

Literary Journalism and Editing: IALJS and *LJS* as Unifying Forces

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I have two big interests in my teaching and research, and *Literary Journalism Studies* brings those two together.

The first is, of course, literary journalism, which the journal puts into a new frame of reference that helps the subject become more fully visible. I am pleased to be part of the small band that first formed the IALJS in 2006, but the institution building did not stop there. Like other new, interdisciplinary fields, literary journalism has need of a shared language, and the journal is vital in supporting that. I felt it keenly when coediting a special issue on the field for another journal; our feet were planted on the ground provided by that first issue of *LJS*.

The second big concern of my working life is the history, theory, and practice of publishing; and, in particular, the editing function. I offer a working definition of editing as a process of selecting, shaping, and linking the text, to deliver its meaning and importance to the reader. The mostly invisible work of editing helps to create a context and identity for texts that allow them to survive as they move through time and space, from one group of readers to another, and from one purpose to another. For periodicals in particular, the voice of the publication is the accumulated voice of these acts of editing. As the veteran film editor Walter Murch puts it, editing is “not so much a putting together as it is a discovery of a path.”¹ The *LJS* journal is an example of this shaping consciousness.

Most importantly, *LJS* helps create a conversation that is international, stretching beyond North America, where the need for definition and legitimization is perhaps even stronger. This reflects its roots in the IALJS, which from the start took a deliberately international stance.

One small example from my own experience: The seeds of a book review that I wrote for *LJS* grew into a book chapter on Polish reportage, which drew in turn on the work of other IALJS colleagues. That conversation has evolved over the years and informed a conference panel for IALJS–13 in Vienna on the oddly internationalist nature of populist nationalism and the insights that might be gained by considering it through the lens of narrative journalism.



Notes

¹ Murch, *Blink of an Eye*, 3.