

3rd November 2011



Welcome to IBT's November newsletter with an update on our work and relevant news from the media industry.

BBC cuts

Last month the BBC Executive published its Delivering Quality First (DQF) plan, with across the board cuts. There will now be a public consultation by the BBC Trust. The plan envisages 'a smaller and radically reshaped BBC'. Some of the key cuts in content will involve: reduced budgets for entertainment on BBC1 and 2, for sport and for bbc.co.uk, BBC4 playing more of a complementary role to BBC2, and BBC3 having a similar relationship with BBC1. In terms of international content the main impact will be in news where some foreign correspondent posts will be cut and there will be a bigger role for World Service journalists to file stories for BBC News. It's likely that there will also be a cut in current affairs coverage on BBC2. One of the most interesting policies announced as part of DQF is 'a BBC ready to partner with others to build a shared digital public space.' Since the BBC is notoriously bad at partnerships it will be interesting to see how this policy is fleshed out. IBT will be publishing research next year which looks at how we can all play a bigger role in creating a more effective public space where our issues can be debated.

BBC Online briefing

Last month saw the latest of our briefings by commissioners. Steve Herrmann, editor of BBC News Online, gave a fascinating account of how the BBC's online news operation works and named key commissioners who could be contacted directly with story ideas. Please let me know if you'd like a copy of the briefing notes. These notes are only available to IBT members.

Next briefing will be with Al Jazeera English

Given the success of these briefings, we will be holding another one early next month, with Diarmuid Jeffreys, Editor of *People and Power*. Diarmuid is a distinguished former BBC journalist who has turned this into a major investigative strand. A number of recent programmes have looked at the issue of trafficking - featuring Nepalese children who work in Indian circuses, Nigerian women involved in crime and prostitution, and Vietnamese children involved in the UK cannabis trade. This briefing is a great opportunity to hear about which stories work best for *People and Power* and also to hear more about programming across the whole Al Jazeera English channel which is growing in importance and influence. The briefing will take place at 10am on Wednesday December 7th at the IBT offices in Southwark. Places are limited – please let me know if you'd like to attend.

New IBT research

Next month we'll be publishing a new piece of research on media coverage of the famine in the Horn of Africa. We've canvassed views from NGO media teams, journalists and academics, in the UK and abroad. Many thanks to all of you who spoke to our researcher, Helen Magee. The report comes to some interesting conclusions and makes recommendations for improving future coverage of famines. It will be published on the IBT website on December 1st.

Who Cares?

Polis and Plan UK will be holding a public debate next week to discuss the findings of a new piece of research by the LSE's Dr Shani Orgad which investigates what the UK public really thinks about aid appeals. The debate will take place at 6.30pm on Wednesday November 9th at the LSE Sheikh Zayed Theatre, New Academic Building. Places are free but on a first come basis. If you'd like to attend, contact polis@lse.ac.uk

IDS research

The Institute of Development Studies has published the third report of the UK Public Opinion Monitor *What Does the Public Think, Know and Do about Aid and Development?* It shows that only 1 in 5 people in the UK feel well informed about aid and echoes the findings of last month's British Red Cross research which found that most people had little understanding of how aid works. IBT contributed a comment piece to the IDS research which can be found on page 18 of the report http://www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/UKPOMReport3_FINAL.pdf

Channel 4 cleared over Sri Lanka documentary and BBC defends graphic images

Ofcom has said that whilst images featured in the Channel 4 documentary *Sri Lanka's Killing Fields* were 'brutal and shocking' they were appropriate for an audience watching at 11pm. Ofcom received more than 100 complaints about the programme's impartiality and the images used but none were upheld. The film focused on the UN investigation into alleged war crimes during the final weeks of the Sri Lankan civil war.

In a separate incident, BBC editors have defended their use of the video of Muammar Gaddafi in his final moments, which featured in the main news bulletins on the day of his death. Mary Hockaday, head of the BBC newsroom has said that the graphic images of Gaddafi moments before his death were justified to convey the scale of the 'dramatic and gruesome' events.

Children and the digital divide

Ofcom's latest research on the viewing habits of children confirms that they are watching more television than ever before, much of it through catch up services like iPlayer. Internet use has also become pervasive with 95% of 12-15 year olds having internet access at home. But the figures highlight a significant digital divide. Only 80% of children from poorer families have internet access at home compared to 98% in the richest homes.

BBC and British Council launch Schools World Service

The BBC, in partnership with the British Council, has launched a Schools World Service which will provide topical stories for teachers around the world to use as educational materials. A recent report looked at the Egyptian revolution from the point of view of children in Cairo. The new service is an extension of BBC World Class.

Lobbying Parliament on the future of the World Service

Following the positive response to his report, *Brave New World Service*, John McCarthy will be briefing MPs and peers on Wednesday November 30th at 1pm in the Grimond Room, Portcullis House. There remains strong concern in Parliament about the changes to the funding and management of the World Service so we expect a good attendance. If you know of any MPs or peers

who you think might be interested please let them know or contact me, and I'll send them an invitation. The report can be downloaded from the IBT website www.ibt.org.uk

Best wishes

Mark