

Thank you, Charles, for allowing us to host the NCTJ's 70th anniversary in this extraordinary place, and with its remarkable history, a fitting backdrop for our celebrations today.

It's such a pleasure to see so many friends of the NCTJ this evening, including some of our lovely alumni.

For me, leading the NCTJ team, working with all our supporters and overseeing the work of the charity is an absolute privilege.

Seventy years ago the media world was very different.

But I believe the core values that have always been at the heart of the NCTJ are still valid. And our role in bringing together all sectors of the media with journalism educators and trainers remains truly unique.

There is nothing else quite like the NCTJ and I am honoured to lead a wonderful team who work so hard for you all.

Never has it been more important to have trained, qualified and trusted journalists who are so vital to our democracy. Quality journalism and professionalism are what the NCTJ stands for.

Yes, there are many challenges.

Leading the NCTJ through relentless change and making difficult decisions means it is tough and exhilarating at times:

Innovating in a global pandemic; dealing with the aftermath of Leveson; making shorthand optional (even more controversial than Leveson for some!); abandoning Oxdown (but we did bring it back temporarily last year!); considering who should author McNae's (Mark Hanna and Sian Harrison have done a brilliant job on the 26th edition, out tomorrow); and identifying who passes, who fails and who cheats in our tough exams and satisfying our demanding regulators. Special thanks to: Mandy Ball, our brilliant principal examiner, Sean Dooley, our steadfast king of quality and standards, and our trusted legal advisers at Teeslaw.

There are always challenges. But I love this job. And it's never been more exciting and rewarding.

We know our qualifications and accreditation standards have to continue to keep up with digital developments, and with changes in working practices and the education and media landscapes.

We have to continue to invest in the best research (thank you Mark Spilsbury for all you do).

We need to provide clear and comprehensive information about journalism careers (thank you Abbie Scott and the FT for leading the support for this vital work).

We want to encourage more professional development, do more to support public interest journalism and continue to build more partnerships to increase our resources and our impact.

That is quite an agenda. But we have a lot to be proud of and the joy of working with some fantastic partners.

Not least, the pioneering and award-winning work we've done with Cirrus and Proctorio to offer online and remote delivery of exams, fit for the digital industry we serve. And, of course, the journalism teaching teams at the 35 colleges, universities and providers that work so hard to meet our challenging performance standards and who go the extra mile for their students, trainees and apprentices.

The incredible support from our friends at Meta for the Community News Project; thank you Sarah Brown, Sian and Nick, and all the publishers, trainers and reporters involved. Meta has donated 17 million dollars and 23 publishers are now involved in this 'awesome' scheme.

The new Journalism Skills Academy, which Google is headlining: thank you so much Matt Cooke and Vincent Ryan.

And, of course, the impact of the Journalism Diversity Fund is growing, helping more and more people from different backgrounds into journalism.

Thank you NLA media access for your constant support and all the enlightened media employers and organisations donating the cash and in-kind support (there are 27 of them now).

These are just some of the highlights for me. Our work is rewarding because all these things make a real difference. We wouldn't do them otherwise.

So, returning to where I started, it's wonderful to have a party, in person, in this magnificent setting but let's not forget what really matters.

I hope that one of the reasons you're here tonight to celebrate journalism is because you believe in what we stand for and you share our values. Quality, trust and diversity are values we as a society need to protect and promote more than ever before.

My ambition for the NCTJ, in this new decade, is to place even more emphasis on equality, diversity and inclusion.

It's not a bolt on strategy and much more than a series of projects; it's right at the centre of everything we do and everything we stand for.

Changing an entrenched culture is one of the biggest and hardest challenges all of us need to confront.

Today, we are launching our best practice guide to work experience. Short placements are fine to see if the job is for you and to hone your skills while you're training. But we have to work together to stop unpaid internships: they are morally wrong, illegal and unfair. Networks and wealth should not open doors that are shut to hard work or poverty.

We need to encourage those from all walks of life into journalism roles, take down the barriers and support people in their careers so they can join the decision-makers. We must place equal value on alternative, non-graduate entry points and boost recruitment and promotion from this talent pool.

So, let's all work as hard as we can to ensure that in ten years' time, when we gather for our 80th, we are really proud of the make-up of our newsrooms that truly reflect our communities.

Thank you very much.

I'm now going to handover to John Ryley, head of Sky News, to say a few words on behalf of our wonderful trustees. John is a long serving trustee and the NCTJ is so fortunate to benefit from his wisdom and support – who can forget the brilliant awards event John and his team produced for us during the dark days of lockdown, far better than any Oscars or Baftas! John...