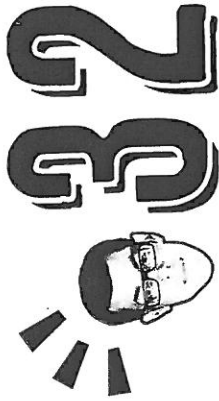


Armstrong A. & Osman, R. (2012) The 100 Most Pointless Things in the World, London, Coronet.



READING OUT VIEWERS' TWEETS ON TV AND RADIO

There are two things guaranteed to make any British viewer switch off their TV or radio but due to my fear of Piers Morgan's libel lawyers, I'm only allowed to write about one of them in this book.

I have decided to email 'The News' about the endless, and surely pointless, use of viewers' and listeners' tweets on supposedly intelligent shows.

To: The News

cc: All radio programmes ever

Subject: Viewers' tweets

Dear The News

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I like you. I like watching and listening to you. I particularly like it when you get Paxman to shout at people. But I am now bored of hearing viewers' tweets on every subject under the sun.

So, for example, let's say David Cameron has an argument with Ed Miliband about taxing jacket potatoes. The following is a list of people I want to hear from:

1. David Cameron
2. Ed Miliband
3. The chief executive of Spud-u-Like (I wonder if that is actually someone's job? Wow! I would absolutely love to hear from him or her)
4. Krishnan Guru-Murthy with a tax expert, or a representative of the British Potato Growers' Association
5. Possibly Wayne Rooney (head like a potato. Interesting celeb angle)

The following is a list of people I do not want to hear from:

1. Gary from Woking

Trust me, if I want to hear Gary's opinion on something, I will travel to Woking and ask him personally. I'm guessing there won't be a big queue.

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This goes for every story on every news programme ever. I was listening to a religious debate on a Radio 5 discussion programme last week. One listener tweeted to say the discussion was moot because God doesn't exist. This prompted another listener to tweet that, contrary to the previous tweet, God does exist. Unfortunately I had to nip out to the shops so I never found out who was right.

Anyway, enough from me. I've – genuinely – just asked my Twitter followers whether they like tweets being read out on the news. Let's take a look at some of the comments:

Jo dB says it makes me furious

Charley says waste of time that could be spent on actual news

Kate tweets it is a nutters' charter.

And Alasdair has got in touch to say

A fatuous replacement for proper journalism

How's that for balance? I'm afraid it's hard to find any in favour, though I haven't yet heard from Gary in Woking.

So, please keep doing what you do brilliantly: telling extraordinary stories, speaking truth to power, and giving a voice to people who genuinely need it. But enough of the tweets already. Don't forget that reading out viewers' tweets even

managed to dumb down *Big Brother*. And you're supposed to be The News.

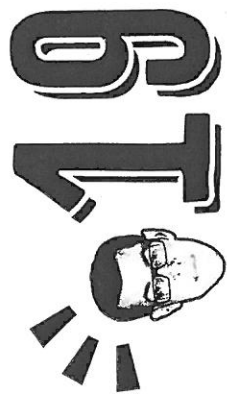
Your faithful servant,

Richard from *Pointless* (you know, with the glasses?)

POINTLESS FACT

The first ever tweet was sent by Twitter founder Jack Dorsey on March 21st 2006. It read 'Just setting up my twttr.'

The most retweeted tweet of all time is reportedly Justin Bieber's 'I'M SEXY AND I KNOW IT'. Good old Twitter.



ONLINE REVIEWS

Garden sheds, restaurants, industrial wood sealant, holidays, hats for dogs, Christmas books – think of literally anything and someone will be reviewing it online. Just take ten seconds to consider the sort of person who spends some of their actual time on this earth writing reviews of *plain white paper* on Amazon. Sixty-seven at the time of writing. Treat yourself to a quick read.

But where online reviews really come into their own is with hotels. There are millions upon millions upon millions of them. When booking a hotel it's easy to get caught in a hopeless spiral of reading these reviews and before you know it you're suddenly basing a genuine financial decision on the fact a Danish couple once had a below par breakfast and a creepy bellboy.

And you can also never be sure that, especially with hotels, these reviews aren't simply made up by the competition and perhaps the hotel isn't actually haunted and the reception staff didn't cast a spell on the guest's entire family when they asked for an extra pillow.

In short, online reviews are only useful to any of us who need advice when buying our next ironing-board cover. Which is none of us.

*Did you find this article helpful? We welcome your opinion.
Let us know exactly what you think by walking down to
your local canal and shouting it into an abandoned skip.*

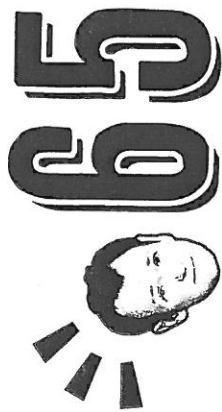
The invention of the Internet has done some wonderful things. It has the capacity to educate (pandas can sneeze!), inform ('So *that's* what a Justin Bieber is') and surprise (I don't wish to be smug, but I *have* just won the Nigerian lottery).

But perhaps most importantly, the Internet can tell you what a disgruntled man from Truro thought about his cordless power drill.

Yes, online reviews.

The anonymity of the Internet means that everyone now has a voice and many use this voice to pour all of their joy, confusion and valuable time into reviewing everything under the sun for our reading pleasure.





INTERNET PASSWORDS

The time has come for passwords to go. Good riddance, I say. We liked you when you were new, when we had to remember only one of you, when it still felt like belonging to a secret gang,* but be gone now, with your strange insistence on mixing letters and numbers and your edict that we should all be able to remember seventeen different passwords. Are you mad? Numbers AND letters? The ONLY way we'll

.....
* I don't think my brother will mind as we haven't really 'used' our gang, as such, for about thirty-six years, but our password was the following: the first person said, 'Eggs and bacon', and the second person said, 'Bacon and eggs'. That way my brother knew it was *me* he was speaking to and I knew it was *him*. Clever, possibly too clever. But all the same I'd appreciate you keeping this to yourselves ...

remember these is if we write them down. And Rule 1 of passwords is we don't write anything down. So now every conversation I have with my bank ends with them sending out yet another form so I can reset my password. However, passwords are themselves passing. They have realised they have been their own undoing. This pleases me, but ...

The time has come for security questions to go. Good riddance, I say. Oh, I know why they came in: because nobody could remember their million different passwords for all their various accounts. But the only security question I know the answer to is the one *anyone* could find out by watching my episode of *Who Do You Think You Are?* My mother's maiden name. Everything else is a mystery. Your first car? Well, I don't know! Was it the first car I remember my parents having (Mini Clubman)? Or was it MY first car (Golf)? Your first house? Could be anywhere. And worse still: your favourite subject at school? Well, that all depends on which school. And when. I used to like music but only when Mrs Dakin taught it, and then I started to prefer English ... Anyway, you get my gist.

I tell you what I long for and that's a return to the days when we used to speak to people who knew who we were. Can we have that back? It was ace.