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Two specialisations carry special prestige. These are parliament and the city. Reporters working in these fields are operating in particularly important areas, and they are area in which experience counts.

The parliamentary and city correspondents operate physically away from the office, in Whitehall and the City finance centres, and often they have the editor's ear and act as editorial advisers. As society is constantly changing, so specialisations are constantly changing. Compare the divisions of government. In Britain now those have been government departments concerned with industry, trade and technology have been combined in the Department of Trade and Industry. The government departments concerned with local authorities, transport, housing and planning are combined in the Department of the Environment. This is because government has recognised that industrial research and development, manufacturing and exporting are all interrelated. Roads, housing and planning are all interrelated.

Similarly in newspapers the old specialisations are becoming outdated and being replaced by new spheres of reportage similar to those of the news government departments. So specialisations can change, and must change. The specialist must no longer be narrowly concerned with his own world, but be prepared to link it with other subjects. There is another important division between newspapers specialisations. Some of them are important to the reader because they affect his personal and social life (politics, national and local, industrial topics, medicine). A newspaper will treat these subjects seriously because they are matters of reader-interest: people will buy the paper to read about them.

But there are other specialisations that have a double concern for newspaper. Among these are entertainment, property, motoring and travel. These matters interest the reader. But they also attract lucrative advertising to the paper. These are rich-spending words, and the reporter dealing with them will feel more than most reporters the pressures of publicity and advertising, and the editor will be aware that if he treats these subjects fully and in detail in his editorial columns, the paper's advertising revenue will benefit. No editor can ignore this, and many papers today arrange advertising supplements to take advantage of it. The various specialists may be involved in the editorial preparation of these supplements, in addition to their other work.

## **Fields**

1. The Politics: Generally, there are three types of parliamentary reporters. Firstly, those who take down verbatim the proceedings of parliament for official records and news agencies.

Secondly, those who write about the selective parliamentary proceedings which they consider most important or interesting. In the third category news lobby correspondents are included. Usually, the news agencies circulate a selective report of the most important proceedings of the day to the leading newspapers of the country. The lobby porters are allowed to enter the lobby hall of the parliament building where they can talk to the ministers and members of the parliament to collect political information from them.

They also attend the press conferences held by the various political leaders of the ruling and opposition parties. Such type of reporters' job is quite tricky

because they come to know many things which are told off the record or which are non-attributable. The second type of reporters which are already mentioned above, are the sketch writers who write the description of what goes on from a personal point of views. They are closer to feature writers than the news reporters. The function of the parliamentary reporter is to study, analyse and write reports for the press regarding the government reports, white papers, reports of parliamentary committees etc. 2. Finance: Financial journalism is a most distinct branch of the profession; for this there are four main reasons. The first is that the financial or city journalist's skill is more saleable outside journalism than those of other reporters.

Not only can he go into public relations (financial PR is the fastest-growing sector of a fast-growing industry) but he can also switch into investment analysis or management with stockbrokers, merchant bankers and finance houses. This has the corollary that financial journalists as a group earn more than other specialists. The second reason is that pure financial journalism, untainted by economic or industrial journalism is restricted almost entirely to the national dailies and a few of the biggest provincial newspapers. The third is that financial journalists mostly have an out-of- house office in the financial area of the city, which accentuates their strong sense of independence.

The fourth is the power wielded by financial journalists in money terms. A good city story can move the price of a share 10 or 15 per cent and the total market value of the equity by several million pounds. Such stories can not only make or break important deals but can, on occasions, make or break companies (and journalists).

**Qualifications:**

There are two qualities that matter in city journalist. The first is that he must be approved by his city editor.

The second is that he should produce stories that are justified by events. Style hardly matters to start with: the city editor will probably rewrite your copy anyway. City journalists have this in common with racing tipsters—their predictions not only affect the pockets of their readers but also their track record can be accurately observed. Paper qualifications in banking, economics, accountancy and the stock exchange are virtually meaningless. People with high qualifications have failed to make good city journalists and people without them have often made the top jobs.

**City stories:**

In any really big news story affecting the country the stock market is certain to figure. To this extent anything that affects shares is a city story but more narrowly, a city story is one about a company or group of companies quoted on a stock exchange.

More narrowly still, a successful city story is one that not only moves the price of the share or shares discussed (any fool can do that), but after that movement, such a price change is held. Lastly, an important city story is concerned with a share in which there is a free market. However, within that framework one can go all the way from embroidering the merest wisp of a Stock Exchange rumour to the serious analysis done by the Lex column of the Financial Times or the simple explanatory documentaries which—at present—fill most of television time given to financial reporting. With this

wide variation of tempo in mind we can divide city stories into four main categories: straight reporting, analysis, following leads, and comment. (i) Straight reporting. Straight reporting is mostly concerned with announcements from companies (usually of annual or interim results) but also from such bodies as the Treasury, other Ministries, trade association, etc. These will, of course, be available to every city journalist.

The first point which (curiously) is sometimes forgotten is to give the name of the company the story is about. You must also mention (a) what the company does (unless this is obvious from its name), (b) the period covered, (c) the dividend, (d) pre-tax profits, and (e) the comparative figures in each case for the previous accounting period, with an indication of whether these are strictly comparable and if not, why not. On serious papers you will be concerned with calculating earnings-per-share and projected earnings-per-share. On annual accounts you must check that the auditors have not qualified their report. You can say little further, except by quoting some stock brokers' opinion, until you have some knowledge of analysis. (ii) Analysis. Like financial journalism itself, analysis is a combination of art and science.

Too few city journalists ever bother to learn more than the rudiments of it. More is demanded of the good financial journalist, though one well-known city editor who cannot read a balance sheet has achieved the same effect by employing people who can. It is only after analysing company announcements that you can put rumours, tips, market gossip and other people's view into perspective and form a sound judgement of the situation. The first point in analysis is to check more carefully than in possible in

straight reporting (where there is only the company's statement to go on) that the result are truly comparable.

Within the framework of the various Companies Acts it is possible to have quite wide variations in accounting methods without having to say so, although since the 1967 Act it is no longer possible to change the method of valuing stocks without disclosing the fact. Apart from any announced differences between one set of accounts and another—the most common are mergers and rights issues—check the following points: (i) Any change in depreciation as a percentage of fixed assets. (ii) Any change in research and development as a percentage of sales. (iii) Any revaluation of fixed assets. (iv) Any expenditure, special or not, capitalised rather than set against profits, or vice versa. (v) Any change in the method of taking profits on long-term contracts which span the company's year end.

For example, changing from taking profits on completion to taking them pro rata on the proportion of the contract competed. (vi) Any change in the tax charge as a percentage of pre-tax profits. If a change appears that looks significant, the reason may well yield the key to a good story. Remember that companies try to hide good news as often as bad. When you are sure that the accounts are truly comparable it is possible to see how the company has done, calculate earnings per share, extrapolate the results forward, calculate profit ratios and trends, and apply many other factors, from government statistics to common sense. From this analysis it is possible to draw conclusions. Too often there will not be time to go into much detail.

Phone calls to two or three stockbrokers to get the views of their analysts will help— but only if you are a sufficiently skilled analyst to be able to interpret their views. (iii) Following lead. In all kinds of markets, but especially in bull markets (those when the share prices are rising), there are more rumours going round the Stock Exchange than any man or any city office can investigate. One test of a good city journalist is when his nose leads him three times out of five (about the best one can ever hope for) to rumours that have something in them. Once you have a lead that seems to be worth following, you act on it as any good reporter would do. (iv) Comment. City journalists have this advantage: when there is no hard news, they can always fall back on comment.

When company reports are thin on the ground, space can be filled with a leader on where the market is going from here, which sectors are performing best and why, or worst and why, and so on.

**Ethics:**

It is a criminal offence, under Companies Act, for ' insiders' to deal in the shares of companies. A financial journalist may well be an ' insider' under the Act—although this remains a largely untried and grey area of the law. An insider is one who comes by unpublished information, which could affect the market prices of stocks and shares, in the course of his business. Even before the Act came into force it was both wrong and stupid for financial journalists to deal in the share of companies about which they write in their papers. The rule is publishing first; deal afterwards—if you deal at all. Remember your first duty is to your readers and your paper, not to your pocket.

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The better financial journalists hardly ever deal in shares at all.

**Television and radio:**

It is only recently that television and radio have made much use of stock market news (other than giving the closing prices) but there are signs that this is changing. As the number of channels increases, so will stock market coverage. But so far television has hardly explored the visual possibilities of companies. Television has not yet challenged the newspapers on the city editors' most cherished preserve—share tipping.

**Power:**

The city journalist has considerable power in money terms.

He is in more danger of being conned or bribed than other reporters. Shady brokers and public relations men will try to feed him doubtful stories or to persuade him to tone down bad result. The only criterion of judgement is the best interest of the newspaper-reading investor, who relies on the city journalist to advise him honestly and accurately. 3. Local Authorities: The 'Town Hall' reporter is responsible for reporting the meetings of the local authority, and will also analyse and report on matters of local administration—such as development plans, rehousing schemes and the like.

He will often get to know the local councillors personally, and be advised in advance when any particularly controversial subject is to be raised. But he has to maintain the independence of his newspaper. He will not give more attention to one side than the other, and though he is always liable to charges to bias and partisanship (the local councillor has not been born who

does not believe that he is under-reported in the local paper) he must beware of becoming too personally committed. Local papers are the public watchdog against maladministration in local government. A reporter who works feverishly to construct a 'scandal' story where none exists does his paper no good.

But the reporter who winks at some administrative sleight-of-hand because the councilor is a friend of his is betraying his profession. The local authority reporter must read through the minutes of councils and committees with scrupulous care, and learn the complexities of procedure. The Town Hall reporter is a key figure on a local paper because so many local government decisions directly affect the town's residents and ratepayers, and are seen to do so. Though much of his job may be tedious and time-consuming, his vigilance is vital to the success of the newspaper. 4. Industrial

Correspondent: The Industrial Correspondent is concerned with industry, both management and workers. He will report the arrival of a new company in the town, the number of people it will employ and the skills required. He will get to know the local trade's union leaders and the Trades Council, and when there is an industrial dispute he will discover what it is all about and try to present a fair account.

The Industrial Correspondent on a national newspaper does the some things on a larger scale. He will probably report the annual conference of the Trades Union Congress, interview union leaders, and if a major government decision is made affecting union matter, he will get comments from the union side and from the employers' associations. Trade union matters are extremely complex.

Wage rates and conditions of employment, productivity agreements and the introduction of automation are often delicate and intricate negotiations. Reporting them in popular newspaper terms so that the report does not distort the details is a challenging assignment. The popular press likes to present the news briefly and clearly: industrial matter is seldom brief or clear, their contracts and agreements peppered with important sub-clauses and qualifications. The industrial correspondent needs a keen eye to pick out the essential facts from masses of verbiage.

5. Medical and Science:

Medicine has taken over as the new religion. In the old days the squire, the parson and the doctor were the authorities in any small village. Today the squire has probably sold the big house to an industrial tycoon, the parson preaches to a congregation of six, and the doctor alone carries the worries of the world.

Therefore medical subjects are perpetual interest to newspaper readers. Many newspapers either pay a local doctor to write a weekly column on medical matters and to be available to advice on news stories with medical slant, or they buy one of the syndicated columns from a larger newspaper or feature agency. But many medical stories these days are not strictly medical: they are sociological.

They are concerned with human relations, with mental attitudes and with differing attitudes in personal relations, particularly where sex or 'permissiveness' is involved. Some newspapers recruit a scientifically qualified reporter on to the staff; others allow a general reporter to specialise in this field and to read through the medical and scientific journals which are a mine of potential news stories. The General Medical Council is the

disciplinary body of the medical profession. Its proceedings are conducted publicly before a court of senior doctors, and as the cases before it are often the results of complaints from the public, they too receive wide publicity. 6. Space Exploration: Television has become the principal medium for reporting space exploration. Since the American astronauts became their own reporters—the first example in history of an explorer actually reporting his own achievements visually and aurally to millions, at the moment of achievement—the news reporter has been cut out of space exploration. He has been reduced to a mere 'expert', a feature writer of television, sitting safely on earth and pontificating about the background of the endeavor.

National newspapers still send their correspondents to the Space Centre to do 'I-was-there' reportage, but this only becomes a relevant activity when disaster strikes. It is difficult to see the crowd round the launching-pad as more highly motivated than the crowd at a circus watching a high-wire act. Thus the near-disaster of the Apollo 13 flight became a running story on the front pages of nearly every newspaper in the world, as readers projected themselves into the predicament of the astronauts in their damaged craft. The reporter of space exploration is therefore a historian, recording what has been done in the past, and a herald, announcing what is to be done in the future. The present is covered, now, by the astronauts themselves. 7.

Entertainment: The entertainment reporter is bombarded with handouts and invitations for interviews from all the publicists whose job it is to get entertainers into the papers. Few industries have the public relations aspect of their work so comprehensively organised as the entertainment industry.

This is when the theatre, Film Company or orchestra wants publicity. When there is some news story in their field that could embarrass them, on industries are so well armoured against intrusion or resentful of it. So the entertainment reporter has to keep a cool head among the seductive delights of meeting the famous actors and actresses of stage, screen and television. Often they are among the most difficult people to interview because their trade involves speaking other people's lines.

There are comedians who are funny and articulate away from the footlights but they are comparatively few. Publicity handouts are therefore useful since they give a basis for a news story and it can be personalised and filled out with a few quotations from the leading actor. The important thing is to get the facts right—the name of the show, the author and producer, the date it opens.

The newspaper reader has an insatiable appetite for gossip about the public figures of the entertainment world. Most of those figures learn that supplying such information is part of their job, and an important part. Managements that are eager to publicist the opening of a show are happy to see show die without publicity: so the reporter must keep an independent eye on the theatre lists. 8.

Travel and Holidays: Now that more people are taking holidays abroad, most newspapers publish travel and holiday articles. These have a particular economic advantage in the period immediately after Christmas when normally advertising falls off except for the January sales. It is at this time of year that many people sit down with the glossy brochures produced by the

travel agents— brochures obtained from replies to newspapers ads—to plan their summer holiday.

Most newspapers publish advertising supplements or pages lavishly filled out with advertising from travel agents and foreign tourist boards. The travel correspondent on a national newspaper may be thought to have an enviable life, travelling round the world as he does at the expense of holiday firms and airlines. The job is rather less exotic in practice, since on such trips the travel writer is rushed from tourist town to tourist beach, usually in the off-season when the weather is bad and a freezing wind blows the breakers over the sand. He is then taken on tours of new hotels (with the tourist boom there is hardly a resort in the world that cannot boast a dozen new hotels which it is eager for travel writers to inspect). One new hotel room is almost invariably identical with another, so the travel writer will be busily trying to extract from the hotel manager whether he welcomes children, and if so at what price, whether his restaurant serves exclusively local food, whether there are lifts to all floors for the benefit of the elderly, and whether the staff speak reasonable language. He will be working out whether the local coinage will be easy or difficult for the visitor to get used to, whether the hotels are really a stone's throw from the beach, whether that beach is public or private and if it is private whether there is a supplementary charge for using it, and whether this charge is including in the quoted all-in rate. He will look round the hotel and try to work out whether it is on the direct flight-path to the local airport, and whether there are pegs in the ground nearby—which could suggest that an extension is about to be built, probably during the height of

the summer and with deafening building works twenty-four hours of the day and night.

He will look everywhere to see whether there are clean sheets in the beds and adequate clean towels in the bathrooms. Then, before he has had time to sit down or laze in the comparatively warm beams of the fitful sun, if any, he will be swept off to the other end of the town to see yet another new hotel and listen to promises that a golf course and a swimming pool are to be built before the summer season starts. It is a wearing life. Television has now taken up holiday and travel journalism, with programmes that examine the advantages and disadvantages of certain resorts. 9. The Leader (Leading Article): Leader is the newspaper's official views of the events of the day. It is personally supervised by the editor even if he does not write the column himself. The quality papers keep a staff of leader writers, and on occasion the expert on a country or subject may write a leader about it.

Generally the editor will hold a 'leader conference' following the main editorial conference of the day at this, the line to be taken will be discussed and the editor may talk through the development of the leader's argument. When the writer has completed his leader he takes it directly to the editor, who if he has time will correct or amend it himself. Some 'writing editors' (editors who have achieved their eminence as writing journalists rather than—as is more common in Fleet Street these days—as sub-editors or administrators) will substantially rewrite the leader it is, after all, the column of the paper for whose opinions the editor is held personally responsible.

As with all columns of comment, it is held important first to state the facts of the case being argued. Never assume that all readers have all the news or watched all the TV bulletins or programmes. Sometimes a leader may be a comment about a matter that is an important news story of the day, and then the fact will be on the front page of the same issue of the newspaper and merely need summarising or given a cross-reference in the leader itself. But even then the leader writer must remember that his column may be locked up inside the paper while the main news pages may change more often. So if the facts of the case are liable to be brought up to date during the run of the paper's editions, it would be rash to tie the leader to early facts. Newspaper leaders often fail into the trap of assuming that the facts are truly stated in brief news report.

The facts, briefly told, may all be true: but there may be other facts that materially change the implications. A leader writer must read all available reports. Even then he will be wary. If all the papers give a nearly identical form of wording, it can be reasonably deduced that one 'stringer' or local reporter has telephoned it to all the national papers. Perhaps the report is full and accurate: but always check. Leaders give a single view.

As they are usually (even in the quality papers) comparatively brief comments, there can be room for the detailed academic thesis. Beware the liberal syndrome, the awful ability to see—and give—both sides of question. AJ Liebling calls these 'Ademonai- kodemonai' articles, someone having told him that these words are Japanese for 'On the one hand .



. . . on the other hand.' A good leader writer chooses only one side to every question, and hammers it home for all it is worth. Leader writers are more prone to cliché than most journalists; because their column is devoted to pointing out whether in the paper's opinion a certain event is a Good Thing or Bad Thing. The leader works best when it looks behind the facts of news story to point out relevance's and significance that may not be immediately apparent. Thus a local council's decision to license the building of supermarket may have dramatic impact on people who live on the site now, and will have to be rehoused—has the council indicated that it will rehouse them, and if not, why not? The new supermarket may attract new traffic into the town: can the streets cope with the increase, and is the council requiring the supermarket chain to provide car-parking space off the street? Will mothers with prams and push-chairs have safe access to the site on foot, or must they cross a busy road? Is the supermarket going to have an effect on neighbouring shops, and does this matter to the town? There may be political implications in the town: do any councilors have a business interest in the scheme—as shopkeepers, property owners, builders, etc.—they have not declared? All these are matters a leader could reasonably deal with, within the legal rules governing the publication of fair comment on a matter of public interests.

10. Sports Reporting: The best sports reporting capture the atmosphere as well as facts of the game. But remember that the reader wants to know the fact first. Big sporting events today are rituals. Like all rituals, they have rules and conventions. The reporter must learn those conventions. He must find out which players are in form, and which have not done well in the past

few games. He must brief himself on the past performance of the teams and the individual players—because the significant fact about a game may be the emergence of one participant in a way that has not happened before.

This may be the most newsworthy aspect of the game. The sports reporter must therefore do as much research as he can before the game starts. Like a good news reporter, he must anticipate the physical problems of reporting. If he is working for an evening newspaper it will be essential to know how his report is to be got out of the ground. He will have discovered which telephone he is going to use (or his runner, if he has someone helping him by telephoning his story in separate 'takes' while he goes on watching the game).

He will have found an alternative telephone; local shopkeepers are often willing to help— particularly news agents, since they have a vested interest in the reporter getting his story back to his office. Time is vital in sports reporting; not only the time at which the report must be back in the office to catch a certain edition of the newspaper, but as a means of measuring what happens in a game. Have a reliable watch, and remember to check precisely what time a game starts. Identify the players at the earliest stage—if possible check as soon as the players come on to the field whether the name are as given on the programme, or whether someone has changed numbers (if, as usually happens in football, the players are numbered). There will often be a friendly reporter covering the game for a newspaper from the visiting team's who will be glad to check the identities of his team in exchange for yours, if there is any doubt.

An evening newspaper reporter working on an afternoon will be writing his report as he goes along. He will start off with a provisional lead—it may have something to do with the size of the crowd, the state of the ground or the weather conditions. This may well be torn up in favour of a stronger lead as the game progresses: a quick goal, a dramatic run, or a fine performance by one player may provide something better. But it is as well to get a passable opening on to paper as soon as possible. Sometimes journalists are criticised for making too much of isolated incidents in sports, building them up into significant dramas when they were in fact minor and soon forgotten.

Remember to keep a balance between the general pattern of the game and such dramatic incidents. Because it is difficult to report the same team week after week without seeing the same moves being attempted time and again, the same pattern of strength and weakness recurring, it is tempting to concentrate on the unusual at the expense of the familiar.

Regular fans of that particular team may understand this; but the report has to be read by people who do not follow that team, and cannot be assumed to know the characters of the players and the style in which they play. Get to know the manager and the officials. This becomes more important as football (in particular) becomes more personalised, and individual players have their own devoted following. Know your way around the ground you may want to get a quote from the manager, the players or the referee in a hurry, and there will be no time to argue then your accreditation with some obstructive doorkeeper.

The personal lives of sportsmen are now matters of great public interest, especially since their earnings put them among the big spenders whose

homes, families and cars are regarded as of public concern. The sports writer is different from the general reporter in one respect: he is at the same times reporter and critic. He is giving his opinion about the game at the same times as he is describing the facts of it. He judges the quality and skill of the players, who in this sense are actors in a public spectacle.

But opinion must be authoritative to be effective. The young reporter who delivers a devastating and witty broadside about the lamentable performance of some local team will not be forgiven if he gets names of the goal-scorers wrong, mis-spells the name of the striker and generally falls down on the facts. Avoid the floral prose and the prettily turned phrase until you have the essential of the game firmly down on paper. Make sure you give the names of the teams, the ground the game takes place on, and the score. Then by all means add the adjectives. Do not try build up a sporting event more than its quality justifies, in an attempt to enlarge your own reputation. Remember that the people who saw the game with you saw what happened as well as you did, and many of them will read your account.

Each sport has its own following and its own jargon and special terms. Avoid using jargon without explaining it for the benefit of readers who may not be familiar with the game. Most readers of the sports pages will probably be familiar with the rules and jargon of the major sports, such as football and cricket—but never assume that they are. But sporting events are dramatic contests, and the reporter may justifiably accent the drama.

Like the theatre critic, he may usefully comment on how an effect is achieved, how a successful goal may be tracked back to a skillful piece of

play some minutes earlier. The crowd may have missed it: the sports writer who observed it is entitled to point it out and praise those responsible.

Amateur sport is very important to local newspapers, since news of amateur events widens the paper's readership. But like amateur theatre it must be judged on its own level, and that may be some distance below professionalism.

It is frustrating for the keen reporter of minor sports, battling to get a few lines into the paper, to find that his sport is only newsworthy when some extraordinary event happens—as when the English women's table-tennis team beat the Russian champions in an international match in Japan.