

Andrew Trench - Digital editor at TMG

 By [Louise Marsland](#)

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Times Media Group recently appointed experienced editor and journalist Andrew Trench as its new digital editor, starting this week 1 March 2016.



Trench will be responsible for steering digital content strategy across TMG titles, TimesLive, SowetanLive, and BDLive.

Times Media has seen steady growth in web traffic on all of its news websites. In January 2016, TimesLIVE recorded 2.9-million unique browsers, 42% growth since January 2015. According to Effective Measure stats, this makes TimesLIVE one of the fastest growing news websites in South Africa.

Trench has spent the past five years at Media24 as head of their media investigative unit, editor of the *Natal Witness*, and most recently as News24 editor-in-chief. His new job heralds his return to the Times Media fold where he started his career in 1995 as a reporter on the *Sunday Times*, later becoming London Bureau Chief. Trench was also editor of the *Daily Dispatch* and DispatchOnline in Eastern Cape.

Q: Please outline your new role and responsibilities?

A: My role as digital editor will be to oversee and drive content strategy and execution across the Group, and this will include building a digital-first editorial operation.

Q: What will be your first order of business?

A: As with any new role, the first order of business is to put my assumptions and presumptions on a shelf, shut my mouth for a while, and open my ears. That means sitting down and understanding the dynamics, culture and talent of my new environment and working from there. Luckily I have a long history with Times Media and I know - and am friends with - many people who will be my colleagues again, and I hope this will make things easier all round.

Q: What is your core strategy for TML?

A: A detailed strategy will emerge once I have done the above, but without doubt the final goal of this strategy will be to produce digital products and platforms which reflect the market-leading positions of the Group's fine print titles, and its traditions of journalistic excellence and commercial success.

Q: Is there an ideal newsroom model?

A: Yes. It's the one which puts the interests of the audience it serves first, ahead of legacy, industry traditions and complacent habit. What the structure of that newsroom might be will differ from place to place, and the needs of the audience. But, if the primary goal is to delight the people we are serving then that's okay. I'm pretty certain that the model for Times Media will be unique and interesting, as it should be.

Q: Most important attribute needed to do your job?

A: I think there are several: a passion for the practice of journalism (otherwise what's the point?), the ability to keep calm in chaos; trust in the judgement of others, and having a healthy sense of humour. Everything seems to fall into place if those attributes are in play.

Q: The biggest trend to note in your industry?

A: The rise of mobile as the number one platform and the dominance of third-party platforms like Facebook, Twitter and others which are still emerging, like SnapChat - and the challenges and opportunities these present to digital news publishers.

Q: What inspires you?

A: A great story told well and people who surprise me when they beat my expectations.

Q: What are you currently reading for work?

A: '*Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in Networked Culture*' by Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green; and '*Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*' also by Henry Jenkins.

Q: Tell us something about yourself not generally known?

A: I'm a decent cook. My latest obsession is Chinese, inspired by a recent trip to China which made me realise I had never eaten real Chinese before! And I also know how to write code. So cooking and coding are my side-line passions.

Q: At the top of my 'bucket list' is...

A: A trip to Paris with my daughter and wife.

ABOUT LOUISE MARSLAND

Louise Burgers (previously Marsland) is Founder/Content Director: SOURCE Content Marketing Agency. Louise is a Writer, Publisher, Editor, Content Strategist, Content/Media Trainer. She has written about consumer trends, brands, branding, media, marketing and the advertising communications industry in SA and across Africa, for over 20 years, notably, as previous Africa Editor: Bizcommunity.com; Editor: Bizcommunity Media/Marketing SA; Editor-in-Chief: AdVantage magazine; Editor: Marketing Mx magazine; Editor: Progressive Retailing magazine; Editor: BusinessBrief magazine; Editor: FMOG Files newsletter. Web: www.sourceagency.co.za.

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