

# >> Snapshot

**Heather Grant**

**Journalist**

**NUJ**



**Can you tell us a bit about your career to date?**

In my early days I was writing about property and home interiors and became editor of a quarterly magazine for Homebase and then editor of a fashion magazine for The Burton Group. When my first child was born I started working freelance and wrote for numerous women’s magazines such as Family Circle, Ideal Home, Homes & Gardens, Inspirations and Ideal Home.

When I moved to Hertfordshire I continued to freelance for women’s magazines but a local publisher led me to write for the automotive trade in which I have specialised for the last 15 years. I spent 10 years as editor of Bodyshop, where I became known in the industry and built up industry knowledge and great contacts. I then went freelance again and have regular columns in titles in the UK and Australia as well as edit a magazine for the Auto Body Professional (ABP) Club. I also do PR consultancy for a few selected clients.

**What do you like most about your work?**

I like the initial drawing up of ideas for the next issue, being first with information and writing about what people are doing. My intention is to produce the best and most informative magazine for the industry. My job has taken me to many interesting places and I have loved the hospitality side, travelling to major events, eating in top restaurants and staying in stunning hotels around the world.

**What are the biggest challenges of maintaining a freelance career?**

Maintaining decent rates can be a challenge. It can be too easy to accept lower rates when you want the work, but fair remuneration is ultimately good for the employers and writers. The fact that so many people are prepared to provide copy free of charge or to work as an intern for next to nothing undermines the profession and is bad for the industry overall.



***“I attend FEU Training workshops because the content is always of a high standard. The tutors actually work in the areas they are teaching, so they have real and up to date information and know how to apply it”***



It can be difficult to get paid expenses to attend trade events as a freelance. I’m lucky because I now get paid to attend. However, if you don’t, the cost of the day out, transport and accommodation can make it impossible to go, which means that you are not in a good position to write about it or widen your contacts.

**Have you added new work/skills to your portfolio over time?**

When I started as a freelance, I realised that there were insufficient speciality magazines to provide me with my target income, so I started to do PR work. I maintain a small number of clients using a set day rate, which works very well for me and for them.

**What is the biggest challenge of learning the skills that you need?**

This has to be cost and time.

**What FEU Training courses have you attended?**

I’ve attended Write that Book and Get It Published and Social Media for Beginners.

**What are the most important things that you’ve learned?**

There are so many helpful things that I learnt on the Write that Book workshop. I understand magazines but not book



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publishing so the day was really informative with clear accessible explanations about the process and how to get started. We were given great tools and signposting to relevant online information.

I'm writing a book about my shock experience of being diagnosed with a brain tumour two years ago and the problems encountered (two operations before the main craniotomy operation including an emergency operation to remove two blood clots and bleeding on the brain) what it felt like post op, the recovery process and the impact it had on me and on my family. I want the book to guide people who have the same problem on what they (and their friends/relatives) can do to support them on their road to recovery. I also want the book to help raise money for the National Brain Charity - my way of saying thank you to the great medical team.

The FEU Training workshop laid out so much information about how to get an agent, what practical steps you need to take to make it happen, and how to self publish should that become the best available option. I feel much better equipped to look into agents and specialist publishers now and I'm confident that whatever route I choose, the book will definitely get produced.

I will certainly be using all I learned from the social media workshop to promote my book before and after it is published.

**What has encouraged you to attend FEU Training sessions?**

I attend FEU Training workshops because the content is always of a high standard. The tutors actually work in the areas they are teaching, so they have real and up to date

information and know how to apply it. So we have all that as well as the tools and guidelines they offer.

FEU Training offers fantastic support and it's all included in my NUI membership! It's lovely to have the collaboration and backup from attendees from four creative unions and the group offers a unique opportunity to network and see things from alternative creative perspectives.

Communication is extremely good too. I am considering becoming a member of WGGB now, and have only discovered the potential benefits of doing this from attending FEU Training events.

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