

Rallying cries to improve transparency, accuracy and accountability in journalism

Posted by [Colin Heilbut](#) on July 15, 2010 at 5:17 PM



Washington Post writer Ezra Klein and Julian Assange, editor of the whistle-blowing website *Wikileaks*, have separately come out poignant critiques of the state of journalism. Klein has published a strong argument in favor of newspapers publishing full interview transcripts online. Mr. Assange's more damning denunciation, including a similar call for public access to source material, was presented during a speech last week to the [Centre for Investigative Journalism](#) Summer School at City University London.

In my own [recent study](#) performed at the American University of Paris, frame analysis of *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* revealed there was indeed significant room for improvement in the accuracy of and adherence to procedural objectivity in relation to coverage of the July 2007 helicopter assault that was exposed by Assange on Wikileaks.

Journalism blogger [Joel Gunter](#) covered Assange's speech and quotes him below.

Journalism needs to work towards making more primary source material such as this available online, arguing that this was the standard process for scientific investigations and that it should be the same for journalism". You can't publish a paper on physics without the full experimental data and results, that should be the standard in journalism. You can't do it in newspapers because there isn't enough space, but now with the internet there is.

In calling for journalists to publish their interview transcripts online, Klein's use of logic closely resembles that of Assange.

Reporters are endlessly interviewing news makers and then using, at most, a handful of lines out of thousands of words. The paper, of course, may not have room for thousands of words of interview transcripts, but the web certainly does.

Klein goes on to demonstrate advantages for both the interviewee and news organization. For the former, he posits, making a public record of one's full comments, and questions that gave rise to them, would provide protection from being misconstrued. For the media organization publishing the transcripts, there will be an increase in web traffic. The nature of the web is to reward additional information; links will be generated by sites that manage to find something interesting buried in published transcripts.

My own [academic search](#) supports Assange's assertion that the 2007 coverage of the incident later depicted in the infamous Collateral Murder video was flawed. For example, The *Washington Post* blindly reprinted military statements (that we now know to be blatantly false) without clearly citing which army personnel were being interviewed, let alone providing statements from impartial observers like hospital staff or civilians which would might controvert the American government's version of events.

It is a good sign to see unconnected experts putting forth strong arguments for journalistic accountability within days of one another. Hopefully this trend will continue and grow to the point that the rallying cries become too loud to ignore.

Sources: [Journalim.co.uk](#) [1] [2], [The Washington Post](#)

Posted in : [Newsrooms and Journalism](#)

Tags : [ethics](#), [journalism](#), [Washington Post](#)



Related Entries

- [WaPo partners with Bloomberg on its new business site](#)
- [An "uncomfortable paradox" in the relationship between content and SEO](#)
- [Connecting Journalist figures with circulation data](#)
- [Michael Arrington: journalists have a right to express their opinions](#)
- [Poll shows journalists are more optimistic about the future of the media](#)