

Text 1.

Michael Fertik: online reputation is becoming more valuable than money or power

The author of *The Reputation Economy* believes online reputation is now so important that we risk becoming persona non grata if we ignore it. Here he explains how to transform yourself into search-engine gold

My Google search for “Michael Fertik” returns a page of uncommon order and serenity, like one of those Japanese gardens where the gravel has been diligently raked into perfect swirls. The first result is his personal website, then Wikipedia, Twitter and LinkedIn, followed by a couple of prestigious publications he contributes to (Bloomberg Businessweek, Forbes) and the Amazon page for his books. We learn instantly that Fertik is 36 years old, an American internet entrepreneur who is the founder and CEO of reputation.com. Photographs show a smiley man with rimless spectacles and a cascading black mane. Nothing random, nothing embarrassing; not a hair – literally or figuratively – out of place.

These results are no fluke. Fertik’s company, which he started in 2006, has curated the online reputation of 1.6 million customers who pay upwards of \$700 a year to have their most flattering activities showcased to the world via search engines. He has a staff of 240 in California and in 2013 he acquired the British company Reputation 24/7 and launched uk.reputation.com. Fertik likes to say that we are all naked on the internet and that your digital screens – phones, laptops and tablets – are actually more accurately viewed as the windows to your house. His job is to open and close the curtains to show you looking your best.

Explaining his own pristine search results, Fertik says, “Well, I use my own technology, that’s rule number one. But, thank God, very few critical things have been written about me. It’s not like there’s been some big-hit piece in the New York Times. That’s never happened because I’m pretty much who I describe myself as.” Fertik talks fast, a New Yorker now transplanted to Silicon Valley, but momentarily he stops. “That doesn’t mean it doesn’t happen to good people, I see it happen all the time.”

Fertik believes in the old-fashioned idea that your reputation matters and in his new book, *The Reputation Economy*, he argues that it has never been more important. As we move from an era of big data to the more considered and perceptive big analytics, the amount of information you give away about yourself – your “digital footprint” – increases exponentially every time you go online. Fertik thinks it is only a matter of time before each of us has a reputation score, just as we now have a credit rating. He writes, “Reputation is becoming more valuable than money or power.”

<http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/jan/18/michael-fertik-online-reputation-economy-interview-valuable-money-power>

Text 2.

Adventures of the Black Square review – art that aimed to change the world

This huge survey of abstract art from Malevich onwards is big on revolutionary ways of thinking rather than ways of seeing

Malevich's Black Quadrilateral hangs on the wall, surprisingly fragile and small. It is starting to look its age. The black shape has faded to grey, but still tilts sharp and subversive against the correct white rectangle on which it floats, fine cracks spreading like laughter lines across the surface. It feels like the most gleeful send-up of figurative painting.

It is 100 years, more or less, since this work was made and abstract painting began, a revolution created by Malevich, Kandinsky, Mondrian, Rodchenko (and others: the myth of origin remains controversial). Some people might expect its moment to be over. Abstraction, in its various forms, already appeared to be the ne plus ultra of avant-garde art by the middle of the 20th century.

But on it went, altering and transforming through op-art, lyrical abstraction, colour field painting, minimalism and so on, to the point where nobody now would imagine that this once curious obsession with shapes and colours and non-descriptive marks is likely to come to an end. Some of our most cherished living artists – Bridget Riley, Frank Stella, Robert Mangold, Ellsworth Kelly – are abstract painters, after all. But go to the Whitechapel Gallery's survey of abstraction and you won't find a single one of them in this massive show.

Adventures of the Black Square is very precise in its aims, if not in its achievements. The show wants to follow one particular strain of abstraction from its source in Russia to its pan-global spread through the course of a century. The strain appears to be geometric. It is the fabulous balance of red and white squares in a Malevich gouache, or the glowing sheaves of fluorescent tubes in a Dan Flavin sculpture; it is Helio Oiticica's black and white rectangles swing-dancing across a painted board, and Sophie Taeuber-Arp's cross-stitch embroidery of circles and triangles holding hands, as it seems, with a big scarlet square.

So far, so good, and one sees with huge pleasure a great many variations on this tradition: the Brazilian artist Ivan Serpa typing out exquisite abstractions with little more than the upper and lower case O of his 1950s Corona; the Czech artist Bela Kolarova following suit with delicate permutations of haberdashers' press studs in the 1960s; the Indian artist Nasreen Mohamedi using a pen and ink to create razor-thin vectors that fluctuate and shimmer across the page in the 1970s.

<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/jan/18/adventures-of-the-black-square-review-whitechapel-abstract-art-that-aimed-to-change-the-world>

Text 3.

2015 general election: enough of the fatalism. It's a great time to push for change in politics

Politicians are fearful, the electorate is confused, but let's harness the ideas and passion alive in the country

It really says a lot about the state of British politics that the televised leaders' debate I'm most looking forward to is the one between Russell Brand and Al Murray. The way things stand, it looks more likely than a Cameron v Miliband debate. It also looks the more interesting.

A Brand/Murray smackdown would be hugely serious and relevant since it would go to the heart of what ails the UK's democratic condition today: whether voting in elections is worth bothering with at all. Russell Brand has spent the past six months arguing the party system is so busted that true and lasting change can only be achieved by turning our backs on it and, come election day, staying at home in droves. Al Murray, on the other hand, embraces the political process by choosing to stand against Nigel Farage as the Pub Landlord, in effect saying that voting counts because it can take real power away from those whom you fear or mistrust.

Surely the two of them should come together and have a debate: it would be the biggest political locking of horns since Gladstone and Disraeli. I realise these guys are actually comedians. I'm aware I'm sort of one too. And I'm not arguing here that comedians have a special wisdom that automatically fast-tracks them on to the political arena, even though our stock is up at the moment, what with satirists being gunned down in Paris. It's just that I see no proper, mature engagement with democracy anywhere higher. Conversations about a TV debate between Cameron and Miliband have stalled on which minority leader's addition would most annoy the others.

That's what's been most dispiriting since this election campaign started: while we're all desperate to talk about health, wages, cuts and welfare, our political leaders can't get past talking about talking. When they do grapple with content, it's done in negatives: Cameron says Labour won't mention the deficit and Miliband says the Tories won't discuss health. Next to Russell Brand and Al Murray's energising attempts to ignite the election, the collective noise from Westminster sounds no better than the bass-level wheeze of a punctured lung.

Politicians have always been protective about their brand, but a collective caution seems to have overwhelmed them. It's difficult, despite the policy reviews and speeches, to know precisely what Labour is in favour of. Which spending budgets will they protect and which ones will they abandon to the fires? Dummy and alternative manifestos are being written then torn up at Labour party HQ, as the fight goes on to limit commitments to anything.

[http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jan/18/2015-general-election-enough-fatalism-push-for-change?gclid=Keyword:news-grid%20main-3%20\(comment\)%20Pickable%20with%20editable%20override:Pickable%20with%20editable%20override:Position1](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jan/18/2015-general-election-enough-fatalism-push-for-change?gclid=Keyword:news-grid%20main-3%20(comment)%20Pickable%20with%20editable%20override:Pickable%20with%20editable%20override:Position1)

Text 4.

Drinking moderate amounts of alcohol is linked to reduced risk of heart failure, large study finds

Evidence already exists for the beneficial effects of drinking moderate amounts of alcohol on the risk of developing a number of heart conditions; however, the role it plays in the risk of developing heart failure has been under-researched with conflicting results.

Now, a large study of nearly 15,000 men and women, published online today (Tuesday) in the European Heart Journal, shows that drinking up to seven drinks a week in early to middle age is associated with a 20% lower risk of men developing heart failure in the future when compared to people who did not drink at all, and a more modest 16% reduced risk for women.

Heart failure is a condition in which the heart can no longer pump blood around the body as well as it used to. The most common reason is that the heart muscle has been damaged, for instance by a heart attack. High blood pressure, heart muscle disease (cardiomyopathy), heart valve problems, an irregular heart beat (arrhythmia), viral infections, drinking excessive amounts of alcohol, consuming recreational drugs and the side-effects of radiotherapy treatment for cancer can all contribute to heart failure developing. Heart failure is a major public health problem with over 23 million people living with it worldwide.

Dr Scott Solomon, Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School and Senior Physician at Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, USA, Dr Alexandra Goncalves, a research fellow at Brigham and Women's Hospital, and colleagues analysed data from 14,629 people aged between 45-64 years who had been recruited to the Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities Study between 1987 and 1989 in four communities in the USA. They followed the participants for 24-25 years to the end of 2011, and they questioned them about their alcohol consumption at the start and at each of the three subsequent visits made at three-yearly intervals.

They defined a drink as one that contains 14g of alcohol, equivalent to approximately one small (125ml) glass of wine, just over half a pint or a third of a litre of beer, and less than one shot of liquor such as whisky or vodka. The study participants were divided into six categories: abstainers (people who recorded having drunk no alcohol at every visit by the researchers), former drinkers, people who drank up to seven drinks a week, or between 7-14 drinks, 14-21 drinks, or 21 or more drinks a week.

During the follow-up period 1271 men and 1237 women developed heart failure. The lowest rate of heart failures occurred in those drinking up to 7 drinks per week and the highest rate was seen among former drinkers.

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/01/150120085927.htm>

Text 5.

Britain 'wide open to abuse by freeloading migrants', says Foreign Secretary

Philip Hammond in outspoken attack on EU freedom of movement rules

Britain is “wide open to abuse” by “freeloading” European Union migrants who are exploiting the welfare state, the Foreign Secretary has said.

Philip Hammond said that the Government is “determined” to reform Britain’s relationship with Brussels so that there is a “sufficient impact on migration numbers to satisfy the public”.

His reference to “freeloading” represents one of the most outspoken comments by a Cabinet minister about the EU and will infuriate senior figures in Brussels.

It came after Jean-Claude Juncker, the European Commission president, earlier this week compared British membership of the EU to a doomed romance and suggested it is time for Britain to get a divorce from Europe.

It is the first time Mr Juncker has publicly contemplated a British exit and he reinforced his message by insisting he would not get down on his knees to beg Britain to stay.

Speaking in the Commons, Mr Hammond said: “As the Prime Minister has set out on more than one occasion, we have increasing agreement across the European Union that we need to address abuse of free movement.

“Free movement to work is one of the principles of the European Union; free movement to freeload is not one of the principles of the European Union. Britain is not the only country affected by this problem and not the only country determined to address it.”

Speaking later before the European scrutiny select committee, Mr Hammond would only say that he “very much hopes” that he will be able to support continued membership of the EU, but that it depends on the scale of the reforms.

David Cameron has pledged to reform Britain’s relationship with the EU before holding an in-out referendum in 2017.

Mr Hammond also echoed comments made by Mr Cameron earlier this month, who indicated that the referendum could be held earlier than 2017. “The sooner we can do it the better,” Mr Hammond told MPs.

He said that Britain is “wide open” to abuse by EU migrants.

“One of the most common themes I hear in discussing abuse of free movement with European partners is a request to us to look at the way they do things and see if we couldn’t tighten up our own system,” he said.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/immigration/11358711/Britain-wide-open-to-abuse-by-freeloading-migrants-says-Foreign-Secretary.html>

Text 6.

Henry VIII didn't really have six wives – why everything you know about the Tudors is wrong

The TV programme *Wolf Hall* has exposed several Tudor myths – here are a few more

There's a reason why the Tudors are one of the most popular periods of history at school: all those battles, magnificent outfits and bizarre habits make for an entertaining introduction to the past.

But it seems that many of those tidbits we learnt in the classroom don't hold up to historical scrutiny. The filming of *Wolf Hall* has already exposed several surprising details about life in Tudor times – and there are plenty more Tudor factoids to disprove.

Wolf Hall first exposed the Tudor fashion for egregiously large codpieces – far bigger than those that will be shown in the TV program. As Damian Lewis, who stars as Henry VIII says, "Men of the court were encouraged to wear prominent cod pieces. It was a symbol of your virility, your derring-do, your sense of adventure."

Hilary Mantel, author of the original books, then explained that the actors in *Wolf Hall* all have historically-accurate clean white teeth. Contrary to the myth that Tudors had terrible dental hygiene, their mouths were actually in very good condition, because they ate so little sugar.

So, what else have we got wrong about the Tudor period? According to Diarmaid MacCulloch, professor of the history of the church at Oxford University, many popular facts about the Tudors are completely false.

Henry VIII didn't have six wives...

The most widely-held belief about Tudor times is incorrect. King Henry VIII didn't have six wives – because three of his marriages were declared "null and void". Unlike a divorce, where a married couple chooses to end their union, these annulments essentially declared that a true marriage never took place. "If you'd walked up to Henry VIII and said, 'You're a man who's had six wives' then – apart from beheading you – he'd have said, 'No, I've had three wives and the others were just terrible mistakes that didn't happen at all,'" says Professor MacCulloch.

...And he wasn't much of a womanizer

His six (ahem, three) wives may suggest otherwise, but Henry VIII wasn't a philanderer compared to typical behaviour in his day. "His sexual shenanigans were not all that great by the standards of most monarchs of the time. He had six wives but having six wives is proof that you're not really good with ladies – not the other way around," says Professor MacCulloch. "He didn't have all that many mistresses during his younger years."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/11358279/Henry-VIII-didnt-really-have-six-wives-why-everything-you-know-about-the-Tudors-is-wrong.html>

Text 7.

James Blunt vs Chris Bryant Round 2: privilege row rumbles on

James Blunt and Chris Bryant continue their dispute about privilege in the arts, as they exchange Twitter messages

James Blunt, the musician, has fired another shot in his war of words with shadow culture minister Chris Bryant, suggesting the politician should help people from poor backgrounds get into the arts rather than criticising others.

The pair exchanged public words after Mr Bryant suggested the chart star was among those from privileged backgrounds who were dominating cultural life.

They both published open letters, with Blunt condemning the MP in colourful language and claiming his own private education and military career had been a hindrance rather than a help to getting a break in the music business.

Blunt continued today with a message on Twitter, aimed at Mr Bryant, which said: "To help people at the bottom of the tree join those near the top, give them a ladder, not a bow and arrow."

The politician replied: "It's quite difficult to lower a ladder from the top of the tree. Better to place it firmly on the ground so all can climb up?"

The Harrow-educated You're Beautiful singer and former Eton pupil Eddie Redmayne were mentioned by Bryant in an interview in which he called for more diversity.

He said: "I am delighted that Eddie Redmayne won (a Golden Globe for best actor), but we can't just have a culture dominated by Eddie Redmayne and James Blunt and their ilk."

But the reference irritated Blunt, who called Mr Bryant a "classist gimp" and a "prejudiced wazzock" in his letter.

"Perhaps what you've failed to realise is that the only head-start my school gave me in the music business, where the VAST majority of people are NOT from boarding school, is to tell me that I should aim high."

He went on to say: "Every step of the way, my background has been against me succeeding in the music business. And when I have managed to break through, I was still scoffed at for being too posh for the industry.

"And then you come along, looking for votes, telling working-class people that posh people like me don't deserve it, and that we must redress the balance. But it is your populist, envy-based, vote-hunting ideas which make our country crap, far more than me and my s--- songs, and my plummy accent."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/celebritynews/11357462/James-Blunt-vs-Chris-Bryant-Round-2-privilege-row-rumbles-on.html>

Text 8.

Unilever claims it has 'good relations' with Tesco despite accounting scandal

Unilever boss Paul Polman gives backing to new Tesco chief Dave Lewis and says company has no problem with retailer, one of its biggest customers

The chief executive of Unilever has insisted the consumer goods group has “good relations” and “mutual respect” with Britain’s supermarkets despite reports of clashes in the supply chain.

The relationship between supermarkets and suppliers has been shoved into the spotlight by the accounting scandal at Tesco and constant revelations that smaller suppliers have been subjected to harsh financial demands by retailers.

However Paul Polman said Unilever had worked with Tesco “through good times and bad” and that its auditors had given its accounts a “very positive sign-off” despite the scandal at Britain’s biggest retailer.

“This is a company which operates with a high level of integrity,” Mr Polman said as Unilever posted mixed full-year results.

Unilever is one of the biggest consumer goods companies in the world and Tesco is one of its biggest customers.

“I don’t know if there is a problem, we certainly have a good relationship with the retailers,” the Unilever boss said, adding that Unilever products were probably in the first Tesco store and are still there today.

Dave Lewis move from his role as head of Unilever’s personal care business to become chief executive of Tesco. Mr Polman said Mr Lewis had made a “flying start” and that Unilever will “support him”.

He added: “He left here with a good track record and I am sure he will be the same there.”

Mr Polman was speaking as Unilever reported lower than expected fourth-quarter underlying sales growth due to weakening emerging markets, bringing to an end a difficult year for the sector.

The maker of Ben & Jerry’s ice cream, Dove soap and Lipton tea said that underlying sales - excluding any impact from foreign exchange, acquisitions or disposals - rose 2.1pc in the fourth quarter. Analysts on average were expecting a 2.6pc rise. The fourth quarter included a 20pc drop in sales in China as Unilever destocked its products from shelves in order to adapt to the slowing economy.

Unilever’s third quarter was its weakest in five years following a slowdown in emerging markets. For the full year, underlying sales growth was 2.9pc, below expectations of 3.1pc.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/retailandconsumer/11356654/Unilever-claims-it-has-good-relations-with-Tesco-despite-accounting-scandal.html>

Text 9.

American Sniper: How army sharpshooter Chris Kyle's story has become a political battleground

In the States, it's this week's most popular film, and everyone involved claims it has nothing to do with politics. "Really," star actor Bradley Cooper stressed over and over again in interviews, director Clint Eastwood's *American Sniper* simply explains the "plight" of a soldier, and provides a "character study".

But this was no ordinary soldier. This was the late Chris Kyle, the much-mythologised "deadliest sniper" in American history. And regardless of what Cooper wants, his film has become political.

Before he was shot dead at a Texas gun range two years ago, Kyle, who claimed that he killed scores of people as a sniper in Iraq, oozed conviction and charisma. He wore big boots. He spoke with a languid Texas drawl. He wrote a bestselling memoir. He made millions. And he stirred controversy just about everywhere he went.

The conversation that now shadows *American Sniper* – which was released worldwide last Friday, and collected a record \$105m (?69m) in the US over the weekend – has been no different. After early screenings, which the Associated Press called an "unprecedented success", the film has been subject to widespread praise among conservatives for depicting an American soldier at his best, and condemnation among liberals who question the admitted pleasure Kyle took in killing and dehumanising Iraqis.

Then there were the tales Kyle told about himself, which came under increasing suspicion after numerous journalists tried – and failed – to corroborate them [see right]. Among them: he shot dead two armed Texas thugs who wanted to steal his pick-up truck; and he travelled to New Orleans and killed 30 bad guys in the chaos following Hurricane Katrina. He also falsely claimed that he punched former Minnesota governor Jesse "the Body" Ventura after Ventura, a former special forces operative himself, disparaged the US Navy Seals.

But anyone who mentions such holes in the Chris Kyle narrative or critiques his ethos does so at their own peril. It's a lesson that journalist Rania Khalek learnt last week when she let loose with a series of tweets that took aim at Kyle's book, also named *American Sniper*.

"Savage, despicable evil," Kyle wrote. "That's what we were fighting in Iraq. That's why a lot of people, myself included, called the enemy 'savages.' There really was no other way to describe what we encountered there." He later added: "There's another question people ask a lot: 'Did it bother you killing so many people in Iraq?' I tell them, 'No.' ... I loved what I did. ... I'm not lying or exaggerating to say it was fun."

<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/american-sniper-how-army-sharpshooter-chris-kyles-story-has-become-a-political-battleground-9991265.html>

Text 10.

Charlie Hebdo: Publishing cartoon of prophet Mohammed was an act of provocation, says ex head of MI6

The publishing of the Charlie Hebdo cartoons of the Muslim prophet Mohammed was an act of provocation, showing a lack of respect of other peoples' religion in the West and the backlash which came should have been expected, the recently departed head of MI6 has stated.

In his first public appearance since standing down from the post of 'C' Sir John Sawers declared his support for Pope Francis who had spoken out against "provocateurs" on religious matters and warned that they can expect violence in return.

Sir John wanted to stress that the 12 murders which resulted from the attack on the offices of the satirical magazine "cannot be justified on any basis whatsoever". But he argued: "there is a requirement for some restraint on the side of those of us in the West. I rather agree with the Pope.... that respect for others peoples' religion is an important part of this. If you show disrespect of others' core values then you are going to provoke an angry response."

Acts inflaming some sections of the Muslim population came at a time when attacks on the West were highly likely mainly due to the sheer numbers of young Muslims from the West who had gone to take part in jihad in Syria and Iraq.

"The formal threat level has gone up which says a terrorist attack is highly. That is not saying an attempted terrorist attack is likely, it is saying a terrorist attack is getting through is highly likely", said Sir John.

"If I was to sit here and say, will the goalkeepers of the security services and the police keep every single attempt to get the ball into the net out? No, at some point these threats will get through and there will be another terrorist attack in this country."

Speaking at the launch of a survey of international attitudes on trust at the offices of the PR firm Edelman in London, Sir John warned about how public confidence in intelligence services depended on the actions they undertook.

According to research by the company, MI5 and MI6 scored 72 per cent and 64 per cent respectively from the public on trust. The FBI and the CIA, on the other hand, were rated around 40 per cent by the British public. Sir John held that the CIA's involvement in targeted killings had counted against the organisation.

"One of the problems for the CIA has been that it has become involved in lethal operations and that has muddied some of the work of the intelligence agencies," said the former MI6 chief.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/charlie-hebdo-publishing-cartoon-of-prophet-mohammed-was-an-act-of-provocation-says-ex-head-of-mi6-9991132.html>

Text 11.

Fancy a lie-in on weekends? New study finds it could lead obesity and diabetes

People who find it difficult to get out of bed at the weekends are more likely to suffer from chronic health problems such as obesity and diabetes compared to individuals who are up with the lark even when they do not have to go to work, a study has found.

Scientists said that people with “social jet-leg” – when sleeping patterns differ significantly between work days and rest days – may suffer from a chronic metabolic disturbance that causes them to pile on the pounds and to develop diabetes and other health problems.

The researchers found an association between social jet-leg and body fat when they analysed the sleeping patterns and weight of more than 800 people who have been followed for many years as part of the Dunedin Longitudinal Study in New Zealand.

Although they cannot say that social jet-leg causes obesity, the scientists believe that the link supports the idea that people whose body clocks are perpetually out of synch with their work patterns are putting their metabolism under strain, which manifests itself as obesity and other chronic disorders.

“Obesity, as with many complex health problems, is the result of a number of factors and our study suggests that social jet-lag is one of the factors that needs to be taken into account,” said Michael Parson of the Mammalian Genetics Unit at the Medical Research Council in Harwell.

“Social jet-lag is an under researched but potentially key contributor to why living against our internal body clock has an impact on our health,” said Dr Parson, who is the lead author of the study published in the International Journal of Obesity.

“Our research confirms findings from a previous that connected people with more severe social jet-lag to increases in self-reported body mass index [body fat], but this is the first study to suggest this difference in sleeping times also increase the risk for obesity-related disease,” he said.

The body’s internal clock runs on a “circadian rhythm” of about 24 hours but some people are considered “owls”, being more alert and active in the evening, while others are “larks”, being at their best in the morning.

Although many people tend to sleep in at the weekends when they do not have to go to work, the tendency for social “jet lag” with their work-day routine can differ markedly between individuals. It was this difference between week-day and week-end sleep patterns that the study analysed, Dr Parson said.

“We found that for every two hours of social jet-lag we saw an average increase of about 2.5kg (5lbs) in fat mass among those individuals. We think this relates to the daily rhythm regulating the expression of about 10 per cent of the body’s genes, many of which are involved in fat metabolism,” he said.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/fancy-a-liein-on-weekends-new-study-finds-it-could-lead-obesity-and-diabetes-9990661.html>

Text 12.

Lawyer of Guantanamo detainee: Donald Rumsfeld should be charged with conspiracy to torture

The former US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld should be charged with conspiracy to torture in light of the alleged ill-treatment – including sexual abuse – documented by Mohamedou Ould Slahi during his 12 years detention without charge in Guantanamo Bay, his lawyer has claimed.

Mr Slahi's Guantanamo Diary, published today, is the only account written by a detainee still held in the controversial American military prison on Cuba. The 44-year-old tells how he was subjected to brutal treatment, including being kept in a "frozen room" for hours on end, forced to drink salt water, and repeatedly beaten.

"I was literally living in terror," he writes, adding that he was denied sleep for more than two months. "For the next 70 days I wouldn't know the sweetness of sleeping: interrogation 24 hours a day, three and sometimes four shifts a day."

His allegations of psychological and physical torture suffered come just weeks after a US Senate report revealed the widespread use of "enhanced interrogation techniques" by the CIA.

In an interview with The Independent, his lawyer Nancy Hollander said: "The convention against torture, of which the United States is a party, requires that countries prosecute those who have tortured – why hasn't anyone been prosecuted? I'm talking about Secretary of State Rumsfeld - he's the one who signed the orders to torture Mohamedou... he should be charged with conspiracy to commit torture."

Mr Slahi's legal team have spent years battling to get a redacted version of his diary, regarded as a 'secret' document by the US government, released. Described by John Le Carre as a "vision of hell, beyond Orwell, beyond Kafka," the inside account of life at Guantanamo is prompting renewed calls for his release.

The actors Colin Firth, Stephen Fry and Riz Ahmed, along with musician Brian Eno and novelist Elif Shafak, are among those backing a new campaign being launched today to free the 44-year-old detainee.

Mr Slahi fought with al-Qaeida in Afghanistan when they were being backed by the US in their fight to oust the Soviet regime, but claims he left the group in 1992.

He was arrested in November 2001 in his home country, Mauritania, and taken to Amman by the Jordanian military – where he was interrogated and held for more than seven months. He was then 'renditioned' by the CIA to Bagram air base in Afghanistan, and taken to Guantanamo Bay in August 2002, suspected of involvement in a plot to bomb Los Angeles in 1999.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/lawyer-of-guantanamo-detainee-donald-rumsfeld-should-be-charged-with-conspiracy-to-torture-9988897.html>

Text 13.

'Slack attitudes to spelling will lead to slack literacy skills'

Far from trying to eradicate inconsistencies in English spelling, we should be celebrating them

As an English teacher, I thought I'd seen everything in terms of awful spelling. Yet in the past week alone, I've been shocked by some horrible howlers.

First, there was that would-be university student who, as reported in the Telegraph's worst Ucas application howlers, boasted of "grate communication skills" on a UCAS form.

Then I received an English essay, supposed to be GCSE coursework, which contained this blunder: "George Elliott is a exelent writer as he uses good descriptions." Three mistakes in just the one sentence?

Call me old-fashioned, but such errors make me see red. And that's why I'm fuming at plans to "normalise" bad spellings like these, on the grounds they cause "embarrassment" for the pupils concerned.

Embarrassment for pupils? What about for teachers, who are supposed to be making sure such solecisms are wiped out from written work. I'd be ashamed to show up at a parent/teacher meeting, if I allowed such slips to go unchallenged.

Yet that's exactly what the English Spelling Society (Motto: "Improving English Spelling") now plans to do. It is currently hard at work, drawing up a list of words that, it believes, will form an "improved" spelling system.

Such words would include: "giv" for "give", "slo" for "slow" and "butiful" for "beautiful". The ESS is even picketing spelling bees to make its point (how horrendously ironic).

The Society argues such improvements will help child and adult literacy levels and therefore enhance our position in international literacy league tables: already we're languishing well behind countries like Italy and Spain.

But any indulgence of slack spelling will, in my book, only mean that, pretty soon, we'll be propping up the very bottom of those same literacy tables.

Of course we all know that words like "embarrassed", "accommodation" and "separate" are hard to spell. But as an English teacher, I also know that boys and girls can and will learn how to spell correctly these, and other words the ESS singles out, if they're given regular weekly tests.

What's more, many teenagers are quick to appreciate the strong benefits of learning such words. Most are all-too-common in everyday written use – so, once mastered, they can be used correctly literally dozens of times.

As for some of the alternatives the ESS suggests, like "butiful"? Well in my view, such offerings are just plain ugly – and will make a mockery of our beautiful language, both at home and overseas.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationopinion/11355261/Slack-attitudes-to-spelling-will-lead-to-slack-literacy-skills.html>

Text 14.

'When pupils know more than teachers'

With 68 per cent of teachers concerned that pupils have a better understanding of computing than they do, Jason Budge says more training is needed

In my experience teachers are always up for a challenge, and the challenge this year is to successfully implement a brand spanking new Curriculum – along with a shiny new subject attached.

Already, just one term into this exercise, it is encouraging to see just how much progress schools are making in bringing this curriculum to life.

However, in staffrooms and classrooms across the country, there is one particular change to the curriculum that appears to be on most primary teachers minds. This is, of course, the introduction of computing, in which, for the first time ever, children from the age of 5 are beginning to explore, investigate and learn computer science skills and concepts.

Even if you are not a big fan of Mr Gove, the inclusion of computing in the new curriculum could well prove to be his lasting legacy for the children of this country, not to mention the economy.

As Nicky Morgan, the current Education Secretary, has noted, “giving young people a solid grounding in computing from an early age is a key part of our plan for education, ensuring they are prepared to succeed in modern Britain”.

Like Ms Morgan, this desire to prepare our children for a high skilled, digital workplace is a very common ‘call to arms’ shared across politics, education and business.

As more and more of what we use, wear and surround ourselves with becomes computerised, it isn't hard to imagine that most skilled jobs in the future will require some level of proficiency in computing. This will apply not just for those seeking to be programmers and software developers.

In the economy of the future, computing will be relevant to everyone – many would argue that it already is.

So, now that computing has been established as a subject area, surely our children are prepared for their future careers? If only it was this simple.

While teachers and school leaders I speak to, in my role as RC for Computing At School (CAS), welcome this new emphasis on Computing and are excited by its potential to prepare children for the future, its introduction hasn't been without issue.

The most pertinent of these problems – and the most crucial element to get right if this subject is going to succeed in helping us to create highly skilled creative workers of the future – is simply that the subject has been dropped into schools where most teachers, both primary and secondary, have no previous experience of teaching computing and probably were never taught it themselves.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationopinion/11354499/When-pupils-know-more-than-teachers.html>

Text 15.

How 3D printing and land reform could help to solve the housing crisis

Using open source software to design and custom build houses, together with a change in planning law, could open up the market so we could build affordable homes we want to live in

Since the Industrial Revolution the assumption has always been that the only people who can build homes at scale are large organisations – either state or market – building whole estates; rows of one-size-fits-all boxes for imaginary “average” humans. Form follows finance.

In a way, the most extraordinary thing is that this top-down form of development became so normal. Planned communities tend to be, at best, dormitory neighbourhoods and shopping malls, and at worst, empty, economically dysfunctional accumulations of capital; permanent hotels for borrowers with ever larger mortgages.

The hidden flaw is that in the “current trader” model, the houses built by property developers are not actually designed as places to live, but as financial assets; to be sold to the mortgage lending market. The term “housebuilder” is actually a little misleading. A better description might be “land developer” a company that buys land and seeks to resell it with a 20% margin for its shareholders.

So, a sensible property developer sees all the things we might see as valuable about housing – quality, affordability sustainability, community leadership – not as investments, but as costs. No matter how much land we may release to housebuilders, no sensible executive will ever release so many new properties onto the market that they cause prices to fall. Their shareholders would (rightly) sack them if they did.

In other words, traditional property developers cannot solve the housing crisis, because they are almost perfectly designed not to.

So who can? There is only one group with a direct reason to build homes with – for example – better energy performance, and that is the people who are going to pay the heating bills: us. Unlike property developers, custom builders (individuals or groups who buy land and procure a home for themselves as a place to live) can usually procure their homes at a fraction of the equivalent property market cost. They can also break the cycle of community resistance to new, topdown developments.

Custom builders have always been there, it’s just that we’ve never taken them seriously as a scalable force for mass housebuilding. More Grand Designs than volume industry. In the words of one executive, it’s just “too damn difficult”. But what if it were now possible, using digital tools and the web, to make it less so?

Our first step might be to develop open source tools and platforms that radically simplify the process of planning, designing and constructing customised, high performance, sustainable, low-cost homes, and to put those tools into the hands of citizens, communities and businesses. That is the aim of the WikiHouse project, an open source construction system that allows online self-build models to be shared, improved, 3D printed and self-assembled.

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/jan/20/3d-printing-land-reform-solve-housing-crisis>