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Rising Star: Georgi Kantchev

By [Kirsten Ballard](#) July 16, 2018



Georgi Kantchev was sleeping when his editor called. “I said, ‘Yes I’m on my way,’” he remembers. “I didn’t know what it was, but I knew it was something big.”

He jumped in an Uber and headed to the London Bridge. It was his fourth time covering a terrorist attack that year.

“We got into this process of these attacks happening too often,” he said. “It was almost a routine of how to cover them. It’s really unfortunate that I lost track of how many I covered; I think five.”

In covering the attacks, he balanced the tragedy on the ground and the need for the public to understand what happened. “You have to be respectful to the people who have been shattered, but then also you want to be careful to the readers and paint a picture.

“They are very long days; you’re reporting for 20-plus hours, it’s obviously taxing. But that’s the job.”

It’s a job he loves, despite covering tragedies and long days.

He is a reporter for *The Wall Street Journal*. His days vary, covering anything from trend pieces, what’s going on with stocks and financial assets, all the way up to investigation pieces. The variety is his favorite part of his career.

He started in journalism as a freelance writer. After three years as a freelancer, he joined *The Wall Street Journal*’s London office.

He prefers his new role to freelancing, saying, “As a freelancer, you’re your own boss and have your own schedule, but you’re held to what you can sell. When you’re at a newspaper, there’s the institution behind you and the resources of a legacy paper.”

His career has spanned the dawn of the social media age. When he was first published, people were only beginning to talk about how important digital was. “It’s a competition for eyeballs in the end,” he says. “I like to see my name in print, obviously, but you want to be right in the end, and go where the readers

are. And that's online.”

Working for *The Journal* has allowed him to dig into some interesting features—including [a long series](#) on antiquities smugglers and looting.

The series focused on how the wars in the Middle East have destroyed cultural heritage. “History has been destroyed and terror organizations are profiting from that. We lifted the veil a bit and showed how this network works.”

He dove into how smugglers are tapping into social media and posting things on Facebook and Amazon to find buyers.

“Amazon took down a number of ads for artifacts that were clearly looted,” he says. “The story had some impact.”

When he began, he was not an expert on antiquities or smuggling.

“You just start like any reporting, doing your research and homework and reading all you can read about the topic. Then begin talking to people in the field,” he says. He built a network of contacts, from dealers to archeologists.

From there, Georgi looks for the human element, what makes the story impactful. “I can’t do this for every story; some are best as news pieces. But when I can, I look into finding the human element.”

For the looting article, he was able to track down a seller online who was clearly selling looted goods through Facebook. Georgi messaged him, and his customers, who are amateur collectors fooled by this type of deal.

“You have to talk to people; that is real reporting,” he says. He advises finding people who know more than you: analysts or people involved. “If you’ve done the reporting, the writing is easy.”

His other piece of advice is to read voraciously. “Reading helps in terms of how you can be a better writer,” he says.

Georgi believes there is a renaissance in long-form journalism, even despite shortening attention spans. He jokes that it has to be a tweet; otherwise, people won’t read it.

“But when people want to read good stories, they find the time,” he says. “There is a hunger for good stories and we can tell them.”



Kirsten Ballard



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