### **MA Online Journalism: M**ED7126 **- Dat**a and **Multimedia Journalism**

# **Assignment element 1: Communities of Practice (2**0**%)**

This element of assignment is designed to help you **build knowledge and contacts in a certain field**, as well as building **expertise**. But the key objective throughout is to build your **reputation**.

‘Communities of practice’ is a broad term to indicate groups of individuals whose knowledge, contacts and expertise will be vital to your work as a journalist. [Read this research paper](http://moodle.bcu.ac.uk/pluginfile.php/824332/mod_resource/content/1/CommunitiesOfPractice_ELDRIDGESTEEL.pdf) to put it into some academic context.

Examples include:

* Developers who might help you scrape data, or clean your data, or visualise it, or make apps with it
* Statisticians who might provide insights into your data, or suggest avenues of inquiry
* Videographers who can suggest ways to improve your video, or tools to use
* Audio producers who can suggest ways to improve your audio, or tools to use
* Victims and their families who can put a human face on your story
* Organisations and volunteers who might explain how systems really work, or where you should look for the story, or who you should speak to

There’s a [huge list here](http://www.poynter.org/2015/a-list-of-every-hidden-journalism-related-social-media-group-i-could-find/362267/).

This small element of your assignment should document:

1. Your **research into** those communities,
2. Your **engagement with** them, and most of all:
3. The **content you produce to serve and engage with** those communities.

## Where to begin

Use your advanced search skills to **find communities of practice**. Some ideas to brainstorm under include:

* Developer communities, e.g. Democracy Club, MySociety, RewiredState
* Technical communities, e.g. video production, audio production, JavaScript, etc
* Activist communities, e.g. openDemocracy, Change.org
* Expert communities, e.g. StatsUserNet
* Social communities, e.g. Mumsnet
* Professional communities

You can look for those communities across a range of platforms. For example:

* Blog and blog comments (e.g. <http://www.findingtheframe.com/>, <http://masteringmultimedia.wordpress.com/> - check the blogrolls)
* Forums (e.g. http://help.hackshackers.com/)
* Mailing lists (e.g. NICAR - <http://www.ire.org/membership/subscribe/nicar-l.html>)
* Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn or other social networks. Look for groups and hashtag chats, e.g. #ddj
* Physical meetups (e.g. <http://hackshackers.com/chapters/meetups/>, industry conferences)

Then, **identify how you can play a role in that community**. Some examples:

* Asking a question. Users on some mailing lists (e.g. Scraperwiki) are often happy to help if they can see it’s a worthwhile project
* Answering a question. Even better if you can use your journalistic skills to help someone out.
* Summarising discussions. If there’s an interesting one then people will appreciate you picking out the most important points or tips.
* Highlighting good practice. For example great examples of data journalism in your field, or video, or audio, or fact checking, or visualisation.
* Highlighting useful resources. For example the best mailing lists, tools, etc.
* Organising. Whether that’s an event, or a design.
* Interviewing. This is one easy way to serve a community, by highlighting its key individuals and asking great questions that everyone benefits from.
* Sharing your own learning. This is another simple thing to do. Solve a technical problem and then share ‘how to’ do that. Or answer a question you had and share an explainer on ‘How X works’.

**Publish and share** those tutorials, interviews, summaries, lists etc, actively engaging with those communities through appropriate channels.

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## What you submit

You should **submit the following elements** (representing 75 hours of work):

* A **Word document** containing the coversheet and copies of a **series of blog posts** documenting what you have learned about the medium and the communities of practice -
  + These should be written week by week as you experiment
  + At least one of these blog posts should be a critical evaluation of your work to that date, including a proposal for the second assignment.
* Links to your contributions to the communities of practice (the best way to do this is to use Delicious or another online bookmarking service to bookmark your contributions as you go)
* A declaration of original work
* Examples of your work within the medium -
  + if this is audio, video, Flash or graphics then please submit original files on memory stick along with a link to any live versions
  + if your work cannot be saved to memory stick then submit printouts and links to live versions

**What should I blog about?**

* Research into the medium (primary and secondary, i.e. existing literature on the field)
* Key people (profiles or interviews)
* Your experiments - these are likely to be linked to the newsroom you are working with
* Useful resources, e.g. mailing lists, blogs, groups, tools etc.
* Developments in the field (news)
* Liveblogging, previews and write ups of community events (e.g. hackdays, Hacks/Hackers, meetups)
* At least one post should be a critical evaluation of your work including a proposal for the second assignment.
* [See this weekly outline for a framework](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-3jStoQeYNtlVwlv_wN-zZiPIR6yDffxUH3VkkgpuAQ/pub) - this is only a suggestion, however

The assignment is **due before 12 midday on the Friday of week 7 (March 10)** and should be submitted via Moodle.

## **Mark scheme**

Assessment here is particularly concerned with academic exploration of the medium and its possibilities online (two thirds of your marks), rather than its content (one third). You will be assessed on content production in [the second assignment](http://doc?docid=0AZTo6f5Yj1iJZGd6MjliNjJfOTM3aGd6emZ3Zms&hl=en_GB), which represents the majority of your marks for this module. Please note that anonymous marking is not possible in this assignment due to authorship being explicit in publication.

Your work will be awarded equal marks against the following criteria:

### **Research**

* Into the communities of practice
* Into the theory and practice of the medium.
* You should explicitly state what you have researched as part of your exploration by either linking to your sources or using a traditional bibliography. Sources might include some or all of the following:
  + Books (these might be about the medium, practitioners, or related fields such as film history, art, etc.)
  + Articles and blog posts (as above)
  + Looking at examples of other work in the medium
  + Speaking to practitioners directly, via email, mailing lists, phone or other channels
  + Experimenting yourself with the medium

### **Reflection and analysis**

* On the results of your experimentation and exploration in the field.
* Again, this should be explicitly stated - it's a good practice to blog about your work as you go to get into the habit of reflecting.
* Some things you might do:
  + Analyse the product itself - how good is your visualisation? How clean is that data? Composition? Editing? Narrative? Source material? Contributors? Opportunity for interactivity?
  + How do others react to it? Look at analytics if you've published it - try to get users' honest reactions.
  + Reflect on your own processes: how do they differ from previous production processes from your professional life or other training? How might you change your processes for different results?
  + See Moodle for examples of previous evaluations

### **Creativity and originality of** engagement

* Based on research and analysis:
* How creative are your posts and other contributions to the community?
* How creative is the treatment and execution of any experimentation in techniques?
* How creative have you been in sourcing material or contributors?
* How creative have you been around interactivity and engagement?

**Indicative criteria boundaries are shown below.**

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|  | **0 – 39%**  **Fail** | **40 – 49%**  **Fail** | **50 – 59%**  **Pass** | **60 – 69%**  **Strong Pass**  **(merit)** | **70 – 79%**  **Very Strong Pass**  **(distinction)** | **80 – 100%**  **Exceptionally Strong Pass**  **(distinction)** |
| **Criterion 1**  **Mark:** | **Research** | | | | | |
| **The research is characterised by degrees of uneven grasp of the subject and use of very few usually poorly selected secondary sources, and limited awareness of professional contexts. A mark of 0 indicates that work is unacceptable or unsubmitted** | **Work fails to meet minimum postgraduate standards characterised by an uneven, if sometimes creditable grasp of the subject based upon a few, and possibly poorly selected, secondary sources, and some awareness of professional contexts.** | **Good work characterised by a solid, if on occasions uneven, grasp of the subject tending towards secondary sources, but revealing clarity about professional and scholarly contexts.** | **Very good work characterised by a competent grasp of subject using a good range of secondary and primary sources and a familiarity with professional and scholarly contexts.** | **Well-selected information developed from secondary sources or original research demonstrating a breadth and depth of understanding. Showing an assured familiarity with professional and scholarly contexts.** | **Outstanding and thorough research which contributes to the field, particularly through primary research and its situation alongside secondary literature.** |
| **Criterion 2**  **Mark:** | **Reflection and analysis** | | | | | |
| **Reflection is dominated by received notions and opinion and lacks evidentiary support or critical reflection. A mark of 0 indicates that work is unacceptable or unsubmitted** | **Evaluations will tend to received notions and opinion and will generally lack evidentiary support.** | **Some examples of evidence-based critical evaluation and reflective practice and an awareness of contemporary problems and some of the alternative positions applied to them.** | **Many examples of evidence-based critical evaluation and reflective practice and a rounded awareness of contemporary problems and the alternative positions applied to them.** | **Clear evidence of critical and reflexive engagement with the complexities of contemporary problems, and evaluations are consistently based upon evidence, a keen awareness of alternative positions, and offer original insights and solutions.** | **Outstanding reflection which discusses ideas or concepts in a sophisticated or developed manner and with due regard to professional conventions even when they break them. Clear evidence of critical and reflexive engagement with the complexities of contemporary problems, based upon evidence.** |
| **Criterion 3**  **Mark:** | **Creativity and originality of execution** | | | | | |
| **Artefacts are unorganised and ignore professional standards. They may have very limited use or relevance to the scope of the brief. They may not utilise even basic new technology, lack clarity and ignore professional conventions. A mark of 0 indicates that work is unacceptable or unsubmitted** | **Artefacts are unrelated to the scope of the brief, unorganised in execution, or have deficiencies in professional standards. They may have some limited use, utilise some basic new technology, present ideas or concepts but these may lack clarity and ignore professional conventions.** | **Artefacts relate to the brief, and there will be evidence of organisation, professional processes and standards. Work will be useable in real situations and utilise some new technology, present ideas or concepts clearly and with due regard to professional conventions.** | **Artefacts respond to common challenges through organised processes and to good professional standards. Work is distinctive and clearly outlines ideas or concepts and present work within professional conventions.** | **Artefacts produced to very good professional standards marked by a developed ability to approach challenges with insight and innovation through systematic and managed processes using new technology.** | **Work is outstanding, at or above professional standards, and may include new or hybrid forms from disparate elements.** |