

(economic, political or otherwise), we strongly believe that media and cultural artifacts should stay in the public domain equally accessible to all.

Within Capitalism almost all aspects of our lives are increasingly being commercialised as we are expected to be reduced to the role of passive consumers. Making your own media and keep it in the public domain so others can benefit from it is a direct way of confronting this, and Indymedia London is very committed to this principle. But if you decide to keep the copyright of your material whilst allowing people to copy and distribute your work (provided they give you credit) then you have a set of Creative Commons licenses to choose from. If you decide to use one of these please state so in your article.

**Contact us:**

Once you have done all the above, and published the article, propose it as a feature by emailing the publicly archived [imc-london-moderation@lists.indymedia.org](mailto:imc-london-moderation@lists.indymedia.org)>Imc London Moderation list, quoting the url of the article. If you have further editorial queries or suggestions please do not hesitate to contact us at the IMC-London Moderation list. For any other issue see the Contact IMC-London page.

**Other texts:**

You may also find it useful to have a look at the IMC-London introductory texts Welcome to IMC-London and Using the New Site.

**And last but not least**

Indymedia London is a DIY project, where everyone contributes skills, interests and individual knowledge. It is the diversity of approaches of your contributions, and the quality of material you publish what will make Indymedia London a vibrant and useful resource relevant to this city, hopefully reflecting the collective creativity, wit and passion of this town. That's why it is important that you write your features first hand, and that the media you publish is material you've put together yourself instead of doing a lazy copy and paste from somewhere else. It also means that, if you think something should be covered on Indymedia London, it's your job to do that. Even though we are happy to help and there's lots of ways to get in touch, asking us to cover something for you will usually not work. We therefore encourage you to to grab a camera and notepad and to go out to report it yourself!

It is time to take back our lives and our city! ... Get publishing! :-)



Indymedia - How to guide (2)



# How to: Write a Feature for Imc London

[www.london.indymedia.org.uk](http://www.london.indymedia.org.uk)

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#### And last but not least ...

### What is Indymedia London?

Well, it is probably many things, and quite possibly different people will give you different answers, but most would agree in what we think it is not: an alternative news service that can be brought in, complete with journalists, cameras and kit, ready to report on your action or event.

For us at IMC-London, Indymedia is basically a collaborative project which allows YOU to become the media yourself. The vision that the Zapatistas expressed in 1996 – three years before the first indymedia site went online – is still for us central to the project. In their 2nd Declaration from the Lacandon Jungle they called for “a network of independent media ... We need this network not only as a tool for our social movements, but for our lives; this is a project of life, of humanity, humanity that has a right to critical and truthful information”.

Today, over a decade later, Indymedia websites are an established reality all over the world, even though different IMC collectives may have different views on what Open Publishing means in the era of web-based ‘user generated content’ or ‘social media’ – otherwise also known as Web.2.0 (though we don't really like this term). Since the revamp of the IMC-London project and website, our work has focused on building electronic horizontal spaces for cooperation, exchange and participation, in other words,

grass-roots autonomy in this highly fragmented and mercantilised city. We therefore think that Indymedia London can only become a working alternative to the corporate mainstream media and to the increasing commercialisation and privatisation of the web if its users actively participate in the project. IMC-London is what you make it!

### Be The Media!

Ok, we could go on and on about what we say above, but what we are really interested in now is to get you active, to encourage you to incorporate IMC-London into your day to day work, to use it as part of your everyday web experience. Yes, of course, you can use IMC-London to announce and publicise your events – many of you already do! – but also, and crucially, it is up to you to make sure your events, campaigns, actions and ideas get covered and reported in the website in an unmediated manner.

Be The Media! says the old slogan. Today you organise or participate in an action, demonstration or event, tomorrow you put a report together, click the Publish button on the website and tell people about it first-hand. Or the opposite, today you publish in IMC-London so tomorrow the context and the arguments of your action, campaign or event are much clearer to everyone ‘out there’. If Indymedia provides a publishing platform for user created content, then it is up to all of us to make sure that whatever goes on in London is reflected in the website in a direct, critical and truthful way.

But we also know that it can be daunting to take the first steps in getting involved, in publishing your own stories to the website. So that's why we've put together this summary of all you need to know to become an effective indymedia reporter and get your quality grassroots news online. Please read on ...

### A step by step guide to publishig 'Features' in IMC-London

You may now wonder what we actually mean by that. Is a feature the same as an article or a report in its purely journalistic sense? Or can it also be a space where you not only describe what actually went on, but you also explain the how and, more importantly, the why it happened in a direct and passionate way? Well, we think that the latter is more interesting to the site users, as well as more relevant to London. We love to see articles or reports like these being posted to the site so they can be promoted into Features for the front page.

Although it is true that you don't need to be a journalist with a capital J or media maker with an M to contribute to London Indymedia, it is also a fact that we strive for quality in our website's content. So here it is what we consider it to be a ‘minimum set of requirements’ to publish good articles to the website. But please note that all contributions to IMC-London need to fall into the remit of the Editorial Guidelines and Mission Statement.

Note: Articles in IMC-London are composed of different sections. We have divided this guide according to our ‘publish form’. You may find it helpful to have a look at it whilst reading this.

### The Title:

Titles are usually what catches people's attention first. It is a good idea to think about a punch line that will draw readers into your article. Funny and creative titles often work

very well too. But for this you don't need to SHOUT. In fact, titles all IN CAPS usually have the opposite effect. They put people off as they are often seen as annoying and patronising, as well as a cheap way to try to put your article down into people's throats. There currently is a limit of 50 characters on a title, so you've got to keep it short. This shouldn't be a problem as a title is meant to catch the reader's attention, and not to summarise the whole article.

#### **The Author and Contact details:**

You will need to put a name into the 'author's field, because if you leave this empty the article won't be published. But you don't need to put your own name if you don't want to. You can use a nickname, or make up a name that relates to the article, or, obviously, you can also use your group, campaign or collective's name. The contact details are entirely optional. Use this if you want to add an email address where readers can contact you or your group. Therefore note that if you fill this in, your contact email will be shown in the article, and thus it will become publicly available.

#### **The Neighbourhood tags:**

It is always a good idea to fill this in. Tags in general are a way to make content easily retrievable later on. They are a method of organising the database of the site's content, as well as a way to categorise material in a geographical sense. We thought that in such a huge (and often fragmented) city, tags would help the site users to make sense of what is happening in the area of London where they live or hang out. So please fill this in by adding the name of the neighbourhood or area where the issue you are reporting on took place. Again, you don't need to put these in caps, and please note that double-barreled neighbourhoods need to have an underscore line between the names – for example: the\_city or elephant\_and\_castle. Also if your article refers to more than one area or neighbourhood you can add as many neighbourhood tags as you want, but leave a space between them.

#### **The Abstract:**

This is the short summary of your article that will be shown in the front page of the website under the title of your article. Remember that other people might not know much about the issue you're writing on, so don't forget to include the who, where and when, but also, importantly the why it did happen. If you start your report with a short summary stating these facts, you are much more likely to catch the reader's attention.

#### **The Description:**

This is where you can put the main body of your article. There's no limit for the length of what you add here, but again make sure the information is well organised so it makes sense to someone that may not know much – or anything at all – about the issue or event you are reporting on. If in the Abstract you have introduced your report (and the issues around it) now you have an opportunity to expand these as much as you want, but please do not repeat the same text of the abstract here, because if you do, people will have to read it twice in succession, which they will find very irritating. You can be very thorough with your article, explaining the what, where and how with much more

detail. But also, and crucially, in here you also have a chance to get into the why(s) of the issues(s) you are reporting on in a political or theoretical sense.

Actions, demonstrations and events are often spectacular and work well in bringing the issues to the public view, in others words, they are a good way to make conflict visible. But the political arguments, narratives and backgrounds are often neglected. We think that Indymedia can help with that, and so we love to see articles and reports that put the politics and concepts at the centre.

For this to happen it is often necessary to do a bit of research, and to collect information from a variety of sources that can then be linked into your report. This will give your work, – and the issue(s) you are referring to – a wider context. We obviously prefer links to material coming from independent, alternative and radical media (there are plenty in the web!) but please, and by all means, link to other sources too if you think that they add information to your article and help to make your point, even if they are from corporate media sources, though be careful with your choices here! ;-)

Also, it is always worthwhile to do a bit of searching for other articles on the same issue that may have been previously published in the indymedia sites. It is a good idea to also link to those in your article, and we encourage contributors to do so as it helps to make Indymedia – our own media – more visible and legitimate source of information. Put it this way, when you contribute material to a local Indymedia site you are also adding to the general (and truly global) pool of collective creativity, knowledge and intelligence, and thus being active in creating autonomous infrastructure and 'movement'. And we, at Indymedia London, think this is very important.

#### **The Topics tags:**

The same as with the neighbourhood tags, we thought it'd be helpful to organise and archive IMC-London's contents by topics – or subjects. We thought this would make easier the navigation of the site and the retrieval of materials. So please use these too. In the publish form you'll find some 'Topics' that you can select by ticking them. These are only thought of as a general guide, so feel free to create your own ones too. But note that the same as with the neighbourhood tags, double worded ones should be introduced with an underscore between the words – i.e: social\_struggles or climate\_change.

#### **Media Uploads:**

This is where you can add your photos, videos or audio files to your article or report, and it is obviously a good idea to include some of these to it. Imagery and audio media not only help readers to visualize what you are talking about, but they are also media forms in their own right. We, at IMC-London, see visual and audio media as an essential aspect of doing our own media, and therefore we consider that good features should include at least one photo or image. This is also important because when your article or report gets featured to the front page of the site, the first media file you have uploaded (usually a photo) will be displayed together with your abstract and under your title. This will be the first that the site's users will see of your work, and it is what will attract readers' interest to your article.

If you don't have any photo or other visual media file yourself don't worry, usually you'll be able to find it somewhere else in the web. Otherwise be creative!, any other type

of image can also do the trick, for example a drawing, a design, a logo or whatever else you may come up with.

### **Report checklist:**

And finally, before you publish your Feature you may want to check the following:

Does your report answer these six questions clearly and concisely?:

1. What happened?
2. Where and
3. When did it happen?
4. Who did it?
5. Why did it happen? and
6. How?

### **Is your report easy to read?**

Try to look at your article from a reader's point of view, as if you had never seen it before. Readers will be put off by a long piece of text that runs all together with no breaks, so split it up into paragraphs. It's also worth dividing a long article into sections with sub-headings so people can see at a glance what it covers. And if possible at all, it is also a good idea to ask someone to read it and give you feedback before publishing. Having said that, and for more immediate reports, this is often not possible as news very quickly become non-news, so if you possibly can aim to publish your story the same day, or as soon as you can after that.

### **Have you explained the background?**

Don't assume that your reader knows about the subject. All good reports should give basic background information. If you are going to use acronyms and abbreviations in your article, make sure that the first time you use them you type the words out in full followed by the shortened version in brackets – or the other way round. Add links to further background information or to relevant websites if you think this would be helpful. Try not to use too much jargon.

### **Have you checked the spelling and grammar in your report?**

Remember, it is easy to miss your own mistakes, so please make sure you check these before publishing. Most word-processors have speller and grammar checkers.

### **Does your report meet our Editorial Guidelines?**

If your article doesn't meet these Guidelines, or contravenes the website's Mission Statement, then there's a strong possibility that it will be hidden.

### **Have you prepared and edited any media you plan to upload?**

Remember visual and audio media can make your report much more interesting to potential readers. Think about the order in which you want to publish your photos, and remember, a good 'photo report' is as valid as a written one, and it can also be turned into a Feature in its own right. You can find a useful guide to editing and resizing photos here.

Video and audio files should also be edited before you publish them. The final piece you plan to upload is entirely up to you depending on your creative sense, style and intention, but we all know how annoying can be shaky shots, or audios with heavy background noise. We have not come up with a 'how to' guide for these, but we are pretty sure you can find some help in the web, or otherwise just use your common sense!

And whilst talking about common sense ... please make sure that your photos, videos and audios are not in any way incriminating. If they are choose different ones for your article. It is possible to obscure faces using photo and video editing software, but clothes or other distinguishing features may still identify people. If there is any possibility of this happening, err on the side of caution and don't publish them.

### **Other useful tips: Features examples:**

You may find it helpful to visualize an example of what we've written above, though you don't need to take that as the only model for a 'good feature'. This one combines background information with a personal account, but other examples may be more focused on theory, or history, or on collecting together a series of events on the same issue, or be photography based or include lots of different media file. The choice is all yours!

### **Spellchecks:**

To spell check your text before you publish it can make all the difference. It is a good idea to type first your texts into a word processor so they can be spell checked before publishing. Don't forget to check the spelling of your titles and media captions too. Using a word processor instead of directly the publish form, also secures your text against being lost in case of any problems with the publishing system.

### **Create your personal account:**

On the site you can register a personal account. You will have to give a User Name and Password. We think this is very important and very useful specially if you plan to keep contributing material to IMC-London. When you publish anything while logged in, you will be able to edit your contribution later on. This means the content you publish will be tied to your user ID, and so it gives you more control to your material.

### **Check your article after publishing:**

It is also a very good idea to keep revisiting your own article after publishing it, so you have the chance of answering any questions your article may arise, or respond any comments other users may post to your article.

### **Creative Commons:**

The material you publish to IMC-London is considered not to be copyrighted by default (unless you clearly state otherwise in your article) As we said before, we think that doing Indymedia is contributing to an open and collective pool of common knowledge and intelligence. And because we think that media and culture in general should not be tied up to the laws of the market, nor be turned into exchangeable commodities for profit