



MEDIA

'Media' is the page of the Society's Press Committee. This section of *The Psychologist* aims to promote and discuss psychology in the media. If you would like to comment on a recent newspaper article, TV programme or radio broadcast involving psychology, if you have tips for others based on recent experiences, or if you know of a forthcoming programme or broadcast, please contact the 'Media' page coordinating editor, Harriet Gross (Chair, Press Committee), on H.Gross@lboro.ac.uk.

A day in the life of the Annual Conference press office

ONE of the most enjoyable responsibilities of the Press Committee is staffing the Annual Conference press office. I hope this description of the first day of this year's conference gives a flavour of the experience, which is quite different from my day job!

8.00am: Conference press office opens. BPS staff are there first. They were here yesterday (Wednesday) to set up facilities: phone lines, printer/photocopier, internet links, ISDN line. They fielded calls from journalists and put notices up on a red spot on badges, asking presenters to call in to the press office.

8.30am: Go out to get papers. Aidan Greggs's work on truth-telling features in the *Telegraph* – 'Half a second, that's all it takes to spot a liar' – and work from Northumbria on the effect of cricket helmets on cognitive performance appears in both the *Telegraph* and the *Guardian*.

8.45am: Phones start ringing. Student helpers arrive. They put out the calls for speakers to contact the press office.

9.00am: Press Committee members, who staff the office on a rota over the three days, arrive to do their stint. All are pleased to see that the office has a window for the first time in three conferences! Coffee arrives.

9.20am: Phones ringing in earnest. Notices go up on noticeboards around conference. Calls are logged on a big board, indicating who is wanted, by whom and when for. Once the contact is completed, the item is cancelled on the log. Phone calls come in

BY HARRIET GROSS

all day, asking for more information or to speak to presenters. Gradually the log expands and pressure on phone lines and the ISDN line (used as a high-quality link for live radio broadcasts) starts to build up. Material is e-mailed out. One presenter has already done a morning television slot.



9.30am: Journalists (known affectionately as The Pack) arrive. Familiar and new faces representing the broadsheets, *Daily Mail* and the Press Association are here all day (and Friday), identifying potential stories, interviewing presenters and writing copy. In addition there are journalists from news agencies, from *Trends in Cognitive Science* and, briefly, *Runners World*. At any one time there are 15–20 people in the office.

10.00–10.30am: Journalists read press releases and programme and make lists of who they want to talk to; usually they interview as a group. Calls go out. Presenters start to respond. Coffee.

10.45am–2.00pm: Busiest time! Journalists see one person after another, ask questions and take copious notes. Other people are talking to journalists on the phone, or doing radio broadcasts.

Researchers who come in are seen by up to six journalists for as long as 30 minutes. For the journalists, it can be a stimulating experience, if somewhat overwhelming to switch between topics without a break. For researchers, being interviewed by so many people can be rewarding: 'I found it quite daunting at the beginning but then I found I really enjoyed it. It's unusual to have so many people interested in what I do. I got better at explaining it as I did it more.'

12.30pm: Lunch arrives.

1.00pm: Press Committee handover to afternoon shift.

2.00pm: Presenters continue to appear in the office, phones ring and interviews arranged for Friday. Journalists work on laptops. Student helpers check noticeboards and registrations. Press Committee members seek presenters who have not responded. Room is boiling hot!

3.30pm: Tea and biscuits.

4.00–6.00pm: Journalists produce lists of people they would like to see tomorrow. Everyone starts to flag! Wine materialises with visible upturn in mood. People drop by to say hello. Phones ring. Support provided for radio interviews using the ISDN line.

7.30pm: The office finally closes for the day.

Friday is a repeat of Thursday. Saturday is quieter; by mid-afternoon, the office is being packed up.

Press activity during conference provided considerable coverage for psychology and the Society (at the time of writing, 60 national, 160 local/regional stories and 29 radio slots). It would be impossible without the permanent BPS press office staff (together with temporary input from Press Committee) and, crucially, all the presenters who give their time. Thanks to everybody.

MEDIA TRAINING DAY

Next media training day – Monday 27 September. Contact Dawn Schubert for details on dawsch@bps.org.uk or tel: 0116 252 9581.