dispatches from the field. Their eye-witness accounts of battles and actuality were aired on, for example, the new program *Radio Newsreel* which began in July 1940 (Schlesinger, 1978, p. 30).

In the 1950s radio reception radically improved thanks to technological developments, particularly the introduction of VHF or Very High Frequency. VHF eliminated problems of interference, which before had given radio "a background like frying sausages" (BBC, History factsheet 1950s). Despite this improved reception, radio news itself continued to be "*hard [and] heavy [...] like a foreign office communiqué*" Paulu as cited in (Schlesinger, 1978, p. 37) and radio started to face increasing competition from Television; the number of TV licenses issued rose from 3/4 million in 1951 to eight million in 1958 (Chignell, 2013). Nevertheless, as Chignell says, "radio news remained both popular and influential throughout the decade. At the height of the Suez crisis the audience for BBC radio news bulletins had grown to nearly ten million listeners at 6 p.m." (Chignell, 2013, p. 96). By 1960, though, TV had superseded radio news as "the dominant informational source for the public" (Schlesinger, 1978, p. 32) and radio executives were forced to develop programs and news for distinct audiences. "The competition from ITV had the unforeseen, longer-term effect of moving the provision of news and current affairs nearer to the heart of the BBC's public service philosophy" (Starkey et Crisell, 2009, p. 7). FM listening became an option in the 1960s, giving listeners significantly improved quality. This decade also saw the introduction of the transistor radio, which enabled people to listen to their favorite program wherever they wanted. This "freedom from the tyranny of the valve", as Street (Street, 2002) calls it, "was to prove one of its greatest glories for the next forty years" (p. 106). The 1960s was a time that saw "the rise of new cultural forms [...] a new agenda moulded by shifts in the understanding of gender, youth, class, place and race" (Black, 2004, p. 55). The BBC too sought to loosen the style of its news programs. Hugh Carleton-Greene, who had been appointed Director-General in 1960, believed the BBC should move with the times: "[W]e have a duty to take account of the changes in society, to be ahead of public opinion, rather than wait upon it." - as cited in (Hendy, 2007, p. 19). In October 1965, on the introduction of the current affairs program *WATO* (The World At One), the traditional one o'clock news bulletin on the Home Programme (later Radio 4) was shortened. The then head of news, Donald Edwards, had wanted to do away with "the long, stilted bulletins" at key points in the radio schedule...[a decision] 'the older radio newsmen' never forgave him" (BBC, s. d.). In 1967 the BBC reconfigured its radio services: the Home, Light and Third Programmes were replaced by BBC Radios 1, 2, 3 and 4. Although it is often said that the creation of the pop music station, Radio 1, was prompted by competition from pirate radio stations such as Radio Caroline, BBC Historian Asa Briggs

4 In September 1955 the BBC lost its monopoly position with the creation of Independent Television (ITV), which was funded by advertising.

(Briggs, 1985) points out that by 1967 audiences for the Light Programme had already increased by more than a million (p. 345), suggesting that the BBC was aware of the demand for more popular music anyhow.

3 The middle years

The veteran BBC Journalist, John Simpson, who started his career in the BBC radio newsroom in 1966, describes the place as one with "a preponderance of grey hair and cardigans" (Hendy, 2007, p. 22). Others talk about the sedate atmosphere and the hierarchical structures:

"In the middle of the afternoon someone would come down from the canteen with a tray with a silver teapot and cups and milk and the editor would have a cup of tea and if the senior duty editor was an established senior duty editor, he would get a cup of tea too, but if he was a duty editor acting up as an SDE he might not get one...and that was the kind of hierarchy, the structure, which is why people will tell you...that you could go ages, all day, and not write anything except the weather. In those days it was a weird place." (Luscombe, 2013, p. 89)

"There was some terribly heavy editing of junior staff copy]. I was given the weather to do and the only words that weren't changed were 'a' and 'the'." (Luscombe, 2013, p. 90)

There were also very few women in the radio newsroom of the late 1960s. The Staff list for June 1966 lists two female 'writers' (one Duty Editor and one Sub Editor) out of a total of 54 journalists; in addition, there are two female production assistants⁵. The chauvinism in the BBC at that time, and in Radio News in particular, is apparent in the comments from the Editor of Radio News in a 1973 report into whether women could do hard news stories: "[They] see themselves as experts on women's features [...] those who are dedicated...are not really women with valuable instincts but become like men" – as cited in (Franks, 2011, p. 128).

The bulletins of the late 1960s were mainly 'straight reads' by a newsreader, although they did experiment occasionally with audio inserts. During the French crisis of May 1968, the Controller of Radio 4, Gerard Mansell, suggested that the radio newsroom should have followed France Inter's example by using live inserts in the BBC news bulletins, prompting the head of Radio News, Geoffrey Hollingworth to voice his frustration that *"the senior staff in the Radio Newsroom are getting a little tired of hearing how much better France Inter and Europe No 1 handle bulletins...Mr Mansell is obviously totally unaware that apart from the daily EBU circuit at 11.15 BST – the only source of voice-pieces from Paris since the crisis got underway is the telephone...as listeners know, their quality is extremely variable...As for the point about answering questions:- ...we have only nine minutes (just over eight excluding headlines) to cover all the news, not just the news from France."* (BBC WAC, 1968)

In April 1970 (the same year BBC Radio 4's current affairs programs *PM* and *The World Tonight* went on air), all BBC Radio news bulletins⁶ moved from being

5 The Staff list of October 1976 has no women listed at all; 1992 has eighteen women listed as journalists (out of a total of 68 workers). Figures for recent years are not available, but observation by author of the radio newsroom in 2006 and 2008 shows the ratio of men to women was 13 to 5 on the day shift and that Radio 1 had 2 male to 5 female journalists.

6 The BBC makes a distinction between summaries - short radio news updates, typically two or three minutes - and bulletins - longer news compilations. The terms bulletins and summaries are further institutionalised by the presence of a summaries desk and a bulletins desk, in which bulletins desk refers to the team of writers/producers who compile the news for key moments on Radios 3 and 4 (0700, 0800, 0900, 1300, 1800, 2200 and 2400),

straight announcer-read ones to including reporters' voices. The new head of the Newsroom, Peter Woon, wrote that the increased use of reporters' voices was aimed at "enabling radio, by reporting with greater expertise and authority to explain and interpret more in an increasingly complex world." (BBC WAC, s. d. R78/1 203/1) Many complaints were received from listeners about the poor quality of the audio inserts, some correspondents apparently felt they were not respected by a newsroom that was "only obsessed with putting our stories into voice [...] we are anxious about the apparent erosion of standards" (BBC WAC, s. d., p. R28 554/1 Political Editor Hardiman Scott) and radio newsroom subeditors (subs) bemoaned to Schlesinger in 1978 that they were "losing the art of writing" (Schlesinger, 1978, p. 263). More recently, former subs still look back on that period as one that created enormous dissatisfaction: "I remember the shock one day – must have been early 1970s, when the edict came out from the new editor, Peter Woon, 'I want a minimum of four voice pieces, in every news bulletin', which actually reduced your job to writing cues" (Luscombe, 2013, p. 92). Worries about falling standards continue today; arguably, nostalgia makes people think everything was always better in bygone days. Similarly, concerns about too many entertainment stories are not limited to current times. In 1974 the Controller of Radio 3 was appalled by the decision to lead the Radio 4 morning bulletins with a story about the resignation of Miss World. This, he told the weekly program review board of 27 November, was:

"yet another sign of the growing insularity and triviality of British journalism. By far the most important news of the day had been the American mining strike news...He recalled what he had said about the affair of the Price Sisters...This had been another wrong decision in the same vein. Mistake after mistake was being made." (BBC WAC, s. d., p. B510-1 News Policy File 3).

Earlier that year John Crawley, the Chief Assistant to the Director-General had written an internal paper on domestic news in which he said that "BBC news is far from trivial, but it does include more 'popular' journalism than it did" (BBC WAC, 1974 B 510-1, 4.1.1974). It appears that entertainment was already part of BBC News' objective in the sixties as well. Notes from September 1967 about *Late Night Extra*, a joint program on Radio 1 and Radio 2, show the newsroom had been asked to include, if possible, "anything about pop singers and the 'charts' or perhaps a night club fracas involving a showbiz personality" (BBC WAC, s. d. Home News Policy R28/520/1).

LBC (the UK's first independent radio station) and IRN (Independent Radio News), whose bulletins had more actuality and more spontaneous reporting, were started in 1973: the first time BBC Radio News faced direct competition. Auntie responded by creating *Newsbeat* on Radio 1: short news programs with significant amounts of real actuality. Use of actuality and voicers', however, appeared to be confined to Radio News *bulletins* while the shorter news *summaries* do not appear to include inserts until a long time after the 1970s. During the 1960s and 70s money issues increasingly became a consideration for the BBC and its news provision; income remained static or decreased because of inflation, leading to budget deficits. According to Briggs (Briggs, 1985, p. 358), "by 1977 the economic (value for money) issues rather than cultural issues were at the centre of the broadcasting debate". One of the ways to save money was by requiring the journalists to do more work, such as typing out the stories themselves rather than dictating them to

and the summaries desk compiles the news for the Radio 2, 3, 4 (and before 2012 for 5-Live also) at other times.

7 Voiced reports by correspondents

typists. Whereas the 1967 Radio Newsroom guide had warned journalists to resist the "temptation to write or type [...]because] dictating a story to a typist gives you your first contact with a listener" (BBC WAC, s. d. A/2773:20), this passage had been deleted from the next guide published in 1972. Many former journalists feel that the phasing out of typists in the newsroom constituted the removal of a layer of quality control, the first of many layers to be removed over subsequent years.

For more than twenty years there was a battle between the summaries and the Radio 4 bulletins, with the bulletins being considered by management as infinitely more important. In the 1980s the number of summaries increased and steadily more actuality was used in this output. It was not until the 1990s with the introduction of the sport and news channel Radio 5-Live, however, that the summaries came to be valued by the management. The physical evidence of this shift in perception was when the Summaries Desk - which had occupied a corner position until then - was moved to the centre of the radio newsroom of the space on the third floor of Broadcasting House.

From the late 1960s to the late 1990s the radio journalists increasingly had to master skills besides newsgathering and writing. The next group to be eased out after the typists were the Studio Managers who had recorded and cut the tapes with correspondents' contributions for the bulletins. Journalists first occasionally cut reel-to-reel tape and then as D-cart digital editing became available in the mid-90s, they were tasked with editing their own material. Specialism in either radio or television journalism, particularly for correspondents and in BBC local radio and television, became a thing of the past as the drive towards bi-medialism took over during the leadership of Director-General John Birt, with its internal market 'producer choice' plans and rounds of redundancies. New computers and the introduction of ENPS (Electronic News Production System) - see photo - meant the radio subs had to be increasingly computer-literate. It took a while for the subs to stop hankering after the simple BASYS word processors. The role of 'copy taster', a junior journalist who monitored stories from the news agencies for the summaries desk, disappeared too: now subs could easily see news agency alerts on their own desktop.

A BBC Audience Research report from the late 1980s indicated that 13-25 year olds thought Radio 1 had an excess of 'dead' news on the network, "that is, a focus on national news reports in the absence of more 'human' news, local news and light-hearted trivia" (BBC WAC, s. d. R9/447/1). As one former journalist puts it: "The Newsbeat team thought the newsroom were a bit old fuddy-duddy and weren't thinking enough really about what the Newsbeat audiences wanted. Some of the newsroom people thought the Newsbeat people were a bunch of silly prats who didn't really know what news was" (Luscombe, 2013, p. 96). After 1997, the Radio One Newsbeat team took over the responsibility of writing the hourly summaries for its network from the Radio Newsroom. That left the Radio Newsroom with summaries and bulletins for Radios 2, 3, 4, and 5-Live and GNS (bespoke summaries for local radio). BBC News 24 (digital TV channel) and BBC News Online (website) started in 1997; the latter quickly became a popular site for an increasing number of people who became connected to the world wide web. In 1998, the Radio Newsroom left Broadcasting House in Central London and moved

8 Radio 5, which started on the former AM frequency of Radio 2 in 1990 was not successful at attracting audiences. It was re-launched in 1994 as Radio5-live (although dubbed by many "radio bloke"), a strong current affairs and sports channel.

to White City in the west of the capital where it shared a newsroom with BBC television.

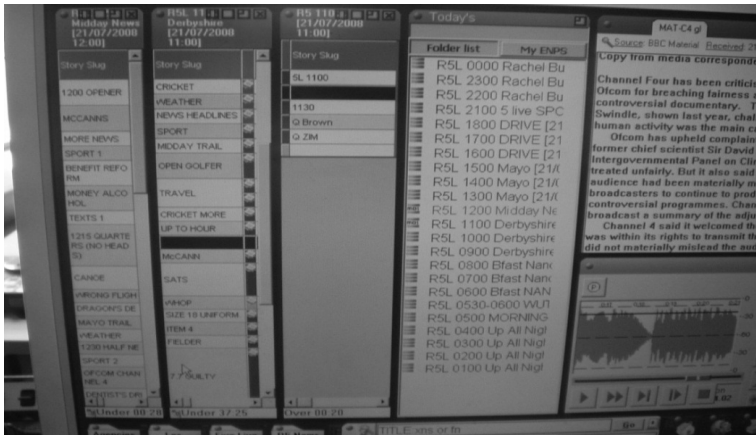


Figure 1. Screenshot of ENPS system showing running orders from various programs and news summaries, 'wires' copy, and audio on digital editing screen. (summer 2008)

4 Changes and more of the same

The lay-offs of the 1990s as well as increased output and digital editing meant the radio journalists had to do more with fewer resources. Several new services were added to the Corporation's radio offerings in the new century, requiring the radio newsroom - now essentially just radio desks - to also write the news for 'mobile minute' and 6-Music. In the last ten years there have been yet more redundancies and cost-cutting measures as the BBC has tried to deal with financial problems arising from the economic crisis and a freeze in the license fee. To counter the extra workload, the summaries desk no longer prepares a separately written GNS summary for local radio stations, sending them the Radio 2 summary instead.

The radio journalists producing the radio summaries and bulletins work in 12-hour shifts. Commonly they tend to work three days or nights on and then have three days off. They will rotate among the various jobs, so that they are not always writing for either bulletins or for summaries. Stories come in to the multimedia newsroom from the News Agencies, BBC correspondents, BBC local radio, press releases and 'tip-offs' from the public. Much of the news of the day has been planned: a diary of prospects ('newsgathering diary') that all news and current affairs outlets of the BBC can access is maintained by planning journalists and discussed by editors. In the morning there is an editorial meeting involving the main editors and heads of department. The Radio 4 Six O'Clock News has a separate meeting after lunch to decide on the running order and the treatment of stories for that evening. For summaries there are no long planning meetings.

Whilst the number of journalists has decreased, the amount of output has risen steadily over the past few decades. Since the late 1960s there has been more than a five-fold increase in the number of radio bulletins and summaries on the domestic

networks (Luscombe, 2013). There is concern that constant production of news output, similar to what Davies describes as "churnalism" (Davies, 2009), leads to less regard for accuracy, for the quality of the writing and for reflection. Technological developments have brought a myriad of benefits to radio and its news professionals, e.g. they can talk to correspondents in the field more quickly, have more and better quality audio to illustrate the output, use the internet for research, and find story ideas and real people caught up in disasters through social media. But these additional tools in newsgathering and news production also mean there is more pressure to feed the rolling news networks and get the news out quickly rather than checking first, broadcasting later. Internal memos written in 2003 and 2004 by an assistant editor of *News Online*, Hugh Berlyn, and obtained by *The Telegraph* newspaper, express concern about the level of accuracy in spelling, names, grammar and factual content and go on to warn that simply re-using stories from local BBC radio and TV stations is not acceptable:

"Yesterday we carried out a study of how many of your stories were being properly checked by a second pair of eyes before publication. To my surprise and concern, more than 60 stories around the country were apparently published without being second-checked... I really think the level of complaints is such that our credibility is on the line and that cannot be allowed to continue... We have to accept that the standard of journalism in local radio and regional TV is not the same as that required by News Online." (Hastings, 2004)

In Radio News, although there is usually an Assistant-Editor in charge of the summaries desk, the journalist responsible for a particular summary on a network (and from 1998 on, often responsible for more than one summary) can decide on the running order and actuality (s)he wants. Here too, the journalists aim to check each others' writing, but usually a lack of time prevents them from doing so.

"If you're the assistant editor on the early summaries desk...[e]very hour what you have to check is all the 5-Line summary stories, the Radio 4 summary, the Radio 2 summary, the online minute summary and the 6-Music summary. That's five things...pretty much coming in altogether and to be honest you don't really care." (Luscombe, 2013, p. 117-118)

The fast pace of the news desks and the ability of a sub to check, choose, write and edit material himself can be exhilarating. At Radio 1 the ability to communicate with listeners more directly to find out what they think of stories has transformed the way the news is produced; for example, audiences can text, email or tweet their reaction which in turn helps the subs when deciding on the order of news items. BBC Audience Research provides the radio news desks with daily snapshot reports on audience overnight reaction to particular news items¹⁰. The availability of BBC Radio on many new platforms and its own iPlayer Radio service also meets seems to be meeting a demand from listeners to access content anywhere. with monthly iPlayer requests for radio increasing significantly¹¹. However, while there may be a clear desire for more access and for more interactivity on radio, it also seems likely that for managers this drive for audience participation, including User-Generated Content, as well as increased convergence and multi-skilling stems from a need to cut costs. According to Wallace "full integration [is] a management goal, [...] not as

10 For example, on 16 July 2008, 32% of the Radio 4 Today listeners said the story massive public sector strike over pay deals 'particularly stood out' for them, compared to 29% of listeners who tuned in to the Chris Moyles Show on Radio 1 (the catchline on Radio 1 was council staff strike over pay rather than public sector strike).

11 Figures from October 2012 show 'year-on-year, monthly iPlayer requests for radio had increased 56% to 2.8 million on mobile, and 300% to 1.2m on tablet.' (BBC, 2013)

a result of technological determinism, [but] rather economic pressures" (Wallace, 2013, p. 113). From her investigation of multi-skilling in BBC regional newsrooms Wallace concluded that working across platforms encourages both collaboration between journalists and autonomy, but also leads to more stress.

While the technology and the demands placed upon radio news journalists may have undergone *major* changes, particularly since the 1970s, the main content of the BBC's domestic radio news bulletins has not. New networks have introduced their own presentational styles and will differ in the wording they use and the choice of news stories to try to appeal to their target audience. For example, the Radio 1 Style Guide of 2006 explains how to achieve conversational style on its network:

"Conversational style is good. Build tension in your writing if you can - use dramatic key words and emphasis when you come to broadcast it - but OTT style is not what we're looking for from reporters. A good script won't need to be shouted. Sentences and links should end on a big finish - build drama to a climax - but to repeat - not in a tabloid style." (BBC, 2006)

However, The prime purpose of all radio news, however, continues to be to inform people (in a very short amount of time), to bring them up to date with what has happened in their community or the world. Because of its ephemeral nature and because it is often a secondary activity, radio¹² does not afford listeners the chance to reread stories as printed papers and online news would do. Nor does the listener usually have the benefit of visual clues such as on television¹³. Therefore, radio news must be comprehensible on first hearing, which in practice means short sentences and simple, clear wording. Although radio language has the appearance of speech, in many instances and certainly in the case of regular news bulletins, the text is scripted beforehand. "Broadcast script is neither conventional speech nor conventional writing... It is addressed to a distant and mass audience and is less colloquial, more premeditated and syntactically elaborate, than most conventional speech." (Starkey et Crisell, 2009, p. 138). Burger in his study of Austrian radio similarly concluded that the structure and spoken form of radio news bulletins in 2005 had not changed much from the time of his first study in 1984. There are sometimes slight differences in structure depending on the radio station and the market in which it operates, but all radio news bulletins tend to adhere to a clearly recognized structure to guide listeners into, during and out of the bulletin (Burger, 2005).

The style of BBC Radio News in the 1960s - especially on the Home Programme - was one in which it sounded like the BBC was intoning to the nation; not necessarily because sentences were longer, but rather because the writing adopted a less conversational style and the bulletins had no audio inserts to enliven the long straight reads by formal sounding newsreaders. After the 1970s actuality began to play an increasingly important role. Post-1960s BBC radio started to become less formal, a move which reflected what was happening in society at the time. One noticeable change in radio news output was the abandonment of the title *Mr.* or *Mrs.* coupled with full names, although this change was gradual and not the same on all BBC networks. The style guide of 1983 advises journalists not to use *Mr.* and *Mrs.* on Radio 1, by 1990 the use of titles was no longer required on Radio 2 either and in 2000 the edict was that *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, *Ms.*, and *Miss* should no longer be

12 although that could now arguably also be said for television and web-based activities as it is common for people to be exposed to multi-sensory input from a variety of media while they are carrying out activities, even - despite being dangerous - texting and using facebook whilst driving.

13 some platforms do broadcast images and/or text during a radio program.

used at first mention (BBC, 2000). Increasing informality can also be detected in the greater diversification of accents of news readers and reporters. With respect to news topics, political and economic news continue to be important staples of BBC Radio news output - although more so on Radio 4 than on Radio 1 and 2. Radio 4 is also more likely than the other networks to cover international issues. Wars, accidents, natural disasters, crime and the lighter 'And Finally' type of story to finish off the bulletin are evident throughout the years in BBC radio output, while news stories about social and health issues, crime, entertainment and science/technology become more prominent from the 1980s and 90s onwards, reflecting the changing interests and priorities in society.

For those working in BBC radio news it has been clear for a long time that they are no longer only radio or broadcast journalists, no longer just news gatherers or writers; they need to be multi-skilled, flexible, immune to pressure and open to more changes. As Peter Horrocks contended in 2009, "fortress journalism" in which large institutions give the audience the news that the institution thinks the audience needs, is coming to an end (Horrocks, 2009) What will the future bring for radio broadcasting and BBC Radio News in particular? A 2011 review of BBC Radio 1, 1Xtra, Radio 2 and 6 Music suggested possible cost savings on all those stations. The report also criticized Radio 2 newsreaders for not writing the news themselves and doing "little else until the next hour's bulletin" as cited in (Plunkett, 2011). At the moment BBC Radio looks healthy, in its prime one might think, not the grand old dame in her nineties that she already is. However, the continued worry by the BBC over its funding through the license fee, over whether its Royal Charter will be renewed by successive governments who invariably believe the CorporationBBC - in trying to achieve impartiality - is biased against the ruling party, over pressure from commercial competitors who allege unfair competition, and over other issues such as the sex and more recently over revelations of sex scandals involving the presenters Jimmy Savile and Stuart Hall or the gender pay gaps of its presenters, means it is difficult to predict in what state of health the BBC will be in the next decade, let alone the next century¹⁴. Many more budget cuts are planned for the coming years; other options are also being looked at. For example, the BBC continues to face the dilemma of the public broadcaster: that of obtaining high ratings (to prove it is reaching large numbers of license fee payers) while having to cater to minority interests. While public broadcasting in the UK benefits from the fact that it does not have to rely on advertising, this does not mean it is immune to budgetary pressures, or pressure from the public and from politicians. Worries about the future for the BBC as a prime public broadcaster prompted Steven Barnett and Jean Seaton to urge parliamentarians to remember that "the BBC is one of those precious institutions that defines our exceptionalism— that sense of distinction that every nation state needs" (Barnett et Seaton, 2010, p. 2). Starkey and Crisell (2009) argue the BBC *will* continue to play a prominent role:

"[I]n future it seems that there will be a need to regulate broadcasting because it will be an abundant commodity. In so widely accessible and anarchic an environment, amid all the babble and cacophony of voices, which of the many broadcasters will we be able to believe? There must remain

14 A report by Dame Janet Smith into the culture and practice at the BBC during the time that Savile and Hall worked there was published in February 2016 (BBC, 2016) The BBC conducted a review of pay following a wave of indignation at the news that there were significant differences in salaries of top male and female presenters (including some on radio) (BBC, 2018).

at least one whose output can be relied on as truthful, authoritative and editorially independent, and the obvious candidate is the BBC because it is the nation's public service broadcaster.” (Starkey et Crisell, 2009, p. 128)

For BBC Radio and its news operation, - cheaper than television, more authoritative than online - , which has seemed to be able to reinvent itself time and again since 1922 to take advantage of the changes in technology, there is no reason to think that it cannot keep reinventing itself in the future. The radio newsroom might have been swallowed up in a multimedia news centre, BBC Radio News continues to play an important part in the daily lives of the millions of people who tune in to the BBC's various radio networks.

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