

Case study: The Edinburgh Reporter

Enders Analysis

46A Great Marlborough Street,
London W1F 7JW
+44 207 851 0900
info@endersanalysis.com

August 2014

Overview

The Edinburgh Reporter is a local news website for people living and working in the Scottish capital. It produces articles, features and audio and video content on typical newspaper topics, ranging from news and local politics to business, culture and sport. In addition, the site offers live coverage of some events. The Reporter also encourages the wider public to submit ideas and stories in text, video or photo format. It provides much of the content of a good local newspaper, as well as multimedia and interactive features that can only be delivered online.

Edinburgh Reporter homepage

The screenshot shows the Edinburgh Reporter homepage. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links like 'About us', 'Advertising', 'Classified Ads', 'Living in Edinburgh', 'Submit Your Story', and 'Contact'. A date indicator shows 'Thursday 28 August, 2014'. Below the navigation is a search bar and a 'Breaking News' section. The main headline is 'Five things you need to know today Edinburgh' by Phyllis Stephen, published 7 hours ago. The sub-headline is 'Rubbish news - Dundas Street bin is replaced'. Other visible headlines include 'City of Edinburgh Methodist Church commended on its credit union scheme', 'Dog abandoned outside Musselburgh pub', and 'Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2014 - REVIEW - Dan Clark: Me, My Selfie and I ****'. A 'CityXPLORA' banner is also present.

[Source: Edinburgh Reporter]

The Reporter distinguishes itself from other services offering local news and information largely through its emphasis on reader-submitted content, its cross-platform approach to distributing its material, and its 'do one thing well' approach to the scope of its posts. These features are discussed in more detail below.

Background and context

The Edinburgh Reporter was founded in early 2010 by Phyllis Stephen, an Edinburgh-born freelance multimedia journalist, who continues to edit it. The Reporter sits in the broader context of online local news. Traditional newspaper

publishers had been putting local content on the web for at least a decade prior to The Reporter's founding. Inevitably, however, local services had not gained the sort of traction in terms of viewer numbers that more general news providers had, as the addressable audience of a local newspaper does not expand much beyond the local online audience.

Content strategy

The Edinburgh Reporter publishes mostly text-based articles, divided in a newspaper-like fashion into news, business, culture and sport. On top of this it has a section called "TER LIVE" which provides live coverage of events. Its overarching strategy is to stay totally focused on Edinburgh-specific issues: the highest level it is likely to go to is to discuss the Scottish independence referendum, but even this is often discussed from an Edinburgh angle, for example the story "Edinburgh MP wants agreement on the independence question". This is the sort of local focus which is notoriously difficult to sustain in traditional media, both economically, due to the limited audience and the damage to classified ad yields from online services, and in terms of content, due to the local news reality of fewer journalists looking for stories from a smaller area.

In order to ensure the site has sufficient content, The Reporter takes reader-submitted stories. Far from being a bolt-on, this feature is heavily emphasised in the About page,¹ and "Readers' News" is the first subcategory under "News". This takes The Reporter's approach close to that of many innovative online media companies (such as BuzzFeed), which style themselves as both publishers and platforms, or 'platishers'.²

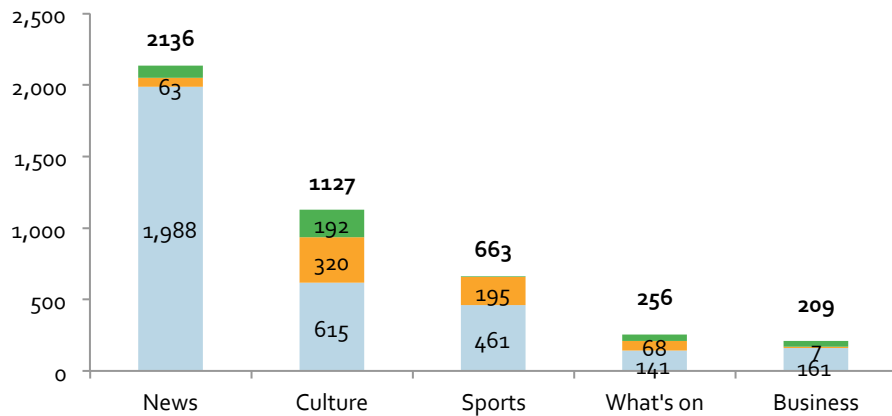
Most of the site's content could be found in traditional media, particularly a local newspaper. Real-time coverage of events, as well as audio and video, are exceptions, but in theory broadcast media could provide these. Still, the Edinburgh Reporter adds something as it provides local content, which, though it *could* be delivered through other channels, in fact is only found to such a significant extent online. The chart below shows a breakdown of the 4011 pieces posted from September 2013 to August 2014: unlike traditional media, The Reporter is not committed to producing a certain amount of each type of content each day, and can therefore be much more responsive. Recent content includes embedded videos, photo galleries and PDF documents (e.g. a 26-page guide to the Edinburgh Arts Festival). The preponderance of content submitted by readers through the on-site form (8% of content surveyed) is one innovation that does set the site apart from traditional media.

The Edinburgh Reporter is cross-platform, with channels used to distribute content including: blipfoto, tumblr and pinterest for photos; Audioboom for audio recordings; and a YouTube channel for video. Links and latest news are posted on Twitter and Facebook. The Reporter was early onto different platforms, having had a Twitter account since its inception in 2010.

¹ <http://www.theedinburghreporter.co.uk/about-ter/>

² A term coined by Jonathan Glick (<http://recode.net/2014/02/07/rise-of-the-platishers/>), and discussed, in the context of Medium, here: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/26/business/media/a-platform-and-blogging-tool-medium-charms-writers.html>

Number of articles posted by category and author, Sep-13 – Aug-14



Note: "Contributors" refers to 36 named writers not listed on the editorial team, who submitted an average of 16 articles over the review period; "Reader" refers to stories submitted by users through an on-site form; articles can be in multiple categories
 ■ Editors ■ Contributors ■ Reader [Source: Edinburgh Reporter, Enders Analysis]

In terms of output, The Reporter publishes a couple of dozen text pieces of a few hundred words each daily; its YouTube channel has produced 265 videos over the past three years; and it has posted 158 audiotracks to Audioboo since 2010.³

Contribution to Public Service Objectives

The primary public service obligations that the Edinburgh Reporter fulfils are PSO₂, by providing news coverage of local affairs, and PSO₈, by reflecting life in Edinburgh and representing the social, cultural and policy issues affecting Edinburgh residents. On top of this it also satisfies the third PSO through frequent sports reporting, averaging almost one local sports story a day throughout July, especially as regards local football clubs.

PSO₂ – News and current affairs

News and current affairs forms the bulk of the Edinburgh Reporter's content. Stories such as "Late night trams for the Fringe" and "Oxgangs fire – police looking for witnesses" inform the audience about news relevant to the community, while stories on "Council to fly the Palestine flag for a day" and discussions such as "What effect will the Independence Referendum have on Edinburgh's property market?" cover broader events from a local angle. A significant portion of its news articles is submitted by readers.

³ Numbers correct as at 18/08/2014

News article

Published On: Sat, Apr 12th, 2014 at 10:45pm

News / Scottish Independence Referendum | By Reader

Scottish Independence Referendum – Edinburgh’s Asian community to hear case for Yes

A group for independence-supporting Scots Asians are launching a new branch in Scotland’s capital.

Scots Asians for Yes is hosting a public meeting in Edinburgh on Monday 14 April with an array of speakers, including one of Scotland’s most prominent businesswomen and political figures who will tell the audience that our Asian communities should be ‘front and centre’ of the debate.

Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh, an actress, lawyer and member of Yes Scotland’s advisory board said: ‘It’s time to put Scotland’s future into Scotland’s hands, so that, together, we can build a nation which works for all of us.

SHARE THIS



TAGS

[Source: Edinburgh Reporter]

In the “TER LIVE!” section, the site also reports live on council meetings and other real-time newsworthy events such as the debates and Q&As with officials.

PSO3 – Sports and leisure

Sport is one of the dedicated sections of the site. Most of the output here consists of match reports for local football teams, but there is also more general news relating to local sides (e.g. “More changes behind the scene at Easter Road” which informs readers of appointments at Hibernian FC, or “Four arrested at Murrayfield Champions League qualifier”). There is also some content relating to other sports, for example “Basketball – Scotland seniors win bronze” or “Rugby – Sharks star second-row enforcer signs”, however, as suggested by the fact that these articles name the sport they concern in the title, there is far more football content than there is for other sports, which presumably reflects the sporting priorities of members of the community.

Other leisure interests are amply catered for in the “Culture” section of the site. This includes book, film and theatre reviews and news, as well as information about local theatre exhibits, showcases of amateur photography, fashion news and restaurant information.

This week's photo

Published On: Wed, Apr 16th, 2014 at 4:03pm

Culture / Photography | By Reader

Stockbridge Photography Club Photo of the Week



SHARE THIS








Subscribe To
RSS FEED

TAGS

[Edinburgh](#)
[Edinburgh Local News](#)
[Edinburgh News](#)
[Local News](#)
[Photography](#)
[Stockbridge Photography Club](#)

This week's photo is from Col Walder, who visited Dalhousie Castle just outside the city.

The Stockbridge Photography Club is a non profit community club. We don't have any joining fees, and provide aspiring photographers with education and experiences to help them get the best from their camera.

[Source: Edinburgh Reporter]

PSO₅ – Factual

Edinburgh Reporter runs occasional pieces relating to social issues, such as a report on "Show Racism the Red Card at Easter Road", and "Greens welcome promise on tackling youth unemployment". There are likely to be occasional stories that relate to science or beliefs, but not with the sort of regularity that would make the site a reliable source for such content.

PSO₈ – Communities and regional

Central to Edinburgh Reporter's scope is representation of the interests of the Edinburgh community. To this end it has a subsection of news relating to the City of Edinburgh council, which runs stories such as "Council need your views on community payback orders". Reflections of Edinburgh life are also included, such as the piece "Opinion – "Queue? Aye!!""", which discusses the writer's personal experience of how etiquette in the city has deteriorated.

Audience reach and profile

As the content is of interest almost exclusively to Edinburgh residents (although some will also appeal to visitors), the addressable audience for The Reporter is relatively small. Nielsen data for April 2014 suggests 11,000 unique visitors. In 2010, the site claimed that its "visitor numbers... are regularly around 100,000 per month";⁴ The Facebook page has over 4,000 likes, and the more active Twitter

⁴ <http://www.theedinburghreporter.co.uk/advertising/>

account has 23,000 followers.⁵ It has a total of 82,000 video views on its YouTube channel, with most videos having attracted views in the hundreds.

Business model and revenue

In general, the Edinburgh Reporter does not seem to be aggressively seeking revenue. It gets income from donations, suggesting “a donation of £1 now and then”.⁶ In line with other local media services it offers classified ads, but every insertion only costs 99p.⁷ And as of 29/08/2014 there were no classified ads posted.⁸ It also offers display advertising, although the details have not been updated since 2010: £20/1,000 views, or £150 for a published advertorial – not high prices, even for 2010. The display ads currently on the site are served by Google Ads. It also offers “Business Services”, where the company will coach businesses on “how to present yourself for TV and radio”, help with planning media strategies, or run online media services for other businesses.

The apparent lack of profit-seeking suggests that the Edinburgh Reporter does not require significant revenue, and therefore may be less susceptible to the twin pressures on the profitability of both local news and free online content.

Summary

The Edinburgh Reporter is a website dedicated to breaking and discussing news from and concerning Edinburgh, as well as providing resources and information for residents and visitors. It is cross-platform, multimedia and many of its posts are contributed by readers; however the majority of the content is similar to the sort you would find in a local newspaper. It is explicitly aimed at people who live or work in the city, but within that does not target any particular demographic. It also does not appear particularly responsive to commercial pressures. As local newsrooms are pared down, online services such as this may serve an increasingly important function in the provision of local news and the representation of local interests, however it is likely not a model that could be applied to smaller communities.

⁵ Correct as at 18/08/2014

⁶ <http://www.theedinburghreporter.co.uk/about-ter/>

⁷ <http://www.theedinburghreporter.co.uk/classified-ads/>

⁸ <http://www.theedinburghreporter.co.uk/classified-ads/browse-ads/>

Important notice: By accepting this research note, the recipient agrees to be bound by the following terms of use. This research note has been prepared by Enders Analysis Limited and published solely for guidance and general informational purposes. It may contain the personal opinions of research analysts' based on research undertaken. This note has no regard to any specific recipient, including but not limited to any specific investment objectives, and should not be relied on by any recipient for investment or any other purposes. Enders Analysis Limited gives no undertaking to provide the recipient with access to any additional information or to update or keep current any information or opinions contained herein. The information and any opinions contained herein are based on sources believed to be reliable but the information relied on has not been independently verified. Enders Analysis Limited, its officers, employees and agents make no warranties or representations, express or implied, as to the accuracy or completeness of information and opinions contained herein and exclude all liability to the fullest extent permitted by law for any direct or indirect loss or damage or any other costs or expenses of any kind which may arise directly or indirectly out of the use of this note, including but not limited to anything caused by any viruses or any failures in computer transmission. The recipient hereby indemnifies Enders Analysis Limited, its officers, employees and agents and any entity which directly or indirectly controls, is controlled by, or is under direct or indirect common control with Enders Analysis Limited from time to time, against any direct or indirect loss or damage or any other costs or expenses of any kind which they may incur directly or indirectly as a result of the recipient's use of this note.

© 2014 Enders Analysis Limited. All rights reserved. No part of this note may be reproduced or distributed in any manner including, but not limited to, via the internet, without the prior permission of Enders Analysis Limited. If you have not received this note directly from Enders Analysis Limited, your receipt is unauthorised. Please return this note to Enders Analysis Limited immediately.