

## ibp www meeting

### MEETING ON 30 APRIL

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the changing role of journalism in a multi-media world, to look at threats to and opportunities for high quality work, and to discuss IBP's stance. We also looked at the IBP annual awards and the judging criteria.

Present were editors, news editors and online editors from leading publications in the construction and property markets. There were also observers from the NUJ and the CIOJ.

#### Bright prospects

Generally the mood was optimistic. Journalists were having fun, learning new skills. Journalists are not confined to their offices since they can file stories from their Blackberries. They love the immediacy. Skills acquired increase opportunities for future careers in national newspapers or even television.

#### Horses for courses

For some audiences, interactivity and video were seen as the goal. Others were more interested in data. For other, especially web-only, operations, the essential was to sift the large amount of material available, and present what was most valuable.

#### Paying for it

There seemed to be general consensus that where publishing houses had gone wrong was in their embracing the concept of 'free content', of giving everything away. That the future for specialist publishing would be in presenting a complete package for subscribers, offering online and offline content. Many sponsors and advertisers see online as an essential part of the service they are offered. Many of the most ambitious online offerings are only made possible by sponsorship. There was a clear belief that this was not affecting editorial integrity – and confidence that this dependency on sponsorship was just part of the economic climate, and not a cause for concern.

#### Doing less

What did journalists do less of, to find time for this new activity? Certain long features were being cut back in recognition of readers' decreasing desire to read long pieces. Double working was eliminated – stories being written once for the web and once for print.

#### Working harder?

The overall feeling was that journalists were working hard, but not too hard. Slack days after press day had disappeared, early starts were common. But this is after all 'the best job in the world' and working hard was seen as reasonable. There was warning however from the

NUJ representative that in regional newspapers demands were often unreasonably high and that there were not the resources for proper journalism.

#### Role of the web editor

There was some concern that this role was in some cases ill defined and often unrewarding. Web editors too often were seen as having responsibility without power – sometimes finding it difficult to exercise authority over staff who did not report to them directly. Also in some cases the role of web editor was seen as being made too technical and insufficiently creative.

#### IBP AWARDS

This meeting moved into a discussion of IBP Awards. There were two concerns.

1. The nature and standing of web award
2. The desire for a multi-media award.

#### Web award

There was some concern, although not universal, that this is seen too much as a reward for the technology and design, and not for the quality of the journalism. It is vital that this award is judged on all criteria, as is the print journalism award, and that there is an appreciation of the different aspirations of different sites – they should be judge by how they fulfil their users' requirements, and not as a beauty parade.

#### Multi-media award

There is a hunger for this award, which would recognise specifically the efforts of journalist working across a range of platforms.

#### CONCLUSIONS

It was encouraging that the general feeling was so positive. Generally the press is embracing opportunities.

Areas of concern: It would be wise to keep an eye on the role of web editors, on workloads, and on the pressures of sponsorship.