Mentoring and Australian journalism

Janet Fulton

Abstract

Mockros (1996) noted that a lack of senior staff in an organisation could mean mentoring was unavailable, hindering this valuable avenue for learning. Mockros’s comment is significant for journalism in Australia because of the number of job losses in the industry, including senior editorial staff. An important question arises from this reduction in senior staff: what will happen to mentoring in journalism? This article discusses findings from a research project that examined the creative practices of journalists and found that mentoring is an important way journalists learn how to do journalism and become journalists. It concludes that having fewer senior staff available for mentoring is an emerging problem that could affect journalism practice.

Introduction

Mentoring is one of the ways journalists learn how to produce, or create, within the system of journalism. Mockros (1996) found that mentors are important to communicate work ethics, professional values, and work strategies and philosophies, particularly of rules and procedures that are not articulated. Mockros also pointed out that a lack of experienced staff in an organisation, or overwhelming demands on experienced staff, means less traditional mentoring occurs. Mockros’ comments are relevant in journalism due to the changing nature of the business.

In Australia, concern about mentoring in journalism is particularly relevant because of the state of the mainstream media: 2012 was a devastating year, with thousands of Australian journalists losing their jobs. In June 2012, both major Australian print media organisations announced a restructure throughout their businesses: Murdoch-owned News Limited announced redundancies for an unknown number of editorial staff at its newspapers and Fairfax Media announced it would cut 1900 jobs. Many of Fairfax’s senior editorial staff accepted redundancy. An important question arises from this reduction in senior staff: what will happen to mentoring in journalism?

The research reported here was an ethnographic study that applied the systems model of creativity developed by researcher Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1988; 1997; 2003) to journalism. The study examined the creative practices of print journalists in Australia to discover how they create, or produce, their work. Csikszentmihalyi’s model demonstrates how a creative outcome occurs when an individual, as one part of a system, interacts with a domain of knowledge and a social field in a dynamic system of interrelated elements. The individual learns the rules, procedures, guides and previous works that reside in the domain, employs this knowledge to produce something, and presents the outcome of this creative process to members of the field, who understand the domain. The field judges the contribution and, if it is considered a creative product, includes
the contribution in the domain for others in the system to learn from and use in their own creative practice. The field is the social structure of the system and includes editors, sub-editors, media owners and other journalists.

The research project used interviews, observation, and document and artefact analysis as data collection methods. Thirty-six members of the field of print journalism – including journalists, editors, subeditors and cadets – were interviewed and three newsrooms were observed to gather data for the study. These methods provided a rich quantity of data that enabled the researcher to conclude that the interaction journalists have with these influences or structures, as part of the system of journalism, and the knowledge they have of these structures, is crucial to how they take part in producing or creating the texts of journalism.

One of the questions asked during the interview process was: “Have you had a mentor and how did this relationship help you in your work?” Throughout the interview process and during observations in the chosen newsrooms, mentorship, both formal and informal, was observed. This article discusses the findings of the research project to demonstrate how mentors are one of the influences in the system of journalism with which journalists interact throughout their careers. It also discusses how having fewer senior staff available for mentoring is an emerging problem that could affect journalism practice.

**Systems model of creativity and journalism**

The systems model of creativity was developed by Csikszentmihalyi to describe the creative process. The model consists of three elements – a domain, an individual and a field – and Csikszentmihalyi contends that each is necessary for creative production. It is a systemic model that contends that creativity occurs when an individual, as one part of the system, interacts with other elements in the system, and the interaction of all three results in a creative outcome. Csikszentmihalyi describes it thus: “[C]reativity can be observed only in the interrelations of a system made up of three main parts” (1997, p. 27). The project discussed in this article applied the systems model to print journalism in Australia to understand how journalists produce, or create, their work within the system of journalism. Examining how journalists create is not suggesting that journalists are making up the news. The terms “create” and “creativity” are being used to demonstrate the process journalists go through in their work production: their creative process.

**Figure 1**: Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model of creativity (2003, p. 315)

To explain these ideas further, the domain is the cultural structure and has been defined as the element that “consists of a set of symbolic rules and procedures” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 27). Creativity researcher Keith Sawyer also includes, “all of the created products that have been accepted by the field in the past” (Sawyer, 2006, p. 125). The domain provides a set of knowledges, traditions, techniques, rules, codes and conventions that an individual learns and draws upon to produce a creative product, and these structures must be learned before a variation can be made.
Domain knowledge in print journalism is not difficult to identify: there are rules that govern how a story is written (language, style and length); formal laws such as defamation; guidelines such as ethical obligations; conventions, including news values; and ideological principles such as the notion of the Fourth Estate. Examples of procedures include working to a deadline, using technological tools, knowing how to submit a story and knowledge about the organisation’s expectations.

Another element in the system is the individual. What the individual brings to the system includes variables such as talent, genetic predisposition, cognitive structures and personality traits. These all contribute to a journalist’s unique but shared view of the world, as do family, education, social class and cultural background. These are the individual structures with which a journalist interacts, and which help constitute them as a particular agent operating within the system. A journalist uses these structures in their production, along with the cultural (domain) and social (field) structures to produce a creative outcome. This creative outcome is then presented to the field.

The other element, the field, is the social structure of the system and is made up of “all the individuals who act as gatekeepers to the domain. It is their job to decide whether a new idea or product should be included in the domain” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 28). Members of the field judge the creative outcome against their own knowledge of the domain and decide whether or not it will be included in the domain for other individuals to draw on in their own domain acquisition and production. The individual must learn “the criteria of selection, the preferences of the field” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 47) to work effectively with that field. To apply these ideas to journalism, the field is “a source for stories, other journalists are used as sounding boards, senior members of the field are mentors and teachers, management provides training courses, there is an awards system and a journalist’s work is edited before publication” (Fulton, 2011b, par. 10). The research found that one of the ways journalists learn how to work is via the field through university education, cadetships, internships, watching colleagues and mentoring: the last being of particular interest to this paper.

The study found that print journalists produce their work within a dynamic of cultural, individual and social influences. The interaction that journalists have with these influences or structures, as part of the system of print journalism, and the knowledge they have of these structures, is crucial in how they produce media texts. Contrary to popular myths that position individuals at the centre of creativity, the research demonstrated that social and cultural influences are just as important in the production of creative texts: the individual is one part of a system of important factors, all of which are necessary but not sufficient by themselves to produce creativity.

A journalist, as a necessary part of the interactions within the system of creativity, learns the content of the domain as well as the requirements, or preferences, of the field and is supported by the domain and the field, thus enabling their production. These requirements and structures are vital in helping journalists to be more productive in their creative process. In other words, journalists who learn these structures become more efficient in their production process. Mentors are members of the field, typically senior members, and most of the journalists in the study discussed the importance of mentoring in their development as a journalist. The respondents in this study mentioned sub-editors, workplace trainers, editors, deputy editors and other management staff, senior journalists and journalism educators who had been important as mentors in their professional development.

It should be noted that while this article is focusing on mentoring in journalism, the researcher is not suggesting that domain acquisition, the individual or other members of the field are any less important. Each of the three elements in the system – the domain, individual and field – is of equal importance in the creative process (see, for example, Fulton, 2009; 2011a; 2011b; 2012; 2013; Fulton & McIntyre, 2012; Fulton & Scott, 2013). However, one of the findings of the
earlier research was that mentors, in their role within the field, provide journalists with valuable
guidance and experience.

The research project

In 2007 and 2008, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 36 members of the jour-
nalism field: 18 journalists, three cadets, one student and 14 management-level members of the
field (editor, deputy editor or owner). Twelve of the 14 management level respondents had also
been journalists, so they answered questions in that capacity as well. The cohort consisted of 17
females and 19 males, and they ranged in age from 20 to 62. The respondents worked for Austra-
lian newspapers and magazines that included a mix of national, metropolitan, regional, country,
community and suburban newspapers published daily, weekly, bi-weekly and tri-weekly. The
respondents worked for publishers including Fairfax, News Limited, Fairfax Community News-
papers, Rural Press, APN News and Media and independent publishers. The different styles of
magazines included weekly, fortnightly, monthly, quarterly, niche and mass market and included
publications from a number of publishers. Three newsrooms were observed in 2009 and 2010:
one is a weekly community newspaper; one a tri-weekly regional newspaper; and one a weekly
metropolitan publication. Secondary data in the form of interviews, seminars, lectures, speeches,
books and articles were also gathered to provide triangulation of the data.

To preserve confidentiality, each of the editors and journalists interviewed was allocated a
code: journalists’ codes start with a “J” (J1, J2, etc.) and editors’ codes with an “E” (E1, E2, etc.).
Any quotes from secondary data were attributed, as the information is in the public domain. The
three newsrooms were coded as NR1 (regional community paper), NR2 (metropolitan) and NR3
(regional community paper).

A brief overview of Australian print media

It is widely acknowledged that Australia has a high concentration of media ownership (Bur-
gess & Bruns, 2012; Cunningham & Flew, 2012; Dwyer & Martin, 2010; Pusey & McCutcheon,
2011). News Corp Australia is the dominant newspaper publisher in Australia. In March 2012,
News Corp owned 58 per cent of all market share (Finkelstein, 2012), although an article in The Australian in August 2013 claimed the organisation actually had a 59 per cent market share
(Jackson, 2013). News Corp Australia has a national publication (The Australian) and publica-
tions in all major metropolitan cities (often the only publication in that city), as well as suburban
publications such as Cumberland Newspapers. The Finkelstein report (2012) noted that Fairfax
Media was the next largest publisher, with 28 per cent of market share in 2012. Fairfax publishes
newspapers including metropolitan newspapers The Sydney Morning Herald (Sydney), The Age
(Melbourne) and the Sun Herald (Sydney), as well as regional and suburban publications. Other
publishers in Australia include WA Newspapers and APN, which had 8 per cent and 5 per cent
market share respectively in 2012. WA Newspapers publishes in the Australian state of Western
Australia and APN has daily newspapers in northern NSW and Queensland. There are small
independent publishers, but their circulation is typically community based. In other words, “the
industry comprises four major publishers and is highly concentrated” (Finkelstein, 2012, p. 58),
with the top two media companies owning almost 90 per cent of newspaper circulation.

As in most other countries, the internet has played a huge role in the employment of journal-
ists in Australia. While the majority of publications have an online presence and Australians have
embraced online news sites, this has not translated into dollars for Australian media publications.
In June 2012, 56 per cent of Australians accessed Australian online news sites (ACMA, 2012),
but Fairfax Media, for example, reported a decline in advertising of 23.8 per cent in its metro
print division, while digital advertising rose only 4.8 per cent (Fairfax Media, 2013b). Fairfax has made several announcements (Fairfax Media, 2013a; Linnell, 2012) concerning a restructuring of its business, including outsourcing parts of the production process (such as sub-editing), changes in management structure, the closure of some printing presses, a new operating model that includes a “digital-first” ethos (Linnell, 2012, p. 2) and the aforementioned redundancies.

Mentoring in journalism

Creativity researcher Keith Sawyer (2006) notes that one of the ways the field can support creative endeavours is through mentoring. Shea defines mentoring as “a fundamental form of human development where one person invests time, energy and personal know-how in assisting the growth and ability of another person” (Shea, 2002, p. 3). Each of the journalists in this research project acknowledged how important mentors were in learning how to write in “journalese”: “It’s a very particular style for it’s not fiction writing, it’s not novel writing, it’s not essay writing, it’s reportage” (J20, 2008). Mentors were also helpful in learning how to negotiate the field and domain. While none of the respondents discussed a formal mentoring program within their workplace, the majority had informal mentoring relationships with older journalists, editors and trainers and agreed on its importance in learning how to be a journalist. A survey of editorial staff at Fairfax metropolitan newspapers, conducted by the Australian journalists’ union, the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA), showed that 48 per cent of respondents thought mentoring was important, a finding agreed with by J17:

I think it’s a really important thing within the profession; I think we could do a lot more of that … And journalists kind of mentor each other because we do talk a lot about stories and stuff. I think it’s a valuable thing and would like to see it done more formally and done better. (J17, 2008)

Although its main focus was on adapting to digital newsrooms, a study conducted in 2012 by the MEAA interviewed editorial executives in a bid to understand what senior staff want in junior staff. Several interviews showed some staff at this editorial level believe in the idea of mentoring, with:

... several editorial executives expressing concern that small teams of young, less-experienced journalists are working on the online sites when “a wider pool” is needed: “The more the traditional journalists can change and embrace and adapt to the new medium,” said one editorial executive, “the better it will be for the quality of journalism online”. Another editor said young, inexperienced digital journalists would benefit from “exposure to, mentoring from, and training by, colleagues working on the print editions” – because they are “some of the best journalists in Australia”. (O’Donnell, McKnight & Este, 2012, p. 21)

Mockros (1996) argued that mentors are important to communicate work ethics, professional values, work strategies and philosophies, particularly of rules and procedures that are not articulated; in other words, they help to relay the information that is stored in the domain. The World Federation of Science Journalists (WFSJ) identified several values on which mentors in science journalism should advise their mentees: ethics, best practice and style. Each of these can be considered part of the domain. Journalists in this study noted that mentors were important for validation, suggestions and critiquing them in their writing practice, as well as imparting knowledge about the rules and traditions in the domain:

... there were a couple of guys on the desk as well who worked with me who are still there now who I just respected their ability to break stories, to find stories, to report comprehensively, and the good humour with which they approached what was certainly in the UK a very demanding task. (J2, 2007)
Several more experienced men and women have helped me over the years, just by imparting the finer points of the trade … most of your workmates are pretty good like that and will answer questions. I had one in particular whose patience is endless and answers all your questions. He’s been a journalist thirty-odd years. (J4, 2007)

I had great respect for my [publication name deleted] editor and I always felt that his suggestions and corrections were brilliant. He was the best briefer that I ever had. In other words, you went in there with a rough idea, you talked it over with him and you left the office just ready to rip and all these new directions opened up and everything. He was terrific in that sense. (J12, 2007)

Oakham’s research into the training of cadets in Australia also found that cadets attached a high level of importance to learning production skills through interaction with senior members of the field, and “experiential learning” and “emulation” (2004, pp. 178-179) were the preferred methods of learning. This observation by Oakham is also evident throughout the responses in this study:

When I was on the [publication name deleted], I was a business reporter, my business editor there, who is now the editor of the [publication name deleted] was a guy called [name deleted] who when I got there, talking to other people, got the impression that he was the best, he was basically said to be the best business journo of his generation. He was absolutely inspirational. I mean, just watching how he worked, watching how he conducted interviews and every so often he’d sit down and he’d give me a mentoring session and watching the, picking up the responsibility with which he conducted his work, how he approached it culturally was inspiring. (J2, 2007)

However, a mentor can do more than assist in learning about the domain; mentoring is also a way for early-career journalists to learn the preferences of the field. In line with the earlier discussion, learning the preferences of the field is as important as learning the rules and procedures of the domain. Hooker, Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi examined mentoring using the systems model developed by Csikszentmihalyi and defined a mentor as “a gatekeeper to a domain who furthers a novice’s access to a field, or, as we will come to discover, a mentor serves to increase a novitiate’s social capital” (2003, p. 231). Increasing an individual’s ability to benefit from a social network (Finkelstein, 2012) improves chances for recognition by the field and can enhance reputation and lead to promotion and other rewards. Oakham’s (2006) research also reported that senior colleagues were not only vital in learning the practical aspects of journalism but also in how new journalists were socialised into a newsroom both through learning about the hierarchy and how to “(be) a journalist” (2006, p. 183); in other words, by learning the preferences of the field. Several respondents noted how the support and feedback they received from mentors played an important role in their development as journalists:

She [editor] was very good at, you were speaking about criticism before, she was very good at giving you feedback and giving it to you in a way that made you go, “Oh yeah” and make you really want to do better and “Yes, I can. Yes, I will improve it that way” and you really wanted to do your best for her. (E11, 2007)

I’d bring in the copy and they’d [editors] sit there and go through it with me and teach me stuff [J20 was initially a freelance journalist]. They were incredibly kind to me and they said they saw it as part of their role was to help people like me who were (laughs) unguided talent – who could write but really had no clear idea of what to do and how to go about it for newspapers. And so those people were real mentors to me in the early days and incredibly helpful to me. (J20, 2008)
Experienced journalists and editors interviewed in this project were also aware of how important mentoring was in their own early careers and a number remarked how happy they were to pass on their practical experience to younger journalists:

I have [mentored] because we get quite a few, every year we get work experience people who are doing communications courses at University of New South Wales and UTS, etc. So having been mentored myself I feel as though I’d like to give something back so I do my best to help them and assist them and encourage them, etc. (E14, 2008)

Several people have been fabulous in assisting me to get to the next level of writing and reporting. I have tried to encourage others and it’s always wonderful to see them succeed. (J11, 2007)

I think it’s important when you’re first starting out. It’s always good to get guidance when you need it and I think you’re going to need it more when you’re starting out … I have experience and I can think and young people sometimes think, I don’t know whether it’s because of my age or what, but they think I’m a person they can approach. (J5, 2007)

E13 is an editor who also works as a part-time tutor in journalism at an Australian university and in the New South Wales TAFE (Technical and Further Education) system, and believes it is her job in that capacity to encourage promising students: “I mentor most of my students; anyone who shows promise, willingness and enthusiasm gets my time as a teacher” (2008). Mentees also recognised the importance of journalism educators in learning how to be a journalist:

Probably [name deleted] who used to teach me at uni … I’d probably say she had a huge influence on me actually, when I come to think of it, because I probably learnt more about being a journalist than anyone from her. (J7, 2007)

However, experienced journalists and senior editorial staff in the research still found value in the mentoring process in their continuing development, with several editors stating that as they moved up through the journalism ranks and into management positions, drawing on others’ experiences helped them.

I have had several mentors over the year, my editors and trainers within the organisation. Even today I have several senior people I regard as mentors as I learn the job of editor. Email makes maintaining these relationships so much easier. (E3, 2007)

John Trevorrow, former deputy editor at the Herald Sun, commented that “you can’t replace the learning that you do on the job and that comes from the collective experience and wisdom of the people in your newsrooms” (Press Club Online, 2003). However, one concern in journalism is that with commercial imperatives becoming increasingly important, publications can save money by replacing older journalists with cadets or junior journalists. The age profile in newsrooms has changed: first because of technology, with older staff sometimes unwilling to take on the newer technologies; and, second, as a result of commercial considerations, with younger journalists both cheaper and more willing to become multi-skilled (Harrison, 2006, p. 57). Former journalist Geoffrey Barker discussed how redundancies have affected newsrooms:

Some staff cuts are justified: all newspapers have non-performing staff. But newspapers make little effort to replace retrenched staff with better and brighter journalists, preferring to hire young, inexperienced people because they are cheap, uncritically enthusiastic and untroubled by the demands made upon them. (2010, p. 3)

Apart from Barker’s comments on the shortcomings of younger journalists, a younger newsroom also means there are fewer experienced staff to take on mentoring roles, a problem identified throughout mentoring literature (Mockros, 1996). J5 has worked in journalism for 40 years
and agreed that other journalists in the newsroom regularly call on his skills, particularly in the area of law and the courts, in which he is highly experienced (see earlier quote), but he has also noticed how the age profile has changed:

It’s an interesting situation we’re moving to where we have less and less senior staff; people are staying less and less. I wonder whether you’ll ever see journalists staying anywhere more than 20 years. (J5, 2007)

Mockros (1996) pointed out that a lack of older staff in any organisation, or overwhelming demands on older staff, means there is less traditional mentoring occurring in workplaces. A disproportionate number of young people compared with experienced people is also reducing mentor relationships. Journalist Pamela Williams claims that a lack of mentoring in newsrooms will lead to a lessening of the values of print journalism, with young journalists unaware of their responsibilities as a journalist:

One of the biggest threats to maintaining our standards is the fact that with newsrooms so tight on staff young journalists entering the profession from techs and universities are often not receiving the mentoring they need. The on-the-job training is as vital now as it ever was, and I think young reporters need to understand the importance of asking questions and not accepting things at face value, and keeping on making phone calls, and above all, to maintain a healthy scepticism. (Background Briefing, 1999)

Regardless of the current flaws in the mentoring system, mentoring and other support from work colleagues is critical in how journalists produce their work. Unlike some studies (Dickinson, 2007; Henningham, 1990) that claim journalists are constrained by members of the field, data in this analysis clearly show journalists can also be enabled and use this support to assist them in their creative process. In terms of the former argument, Oakham made the following observation regarding the training of new journalists:

If senior journalists are incorporated as part of the method [of inculcating cadets], it has to be asked: What are the implications for innovation if what has gone before is always presented as best practice? Where indeed when one trainer explicitly states, “we are trying to create journalists in our own image, it is a chance to shape people” and further, “we try to influence them culturally.” The constant emphasis on replication would seem to leave little ideological space for the notions of innovation and change. (2006, p. 193)

Oakham’s question can be answered by stating that it is important for a journalist to learn the traditions, the existing structures of the domain and the preferences of the field before they can introduce innovation and expand the domain (Negus & Pickering, 2004), since research into creativity clearly shows that creative producers must learn the rules, conventions, techniques, guides and procedures, or structures, and traditions of a domain before they can produce novelty (Bailin, 1988; Evans & Deehan, 1988). As demonstrated in the above findings, engagement with work colleagues and mentoring assists in this process in both domain acquisition and learning the preferences of the field.

How will the current environment affect mentoring?

There is little doubt that the digitisation of news is having an effect on journalism in Australia. In 2012, Australian journalism went through what could be considered a watershed year, with the mainstream media, including print and broadcast employers, shedding jobs. Journalist Geraldine Doogue described the Fairfax redundancies as “a massive loss of accumulated knowledge” (2012). In an interview with Michael Gawenda, former editor-in-chief of Fairfax’s newspaper
The Age, Doogue said: “It is a very good news day, I suppose, for younger writers, though. It is a generational change issue” (Doogue & Gawenda, 2012). She asked Gawenda’s views on that issue, to which he replied: “For some young writers this is an opportunity and they should have that opportunity” (Doogue & Gawenda, 2012). However, he also said:

… if fifty or forty senior people were leaving the article even on redundancies and they were hiring another twenty-five, thirty young people to replace them well, you’d say, this is generational change and generational change is good … yes, there’s an opportunity for young journalists but they’re going to be asked to do more, with less time, fewer resources, less training. (Doogue & Gawenda, 2012)

In this instance, as well, younger journalists are not being hired to replace those who have left, thus making the argument for generational change a moot point. Gawenda also made the point that mentoring in Fairfax newsrooms was threatened: “Look, it’s got to the absurd stage, really, sad stage, where most of the people who are leaving Fairfax were made mentors of young journalists just three or four months ago.” (Doogue & Gawenda, 2012)

On the other hand, Mike van Niekerk, editor-in-chief of Fairfax Digital from 2001-2011 and weekday editor of The Age until he accepted redundancy in 2012, stated emphatically that: “Despite the loss, irreplaceable in some cases, of quality and experience, there remains at The Age and the Herald much experience and also a younger, rising generation of awesome talent adapting well to the new, digital-first presentation of news and features” (Van Niekerk, 2012). Van Niekerk’s comment ties in well to a point made by Tom Huang (2012), who believes younger journalists can, and should, be mentors. One respondent from the research, a student who was doing an internship at a magazine, said she felt more comfortable with a younger mentor and found the experience rewarding:

There was a young girl there who was only a year older than me but she’d been working there for two years and she came beside me and showed me a lot, which is good because a lot of them were a lot older than me. (J22, 2008)

Conclusion

The findings reported in this paper demonstrate that mentoring is beneficial in journalism but that this beneficial relationship is being eroded. An important question is what can be done to maintain a mentoring culture. One possibility is that, with the increase in fluidity in journalism’s workforce, mentoring needs to be done outside the workplace rather than the traditional in-house style. In a study that examined how to extend diversity in newsrooms, Choudhury and Baines (2012) attempted to discover whether mentor/mentee relationships outside a workplace worked better in the “liquid lives” (Choudhury & Baines, 2012, n.p.) of current journalists. They surmised that with more journalists working outside the traditional mainstream media, such as freelancers, a relationship with an external mentor would be more profitable for young journalists.

With Choudhury and Baines’ (2012) suggestion in mind, a similar solution is provided by organisations such as Wannabe Hacks, a UK-based group that offers mentor/mentee relationships between experienced and young journalists, The John Schofield Trust, a British-based mentoring program set up to commemorate late journalist John Schofield, and the Society of Professional Journalists. The SPJ program has a Facebook mentor page, a closed group page where SPJ members are invited to join the group as a mentor or mentee and encouraged to post questions and answers. Other organisations that provide mentoring services are the previously mentioned World Federation of Science Journalists (WFSJ), as well as the Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ). In Australia, the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) launched the Women in Media initiative to provide mentoring to young women in the media.
Another possibility is that mentoring could take on a less conventional style, with a mutually beneficial relationship between mentor and mentee occurring in a collegial learning experience. In an MEAA survey, one journalist commented:

Our industry needs to be guided by the few old hands who are tech savvy, leading the two-finger [sic] typists with incomparable contacts and news sense to tell their stories in different ways, with the aid of the new digital crew. This learning from each other will benefit both and equip both groups for productive futures. (MEAA, 2010, p. 23)

The media business is not going to get any easier. Jobs for journalists in mainstream media are not going to increase in the near future. It could be argued that with the way the industry is going, with fewer and fewer journalists employed, mentoring is not needed. But, as researchers have pointed out, journalism is not dying; it is the delivery platform that is changing (Deuze, 2007; Nerone, 2013). With this in mind, it is worth noting that, according to the research project discussed in this article, mentoring is an important way a journalist learns about the rules, procedures, guides, laws, and so on of the domain as well as the preferences of the field, and journalists who have discussed mentoring found it a valuable way to learn how to work effectively and efficiently. In a different work environment, such as a digital environment, with different rules and procedures to be learnt, mentoring would still be a valuable process, and one that is needed to pass on domain knowledge and field expertise.

References


Author

Janet Fulton is a lecturer in media and communication at the University of Newcastle, New South Wales.