

## THE PLACE OF SHORTHAND IN NEW ZEALAND JOURNALISM EDUCATION

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## Who I am

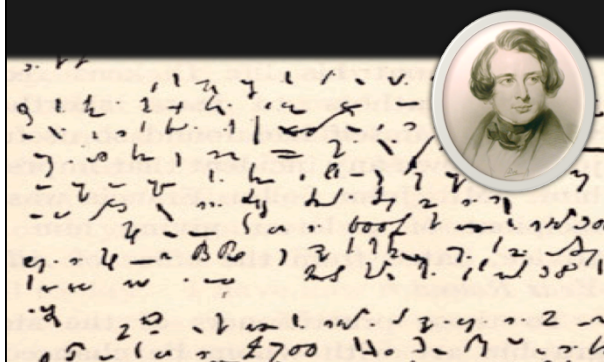
- Head of journalism programme, Massey University at Wellington
- Fourteen years at *Consumer* magazine
- Ten years at Massey
- Teach news writing, grammar, media law & ethics, journalism history, business journalism
- Spent seven months teaching/researching journalism in US



## What I will cover


- Place of shorthand in journalism education internationally
- Controversy over teaching shorthand in NZ
- Benefits and challenges
- Outlook for the future
- Generate a discussion

## Shorthand long part of journalism



## Shorthand internationally

- Not taught in US and Australia
- Jurisdictions where journalism educators do not, as a rule, have close involvement with journalism industry (ACEJMC) (Discipline Standards)
- Is taught in UK
- "Extremely valuable skill for the competent journalist" (NCTJ). 60 to 120 wpm, with 100 wpm the "gold standard" (NCTJ)

 National Council for the Training of Journalists

## Shorthand internationally

- Some UK journalism academics have balked at cost and time involved in teaching shorthand
- Brian McNair, then head of journalism at University of Strathclyde, declared NCTJ accreditation of little value...

## Shorthand internationally

- There was “no space for the NCTJ’s increasingly unrealistic demands on both staff and students” (McNair).
- These demands included the teaching of shorthand and a focus on the “old world of print journalism”, rather than new media
- Free of the NCTJ curriculum, McNair said, Strathclyde’s “synergy of journalism with creative writing, humanities, and social sciences could flourish”



## Shorthand internationally

- But many leading journalism postgraduate programmes in UK continue to be accredited and teach shorthand as a zero-credit paper (as university hierarchy see it as not appropriate for postgraduate study):

- University of Sheffield



- Cardiff University



## Shorthand internationally

- Even some that are not NCTJ-accredited still teach shorthand
- “We are not accredited to the NCTJ and for broadly the same reasons as Westminster...it’s too rigid” George Brock, head of journalism at City University, told Leveson Inquiry
- But both Westminster and City universities teach shorthand, as it is a skill required by industry



## Shorthand in New Zealand

- Continues to be requirement of JTO
- Court, local government, general reporting
- 80 wpm minimum



## Shorthand in New Zealand

- In 2009 Martin Hirst, then journalism programme head at AUT, advocated its removal:
- AUT would continue to teach shorthand but “out-dated technology” (Hirst). Expensive to teach and “a drain on budget resources that could go towards more equipment or staffing in other areas” (Hirst).
- “The industry is firm that shorthand must remain part of the J-schools’ curriculum” (Mike Fletcher)
- Thus, so long as J schools continue to offer shorthand, students typically must go to J schools to enter industry



## Shorthand in New Zealand

- Indeed, on the margins, a small number of people enter the journalism industry without a journalism diploma
- They typically are young graduates, very talented and have had volunteer newsroom experience
- In my experience, newspapers still require these students to have shorthand and thus will send them to a J school just for this.
- Thus, the newspaper industry apparently regards shorthand as the one fundamental skill required of journalists that cannot be taught on the job (forget media law, media ethics, court reporting, local government reporting, etc.!)

## Shorthand in New Zealand

- ◉ In 2013 Massey expects to have a postgraduate journalism programme, with shorthand a zero-credit paper, *a la* UK.
- ◉ Students will have to pass shorthand in order to obtain Massey diploma, but not formally graded (what a pass will be, remains to be decided)
- ◉ AUT has something similar
- ◉ Shorthand is graded at other schools

## Shorthand in New Zealand

- ◉ Benefits of shorthand:
  - Emphasises to students need for accuracy, speedy note-taking, diligence
  - Sometimes no alternative
  - Credibility: no “citizen journalist” can do it!
  - Good indicator of student ability

## Shorthand in New Zealand

- ◉ Challenges confronting shorthand:
  - Expensive in time and resources
  - Increasingly difficult to find teachers
  - Increasingly at odds with new media technologies

## Shorthand in New Zealand

- ◉ Future for shorthand
  - Status quo?
  - Teach it online, by contract?
  - Shorter courses?
  - Teach a new generation of shorthand teachers?
  - Industry phase it out?
  - Journalism schools phase it out?
  - Your thoughts/experiences?

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