

Media(4)-03-11 : Paper 7

National Assembly for Wales: Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee, Task and Finish Group on the future outlook for the media in Wales

Submission by Golwg Cyf. and Golwg Newydd Cyf

There are two papers here – the one by Golwg Cyf. summarising some general points and more specific points about the press; the other by Golwg Newydd Cyf. concentrating on on-line developments.

Evidence by Golwg Cyf. (Dylan Iorwerth – Editor Director)

1. The companies' background

1.1 As the names suggest, Golwg Cyf. and Golwg Newydd Cyf. are two companies which work closely together to create and promote journalistic material in Welsh.

Golwg Cyf. was established in 1988 to meet the need for a news and current affairs magazine, employing professional journalists and aiming to provide high standards of content and presentation.

The magazine Golwg has been published weekly since then selling between about 2,800 and 4,000 copies. Considering that many copies go to schools and colleges, we estimate that that means a readership of between about 9,000 and 12,000.

Since the 1990s the company Golwg Cyf. has also published a magazine every other month for Welsh learners, called *Lingo Newydd*, and a monthly magazine for small children, called *WCW a'i ffrindiau*. This also includes an English translation.

Commercial

1.2 Another element in the business is Gwasanaethau Golwg (*Golwg Services*), which provides copy, design and publishing work for a variety of public and private customers – from advertising copy to magazines, newsletters and books.

This branch was created early in the history of the company to produce income for the development of the magazines. It means that a comparatively small proportion of the company's income – less than 20% - has been in the form of grants.

The model was to use the skills and resources which we possessed in order to create additional income to support our core work.

The company now employs 14 people (corresponding to 11½ full time jobs). Seven of these are journalists.

Golwg360

1.3 In 2009, Golwg Cyf. set up a new company, Golwg Newydd Cyf., to support an on-line news service, Golwg360, which is updated every day, all day.

The new service was designed to work side by side with the weekly magazine, rather than replace it. The on-line service deals with current news, and the magazine is more about research, feature and analytical items.

2. The state of the press in Wales

The press – and the traditional media in general – faces several major challenges.

- Communication technology is changing surprisingly fast, which makes it difficult for the traditional forms to adapt, with regard to content and business.
- To all intents and purposes, words such as ‘the press’, ‘television’ and ‘radio’ will become more and more meaningless, since they describe technological methods of presenting content. In the remainder of this paper, terms such as ‘print journalism’ are used to mean journalism by means of the written word, on all kinds of platforms.
- The words ‘daily’, ‘weekly’ and ‘monthly’ also, to some extent, will lose their meaning in this context.
- Society has also changed, with regard to reading habits, cultural habits, the nature of the population and commerce.
- The economic downturn has caused a burden which is particularly acute in the field.
- For the traditional Welsh media, there is a particular challenge because of the reduction in the number of first language Welsh speakers and those to whom Welsh is their main language culturally and socially.
- Because of the failure to ensure the standing of Welsh in local, commercial radio services, there is an important gap in the provision.
- With S4C coming under the wing of the BBC, there is a greater danger than ever to pluralism, particularly as readers move increasingly towards multi-media and Internet material.

In general, this has led to the closure of some local papers and cutting back on the number of journalists. The ‘national’ papers in particular have seen a huge reduction in their circulation.

Although Golwg is under commercial pressure, particularly because of the reduction in job advertisements and public notices, the circulation has held up.

3. The future

3.1 It appears that the news media are all coming together with regard to technical platforms – mobile computer equipment. While there will still be room for traditional paper publications, we need to ensure the position of print journalism in the new media. Print journalism alone – words rather than pictures and sound – is able to offer the permanent depth required in culture and democracy. **We need to look for ways to help publications to adapt and take advantage of the new technology.**

3.2 In Wales, and through the medium of Welsh in particular, there is a danger that this new field will be taken over by the public sector. Only establishments such as the BBC and S4C have the resources to be able to invest in the technology swiftly and on an adequate scale. **This power and**

the ability to commission as well as produce should be used to promote independent ventures and pluralism rather than to take possession of the field. This could follow the same kind of principle as with commissioning television programmes from independent companies.

3.3 News media are more than news and cultural content. They are also vehicles for commerce. Traditionally, advertisements have been an essential part of any newspaper, and in the case of local papers they have offered an important service to businesses in their areas by creating a market. With globalisation, the growth of supermarkets, chain stores and distance shopping on the Internet, this role is more important than ever, but in danger. **We need to consider that the media in Wales has a part in economic development. They can contribute to the development of an information economy in Wales and help national and local businesses to respond to the communication and commercial revolution. Helping the press and traditional media to develop their use of the new technology could also help Welsh businesses.**

3.4 One of the main aims of the Welsh Government is to ensure a bilingual Wales. Many governments have acknowledged that promoting the use of the language in all fields is now of the keys – outside schools and the public sector. A variety of media, voices and cultural products is essential to accomplish that. Considering the new nature of social networking, ensuring the position of Welsh in the digital media will also be essential, but that cannot be done by means of one or two large public bodies. **Helping the traditional Welsh media to adapt to the new technology and taking advantage of it, and helping to establish new initiatives in the field, are part of the effort to promote the language and create a bilingual Wales.**

3.5 Being local is very important. One of Wales' strengths and weaknesses is that it is a community of communities. The effect of this is to be seen in the growth and downturn of the traditional press. Wales has no newspaper with a wide circulation in all corners of the country, and one of the weaknesses of the professional Welsh press has been a failure to develop a network of local papers. On the other hand, the comparative success of the *papurau bro* (Welsh language community papers) shows the importance of being very local. It happens that this is one of the key words in the communication revolution also. This offers an opportunity – it is a way for the Welsh media and local media to do better than British and international communities, and it would be a marketing platform for indigenous businesses also. **This means working from the local upwards, supporting new enterprises and development which include the press, and harnessing efforts in the field of economic development, social development and also linguistic development.**

3.6 As the various media come together, there is talk that local radio and local television is anachronistic. Rather, maybe we should think of local, multi-media information and entertainment services, which are being introduced digitally. **By having various traditional contributors working in partnership on these platforms, it would be possible to ensure variety of content and voice and create services which are valuable to society, culture, language and economic prosperity. In the case of Welsh, there will need to be a proactive attitude to this in order to ensure the position of the language in different communities across Wales.**

3.7 Our emphasis is on holistic action, seeing the prosperity of the press with regard to economic development, social development and linguistic development. We also see the press – journalism in word – as an essential part of the pattern of the media in the future. But support is needed to respond to the technical and commercial challenges. One of the most difficult things for a small

company like us is to invest in research and technical development. It is also difficult to see when to venture into technology which is promising but not proven. **Government and the economic sector – universities, for instance – could have a key role in that.**

Dylan Iorwerth

7.11.11

Presentation by Golwg Newydd, by Owain Schiavone (Chief Executive)

Background

Golwg Newydd is the company which runs the continuous on-line Welsh news service, Golwg360.com.

The online service was launched in May 2009, and it has gone from strength to strength since then. On average, Golwg360 publishes about 30 stories daily and we now attract over 5000 visitors to the site every day. Although we cannot be absolutely certain, we believe that Golwg360 is the most popular Welsh language internet site by now.

During the last two and a half years the service has faced several challenges concerning content and technology, but without doubt the biggest challenge is trying to give the company a firm commercial base. In the present economic climate, this is probably a common problem among the media in Wales.

Filling gaps

As for the content of the website, the principle which we have followed is to try to fill gaps and add value to the Welsh content which is provided by other media, and I feel we have succeeded in doing this effectively.

Plans

In planning for the future, we intend to continue with this principle, and combine original content by Golwg360 with being a gateway for other on-line content in Welsh.

One priority in the next period is to introduce more local sections into the service. By doing so we hope to combine professional journalism with 'citizen' journalism (i.e. stories by the readers) and also feed information and relevant news from other internet places.

Another priority is to provide a platform for more multi-media content on Golwg360.com. We hope to be able to produce more voice and sound content in-house, but we are also anxious to provide a platform for content which is produced by other people, e.g. we are co-operating at the moment with the programme Sgorio to put highlights of football games on the website.

Impressions of the Welsh language media

I feel the various media in Wales must work much more closely together in order to protect and strengthen the sector. Resources and money are scarce everywhere, but here is an opportunity by sharing specialism and resources.

Wales is still somewhat naïve about the potential of new technology and the strength of the web in particular. Used properly, the web can be used to further strengthen the media, including traditional broadcasting and the print medium. In one way, introducing Golwg360 was seen as a threat to the magazine Golwg. But by adapting slightly we have developed a system where both media are co-operating effectively and strengthening each other. The success of this model is something which could be introduced into many other parts of the media in Wales.

Priorities for Wales

We need a process of general education in Wales about the strength of the new media.

Welsh businesses need to make more effective use of the Web to market their service –whether by advertising in the media or by using various networks (e.g. social networks).

On a community level, there is an opportunity to use the Web to strengthen geographic communities. Although social networks bring people closer together and make it easier to socialise on the one hand, it can also be a threat to community activity at grass roots as people feel less need to leave the house to meet with friends, and so on. Effectively used, of course, it is possible to use the technology to promote what happens on a local and community level and reach a wider audience. Communities, therefore, must embrace the web and use it rather than fear it.

The understanding of the Web by the media in Wales is also mixed. The Web is now very open, and it is quite easy to create websites, but one needs more than an independent website to reach the audience: one also needs traffic. Having said that, direct traffic does not always have to be attracted to convey a message – there is space on popular websites and networks, where contact traffic can be just as effective, if not more so.

Owain Schiavone

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