

## ***The rise of the 'citizen journalism'*** **Christian Payne, Documentally**

Tim introduced [Christian Payne](#). Christian, also known as Documentally, is a photographer, a blogger, a podcaster – and might even be called a journalist.

Christian started by saying that he's not an expert – he's just having a lot of fun in his area, and does make a lot of mistakes. He'd noticed so many hands going up about using the digital media tools: in 2008, he used to give a talk called *Social Media Freak* show because back then people were really amazed and impressed by all the possibilities. Things have moved on enormously since then. Christian 'does stuff' more than 'knows stuff'. The more he gets his hands dirty, the more he learns. He's a story maker and a story teller, and that's what we should all be. He doesn't call himself a journalist: journalists who can't spell are normally no good; bloggers who can't spell are bloggers. A blogger gets a lot more freedom. Citizen journalism (already an old term) is about getting involved, starting a conversation, being asked what the sources are, having people go away and check the facts – unlike the old journalism which was taken as gospel truth and just listened to as fact.

### **What is citizen journalism?**

It is members of the public taking an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analysing and disseminating information. Journalists just can't move fast enough these days – be mobile. The dictionary definition of a journalist is quite out of date now:

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journalism | 'jərnɪl, ɪzəm|  
noun  
the activity or profession of  
writing for newspapers or  
magazines or of broadcasting news  
on radio or television.
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We can all do journalism – it's an act of doing – by sharing things on the internet. Mainstream journalism is still important to pave the way and have people in the right place at the right time. Blogging is about inserting yourself into a story and having an authentic reaction.

There are many public spaces that allow us to share on a democratic platform: Storify – there is a man who has been nominated for a Pulitzer prize for using Storify: a journalist who didn't necessarily write anything himself. (Storify is closed at the moment – but if you go and say '*Documentally sent you*', you may get in.)

Scoop.it – even easier to use than Storify. With it, you have the ability to take part in all the conversations that are going on out there and pull them into a separate page.

The buttons should be on everyone's sites by now, because if you are not allowing people to share content, you may as well be printing lots of business cards and bluetacking them on people's computers.



Creative Commons allows people to partake of your content by sharing things on their blogs: so you will be sending people away from your site, but there should be some 'link love'. There are problems with licensing, but it has a lot of potential.

Bambuser allows live streaming: Christian live streamed from the summit for a short time, and it was retweeted twice in a few seconds, and at one point twelve people were watching live from his iPad. The ability to share is mind-blowing.

The web is awash with this kind of stuff. The best thing to do is to get involved with it. We're always looking for the Next Big Thing. Look for the disruptors – they will find the next big thing before you even see it on a blog. The landscape is changing: the quality even of mobile phones and their cameras is exceptional now. We are getting more mobile, and we need to keep getting more mobile, and creating content that fits in with those mobile devices. The press release is not dead but reanimating constantly – how you get it out is up to you.

Phil Sands was kidnapped in Iraq in 2005, before the use of Twitter. The *Daily Mail* found out that one of his kidnapers had held his hand during the kidnapping, and tried to make a story out of sexual abuse. But he held back all details and any photos about it. By holding back, they controlled the story, and just gave the story to GQ and controlled the details and the accuracy. So there are times to share and time to hold back. And if you are sharing, control the information.

Christian himself rolled his car, and shared a video of it on Twitter, which had a lot of value for him, as it went viral.

There are people accidentally stumbling into journalism: the example given was Pits 'n' Pots (pittsnpotts.co.uk): a welder wanted access to council documents and ended up starting his own website and now has his own web-based radio station, and is a hub of news for his area (Stoke on Trent).

It's the rare few in mainstream journalism who are getting involved, but some are doing crowd-sourcing, such as asking on Twitter for people who are an expert on/interested in a subject to come forward to speak on the news or be interviewed:

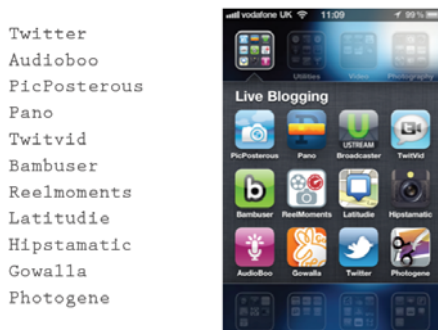


There are some who don't get involved in Twitter etc. because of the 'it's just people saying what they're having for lunch' argument, but there is a lot of information which can be extracted from tweets. And it allows people on the spot with mobile devices to spread facts and news. There are some interesting crowd-sourcing applications out there – and crowd-funding. The *Guardian* was one of the first to do the former at a large scale, digging the dirt on MPs' expenses. Paul Bradshaw runs a site called [www.helpmeinvestigate.com](http://www.helpmeinvestigate.com), an 'open source tool people can use to collaborate to investigate questions in the public interest (also known as crowdsourced investigative journalism)'.

Reuters wanted to use Christian to pick up Nick Clegg in a cab and drive him to Reuters for a crowd-sourced interview, using Christian's following to drum up interest when he tweeted that he was in a cab taking Nick Clegg to an interview. In the event, with the equipment that Christian carries around anyway, he did a whole interview, took photos, crowd-sourced some questions from his phone, live-streamed it etc. from the cab itself. This is guerrilla journalism, which tends to be remembered more than other forms of journalism, because it's not normal, it's a bit quirky – albeit sometimes people talk more about how the story is disseminated rather than the content itself. Street journalism, on the other hand – when people who are in the right place at the right time – has other issues, such as copyright of content. If you use Flickr or Posterous you retain copyright, but if you use Twitpic you don't.

Mobile journalism allows you access where more formal journalism may not work: the example given was looking at life in Pakistan, where it was too dangerous to send whole news teams, but Christian just using a hybrid camera could document things without really being spotted. Having such compact equipment also allows for people who aren't necessarily in the right place at the right time to get to the right place really quickly.

Christian also covered *The Manchester Weekend*, just walking round with his phone, finding events and tweeting about them, videoing them etc. He used various apps:



Audioboo – for audio straight to the web, one-touch podcasting

PicPosterous – not around anymore, but allowed galleries in blog posts that could then be tweeted

Pano – for panoramic photos

TwidVid – Video to Twitter, cross-posting to YouTube

Bambuser – allowed live-streaming, not great quality but sometimes that can be an advantage, being intriguing

Reelmoments – takes photos in stop motion

Latitudie – gives your location back e.g. to your employer, so if you get lost, they can direct you

Hipstamatic – was described as the ‘comic sans of photography’ apps

Gowalla – a bit like FourSquare, checking into places. The bridge between the real world and the online world – although actually they are not different worlds. We don’t think of people on the phone being in a different world, and similarly these tools are just means of communicating, not a different space in and of themselves.

Photogene – the best photo editing tool on the iPhone

There is accidental crowd-sourcing too: Christian did a PR job of getting from Land’s End to John O’ Groats with no money, just using a sim card, swapping text messages, data or international calls for travel, food etc. But by logging himself in to Gowalla, doing an Audioboo etc. he was followed by a lot of people, his route was logged, drink, lodging etc. were offered to him by his ‘friends’ online. By nurturing his network, reading the biographies of the people he was following, knowing who could offer what, he could have done the journey in two days.

Going local is a huge phenomenon now. People build local websites, getting to know each other, disseminating useful information, keeping things local – and funding it by selling local ads. And these sites are done, written and curated not by journalists or experts, but just the local people themselves – it’s hyperlocal news.

Instagram is a popular way of photoblogging – very simple, but you can only use it in the app but share it to Twitter. This does make it feel more special and more intimate. The prediction is that there’ll be more of this kind of thing – making something more exclusive with limited access. But we should all know about these things:



Real-time, searchable news has really taken off, and recent world events – in Egypt, Libya, Japan – have shown how huge they are when sometimes social networks are the only way news is coming out of newsworthy place. Mainstream media are still hugely important, but micro-blogging is being adopted more. With Twitter, you can’t see people’s history or validity, but that might be coming, where a tweeter is somehow given a reference or vouched for, so it is easier to pick out the voices worth listening to and trusting. Micro-blogging platforms are still the spine, and Twitter is central to many things. Maybe some are worried about what will happen when Twitter dies, but the networks you’ve built and nurtured through Twitter will migrate with you to whatever the next thing is.

## Developing audiences

How social are our organisations? How much of what we tweet etc. is genuinely sharing stuff, and how much is overtly or covertly selling?

## Quality stalking

If you follow on Twitter a journalist who is not following you, you can wait until they tweet about something that is relevant to you or that you can help with (a question or wondering) and reply. If that information is relevant and helpful to that person, then they'll probably follow you back. Then you have the possibility to direct message that person with press releases or news – again, using the monitoring to pick a good time (e.g. 'Slow day at the office') without being pushy about it so it doesn't seem like DM spamming. This is just constantly listening – keep the channels open.

The Open University release stuff through Twitter, as if by accident: they communicate through Twitter, using it like an intranet: one tweet said 'Is DA coming in to do the VO for L?' and that was picked up on (possibly by a 'plant') to mean that David Attenborough was doing the voice over for *Life*. The news was out there – people come rushing for more information.

But there is the opposite of that, when people keep things under wraps: for example, a TV programme that has been worked on for years has been kept quiet with the intention of releasing it fully realised with a big fanfare onto an unsuspecting audience. In fact, it is better to release bits of insight and information about the process during the run-up, let the public get to know those involved, let them get attached to the story and create a community who are involved. Birmingham Royal Ballet did something similar with their production of *Cinderella*, and built [creatingcinderella.com](http://creatingcinderella.com), with video diaries, news on the production etc. The show opened in November, but they built up a huge amount of interest long before that:

Sept 2010-	20,032 unique website views 4,001 video views, 690 comments
Oct 2010-	40,236 unique website views, 167 comments 18,104 video views, 847 comments 26,450 Flickr view, 259 comments
Nov 2010-	84,282 unique website views, 225 comments 24,173 video views, 620 comments 31,018 Flickr views, 84 comments

Performance- 25th November - 12th December 2010

They sold out the show very quickly. In the past, photos would be taken of rehearsals to be displayed in the foyer when the audience were coming in to book tickets or see the show: then rehearsal photos were used to send to the press for preview coverage: Christian himself has done quick video interviews (using his phone) with a director of a show, put it up on YouTube, told a few staff who were in the background of the video, who have then shared it with their friends, and that then has created a buzz in a very easy way.

There are still barriers: build your networks and nurture your networks. Numbers of followers are not important – it is the depth of your engagement. See who has added you to a list, as that shows a different level of interest, they are taking the time to filter you so they can pay attention to you: if you want to find nodes, find the people who are connected to the most lists.

Don't forget the journalists and the big names – you're just using these channels to reach journalists and bloggers and citizens. When thinking about these relationships, don't rule anyone out.

Look out for the nodes – Stephen Fry is the example that everyone uses for this: but there are many nodes without the same public profile as Fry. You can use TweetReach to look at a hashtag and you can see how much exposure certain tweets with that hashtag have had. You can find the people who are tweeting about your organisation – and connect with them. At Bletchley Park, they offer free coffee to nodes. They have a monthly get together, Station X, where they offer free coffee and wifi – the only rule of coming to the club is that you do some video, some audio or tweet with the hashtag #bpark, and there is always a spike in web traffic: they always launch a big campaign when the geeks are in and raise money through it too – perhaps a million pounds in a year (Kelsey Griffin there could give more information). They've used petitions on social media and run specific campaigns to save things for the nation. Looking on TweetReach, she sees who is tweeting about Bletchley Park that she should invite to Station X, and more than a thousand counts as a node.

You do have to give something back – don't expect something for nothing. At Urbis, they offered an RFID enabled card, like a gold membership card, to certain people who they really valued, who they wanted to be in the venue, giving them a bonus layer everywhere that they walked in the venue.

There are some Twitter users who live in search now, always wanting to know what conversations are going on and specifically who is talking about them – but when searching, use every possible spelling of your organisation's name. Search phrases, locations, trends. Gowalla is a tool – like FourSquare – where you can check in to places – and you can see who has checked in to your organisation. Then you can give offers and build relationships with those in your building. The Science Museum monitored who was tweeting about their museums or from their museums (using geo tagging): when someone tweeted from the Science Museum wondering what to do next with their kid, the guy monitoring the tweets tweeted back about a special offer in the museum's cafe. You need to be doing these searches all the time – Google Alerts is very useful, but you'd have to have it set to be emailing you every ten minutes or so to be able to respond in an immediate enough way. It is useful though for correcting incorrect information written about your organisation. So you should have all this monitoring going on – GA, hashtags, twitter searches (using advanced search) <http://search.twitter.com>. If you are a touring company, you can insert yourselves right into people's lives using Facebook – you can tailor your advertising by location, age, interests etc. and then the ad just appears on the Facebook pages of the relevant people.

Listening is vital, and don't underestimate the power of location. The exciting push notifications aren't happening yet (i.e. more than just 'you are the mayor') when you walk into a place, and the arts could really get involved with this as that's where the powerful imaginations are. Play with these tools to find ways of making them work for you and your organisation.

There are many useful apps: scalable privacy is not something that there is much of at the moment, but will be really valuable, especially when IPv6 kicks in – and inanimate objects are talking to each other. WorkSnug is a useful tool – it overlays a digital layer on your phone's camera to show where places are with free wifi, how noisy they are, reviews of it – like libraries, cafes, so on – where you can go to work. Layar does similar things with layering too. There could be some kind of way of using this for arts companies, because you can create a layer for anything, showing where galleries, theatres etc. are, and what's going on there.



Remember the power of what's in your back pocket, and remember these Cs:

Contribute  
Comment  
Collaborate  
Conversation  
Community

And keep playing with all the tools.