MODULE 5  SPECIALISED REPORTING

Unit 1  Introduction to Specialised Reporting
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UNIT 1  INTRODUCTION TO SPECIALISED REPORTING

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1.0  INTRODUCTION

Specialised reporting has become a necessary part of the press because of the need to address the inadequacies presented by straightforward news reports. The society is getting more and more complex with time so are the people. Mere news stories are no longer adequate to address the yearnings of the complex human societies for complex angles to stories. This is what this unit is all about.

2.0  OBJECTIVES

At the end this unit, you should be able to:

•  define specialised reporting and identify the attributes of a typical specialised report
•  distinguish between a specialist reporter and a generalist
•  identify and explain the special qualities of specialised reporter.
3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 What is Specialised Reporting?

Specialised reporting, according to Obe (2005:45), simply means reporting from special areas or fields. It is a clear departure from the general type of reporting that is not focused on particular fields or areas. It is therefore referred to as reporting specialties.

Specialisation is not unique to journalism alone. Other professions like law and medicine also have their areas of specialisation. For law, some lawyers specialise in maritime law, company and allied matters, criminal law, civil law, jurisprudence, etc. For medicine, specialization is even more pronounced. In some advanced western nations, you must specialize before you are allowed to practice.

This underscores the need for specialisation in the media industry. A cub reporter that just left journalism school may not be able to give the required treatment to energy or budgetary issues as a financial correspondent with adequate training in financial issues or energy correspondent will do. Therefore, the cause of specialisation in the media industry should continue to receive adequate attention in order to properly institute it in the profession and subsequently prepare reporters well to fulfill its demands.

Specialised reports could therefore be regarded as in-depth, thorough, elaborate, comprehensive, discriminate and very lucid report of a specific area or field of journalistic coverage. In other words, specialised reporting is knowledge demanding and brain tasking intellectual piece focusing on specific issues in specific areas of media coverage.

3.2 Who is a Specialised Reporter?

A specialised reporter is a special kind of correspondent who covers a particular beat for his or her media organisation. A special reporter could also be referred to as a seasoned, professional reporter who covers a particular beat for his organisation. A specialist is a beat reporter and is very knowledgeable in his/her area of coverage. He/she is contrasted with the generalist or roving reporter. A correspondent is usually in charge of his/her organisation’s news bureau or office in major cities or towns where his organisation operates. He or she could also be in charge of subject areas or matters for his/her organisation. This will be further explained in beat reporting.
3.2.1 Academic Qualification

A good university degree or diploma in the area of coverage is a good starting point for specialist reporters. This means a specialist reporter in financial matters, e.g. a Financial Correspondent, should have at least a degree or diploma in finance, banking, accounting, business or management. This gives him or her the requisite knowledge base to hold his/her own in that area. Such academic background also enables the specialist to acquire the necessary technical competence to cover such a special beat.

3.2.2 Professional Qualification and Experience

a. The specialist reporter must be an accredited journalist registered with the professional association or, as the case may be, in the country of practice.
b. He/she must have worked as a journalist at whatever capacity for some time.
c. He/she should have adequate exposure or professional training in the area of specialisation.
d. He/she must have long-term experience as a generalist and assisting correspondent in the particular field of coverage.

3.2.3 Personal Qualities

1. First and foremost, s/he must be a good and seasoned reporter.
2. S/He must be a good analyst.
3. He/she must be passionately and resolutely committed to the area of coverage.
4. He must have a wealth of experience and knowledge in the field or area of coverage.
5. He must be skilful in packaging interesting and intellectually stimulating write-ups.
6. He must be research-driven so as to give his stories enough depth and factual support.
7. S/He must always be prepared.
8. S/He is always at alert.
9. S/He is very persistent.
10. S/He is always there whenever the news breaks.
11. S/He easily mixes up.
12. S/He easily cultivates sources and maintains them.
13. S/He dresses fine, very courteous and amiable.
14. S/He must be knowledgeable about the area of coverage and have the technical, professional and educational competencies to cover the area.
15. S/He has a nose for news.
16. S/He must be an expert/specialist in his beat.
17. S/He must be information and communication technology (ICTs) compliant.
18. S/He must be a career-oriented personality and journalist.
19. S/He must be courageous and fearless.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Discuss the academic qualification of a specialised/specialist reporter.

3.3 How to Identify Specialised Reports

a. Specialised report is in-depth, thorough and detailed. It is complete in content and delivery.
b. Specialised reports also involve the use of technical and advanced language with explanation where necessary.
c. Specialised reports are usually serious in tone and well packaged.
d. Specialised reports should provide background and precedence. This is the primary reason the specialist must be research savvy.
e. Specialised reports should reflect sound professionalism and experience of the writer in the choice of words, sentences, and so on.
f. Sometimes, there are some levels of professional subjectivity in the stories reported.
g. Specialised reports are sometimes very critical and scientific.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Specialised reports are in-depth reports, which inform and educate its readers than entertaining them or anything else. Such reports must be written with this understanding in mind. For reporters to deliver on the demands of this type of reporting, they must have requisite education and professional training, which must be supported by long and relevant experience as a generalist/reporter.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit has introduced you to specialised reporting, its attributes and the qualities expected of a specialist reporter.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss briefly 10 items you expect to find in a specialized report that is well written.
2. Which five qualities are most needed for a specialist reporter?
7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING


UNIT 2 REPORTING FROM THE BEATS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Beat is a journalistic term used to refer to segmented area or particular field a reporter is assigned to monitor and report from there on a regular basis. The act of monitoring and covering assigned beats for the purpose of publication is referred to as beat reporting. This is another angle to the discussion on specialised reporting. This unit will concentrate on beat reporting, types and the kind of reporters assigned to cover particular beats.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end this unit, you should be able to:

• define what beat reporting is all about
• identify and discuss the types of beats available
• identify the requisite qualities expected of a beat reporter
• identify the principles or rules guiding reporters on the beat.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 What is a Beat?

A beat is a reporter’s assigned area of responsibility. A beat may be an institution, such as the National Assembly; a geographical area, such as a small town or an entire city/town, or a subject area, such as science and technology, business etc.
3.2 What is Beat Reporting?

Beat reporting is the act of covering and reporting from a particular field or subject of coverage for your media organisation. Beat reporting is therefore specialised news gathering. It could also be regarded as a form of correspondence. Here, the beat is the place of coverage while the correspondent in that place is the beat reporter.

3.3 Who is a Beat Reporter?

A beat reporter is a person with well-trained and adequate knowledge in a particular area of news coverage where he represents his news organisation. A beat reporter may be a young reporter assigned to cover such local beats like the police, the courts, local government or the schools. A beat reporter could also be a well-trained and very experienced reporter of many years standing who covers very important institutions like Aso Rock for his media organisation. In this instance, one has to be a successful reporter before one is assigned to cover such important beats.

3.4 Types of Beats

There are two types of beats. The first is the **topical beat**. Topical beats thrive because the media audience constantly needs updates from such topical subject. Some topical beats are education, politics, business, economy, science and technology, health, and so on. The second type of beat is the **geographical beat**. Geographical beat require the reporter to report from specific location on all topical issues and subject matter.

3.5 Principles of Reporters on a Beat

If you must succeed as reporter on the beat, you must:

1. **Be prepared**: Have a basic education in journalism, understand the society, understand the government, know history, economics and psychology and be well exposed in your area of coverage.
2. **Be alert**: The germ (the beginning) of a good story is hidden in many a routine one. So, always stay focused and take tips seriously.
3. **Be persistent**: Persistence entails two things to a reporter on a beat. First, it means that when you ask a question; you cannot give up until you get an answer. Second, it means that you must keep track of slow-developing projects or problems.
4. **Be there**: In beat reporting, there is no substitute for personal contact. The only way to cover a beat is to be there every day, if
possible. You must make yourself seem to be part of the community you are covering.

5. **Be wary**: You must always try to keep your readers informed about the latest events or developments. You must also be cautious in your dealings that come across you.

6. **Set daily goals**: Make sure you have a good idea of what you want to accomplish on a daily basis.

7. **Build sources**: There is no substitute for regular contacts that will alert the reporter the first time they hear or see anything news worthy in the beat.

8. **Do favours**: Where appropriate, go out of your way to do favours for your sources. It sure will help in times of your own need.

9. **Ask the sweeping questions**: If you like, ask the dumb questions but make sure you are asking the questions that will get something out of your sources or subjects.

10. **Listen carefully and watch carefully**: Some reporters look but they do not see. When you look, try to observe and see what is happening around. Check out the moods, the reactions, body language when the question was asked. Look and see.

11. **Look at the Records**: In covering your beat, you are expected to constantly keep in touch with original documents. Go for the original source material.

12. **Make Phone Calls**: Make constant phone checks and calls even if not very necessary. You should also know that phone calls cannot replace direct contact. They are only a supplement.

13. **Start out Early and Fast**: You need to constantly leave your office early to your beat. You must a clear understanding that stories do not usually pump up in the newsroom. So, what are you still doing there by 9.00 in the morning?

14. **Know the Beat**: You must make a concerted effort to know your beat like you know your true friend. There is no substitute for this. Just make sure you understand the process in and around your beat.

15. **Show Some Courtesy and be Friendly**: As a beat reporter, you should be able to relate with people in your beat and treat individuals you beat there some respect. You may never know who the next source might be. A beat reporter should also try to make friends in his/her area of coverage. You sure need them than enemies.

16. **Be an Observer**: A beat reporter should maintain a critical distance between him and the subjects he is covering. He must be a non-participant observer and not a participant. The moment a reporter associates very closely with the subjects of his beat, he begins writing for his sources rather than the audience. This is very dangerous.
17. **Be Protective of Confidential Sources**: You must respect the off-record rule. You must also maintain the confidence of your sources even at gunpoint. Any beat reporter who easily divulges the sources of information or gives a hint about it because of threats, is already dead professionally.

18. **Maintain the Triple News Virtues**: The triple news virtues are their fundamental pillars upon which every news story must rest. They are: truth, objectivity and accuracy. For no reason should any of these be violated.

19. **Finally, I tell my students that there are no dry beats but dry people covering a beat**: You must be lively, amiable, a goal getter, a keen observer and very courageous and passionate about that beat. Without this, your beat may turn out dry because you made it so. Do not be dry in your approach to your beat assignment.

**SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

1. Discuss the assumed qualities of a beat reporter.
2. How will a beat reporter effectively cover his or her beat to get maximum returns?

**4.0 CONCLUSION**

Beats come and go but good reporting remains. A beat reporter must remain a fine reporter of the highest standards. There are beats that will come up to address specific trends at that time and some become more sophisticated with time and developments in technology etc. The reporter is expected to keep abreast of these developments and ensure he is not left out when the trains moves.

**5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, we have discussed beat reporting as part of specialised reporting and evaluated the principles of reporters on the beat.

**6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. Discuss beat reporting as specialised reporting.
2. Does the beat reporter necessarily have to be a specialist? Justify your position with robust argument.
7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING


UNIT 3 ONLINE REPORTING

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   3.3 Tools for Today’s New Media Journalist
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5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit is about online reporting which is different from Computer-Assisted Reporting (CAR). Please note that CAR is not synonymous to online reporting. However, online reporting is a component of CAR if given the complete treatment. For the benefit of doubt, CAR is all about using web resources and database journalism to augment everyday reportorial assignments, while online reporting is like writing for the internet newspaper. It is like blogging. Notwithstanding this distinction, one could see many similarities between CAR and online reporting.

Back to the theme of this unit, online reporting is a revolutionary departure from known conventional ways of journalism. It is uses advanced technological tools like the Internet to gather information and disseminate same through such tools. It is a one-stop reporting. All you need have is a laptop with wireless internet connectivity and some advanced search program software and then you have an online newspaper right on your lap.

The potential of online reporting is unimaginable. Its reach is so wide and its audience unquantifiable. It is newspaper without borders. Its primary challenge is credibility. There is little government check on entry requirements and monitoring capacity. In fact, anybody with very little resources for the basic needs could start online journalism at will. This is the major danger in its rise. However, the above does not diminish its potentials and advantages especially on how it has revolutionised journalism in the 21st century.
2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define online reporting/journalism and distinguish this from CAR
- identify and explain the qualities expected of an online reporter
- identify and explain the current tools for today’s new media journalist
- identify websites related online journalism.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Qualities of Online Reporters

Online reporters must possess the qualities of a reporter, which have been treated in detail earlier. These qualities are basic. The other ones following these are additional because of the demands of online reporting.

Ordinarily, online reporters must be versed in the use of computer and internet resources. The online reporter should understand most computer software packages required for internet operations. He or she should also be able to integrate hypertext links to related topics, sound and video clips that are relevant to spice up a story.

The online reporter must also be familiar if not at home with the tools for today’s new media journalist. In the normal sense, the online reporter is a new media journalist, so, he or she should be able to work with some or all of these tools.

The online reporter should a research-savvy person. His/her primary assignment may entail searching and researching online resources for information. Therefore, he/she must be familiar with research methods and research sites for his reportorial duties.

The online reporter is not just a nimble wordsmith, in today’s information society; he/she has to be a database manager, a data processor and a data analyst.

3.2 Online Websites Related to News Reporting and Journalism

Many online resources and websites are available for journalists for news reporting and e-journalism. The list is exhaustible, thus, some of them are listed below.
1. PowerReporting.com
3. The Foundation for American Communications’ FACSNET ([www.facsnet.org](http://www.facsnet.org))
6. ProfNet ([www.profnet.com](http://www.profnet.com))
10. CNN.com
11. ZDNet.com
12. Weather.com
13. MSNBC
14. CNET.com
15. [WWW.Zatso.com](http://www.zatso.com)
16. [WWW.Mediachannel.org](http://www.mediachannel.org)
17. [WWW.newslink.org](http://www.newslink.org)
18. [WWW.trib.com](http://www.trib.com)
19. [WWW.freedomforum.org](http://www.freedomforum.org)

### 3.3 Tools for Today’s New Media Journalist

The expansion of multimedia ownership has brought about multimedia journalist also known as new media journalist. Some of the tools necessary to function at this level include (adapted from Mencher, 2010):

1. A digital camera that can take high resolution still photos and video.
2. A laptop with wireless Internet access.
3. A handheld computer such as palm personal digital assistant.
4. A digital audio recorder for recording interviews.
5. A mobile Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) receiver for location finding.
6. A digital cell or smart phone.
7. A high capacity flash-drive for storage purposes.
8. A variety of software packages installed in the laptop.
9. Instant Messenger and Voice over IP (VoIP) software for real-time, no cost communications over the internet.
10. A handheld scanner for digitizing documents on the spot.
11. A satellite telephone for making calls when cell phone service is unavailable.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Discuss the use of 10 new media tools mentioned in this unit.
2. Discuss the qualities of an online reporter.

4.0 CONCLUSION

As the digital revolution continues, the relevance of online journalism continues to widen. The online reporter is therefore expected to assume the role of a new media journalist and so equip himself or herself for enormous challenges associated with Computer-Assisted Reporting and online journalism.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you learnt about the meaning of online reporting, Computer-Assisted Reporting and the distinction plus similarities between them. You also learnt the qualities of an online reporter as well as the tools a new media journalist should have to be able to deliver in the 21st century.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Distinguish between online reporting and Computer-Assisted Reporting.
2. Discuss the application of online reporting journalism in Nigeria.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING


UNIT 4    FOLLOWS

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1.0   INTRODUCTION

What follows a story may be as important and interesting as the original story. After people ask what happened, they usually ask, what happened next? And because newspapers are always in a hurry to meet up with deadlines, follow-up stories or simply “follow” are now common features of the media industry.

A follow or follow-up story tells the readers what happened next after the initial break out of the news. A follow could also aim to catch up on a running story or complete a story started by another newspaper. A follow also keep readers posted about breaking news. A follow also deals with events and issues that happened months ago and reports latest developments about such issues and events.

2.0   OBJECTIVE

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify follow-up stories and attempt to write such stories.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   The Second-Cycle Story

The second-cycle story is a second version of a story already published. It is also called a second-day story. A second-cycle story usually provides a fresh start to an already published story. To give a fresh start to second-cycle stories, reporters could do the following.
a. Supply information not available when the first story was written. News stories should be constantly updated when new facts come in.
b. Use enterprise to uncover information not contained in the original and then you can use reportorial creativity to make a second story out of the new facts.
c. Supply fresh details, colour and background, even when nothing of substance is new. This will keep your report very lively and interesting.
d. Respond to news of the first story with analysis, possible developments or the reactions of people whom the news would affect. This will entail some digging deep for more relevant facts.
e. Gather local reactions to a national or international story and then represent a second version of that story using the local or national angle as the new twist.

3.2 The Developing Story

The developing story contains the latest developments about an unfolding or continuing event or issue. The developing story begins with the new information or the latest information in the lead. In the second and third paragraphs, you write a tie-back to the previous story. Developing stories are usually organised and written thus:

a. **New/Latest Lead**: This is a normal lead but contains the latest information you gathered.
b. **Tie-back**: This helps to connect the reader back to the original story. Do not forget that the lead is based on the fresh facts so tie back is a technique to connect the latest lead with the original story.
c. **Transition**: Developing stories are continuing stories. Transitions help to connect parts to the whole.
d. **Return to the Story**: After the new lead and tie back, you can return to the story and continue. This gives a complete picture of the entire story as it unfolds.

3.3 The Update

The update is the third type of follow-up story. The follow-up story tends to update your knowledge on a particular story earlier published. After a story about a person or a situation has been published, a later look may result in another story of a major significance. This story is called the update.
SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Discuss the three variants of follow-up stories.

4.0  CONCLUSION

The newspaper business is like a hit-and-run business because of the craze by journalists to meet lifelines. This singular factor makes it nearly impracticable for a breaking story to have all the details in before press time. Follows now offers opportunity to reporters to rush to meet deadlines and then come back to the story again in the form of follows. By so doing, the readers hardly miss out on any latest information on running stories.

5.0  SUMMARY

This unit discussed follows and the three variants of it. The content of each variant also received attention. It is our expectation that you can now write follow-up stories after the initial publication of the original story.

6.0  TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Pick any Nigerian daily national newspaper and attempt to write a follow-up story on two of the lead stories.

7.0  REFERENCES/FURTHER READING


MODULE 6    ADVANCED REPORTING

Unit 1    Science and Technology Reporting
Unit 2    Reporting Sports
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Unit 4    Economy and Business Reporting
Unit 5    Reporting Crime and the Courts

UNIT 1    SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY REPORTING

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1.0    INTRODUCTION

The need for people to know the social aspect of sciences informs science and technology reporting. Science reporting does not bore the reader with scientific jargons but interprets science-based stories so that the non-science reader could find meaning in such reports as well as how such scientific analysis affects them as members of the society.

Science and technology should therefore help laypersons to decode, analyse, interpret as well as make meaning to scientific issues and reports. Communicating the social aspects of sciences is a fundamental objective of science and technology reporting. Science and technology reporting also falls under advanced and specialised reporting, which have been partly dealt with earlier in the preceding units. This unit aims to introduce science and technology reporting as an aspect of advanced and specialised reporting.
2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the meaning and justification for science and technology reporting
- explain qualification and kind of training expected of a science and technology reporter
- discuss qualities of a typical science and technology report
- discuss avenue for science and technology reporting
- discuss guiding principles of science and technology reporting.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Qualification and Training

Science and technology reporting is a technical area. As such, not every reporter cannot function well in this beat. Therefore, some basic academic and professional training is required for the science and technology reporter. These include the following points.

1. All the qualities of a reporter already discussed in the preceding units of this course remain relevant here.
2. The science and technology reporter must have an academic qualification in any of the basic sciences. This background gives him a footing and a platform for detailed analysis. Please note that a degree or any relevant qualification in the sciences is not a prerequisite for success as a science and technology reporter.
3. Then the reporter must also have some specialised training in covering such a unique beat.
4. All other qualifications expected of a beat or specialist reporter as earlier outlined in this course.

3.2 Issues for Science and Technology Coverage

There are many begging issues that science and technology reporter could focus on so that his beat will be a constant source of news for his newspaper. Some of these issues as compiled by Obe (2005) include the following.

a. News on latest scientific development and discoveries
b. News on scientific predictions
c. News on scientific adventures
d. News on the unusual
e. News on issues and processes for improving health care delivery
f. News on technological developments and innovation
g. News on scientific warning, nature of the universe and heroism
h. News on scientific researches, findings and breakthroughs
i. News on universities, technology institutes etc that focus on science and technology issues

3.3 Writing Rules for Science and Technology Reporting

1. Do not use too much technical language especially for impressing instead of informing. This should be avoided at all cost. You are the expert.
2. Interpret the reports to the understanding of your audience. They are reading your article or story to make meaning not to be dazzled or confused with jargons.
3. Make your reports very brief, accurate, interesting and straight to the point. Unnecessary details that do not add anything new or fresh to the story should be removed. Avoid needless verbosity.
4. Be creative as a reporter. Bring colour and human interest angles to your story.

3.4 Qualities of a Good Science and Technology Report

The qualities of a good science and technology report include the following.

a. Mechanical Accuracy: There must be grammatical accuracy and the entire report must be error-free. A good science and technology is also free of linguistic errors.
b. Technical Accuracy: This has to do with the reporters’ capacity to write credibly in the area of science and technology. Is the report an expert opinion in the area? Is the analysis credible? What are the competencies of the writers? These questions are to be answered in the affirmative for you to know that you have a good science and technology report.
c. Internal Consistency: There must be uniformity of purpose and content especially the way and technical details are presented.
d. Interest: Interest is the primary reason the readers want to read the story. Therefore, there is no substitute in making the report interesting.
e. Fact and Objectivity: Apart from making the report interesting, it must also be factual, accurate and objective in order to retain the interest of the readers.
f. Persuasiveness: Yes, the primary purpose of science and technology reports is to provide information. However, it should also have the capacity to persuade the readers to action.
g. Conciseness: The science and technology story must be brief and straight to the point. Needless details should be avoided.
h. Clarity: The science and technology story is not the right avenue to mesmerise the readers with scientific jargons and needless technicalities that could easily be explained off in the analysis. Clarity and brevity are two core qualities that a good science and technology story should have.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Name 10 areas from which a science writer could focus his or her writing on.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Science and technology reporting is a specialised kind of reporting. It can also fall under advanced reporting. It is also one of common beats you find in the industry. Every media organisation should endeavour to have specialist and well-trained reporters’ cover this beat for their organisations. This is the only way to improve on this specialised area of journalism.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit has exposed you to the details of one of the core areas of specialized reporting - science and technology reporting. It is believed you are now familiar with this area of reporting and what it takes to write a good science and technology story.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

A degree in any of the basic sciences is not a prerequisite for being a good science writer. Do you agree? Justify your position with solid/valid arguments.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING


UNIT 2   REPORTING SPORTS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The sport pages of an average newspaper are amongst the heavily read pages in a place like Nigeria. In Nigeria for instance, husbands argue with their children over Premiership clubs. The picture is just crazy. Sport reporting is a core specialised area of coverage in most nations because of the abundance of fans all over the place in almost all the sports.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end this unit, you should be able to:

- explain techniques of sport reporting
- discuss role of sport reporters
- list qualities of a good sport reporter
- discuss sources of information for sport coverage and reporting
- explain checklist sport reporter.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Role of Sport Reporters

Sport reporters occupy a unique place in the society because of the popularity of the various sporting activities which reporters help convey to the audience and fans alike. Some other roles of sport writers and reporters as suggested are listed below.
1. A good sport reporter should be able to bring the players, coaches and administrators closer to the public and fans in particular. Check out the popular players, coaches and administrators and you will find that their popularity is often connected to favourable media coverage.

2. Sport reporters could also act as watchdog over the players, administrators and coaches to avoid and help expose embarrassing behaviour associated with sportsmen and women.

3. One of the primary roles of sport reporters is to beam their searchlight on negative boardroom politics that could hamper sport development.

4. Sport reporters must see to the end of a game and make sure accurate and unbiased account of such games is published timely.

5. It is one of the core roles of sport reporters to analyse game situations before and after the games to help build excitement and sense of fulfillment respectively in the fans.

3.2 Qualities of a Good Sport Reporter

1. A good sport reporter must normally possess the qualities of a reporter, which has been treated in detail earlier. These qualities are basic. The other ones following these are additional because of the demands of sport reporting.

2. A good sport reporter must have a passion for the type of sport he or she is covering.

3. A good sport reporter must have a clear understanding of the rules of the game and be able to interpret results of game to his readers.

4. He or she must also be research savvy and a good historian of sport matters.

5. He or she must have adequate knowledge about the players, coaches and administrators and be able to discuss them comfortably.

6. A good sport reporter must be a good analyst and have a good sense of judgment.

7. A good sport reporter must always respect the triple news virtues of truth, objectivity and accuracy in his reports.

8. The good sport reporter must know how to use few words to tell his story.

3.3 Sources of Information for the Sport Reporter

The sport reporter has an array of places he/she could go to verify the facts of his story before going to press. Sources of information for sport reporter include the following.
1. Venue of the game or meeting
2. Local Organizing Committee of the competition or games
3. The Sports Council
4. The Ministry of Sports
5. The controlling federation of the particular sport
6. Players and coaches hideouts
7. Popular sportsmen, women and administrators
8. Sports library
9. Online resources

**SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Discuss five reliable places a sport writer may go to verify his facts before publishing.

**3.4 Checklist for a Sport Reporter**

1. Do I have all the results, the final score, names of teams, type of sport, championship type?
2. Where and when did the game take place?
3. What was the turning point of the game?
4. Who were the outstanding players?
5. Any effect on record standing?
6. Post-game comments.
7. Any press briefing?
8. Any external factors?
9. What was the crowd size?
10. Any injuries?
11. What is the physical condition of players/athletes?
12. Game Statistics and details
13. Game duration

**4.0 CONCLUSION**

Sport reporting has remained a major area of interest for many media audience. This is because it is in sport you can find fanatical fans, men, and women who follow the games with passion. Reporters in this area of interest must therefore take their reportorial abilities to the next level. This is very vital so that fans expectation will match reporters’ delivery.

**5.0 SUMMARY**

This chapter x-rayed sport reporting as another special area of media coverage. It is hoped that you can now describe the intricacies involved in sports reporting as well as the qualities of a good sport reporter.
6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss five qualities a good sport story should have.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING


UNIT 3  POLITICAL REPORTING

CONTENTS

1.0  Introduction
2.0  Objectives
3.0  Main Content
   3.1  Function of a Political Reporter
   3.2  Qualities of a Good Political Reporter
   3.3  Sources of Information for the Political Reporter
   3.4  Challenges Associated with Political Reporting
4.0  Conclusion
5.0  Summary
6.0  Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0  References/Further Reading

1.0  INTRODUCTION

Covering politics requires a broad range of knowledge of political science or at least the basic knowledge of governmental structures and the operational system of government at whatever level. A political reporter must also understand the dynamics of human societies. This is vital for his coverage of the beat because he will sure be dealing with complex human beings called politicians.

2.0  OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- describe political reporting
- identify and discuss the functions of a political reporter
- identify and discuss the qualities of a political reporter
- identify and discuss the problems associated with political and how to overcome them.

3.0  MAIN CONTENT

3.1  Function of a Political Reporter

1. The Political reporter interprets the electoral processes to the electorate in manner they will understand the issues better.
2. It is also the duty of the political reporter to monitor, investigate, analyze and report political happenings and events in a language and format the electorate will appreciate.
3. The functions of a political reporter include reporting and interpreting events; defining issues; portraying personalities;
investigating support; identifying trends; checking and analysing public opinion.

3.2 Qualities of a Good Political Reporter

1. A good political reporter must normally possess the qualities of a reporter, which has been treated in detail earlier. These qualities are basic. The other ones following these are additional because of the demands of political reporting.

2. A good political reporter must have passion for politics.

3. A good political reporter must have a clear understanding of the meaning of politics, political intrigues, power games as well as a first hand familiarity with the electoral processes. He or she must also have an understanding of party politics and report such issues adequately.

4. He or she must also be research savvy and a good historian of political matters and activities.

5. A good political reporter must also have good memory for faces and names.

6. A good political reporter should also have the capacity to understand and interpret the governmental processes to his audience.

7. He should have the ability to memorise and summarise political speeches at short notice.

8. The good political reporter should also have a clear understanding of the laws governing the political process in a country or locality of coverage.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

The political reporter must have a degree in political science to make it big in the industry. Discuss.

3.3 Sources of Information for the Political Reporter

There are a variety of sources where the political reporter can look up records, verify facts and do other sundry and related matters connected to his beat before going to press. These sources include the following.

1. Political parties
2. State House or Government House or Government Secretariat
3. The leadership of political parties
4. Ministries and Government Parastatals
5. Powerful politicians and individuals
6. Strong party men and supporters
7. The National Assembly and Houses of Assembly of each state and the official record platforms
8. Credible sources and witness of political events and issues

3.4 Challenges Associated with Political Reporting

1. The editorial policy of the particular media organisation may conflict with the political reporter’s perception of the issues. This is evident when the media organisation becomes partisan or semi-partisan in the political affairs of the nations.

2. In the developing societies, politics is sometimes seen as a do-or-die affair. This perspective makes politics always violent prone in the developing. Many journalists have lost their lives covering politics in the developing nations. This remains a big challenge in political reporting.

3. Another major challenge associated with political reporting is that some reporters have gotten into the habit of becoming “very close” with politicians thereby influencing their judgment of the issues.

4. Some reporters in this beat sometimes find it difficult remain neutral in political issues and party politics. They also find it difficult to remain neutral or hide their political views. Thus, it is not surprising to have Liberals, Democrats, Republicans and others amongst the journalists. This affects objectivity and fairness in the daily coverage of their beat.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Most of the day-to-day activities of a society or nation starts and ends with politics. Politics is about power and resource allocation; hence, it is always a big issue. This is the singular reason why any reporter who is assigned to cover this beat must do it well and with the understanding that a nation life and future revolves around politics.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit focused on political reporting as another primary area of coverage in specialised reporting. The political beat is a unique beat and therefore requires commitment, responsibility and dedication in handling such a beat because of the potential to make or mar a nation’s development. It is expected you are now familiar with politics as an area of coverage in the media industry.
6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Distinguish between power and politics and show the role of the reporter in covering such a beat.
2. How could you as a new breed reporter eradicate or reduce the challenges faced by political reporters in covering the political beats?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING


UNIT 4 ECONOMY AND BUSINESS REPORTING

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
   3.1 The Role of a Business and Economy Reporter
   3.2 Qualities of a Business and Economy Reporter
   3.3 Sources of Information
   3.4 Tips on How to Cover the Business Beat Better
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Business and the economy affect lives generally. People are interested in how the economy is faring, what are the business trends, what is happening at the stock market and what is generally happening with their investments, inflation, banks, jobs, and so on. This means the business and economy touch everyone’s lives in very unique ways. This also elevates this beat to a serious plane because of its capacity to influence people’s reaction to other issues. Therefore, the business and economy beat is a serious beat that requires expertise handling. How this special area is covered is our focus of this unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

• explain business and economy reporting
• identify and explain the qualities of a good business and economy reporter
• identify and explain the role of business and economy reporting in a society like Nigeria
• identify the sources of business and economy reports.
• explain tips on how best to write a business and economy report.
3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Role of a Business and Economy Reporter

Every story in the media performs one function or the other; so are also the business and economy stories. The following are some of the roles the business and economy stories are expected to play in a society.

1. Should present economic data to the populace and interpret them appropriately.
2. Should introduce the human interest angle to its reports whenever possible.
3. Should discuss new business policies and labour laws and how the average person is affected.
4. Should do a thorough analysis of business and economic related issues to the appreciation of the ordinary and educated audiences.
5. Should give the audience the latest updates on business and economic issues.
6. Should interpret technical terms related to business and the economy to the audience in a way they will understand the meaning and implications.

3.2 Qualities of a Business and Economy Reporter

1. A good business and economy reporter must normally possess the qualities of a reporter, which has been treated in detail earlier. These qualities are basic. The other ones following these are additional because of the demands of business and economic reporting.
2. A good business and economy reporter must have passion for business and economic related issues and go in-depth in its coverage.
3. A good business and economy reporter must have a clear understanding of the meaning of economy and business related issues. He or she must also have an understanding of the stock market and give the audience detailed explanation about the market happenings.
4. The business and economy reporter is a specialist who feels at home with numbers and is not frightened by lengthy reports and press releases, many of which contain rates, percentages, business and consumer indexes and the jargon of the business world.
5. The business and economy reporter must have the skills and attitudes to recognise the power business exerts and become a tough questioner.
6. He or she must also have a healthy skepticism that keeps him or her from being awed by the muscle and money that business power generates.

7. Even though the business and economy reporter is a specialist, he or she must know much more than the world of finance. He or she must be knowledgeable in related areas and subjects as well.

8. The business and economy reporter should be a corporate raider. He should approach the money managers and manipulators with the same objectivity and distance that any reporter takes on an assignment.

9. He or she should have a good knowledge of the working system of the economy and the business world. He or she should be familiar with market forces and the nitty-gritty of the financial circle.

10. He or she should have a basic tertiary education in related fields like business administration, economics, accounting, banking and finance and others.

11. A good business and economy reporter must also be research savvy, very analytical, detailed and critical in his or her writings.

3.3 Sources of Information

Good contacts and sources can be made among the following.

1. Bank officers and tellers
2. Savings and loans officials
3. Chamber of Commerce Secretariats and secretaries
4. Union leaders
5. Securities dealers
6. Financial experts and analysts
7. Real estate brokers
8. Trade organisation officials
9. Teachers of business and economy related disciplines
10. Government ministries and parastatals concerned with business and economy related issues
11. Employees and former employees of businesses

3.4 Tips on How to Cover the Business Beat

The following are some suggestions from Henry Dubroff, a veteran business editor as cited in Mencher (2010) on how to cover the business beat better.

1. Become a financial news junkie. Pay attention to developments on your beats even if there is no obvious local or connecting angle to the story.
2. Look for hidden hooks in releases and routine earnings announcements. Hint: Read the last line first.
3. Use your sources for insight, not necessarily quotes.
4. Be comfortable with basic financial terms.
5. Never be afraid to go back to a company or a source two or three times to get the whole story.
6. The best stories often are the ones that break late on your beat.
7. Learn from reading and rereading major publications like *The Wall Street Journal*, *Forbes* and *Barron’s* not just for content but also for how they approach a big research project or how they tell a story.
8. It is always better to get off the phone and get on the streets to actually see what a company looks like up close and personal.

**SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

1. Discuss 10 qualities expected of a good business and economy reporter.
2. How will a reporter cultivate some of the sources presented in this unit for business and economy reporting?

**4.0 CONCLUSION**

No doubt, the business and economy beat is a special area that requires special attention. The reporter covering this beat is therefore expected to be a real professional in this area and be interested in the issues that come up in the course of his assignment. The business and economy reporter is also expected to report on local spot news stories, features and interpretative stories.

**5.0 SUMMARY**

You have learnt in this unit that the business and economy beat is a unique beat. The reporters who work in this special area must therefore take cognizance of this and keep the audience posted on happenings. You also learnt in this unit what it takes to cover the business beat more effectively.

**6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. Why is a related degree in management sciences vital to a successful career as a business and economy reporter?
2. Justify the 8-point item on how to cover the business and economy beat better as compiled by Henry Dubroff.
7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING


UNIT 5 REPORTING CRIME AND THE COURTS

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
   3.1 How to Write Crime Stories
   3.2 Contents of Police Reports
   3.3 Checklist for Writing Crime Stories
   3.4 Reporting Courts: The Basics
   3.5 How a Reporter can Commit Contempt of Court
   3.6 Checklist for Writing Court Stories
   3.7 Tips on Court Reporting
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Crime reporting is another unique special area of coverage in the media business. According to Obe (2005), “the public is in dire need of such news, the editors are very eager to provide it but the lawyers and the police have resolved to limit it. Most newspapers that focus extensively on crime stories stand a better chance of leading the tabloid.” The same is applicable to court stories that also demand special attention. These two areas will be our focused in this unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

• discuss crime and court stories
• explain how to report crime and court stories
• identify the checklist for writing stories in this beat
• identify some basic concepts related to crime and court reporting.
3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 How to Write Crime Stories

A crime reporter should be cautious when writing crime stories to avoid having different story from the police reports. This is the primary reason crime reporters are encouraged to closely work with the police in the course of their coverage. This again is supported by the fact that crime reporters make use of three major sources information in writing their stories thus: police reports, the people involved and eyewitnesses and account of the event.

Before you write the crime report proper, you should find out what type of crime was committed and the circumstances surrounding the crime. This will help determine amongst the three primary sources which to give prominence. However, you must note that many of the crimes committed do not have eyewitnesses. You need to then check out those who probably heard a strange sound or movement or person. This could be the beginning point in writing your story.

You must also be cautious in identifying the arrested in your story. Use special care in doing this because most of the time, those arrested usually give police fake names and these names may turn out to be the names of movie stars or celebrities. They could sue if their names appear on your newspaper as arrested for a crime.

Be sure to understand the classification of crimes and let this reflect in your reports and stories. Crimes are classified as violations, misdemeanors or felonies. Violations are low-level crimes, punishable by small fines or short jail terms. Misdemeanors are more serious and can lead to a jail sentence of less than a year. Felonies are serious crimes punishable by a sentence of more than a year. A reporter should understand this distinction and reflect it appropriately.

3.2 Contents of a Police Reports

Brian Brooks et al. cited in Obe (2005) identify the information contained in police reports thus.

a. A description of what happened
b. The location of the incident
c. The name, age and address of the victim
d. The name, age and address of the suspect, if any
e. The exact offence with which the suspect is charged
f. The extent of injuries, if any
g. The names, age and addresses of the witnesses
3.3 Checklist for Writing Crime Stories

Checklists are the information a reporter should have before writing his or her stories.

Checklist for homicide as compiled by Mencher (2010):

1. Victim, identification
2. Time, date, place of death
3. Weapon used
4. Official cause of death or authoritative comment
5. Who discovered the body
6. Clues, any identification of slayer
7. Police comments; motivation for crime
8. Comments from neighbours, friends
9. Any police record for victim; any connection with criminal activity
10. Consequences to victim’s family, others

Checklist for homicide (arrest) as compiled by Mencher (2010)

1. Name, identification of person arrested
2. Victim’s name; time, date, place of crime
3. Exact charge
4. Circumstances of arrest
5. Motive
6. Results of tip, investigation
7. Officers involved in investigation, arrest
8. Booking
9. Arraignment; bail, if any
10. Suspect’s police record

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. How would you approach a crime story that involves rape?
2. Justify five items in the checklist for arrest.

3.4 Reporting Courts: The Basics

Covering the courts is a delicate assignment for reporters. The delicate nature comes from the fact that a journalist could easily commit contempt of the courts if proper care is not taken in reporting the beat. To avoid unnecessary contempt cases, a reporter should adequate knowledge of the basics of court processes.
For instance, in the Nigerian Judicial System, there are Superior and Inferior Courts. The appellate courts fall under the Superior Courts while the Magistrate Courts fall under the Inferior Courts.

There are two kinds of law: **criminal** and **civil**. In criminal law, the Government is the accuser. In civil law, an individual or group usually initiates the action. The Government can also initiate civil actions. Most criminal cases are also settled before they go to trial by plea bargaining in which the accused agrees to plead guilty in return for a lesser sentence.

### 3.5 How a Reporter can Commit Contempt Of Court

Most contempt cases against reporters are often about contempt committed outside the courts. This is referred to as **contempt ex facie curia**. According to Obe (2005:163-164), journalists can commit contempt of court through the following ways.

1. Writing stories to jeopardize a person’s chances of receiving fair trial in the court.
2. Taking photographs or drawing sketches in the courtroom.
3. Misquotation or misrepresentation of the court proceedings by reporters.
4. Any act of disrespect against the court.
5. Mentioning the name of an accused who is a minor in news stories.
6. Offensive and provocative dressing by female journalists in court premises.
7. Smoking or chewing gum aloud in the court room while cases are going on.
8. Unnecessary interruption and distraction of the judge and court proceedings.

### 3.6 Checklist for Writing Court Stories

Checklist for Civil Actions (compiled by Mencher, 2010):

1. Identification of person or organisation filing action.
2. Background of plaintiff or petitioner.
3. Defendant; respondent’s particulars.
4. Type of damaged alleged.
5. Remedy sought.
6. Date of filing; court of jurisdiction.
7. Special motivation behind action, if any.
8. History of the conflict, disagreement.
9. Could suit lead to landmark decision? Is it a precedent?
11. Significance of action; effect on others.
12. Lawyers on both side; types of firm they are associated with.
13. Date and presiding judge for trial, hearing.
14. Judge’s reputation with similar cases.

Checklist for Criminal Trials (compiled by Mencher, 2010):

1. Formal charge
2. Full identification of defendant
3. Circumstances surrounding criminal act.
4. Summary of preceding developments
5. Likely next stage.

The Trial Process

1. A typical trial process follows this pattern.
2. Opening statement
3. Direct examination
4. Cross-examination
5. Redirect examination
6. Motions
7. Rebuttals
8. Cross-examination by prosecutor
9. Redirect examination by defense
10. Rebuttals
11. Summations
12. Charge to jury
13. Jury deliberation
14. Verdict
15. Sentence

Please note that these 14 stages represent the court trial process in the American judicial system. It is slightly different from the Nigerian context.

3.7 Tips on Court Reporting

1. Court reporters should know that the media houses are not law courts. They should therefore desist from trial by newspapers. Notwithstanding the fact that a public has a right to know, the reporters should also know that an accused is entitled to fair hearing. Newspapers and other media organisations should therefore desist from pre-trial coverage and trial by newspapers as the case may be.
2. Make sure your report is fair and accurate. All sides on the case must be given fair hearing and the facts of the case reported as accurately as possible.
3. Focus on the sentence and leave out unnecessary details.
4. Make sure you get the full sentence and then analyze within the context of your audience.
5. Limit your report to what happened in court only.
6. Publish only documents that had been tendered as “exhibit” in court.
7. Do not take pictures without the express approval by the judge.
8. Do not comment or write editorials on matters before the courts.
9. Be sure about the particulars of the accused before releasing such information.

4.0 CONCLUSION

More than 60 percent of those in jail are still awaiting trial because the courts have become overwhelmed in recent times with numerous cases. Monitoring all of these is the reporter. The only way a reporter maintains stability in this swelling tide of awaiting trials is through knowledge of the judicial system, good sources and the ability to pick out the significant and interesting cases out from the lot that may not sell.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have been exposed to another special beat: crime and court reporting. It is expected that you are now familiar with the intrigues of reporting from such a beat as well as how to write crime and court stories.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss some of the basic information a crime and court reporter should know about a typical judicial system.
2. Should a crime and court reporter require a degree in Law to succeed in this special beat? Discuss.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING
