Histories, Presents and Futures of Media and Communication

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Title

The role of Artificial Intelligence in the construction of news: Challenges and opportunities facing journalism in an age underlined by increasing distrust in knowledge-producing institutions.

Abstract

News is constructed through a myriad of processes reflecting the cultural and social context in which newsrooms operate as well as the work routines and ownerships structures that govern news organisations. Natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning algorithms have now enabled news organisations to automate content creation, significantly improving efficiency. These algorithms can analyse data, generate headlines, and write news articles. Such innovations have opened opportunities for journalists to focus on investigative journalism and in-depth reporting, while also providing real-time news to an information-hungry audience. However, the rise of AI in news construction also brings its own set of challenges, one of the most significant issues being trust. This paper will discuss how AI is currently used in news organizations, highlighting successful projects and lessons learned. The democratisation of content creation and the potential for personalised, data-driven news experiences also hold immense promise. Yet the industry must grapple with profound issues of trust, ethics, and transparency to maintain the integrity of journalism in an era where traditional knowledge-producing institutions are met with scepticism.

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The Impact of AI on Journalism and Information Integrity

The proliferation of algorithms, metrics and artificial intelligence (AI) in the digital information landscape has significantly altered the nature of journalism, content dissemination, and public discourse (Cohen, 2021). While AI's capacity to aggregate and synthesise information has streamlined content production, it has simultaneously raised concerns regarding the reliability, credibility, and transparency of news reporting (Harari, 2024). The absence of clear authorship, proper citations, and critical journalistic oversight has contributed to a decline in the quality of information, potentially undermining democratic discourse and the principle of freedom of speech (Klinger, Kreiss, & Mutsvairo, 2024). Moreover, the sustainability of AI is increasingly questioned due to its significant energy and resource consumption. Critics also argue that AI may primarily serve as a tool for reducing labour costs and consolidating power among a handful of tech firms, rather than delivering broad societal benefits (Schellmann, 2024).

As the media industry navigates this new landscape, agreements like the FT-OpenAI deal highlight the tension between securing short-term revenue and addressing long-term concerns about the erosion of journalistic value and the ethical implications of AI. Deals like this help us begin to recognise that, ultimately, the future of news in the AI era is uncertain, with the potential for both innovation and further consolidation of power in the hands of Big Tech (Foroohar, Is AI about to kill what's left of journalism?, 2024).

Traditional journalism has historically been characterized by rigorous fact-checking, investigative reporting, and named authorship (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014). In the past, news articles published by reputable media outlets were accompanied by the journalist's name and sources, ensuring a degree of accountability and credibility (Schudson, The sociology of news, 2011). However, we are also witnessing an increasing trend where contemporary digital news platforms increasingly rely on AI-generated content, which lacks clear attribution or verifiable sources (Ihleboek & Fienschou, 2022). These systems compile data from various online sources, restructure information, and generate articles that appear coherent but on close inspection, are often devoid of original reporting or critical analysis (Foroohar, 2024).

The Transformation of News Production

Here lies the problem. The fundamental issue with AI-generated news is its detachment from human oversight. Unlike human journalists who engage in investigative work and contextual analysis, AI systems primarily synthesise existing content, often without discerning the credibility of the original sources (Diakopoulos, 2019). While some research suggests that echo chambers and filter bubbles are not as prevalent as can be suggested (Arguedas, A.R., Robertson, C.T., Fletcher, R., & Nielsen, R.K., 2022) this process still risks perpetuating misinformation, reinforcing biases, and eroding the public's trust in journalism (Bennett & Livingston, 2021). Furthermore, as AI-generated news becomes more prevalent, it diminishes the role of professional journalists, reducing incentives for media organisations to invest in original reporting (Schmelzer, 2024). It is within this context that the way Large Language Models (LLM) are capturing data needs to be understood.

In 2025 the French AI start-up *Mistral* entered a partnership with Agence France-Presse (AFP), integrating thousands of AFP's fact-checked news articles into its chatbot, Le Chat. By incorporating over 2,000 daily articles in six languages, *Mistral* aims to provide users with fact-

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based information, contrasting with the approach of companies like Meta and Elon Musk's X, which have scaled back moderation efforts (McMahon, L., Kleiman, Z., & Subramanian, C., 2025). The collaboration underscored *Mistral*'s stated commitment to leveraging verified content and framed the partnership as a strategic move to defend Europe's technological sector against Big Tech's regulatory challenges. The deal also offers AFP a revenue stream as its fact-checking contract with Meta diminishes. *Mistral*, valued at €6 billion, is one of Europe's leading AI companies, rivalling the U.S.'s OpenAI. This partnership reflects a broader trend of media-AI collaborations, as seen in Google's deal with Associated Press, which needs to address ongoing debates over copyright and the value of journalistic content in AI training (Bradshaw, 2025).

The *Mistral* partnership sits at one side of the spectrum. As noted, the *Financial Times* (FT) and OpenAI have reached an agreement to license FT content for training LLMs which raises critical questions beyond the future of journalism, and impacts intellectual property, and the asymmetric power dynamics between media organisations and Big Tech (Foroohar, Is AI about to kill what's left of journalism?, 2024). While the deal ensures compensation and attribution for the FT, it reflects this broader trend in which news organisations are grappling with the implications of AI-driven content consumption. Historically, media companies have struggled to protect the value of their intellectual property in the digital age, as exemplified by the 1990s era when Silicon Valley's mantra of "information wants to be free" undermined copyright protections and enabled the rise of surveillance capitalism (Pickard, 2020). Today, AI platforms like ChatGPT and Google's Bard further exacerbate this issue by directly providing users with answers derived from copyrighted content, bypassing original creators and keeping users within the walled gardens of Big Tech ecosystems (Foroohar, How Silicon Valley copied Wall Street's media capture playbook, 2021). This will create an ultimate inequality of arms.

This financial asymmetry in these arrangements is stark. For instance, while a recent study estimated that US publishers could be owed $10−$12 billion annually if compensated fairly for their content, the *New York Times* secured only $100 million over three years from Google (Tobitt, 2023). This disparity underscores the ongoing challenges faced by news organisations, particularly as AI entrenches the dominance of a few tech giants. On the other hand, as noted, this form of collaboration offers AFP another revenue stream plugging the hole made by Meta. While one could view AI as a transformative force, parallels can be drawn with the overhyped promises of 1990s enterprise software, which failed to deliver the anticipated productivity boom (Curran, Fenton, & Freedman, 2016). All this indicates that large international news organisations are having to navigate with difficulty through this LLM environment.

AI at a local level

The integration of AI, technology, also happens at a local level with local news organisations increasingly integrating artificial AI transcription tools to enhance their coverage of public meetings which in turn gives them access to local news. Here technologies enable reporters to access transcriptions and summaries of events they cannot attend in person, thereby broadening their reporting capabilities. An example of this is *Chalkbeat*, an education-focused news outlet, which has adopted AI tools like *LocalLens* to transcribe and summarise school board meetings. This approach allows reporters to identify potential stories and sources remotely (Deck, 2025).

Similarly, the *Midcoast Villager,* a local newspaper in Maine, US, partnered with *Civic Sunlight,* a startup providing AI-generated summaries and transcripts of public meetings. This collaboration enables the Villager's journalists to monitor proceedings across 43 towns,

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including remote offshore islands, without the need for physical presence (Deck, 2025). Despite the advantages, even here these AI tools are not without limitations. They struggle with accurately identifying individual speakers and interpreting regional dialects, such as the Maine accent. Consequently, journalists are advised to independently verify information obtained from AI-generated summaries before publication. Both *Chalkbeat* and the *Midcoast Villager* emphasise that AI serves as a supplementary resource, not a replacement for traditional reporting methods (Deck, 2025).

However, this integration of AI transcription services reflects a broader trend in journalism to leverage technology for enhanced efficiency and coverage. By automating the transcription of public meetings, newsrooms can allocate their resources more effectively, ensuring that critical local issues receive the attention they warrant. This could also have unforeseen effects. In March 2025, Gannett, the publisher of *USA Today*, advertised a position for an "AI-assisted sports reporter." This role was described as at the "forefront of a new era in journalism," yet did not involve traditional reporting activities such as travel or face-to-face interviews (Savage, 2025).

A further example of how news organizations are actively exploring AI's potential to enhance efficiency and expand coverage can be found at *The Independent.* Having announced the launch of *"Bulletin,"* an AI-driven news service utilizing Google's Gemini AI model to generate article summaries under human editorial supervision the aim is to provide verified journalism for readers seeking concise news updates. Similarly, other publishers are employing AI tools to suggest headlines and story summaries, facilitating the editorial process (Thomas, 2025). Christian Broughton, CEO of *The Independent,* emphasised that the initiative is journalist-led, ensuring that editorial control remains paramount. He highlighted that *Bulletin* was conceived to meet the growing demand for succinct news briefings amidst increasingly busy lifestyles (Maher, 2025).

All this indicates that AI and the use of LLMs are having a significant effect on the creation of content at both the local and nation al level. It is an impact that is felt editorially and financially.

Beyond Misinformation

Ina different arena, much of the concern that rotates around the use of AI and news emanates around concerns with what is colloquially called deep fakes disinformation and misinformation (Uthman, 2024). Yet, as noted, the integration of AI into journalism and news production extends beyond these widely discussed concerns of misinformation and disinformation. While AI-powered deepfakes, bot-generated content, and hallucinations pose challenges, AI is also being leveraged to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, and operational capabilities of the news industry (Foroohar, How Silicon Valley copied Wall Street's media capture playbook, 2021). As noted, automated news writing generate content across text, image, video, and audio formats is one example. This capability has been increasingly utilised to produce articles on data-driven topics such as sports, financial reports, local politics, and weather updates, often filling gaps in coverage caused by limited human resources (Meade, 2023).

Even here, the use of AI in journalism is not without hesitations, primarily due to concerns about factual inaccuracies (hallucinations) and the potential displacement of human journalists (Schmelzer, 2024). To address these issues, a distinction is often made between "low-effort," fact-based reporting, which AI can handle effectively, and more nuanced, investigative, or

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opinion-driven journalism, which requires human insight and expertise. Even in automated reporting, human oversight remains critical for fact-checking and editing AI-generated outputs.

AI also plays a significant role in enhancing news consumption by enabling hyper-personalized content curation (Schmelzer, 2024). By tailoring news feeds to individual preferences, AI-driven systems can increase user engagement and monetisation (Schellmann, 2024). However, this personalisation risks creating echo chambers, where users are exposed only to content that reinforces their existing beliefs, potentially limiting broader perspectives (Arguedas, A.R., Robertson, C.T., Fletcher, R., & Nielsen, R.K., 2022). Striking a balance between personalised content and diverse information exposure remains a key challenge.

The implications of this shift extend beyond the decline in journalistic quality. The absence of clear authorship raises ethical concerns regarding accountability. If an AI-generated article disseminates false information, who bears responsibility? Unlike human journalists who can be held accountable for their reporting, AI lacks personal agency, making it difficult to attribute responsibility for misinformation. This lack of accountability weakens the integrity of news media, potentially enabling the manipulation of public opinion through AI-generated propaganda or agenda-driven content.

AI-generated news has contributed to the commodification of information. Many digital news platforms operate on an economic model that prioritises engagement metrics over journalistic integrity (Klinger, Kreiss, & Mutsvairo, 2024). Articles optimized for maximum clicks and shares—often written by AI—frequently lack depth and nuance, reducing complex issues to simplistic narratives (Christin, 2020). This phenomenon not only compromises the quality of public discourse but also fosters an environment where misinformation can thrive (Schmelzer, 2024).

Beyond content creation and consumption, and ties to issue of disinformation, AI is transforming the operational aspects of journalism. It aids in processing large datasets, generating multi-modal outputs, and automating routine tasks such as transcription, translation, social media management, and workflow optimization. AI tools also assist in verifying the authenticity of visual media and identifying AI-generated content, addressing growing concerns about digital manipulation. By streamlining resource-intensive processes, AI is helping news organizations reduce costs and improve efficiency, making journalism more sustainable in an era of declining revenues.

While AI introduces new complexities and ethical considerations, its applications in journalism—from automated reporting and personalised content delivery to operational efficiency—demonstrate its potential to enhance the industry's impact and relevance. The key lies in leveraging AI as a complementary tool while maintaining human oversight and journalistic integrity (Schmelzer, 2024).

However, the rapid adoption of AI has also led to notable missteps. The *Los Angeles Times* introduced an AI tool designed to offer alternative perspectives on opinion pieces, which controversially suggested that some local historians viewed the Ku Klux Klan as a "'white Protestant culture' responding to societal changes rather than an explicitly hate-driven movement," thereby downplaying its ideological threat. This incident underscores the challenges AI faces in making nuanced judgments (Savage, 2025).

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Apple had to suspend a feature that produced inaccurate summaries of BBC News headlines, highlighting the complexities involved in maintaining reliability in AI-generated content. Despite these challenges, media organisations continue to invest in AI to analyse extensive data sets, uncover stories, and perform tasks such as transcription and translation, thereby augmenting journalistic capabilities (Savage, 2025).

The evolving landscape has also led to legal and ethical considerations. So, while as noted some media companies have entered licensing agreements with AI firms to ensure proper attribution and compensation for original content used in training AI models, conversely, entities like *The New York Times* have initiated lawsuits against AI companies for unauthorized use of their work. Dion Bailey of The News Movement emphasised the necessity for media organisations to adapt, stating, "If the power goes to two or three big tech companies, then we have real issues" (Savage, 2025).

Regulatory and Ethical Considerations

The increasing reliance on big tech companies and AI-generated content has significant implications for freedom of speech and democratic engagement. A well-informed citizenry is fundamental to a functioning democracy (Curran, 2011), yet the rise of AI in news production threatens to distort public perception by promoting narratives that align with algorithmic preferences rather than objective reality. Within this context the move by Bezos to redirect the editorial positioning of the WP and move by Zuckerberg to remove moderation from his platforms and the positioning of X needs to be examine within this context (Yousef & Halpert, 2025). AI-driven content curation, often based on user engagement patterns, reinforces existing biases by presenting individuals with information that aligns with their preconceptions (Bruossard, 2023). This phenomenon, limits exposure to diverse perspectives, thereby narrowing public discourse.

Furthermore, the growing public acceptance of AI-generated news raises concerns about media literacy. Younger generations may be less inclined to question the authenticity of online content, given the seamless integration of AI-generated articles into mainstream news platforms (Hillman, 2025). A decline in critical thinking skills, coupled with the absence of proper citations and named authors, may lead to the normalisation of low-quality journalism. Without a concerted effort to promote media literacy and critical analysis, individuals may become passive consumers of information, unable to distinguish between reliable reporting and AI-generated misinformation.

Addressing the challenges posed by AI in journalism necessitates a balanced approach that avoids excessive government regulation while ensuring transparency and accountability. On the one hand an argument can be made for stringent regulations requiring news organisations to disclose AI involvement in content production. On the other hand, excessive regulation risks centralising control over AI technologies, which could lead to government overreach. However, while a decentralised, community-driven approach may offer a solution it will not offer the capacity to identify the increased use of technology in news gathering.

Independent watchdog organisations and fact-checking entities can play a crucial role in identifying AI-generated content and assessing its reliability. The issue here is that major platforms are moving away from the use of fact-checkers (McMahon, L., Kleiman, Z., & Subramanian, C., 2025). By establishing publicly accessible databases that track the sources and authorship of news articles, fact checkers can provide transparency and help users make

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informed decisions. Additionally, educational initiatives should emphasise media literacy, equipping individuals with the skills necessary to critically evaluate news sources and identify AI-generated content.

Another ethical concern relates to the responsibility of corporations and governments in controlling AI-driven media. While AI itself is merely a tool, the entities that control its development and deployment wield significant power over public discourse (Nielsen & Ganter, 2022). The concentration of AI technology in the hands of a few major corporations raises concerns about information monopolisation and the potential for large-scale manipulation (Schellmann, 2024). Thus, ensuring that AI remains an open and accessible tool, rather than a means of controlling information, is crucial for preserving democratic principles.

The discourse surrounding AI and its implications for human cognition, governance, and economic control highlights a fundamental tension between decentralisation and centralisation. The core concern presented is that AI, while not surpassing human intelligence in its intrinsic capability, can contribute to the degradation of human cognitive faculties when deployed in certain ways (Harari, 2024). This phenomenon, referred to as the "stupefaction" of humanity, is driven by AI systems that are designed not to enhance independent thought, but to shape and control information dissemination, thereby diminishing critical thinking and personal agency (Bauerlein, 2022).

One of the primary contentions calling for regulatory framework is that AI is being leveraged by powerful actors, whether governmental or corporate, to consolidate control rather than foster genuine innovation. AI framed as both an economic and political instrument, with governments and large corporations seeking to monopolise its use. This regulatory framework does not necessarily ensure safety or ethical deployment but rather imposes artificial barriers that limit AI's accessibility to a select few. The European Union's AI Act, for instance, has been critiqued as an extensive bureaucratic document that, under the guise of ensuring "trustworthy AI," primarily functions to centralise control over AI technologies (Meltzer & Tielemans, 2022).

Furthermore, international agreements such as the United Nations' Global Digital Compact suggest a broader, coordinated effort to regulate and centralise AI at the global level (Walther, 2024). While such policies are presented as safeguards against misuse, their underlying effect is to create a technological ecosystem where only government-approved entities can develop and deploy AI. This shift mirrors historical precedents where intellectual and technological advancements were first widely adopted, only to be later restricted and monopolized by the state or a ruling elite (Curran & Seaton, 2025).

The discussion extends to the economic ramifications of AI centralisation. Data is frequently described as the "new black gold," a resource as valuable as oil in the digital age (Zuboff, 2019). Control over data equates to control over economies, industries, and even political structures. The expansion of AI-powered data centres and corporate dominance over AI technologies indicates a trend toward economic monopolisation, where a handful of entities wield disproportionate power over AI's development and application. The Stargate Project, which involves massive data centres integrated with power grids, exemplifies this trend, raising concerns that the primary aim is not technological advancement but rather the establishment of an AI-driven surveillance and control infrastructure (da Silva, Sherman, & Rahman-Jones, 2025).

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Another significant point of analysis is the stagnation in AI research beyond generative AI (GenAI). While LLMs like GPT have captured widespread attention, they represent only a fraction of AI's potential. Technological advancements in optical or quantum computing, which could revolutionise AI's efficiency and capabilities, are notably absent from major investment agendas. This raises the question of whether AI development is being intentionally stifled to prevent the emergence of decentralised, powerful AI applications that could challenge existing power structures.

Additionally, an argument can be made that GenAI is being used to condition societies toward passive information consumption. Rather than encouraging analytical thinking or problem-solving, AI-generated content, particularly in news and social media, fosters a culture of accepting pre-packaged narratives. This dynamic strengthens centralised control over public discourse and limits the ability of individuals to critically engage with information. If AI-generated news and knowledge become the dominant sources of information, the potential exists for a highly controlled information ecosystem where dissent and alternative perspectives are systematically marginalized.

Conclusion

The overarching concern is that the current trajectory of AI governance is not designed to empower individuals or democratise technology but to establish a framework where AI becomes an instrument of control. This reality necessitates an urgent discourse on maintaining AI decentralisation, fostering technological plurality, and resisting overregulation that serves corporate and governmental interests rather than the public good. The ethical deployment of AI should prioritise enhancing human capabilities rather than diminishing them, ensuring that AI remains a tool for intellectual augmentation rather than a mechanism for cognitive suppression and societal control.

The integration of AI into journalism presents both opportunities and challenges. While AI has the potential to enhance content generation and streamline information dissemination, its unregulated use has contributed to a decline in journalistic quality, the erosion of accountability, and the manipulation of public perception. The absence of proper citations, named authorship, and critical oversight diminishes the credibility of news media, making it increasingly difficult for individuals to assess the reliability of the information they consume.

To mitigate these risks, a multi-faceted approach is necessary—one that includes transparency in AI usage, the promotion of media literacy, and the establishment of independent oversight mechanisms. While AI is not inherently detrimental to journalism, its ethical deployment requires careful consideration to prevent its misuse. Ultimately, the responsibility lies not with AI itself but with those who control and regulate its application. By fostering an informed and critically engaged public, society can navigate the challenges posed by AI in journalism while preserving the integrity of news reporting and democratic discourse.

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