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Introduction



By World Editors
Forum President
Erik Bjerager,
Editor-in-Chief
and Managing
Director,
Kristeligt
Dagblad

I am pleased to welcome you to the 2013 edition of Trends in newsrooms, the World Editors Forum's ninth report on the state of the news industry.

While editors around the world continue to struggle with ongoing challenges relating to tight budgets and smaller newsroom staffs, we also see a number of trends that make our profession promising, interesting and valuable. Here are five key trends we highlight in this report:

1 Mobile As tablet and smart phones sales have exploded during the past year, more people than ever are spending more time accessing news on their mobile devices. The demand for good mobile content is rising and is expected to keep rising in the near future.

2 Innovative storytelling Projects such as The New York Times' recent Pulitzer Prize-winning story Snow Fall increasingly will become the norm as more news publishers start thinking in terms of multimedia elements from the beginning of the process rather than as afterthoughts tacked on at the end of it.

3 Paid digital content Although it no longer promises to be the "silver bullet" revenue solution that news organisations have been

hoping for to replace declining print advertising revenue, paid digital content can provide a significant stream of income, and seems likely to become standard in many parts of the world.

4 Social media Most organisations are now using social media both for finding stories and for distributing news. For breaking news during a crisis, social media is becoming the first place where many, particularly young people, go for updates. It is also becoming more common that a journalist's first instinct when covering fast moving news is to tweet about it.

5 Data and metrics Analytics are increasingly becoming a tool used by journalists as well as by data specialists to understand traffic and reader habits. Using analytics isn't strictly a way of interacting with your audience but it is a way to understand how your audience interacts with your content.

In addition, press regulation measures relating to ethical concerns remain an ongoing issue for many editors, and we examine some of the most recent developments in this area.

With this edition, we are entering a new era aimed at increasing the timeliness of our reports to bring you information on the latest trends and developments throughout the year. Future reports planned for this year of interest to editors will include:

Mobile Platforms: The Emerging Strategies and Technologies; Start-ups – Learning from the Competition; and Sizing Up Your Audience: Measurement, Engagement and Monetisation.

At the World Editors Forum we are continually looking for interesting case studies, creative ideas and thoughtful leaders to offer inspiration. To be part of the conversation, join us on Twitter and Facebook @newspaperworld.

Follow us every day for the latest trends and developments at: www.editorsweblog.org

Imprint



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Join the World Editors Forum

The World Editors Forum is the network for editors within the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA).

WAN-IFRA's members are located in over 120 countries and have a combined reach of more than 18,000 publications, 15,000 online sites and 3,000 companies.

This vast network allows us to connect and support editors and newsroom executives across the globe as they navigate the journalistic and publishing challenges of the digital age.

The World Editors Forum's activities are underpinned by three core values. These are a commitment to editorial excellence and ethical journalism and an unyielding belief in press freedom.

For the past 20 years the World Editors Forum has proved its value as a supportive partner to editors: providing information and intelligence from daily news on our editors weblog (www.editorsweblog.org) to in-depth reports such as this Trends in Newsrooms study.

Key to our success is our ability to connect editors around the issues that matter - from digital transformation and its effect on newsrooms to disruptive competition. We have helped editors anticipate changing reader habits and manage ever smaller budgets so they can focus on their wider, vital role in society.

The World Editors Forum is guided by a board of editors, representative of the media community from all corners of the world.

If you would like more information about how we can be of value to you and your organisation, email David Newall at david.newall@wan-ifra.org.

To join our network go to www.wan-ifra.org/microsites/membership



within



Chapter 1

Mobile publishing

Mobile publishing

As tablet and smart phones sales have exploded during the past year, more people than ever are spending more time than ever accessing news on their mobile devices. The demand for good mobile content is rising and is expected to keep rising in the near future.

In this chapter, we consider the following:

- How sales and use of mobile devices are developing
- Some early advice on thinking “mobile first”
- An interview with Raju Narisetti, Senior Vice President of Strategy for News Corp
- A case study of La Presse+, a new iPad daily tablet edition from Canada
- Responsive vs. adaptive design: which is best for publishers?

We look at where mobile is now and how some news publishers are adapting their efforts and products to meet changing consumption habits and demands. However, as mobile audiences continue to grow and news publishers’ efforts to produce and distribute mobile content develops and proliferates, we will be reporting more about new launches and case studies as well as the lessons being learned in the process, both in regular blog postings on the Editors Weblog and in an SFN report on mobile that we will produce in the second half of this year.

That year of the mobile we've been hearing about for years? It's here

While mobile content as a trend has been discussed by news publishers for at least a decade, it has only been in the past year or two that most publishers have seen a large and growing percentage of their news consumers actually accessing substantial amounts of digital content using a mobile device.

"Audiences are increasingly wanting content in their hands," Raju Narisetti, Senior Vice President of Strategy for News Corp, said during a WEF/Newsplex webinar earlier this year.

The reasons for this growth are directly linked to the boom in sales of both smartphones and tablets. In late April, for example, Apple announced that it had sold 19.5 million iPads during its second fiscal quarter of 2013, a 65 percent increase from the 11.8 million sold in the same quarter in 2012. The company also sold 37.4 million iPhones during the same recent quarter, up from 35.1 million in the same quarter the previous year.

Tablets expected to surpass desktop PCs

"Sales of tablets have rocketed in the past 12 months, making them the fastest-growing devices in history," wrote Brand Republic's Gordon MacMillan in early May. "According to analyst IDC, sales of smart connected devices grew by 78.4 percent in 2012 and was largely driven by tablets, which exceeded 128 million units. IDC expects tablet shipments to surpass desktop PCs in 2013, and portable PCs in 2014."

Even greater increases are anticipated during the next few years. "Powered by growth in the tablet and smartphone categories, IDC predicts the worldwide smart connected device market will continue to 'surge' — with shipments forecast to surpass 2.2 billion units and revenues reaching \$814.3 billion in 2017," wrote Natasha Lomas on TechCrunch in late March.

Publishers report strong increases in mobile traffic

With sales growing by the day, it should come as no great surprise that many news publishers are reporting a strong increase in the percentage of users consuming their digital content on mobile devices. Indeed, during recent interviews with WAN-IFRA and at our conferences, a number of news publishers have told us about the sizeable growth they are seeing in their mobile numbers.

Almost two-thirds of visits to Switzerland-based Tamedia's largest news site 20min.ch originate from a mobile device, said Gabriele Ottino, the company's project manager for business development, during WAN-IFRA's Digital Media Europe Conference in mid-April. The paper has lost traffic on its desktop site, and Ottino believes "we are in the midst of a total shift."

“ Mobile is growing very fast for us, we've seen a 30-odd increase in our traffic over the last three months. The big challenge is still how to monetise that effectively.

Phillip Crawley, Publisher and CEO of Canada's Globe and Mail



In the UK, 45 percent of traffic to the Guardian's site now comes from mobile, up from a quarter at the beginning of 2012, said Anthony Sullivan, group product manager at the Guardian, also speaking during Digital Media Europe. At certain times of day, such as early mornings, traffic from mobile has already passed the 50 percent mark, and he thinks that within the next 12 months this will be the case overall. The fastest growth is on tablets, he said. Alex Kozloff, head of mobile at the UK Internet Advertising Bureau, noted that 32 percent of all page views in the UK now come from mobile devices.

These traffic levels are being reported in many countries throughout the world. For example,

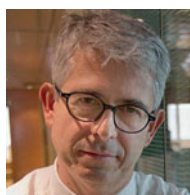


The Wall Street Journal is among the publications making a concentrated effort to improve how it packages its content on mobile devices.

Fairfax Media in Australia reported that for March 2013, its mobile sites for The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age had a combined total of more than 400,000 daily unique users. For The Age, with some 161,400 daily uniques that month, the figure represented a 73 percent increase over March 2012, while the 250,042 uniques at The Sydney Morning Herald were up 39 percent over the previous March. Meanwhile, the results for Fairfax's tablet app downloads for

“We already have applications for mobile and tablet, but they are early generation apps, launched some time ago, and we feel the need to improve them radically.”

Javier Moreno Barber,
Editor-in-Chief of Spain's El País



the year-to-date through March were 627,538 for The Sydney Morning Herald (an increase of 136 percent over 2012) and 561,309 for The Age (up 142 percent).

Thinking 'mobile first'

With mobile numbers increasing as much as they are and projected to keep growing, publishers clearly need to begin considering mobile as a priority when creating and distributing their content.

“If news organisations want to serve the majority of their users in the best possible way and stay ahead of the game ... they will have to adopt more of a ‘mobile first’ mentality,” wrote Fiona Spruill, editor Emerging Platforms, at The New York Times, in an article for NiemanLab.

To do this, publishers must first start to think about how they present their content, said News Corp's Narisetti, who noted that editors must “think about what it means to write a 2,000-word story that somebody actually might first come to on an iPhone. You have to start re-thinking how you present your journalism. ... Over the next one to five years, most newsrooms will have to pivot from thinking of our traditional experience as a desktop experience to thinking it's going to be increasingly a mobile experience.”

“Most of us still think of mobile as a way to present whatever we have done for the website or the paper,” he added. “We have to start thinking that if you're going to do a big investigative project that's going to run over three days and several pieces, how do you package and present that on an iPhone and a BlackBerry or an iPad? I think that process has to begin at the conception of stories and not at the end of the process.”

To illustrate his point, Narisetti described a large-scale project that was done when he was at The Washington Post.

“The lead story was, I think, about 4,000 words. It was very well designed to run in print, and there was a nut-graph, or graph to explain what this story was, before the jump of the print page and everybody was very happy, but then we

Continued on Page 12

Q&A with Raju Narisetti

Senior Vice President of Strategy for News Corp



WAN-IFRA: In a January webinar with us, you said “as of last month, 32 percent of my audience comes to my digital content via a mobile device, whether it’s a phone or tablet.” What is the most recent figure you have for this and where do you think it will be by the end of this year?

Raju Narisetti: As of the first quarter of 2013, that number is around 43 percent. While it is never easy to predict audience behaviour, it would be safe to assume that by 2014 over half of our digital audiences will be accessing WSJ content through mobile – either phones or tablets.

How is WSJ integrating mobile content into the newsroom workflow, and what are the main challenges here?

The Wall Street Journal has had an integrated newsroom for a few years in the sense that the content creation newsroom is multi-platform, with few nuances. As a result mobile has been treated as an outlet platform for our content, much like web or print. That has served us well over the years but with a significant shift in audiences to mobile, the time has come to think of how the content-consumption experience on mobile might lend itself to different approaches to our story telling and presentation. Getting a newsroom to focus on an end-user platform beyond print has always been challenging and so it remains a nascent work-in-progress with a lot of cultural, workflow, technological resource and mindset shifts needed.

Are you producing mobile-only content, and is WSJ moving towards a mobile-first newsroom?

WSJ’s mobile team creates some mobile-only presentations but the majority of the newsroom is not creating mobile-only content. The focus on any newsroom should be where its audiences are so in that sense there is a recognition of the need to shift our thinking from print/web to mobile. Whether that leads to a mobile-first newsroom remains to be seen but is unlikely to the extent that print and web remain large platforms with large audiences.

What are a couple of the main lessons you’ve learned from working with mobile?

Don’t get hung up on the mobile technologies that are popular in your geography (aka iOS in the US) at the cost of where the rest of the world is (Android.)

Don’t think of mobile as a team (when it comes to technology, product or news) but think of mobile as underscoring everything you do. Keep opening your newsroom’s eyes to mobile audience data and drive home the point that for a growing majority of your readers/audiences, your brand and your journalism is increasingly only being experienced on devices that are three to seven inches.

discovered that a lot of people were consuming that story on a BlackBerry. First of all, it took 46 screens of your BlackBerry to read the story, but more importantly, until you got to the seventh screen on your mobile phone you didn't even know what the story was because the anecdotal lead was so long. So, the lesson there is not to look at our mobile audience and say that we had so few people reading it that we shouldn't do these kinds of stories. The metrics told us that the next time we do an investigative project, in the mobile channel, let's have a first screen summary of what this project is. And even tell our readers 'By the way, this is a super long project, a long read, if you will, you may be better off reading it in print or going to a desktop.' ”

Second, publishers use data metrics and analytics (see more about these in chapter 4 of this report) to find out when users are accessing content throughout the day and on which devices and then plan to deliver content accordingly.

Some publishers have found that mobile traffic, especially during the week, tends to be high in the morning and on the commute to work. During the workday, people often access news through the computer on their desk or their laptop, then back to mobile use for the commute home.

Overall news consumption increasing

Interestingly, publishers are finding this increasing mobile use is boosting the overall amount of news consumption. As Tom Betts, the head of data for the Financial Times told UK-based TheMediaBriefing website in April: “We are not seeing a substitutional effect. People reading across multiple devices increases their consumption, they read for more and longer.”

“Mobile devices have extended the time frame during which publishers need to pay attention to the content they are putting in front of consumers, but it has also massively increased the complexity of news consumption throughout the day. That makes delivering the right content in the right way at the right time far more challenging,” concluded a posting on The Media Briefing Experts Blog in April.

Third, publishers should also keep in mind that phones and tablets are highly personalised items and users will expect more personalised content on them.

As Cory Bergman, general manager of Breaking News, a mobile-first startup owned by NBC News Digital noted in March on the PBS MediaShift blog, said journalists should “imagine if your device anticipated what you want,” Bergman said. “That's the direction mobile is headed: Phones and tablets are becoming natural extensions of ourselves, and coverage and information should adapt accordingly.”

Mobile will undoubtedly continue to be a hot topic for the foreseeable future and as noted in the intro to this chapter, we will be reporting on developments in this area both on the editors-weblog and in a further SFN report later this year. Stayed tuned for plenty of developments in this area.

La Presse+ launches in Canada

In April and early May, several large news publishers offered major launches or relaunches of their mobile offerings. One of the most interesting among these is from Canada's La Presse, which on 18 April launched La Presse+, a new French-language digital edition for the iPad.

After reporting about News Corp's The Daily in our past two editions of this report, this daily tablet edition designed especially for the iPad seems like an interesting next generation version of The Daily, which folded in late 2012. Perhaps most interesting is that unlike The Daily, La Presse+ is being offered for free.

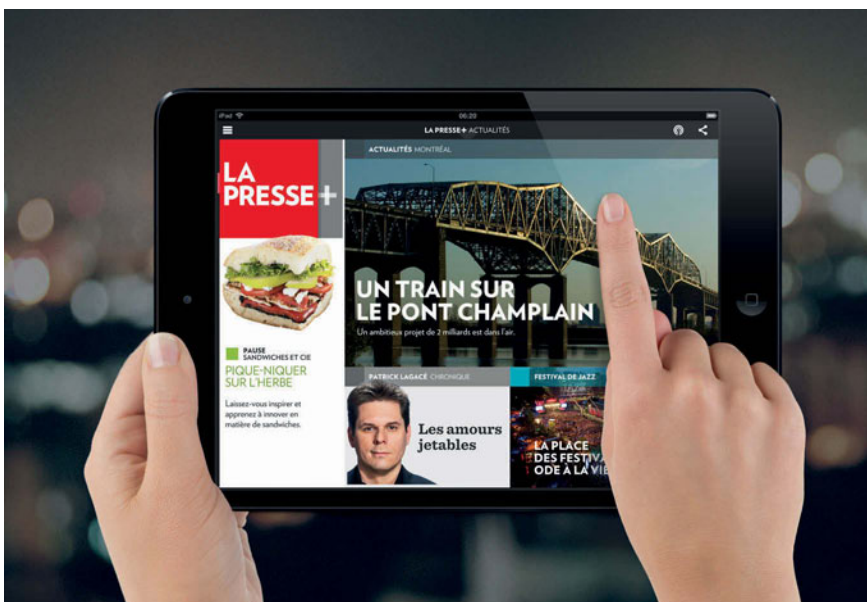
A C\$40 million investment

In announcing the launch, Montréal-based La Presse said the company had made a C\$40 million investment (approximately \$30.5 million euros) in La Presse+, which joins La Presse's existing print, web and mobile platforms. The publishing house says its new digital edition

makes the most of the “multi-function capabilities of the iPad and delivers the most comprehensive news and information experience ever” from the largest newsroom in Québec.

“After three years of research and development, we are proud to offer users an innovative digital edition that will redefine the way they get their information, while maintaining La Presse's DNA in terms of content quality,” said Guy Crevier, president and publisher of La Presse, in an announcement on the day of the launch.

Crevier added: “La Presse+ is an exceptional tool that enriches and expands upon the quality and depth of the news experience. We chose the iPad for its outstanding content-presentation abilities and its potential as an advertising vehicle. The iPad is also the most widely used tablet device among our subscribers, and the most popular in Québec. La Presse+ is being offered on a free-subscription basis, because we believe in the irreversible phenomenon of the availability of information free of charge on digital platforms. This launch is a significant milestone, and La Presse+ now becomes the flagship platform of our entire information ecosystem.”



The La Presse+ app is available through Newsstand and at LaPressePlus.ca. After downloading the app, users complete a free-subscription process. A month after its mid-April launch, La Presse+ was already being read by 180,000 readers a week.

'First priority' for storytelling

As for how La Presse+ fits into the newsroom's workflow, Caroline Jamet, vice president of communications, says: "We ask all our reporting staff to consider La Presse+ as their first priority when it comes to storytelling. We still expect breaking news for our online and mobile channels, but the way the information is gathered and the types of content produced (text, photo, video, graphics) are aimed at giving the reader an optimal experience in La Presse+."

When it comes to the production of a La Presse+ edition, some 50 employees are exclusively working on the edition layout, she said.

"After going through deep changes in the past 10 years in both print and online, we are very proud to see how fast our newsroom staff has adapted to the new challenge," she added. "Of course, we still have many things to fix and/or improve in the next year, but the results we have to this day are a strong motivation to carry on."

La Presse+ is updated daily at 5:30 a.m., and gives subscribers the news "in an interactive, user-friendly media environment that blends the best of print, web and video. Content is presented in a distinctive, enhanced form with sophisticated visuals comprising text, interactive images,

videos, photo galleries, tabbed folders and scrolling screens," the company stated.

Consumers have access to enriched versions of the newspaper's sections, columns and editorials, along with exclusive content, such as new columnists and contributors.

For breaking news, the tablet edition has an icon that when users click on, they arrive to La Presse's website.

The La Presse+ app is available through Newsstand and at LaPressePlus.ca. After downloading the app, users complete a free-subscription process.

At our presstime for this report in May, it was still obviously very early days for La Presse+, but Jamet said La Presse+ is already being rapidly embraced by readers.

180,000 readers in four weeks

"After just four weeks, La Presse+ reaches 180,000 different readers per week," Jamet said. "Our initial objective was to reach 200,000 readers after three months. These exciting results exceed our expectations and confirm that La Presse+ is off to a spectacular start. Since its launch, our new digital edition has prompted thousands of positive comments on social networks and on the App Store. La Presse+ has also generated media coverage home and abroad."

In terms of the company's plans for La Presse+ for this year, Jamet said "our main goal is to reach 400,000 readers by year-end. In addition, La Presse has committed to working with various stakeholders to develop a new measurement tool that meets the needs of advertisers. Meetings between our research team and different potential partners started this week (second week of May) and we are planning to publish the data from this initiative this coming fall."



"La Presse+ now becomes the flagship platform of our entire information ecosystem," says Publisher Guy Crevier.

Responsive vs. adaptive design: which is best for publishers?

Although the differences between responsive and adaptive design are nuanced for the non-developer, the distinctions are increasingly important as publishers see more and more traffic come from mobile devices.

There are two similar buzzwords flying around the digital media space right now, and to the uninitiated, responsive and adaptive design might seem like interchangeable labels for the same tech. They are both, after all, methods to optimise web content for mobile consumption – a challenge that publishers must face if they are to adapt to today’s news consumption trends.

A recent Pew Research study shows that mobile users are not just skimming headlines as once assumed, but “many also are reading longer news stories – 73 percent of adults who consume news on their tablet read in-depth articles at least sometimes, including 19 percent who do so daily. Fully 61 percent of smartphone news consumers at least sometimes read longer stories, 11 percent regularly.” So, having established the importance of offering a site well-adapted for mobile use, the question is: What’s the best way to go about getting there for publishers, adaptive or responsive design?

In an attempt to fully understand what distinguishes the two methods, I’ve been asking experts in media, mobile development and digital agencies from three countries to describe the methods for me in layman’s terms. Perhaps unsurprisingly, each had a slightly different explanation, and it turns out that what’s best for publishers depends on what they’re trying to achieve with mobile.

There are a few ways of comparing the two methods:

The client-server distinction, simplified

One of the easiest ways to understand how responsive and adaptive design differ is to consider it in terms of how the website is delivered to a device.

- Responsive design is client-side, meaning the whole page is delivered to the device browser (the client), and the browser then changes how the page appears in relation to the dimensions of the browser window.
- Adaptive design is server-side, meaning before the page is even delivered, the server (where the site is hosted) detects the attributes of the device, and loads a version of the site that is optimised for its dimensions and native features.

As you might guess, a major difference here is in where the work is being done. With responsive, the device itself does the work with media queries to display the re-sized images and optimised layout, whereas with adaptive, the server does the work and delivers the page already optimised.

This is how the distinction was described by Ilicco Elia, who is the former head of mobile for Reuters and currently heads up mobile at Digital Agency LBi in London, and his colleague Lorenzo Wood, CTO at LBi. If you hadn’t heard of LBi, they recently worked on the Sony Mobile re-branding and delivered a fully responsive brand homepage at sonymobile.com.

Breakpoints

After a conference in Paris, I got the chance to pose the same questions to Julia Beizer, head of mobile at The Washington Post. Beizer’s team worked on several responsive web design (or RWD) projects, and launched a participatory site for Obama’s 2013 Inauguration event. During our chat, she broke down the differences in terms of breakpoints.

Simply put, breakpoints are used to specify when a site layout will change when the browser window reaches certain dimensions.

Looking at a site that uses responsive design, as you drag the corner of your browser window to resize it, you will see the site shrink until it reaches a breakpoint, and then the layout of the site will reload differently to better suit that smaller screen size and new browser dimensions. Give it a try with Bostonglobe.com, can you spot how many breakpoints there are?

With adaptive design, the layout for a specific device type will be loaded right off the bat, so there's less of the fluid transitioning between breakpoints, as the right version should already be displayed for whatever device you're accessing the site from. You can test it by going to CNET UK from a few different devices if you have them handy.

Generally, publishers will design different layouts for their site for a minimum of three types of devices (mobile, tablet and desktop). However, as I mentioned above, the team behind The Boston Globe responsive website defined six breakpoints that correspond to "smart phones, dumb phones, tablets, laptops, PCs, etc."

Ethan Marcotte, who first coined the term "responsive design" in a 2010 article on A List Apart, and also worked on The Boston Globe responsive site, describes changes in layouts according to breakpoints: "In short, we're moving from a three-column layout to a two-column layout when the viewport's width falls below 400px, making the images more prominent... Now our images are working beautifully at both ends of the resolution spectrum, optimising their layout to changes in window widths and device resolution alike."

The right solution for your mobile strategy

Like all tech decisions facing publishers, the solution to the responsive vs. adaptive dilemma depends largely on the strategy, and the decision should be made with the publisher's specific outcomes in mind. The CTO of dotMobi, Ronan Cremin, did a nice job of categorising the two types of outcomes publishers are often seeking with their mobile web strategies:

- trying to make an existing website work passably well on mobile devices or,
- building a mobile experience from the ground up.

For the first lot, Cremin suggests responsive design, and for those looking to harness the extra capabilities mobile devices offer (geolocation, touch gestures, compass, accelerometer, etc.) to build a mobile-first experience, he suggests adaptive design.

In my conversation with Elia at LBi, he highlighted that responsive is not always the answer for publishers. He suggested that the best solution can be a combination of both methods:

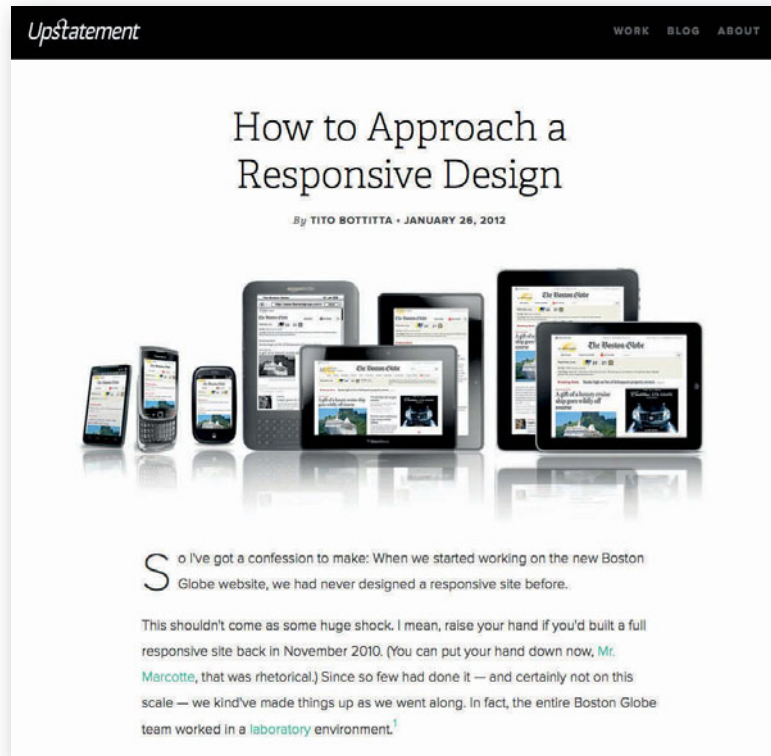
"Detect the device, "adapt" the page on the server and send down the smallest amount of code you can get away with, while allowing the page/code to "respond" to the small variations in devices – i.e., do both!"

Baptiste Benezet, CEO at French mobile development firm Applidium, had another word of advice about the responsive vs. adaptive question. After a panel discussion where major French media houses discussed the future of mobile news, Benezet told me that before even getting into the "front end" design challenge, "publishers need to sort out their 'back end' content management systems, and moreover their API, to give them a standard way to work with their content." Only with a strong CMS and API can publishers actually arrange their content into multiple layouts for optimal consumption across a range of devices.

The bottom line

If a publisher chooses to use responsive design, they should have a strategy of designing for mobile constraints, i.e. not assuming a site will by default be accessed from a desktop computer, and progressively enhance up to the optimal experience. As Elia suggests, "load small/mobile images first then replace with larger images designed for broadband/desktop experience." It's like coding for the lowest common denominator: a small screen and a slow Internet connection.

The team behind The Boston Globe responsive website defined 6 break-points that correspond to “smart phones, dumb phones, tablets, laptops, PCs, etc.”



If a publisher chooses adaptive design, it can allow them to go further with optimising the mobile and tablet experience by taking advantage of the extra features these devices have to offer like accessing location and using touch gestures. Plus, serving the best version of a site to a user can cut down on loading times, further improving their experience. That would explain why, of the Alexa top 100 global sites, 82 percent use some form of server-side device detection to serve content on their main website entry point. As Beizer put it in an email: “The larger point here is that, sure, there are technical differences between adaptive design, adaptive layout and responsive design. For publishers, the technical differences aren’t really the point. The goal is ensuring content is optimised for our audiences no matter what device they’re on. And that’s why we’re so excited about the possibilities with these approaches.”

This article was originally published on The Huffington Post.

Garrett Goodman, a new media consultant who does business development for two Paris-based startups, Worldcrunch and VideoStep. He also blogs for The Huffington Post on innovations in journalism. Find him on Twitter @garrettgoodman

Chapter 2

Innovative storytelling

Innovative storytelling

Beyond 'Snow Fall': three innovative storytelling projects offer lessons on news' interactive future

It came as no surprise when The New York Times took home a Pulitzer for "Snow Fall" – the immersive multimedia package impressed journalists and web designers alike with its seamless integration of text, audio, videos, photos and interactive graphics.

But the Associated Press' new interactive editor, Troy Thibodeaux, said that the future of journalism is one where such projects aren't just jaw-dropping but expected.

"We're really moving away from the model in which visualisation or interactive storytelling is an afterthought, an illustration of the story, and

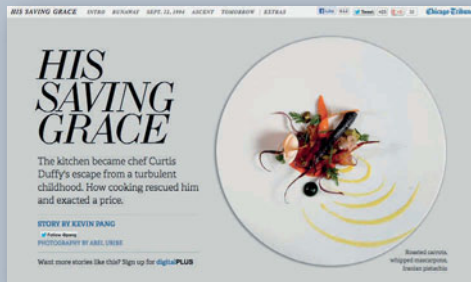
toward a model in which this work is central to developing the story and enables us to tell the story in ways impossible for straight text reporting," he said in an interview with Poynter.

"By challenging ourselves to create more engaging data visualisations and intuitive user interfaces, we can offer our readers a deeper understanding of the stories they most care about," he added.

As such innovative storytelling projects see a future as the norm, WAN-IFRA looked at three examples to understand challenges and lessons from working with the emerging form. We talked to the journalists behind an immersive "Snow Fall"-like piece by The Washington Post, a data-infused app by ProPublica and an interactive graphic novel by The Guardian.

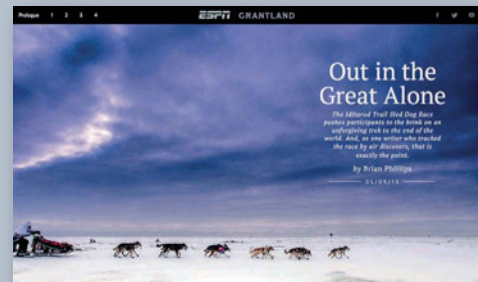
OTHER INNOVATIVE STORYTELLING PROJECTS

Immersive, 'Snow Fall'-like experience



'His Saving Grace'
Chicago Tribune, February 14, 2013
graphics.chicagotribune.com/grace

This multimedia package, with animated photos, voicemail messages' audio, newspaper clippings, videos and a letter, immerses readers in an emotional story about a kitchen chef's rise from a troubled past.



'Out in the Great Alone'
ESPN Grantland, April 24, 2013
www.grantland.com/story/_/id/9175394/out-great-alone

This piece about the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race allows the user to interact with the story by linking different parts of the text with corresponding map locations. The package seamlessly combines full-bleed photos, audio clips, drawings, photos and videos. The layout allows for side notes that translate dog sledding jargon and provide context to referenced locations.

‘Cycling’s Road Forward’

The Washington Post, February 27, 2013

Following ‘Snow Fall,’ The Washington Post designed its own flexible WordPress template, amenable to a similar type of multimedia package. So when Sports Reporter Rick Maese pitched a piece about local cycling competitor Joe Dombrowski in November, Sports Production Editor Mitch Rubin at once recognised it as a ‘perfect match’ for the new template.

“I saw immediate possibilities in terms of visuals,” Rubin said. “We were devoting resources to the reporting side, so I thought we should devote resources to the presentation side as well.”

Wilson Andrews, senior editor for interactive graphics, also realised early on that the story dripped of visual potential: the mounds of cycling data Dombrowski collects, the intricacy of bikes themselves, the scenic backdrop of Nice, France, where Dombrowski trains.

The narrative, too, showed promise on several levels. Dombrowski, from Northern Virginia, has local ties, and Maese thought the Lance Arm-

strong controversy allowed the story to transcend sports.

“It’s kind of a redemption story – not just for Joe [Dombrowski], but for the sport,” Maese said. “It was an amazing thing to identify with on a lot of levels.”

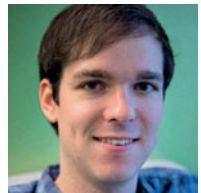
Realising the project’s potential, the Post quickly assembled a team of 14, spanning different departments, including sports, graphics and video, Rubin said. The challenge – and key – was bridging the gap between these sections, both Maese and Rubin agreed.

But the team maintained a “constant conversation,” Maese said, even when he travelled to France to chronicle Dombrowski’s training in late January: He and Dombrowski FaceTimed with Andrews and Rubin from Nice to ensure he collected all the necessary data. “Communication is huge,” Maese said he learned.

Indeed, the reporting, multimedia and technical processes were “100 percent intertwined,” said AJ Chavar, who compiled and edited the project’s video. “You have to be fully integrated to get something like that off the ground. If this story was fully written when I was approached to do video for it and then a week later someone was



Rick Maese,
Sports Reporter,
The Washington
Post



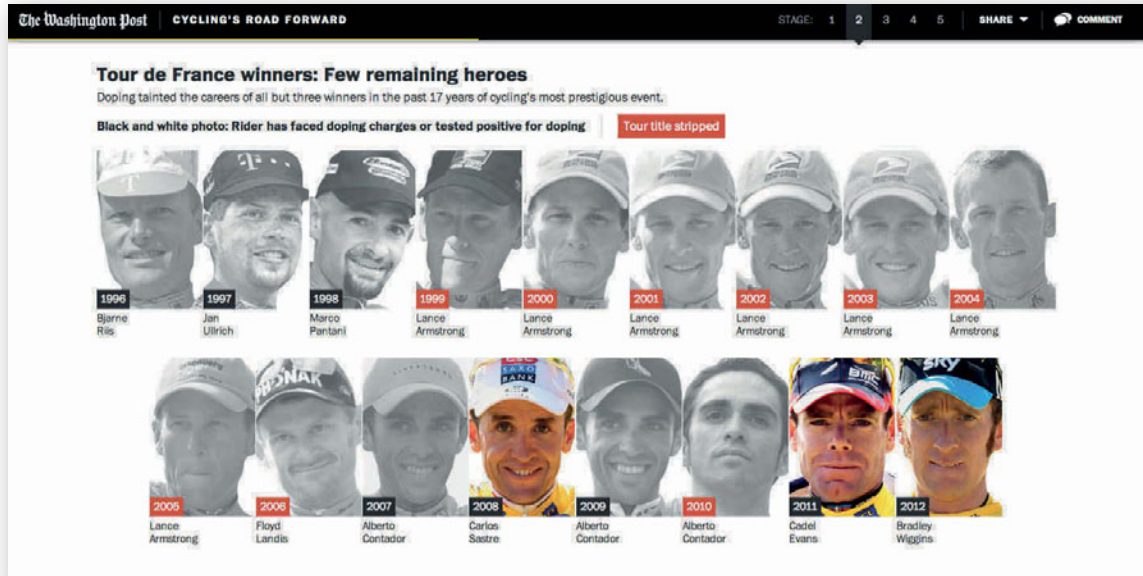
Wilson Andrews,
Senior Editor for
Interactive Graphics,
The Washington
Post



AJ Chavar,
Video Journalist,
The Washington
Post



“The biggest question was trying to keep it clean because we had so many elements,” said Production Editor Mitch Rubin.



When deciding the layout, Wilson Andrews, senior editor of interactive graphics, focused on the package's strong points.

approached to do design for it, there would be a disconnect. “Real time news collaboration really was a key to this,” he said.

‘Nothing was off the table’

The group discussed a range of possibilities for the story – “really nothing was off the table,” Maese said – but ambitions were stunted by a tight deadline. Maese wanted the story published at the start of cycling season, only three months after first pitching the idea.

The quick turnaround combined with limited resources meant only Maese would travel to Nice. Rubin said with more notice, a staff videographer might have been able to accompany Maese. But Maese himself took on a role as videographer and data journalist, compiling the information that filled the project's charts. Chavar armed Maese with a couple of GoPro cameras and a quick tutorial, and Maese, with limited video experience, ended up shooting about 50 percent of the footage that was ultimately used, Chavar said.

“It was very important to have a multifaceted reporter on this story,” Rubin said. “It couldn't have gotten done if the reporter was just interested in writing the story.”

Maese gladly accepted the additional jobs, he said, acknowledging that video cameras are becoming indispensable elements in a reporter's toolbox, even rivalling notebooks.

“It was definitely a challenge for me personally to juggle all of these responsibilities,” Maese said, “but it was a challenge I kind of embraced.”

When Maese returned from France with mountains of data and multimedia, the team faced a new issue.

“The biggest question was trying to keep it clean because we had so many elements,” Rubin said. “We didn't want to, for lack of a better term, junk it up. We wanted to make it as easy to read as possible. We wanted to present our best stuff and only our best stuff and not clutter it up with everything we had.”

So the team axed family photos, an additional interactive map and a fly-in graphic that illustrated a ride, Rubin said. The judicious process of content selection also translated to the story itself. Maese said the package's other elements kept his writing clean and focused, as he didn't have to “throw everything in the story.”

“It kind of freed me up to really focus on telling the story in the best way possible,” he said. “We could put some stuff in these different elements



"I heard from a lot of people who said, 'I wouldn't normally read a cycling story,'" says Sports Reporter Rick Maese.

and it would help my story because it wouldn't get bogged down in certain areas. I could keep the pacing up, maybe a little bit more brisk. I didn't have to go into background in certain places as much as I might have had to otherwise.

"It did affect the writing – and I think it helped the writing," he said.

An open canvas

The team at first struggled to decide the best format for the project. Starting with a blank slate made the options unlimited – and overwhelming, Rubin said.

When deciding the layout, Andrews said he focused on the package's strong points: tons of photos but few strong videos. The ultimate layout, with all but one of the story's six sections topped by a full-bleed photo, highlighted the photography.

Andrews said he struggled to combine the multimedia in a cohesive manner. The pieces came from all over: a freelancer in France, family members, Maese's iPhone, staff work from Virginia, race photography from Dombrowski's amateur days. To make the diverse elements stylistically similar, the team decided to convert

many of the photos, particularly the section top-pers, into black and white.

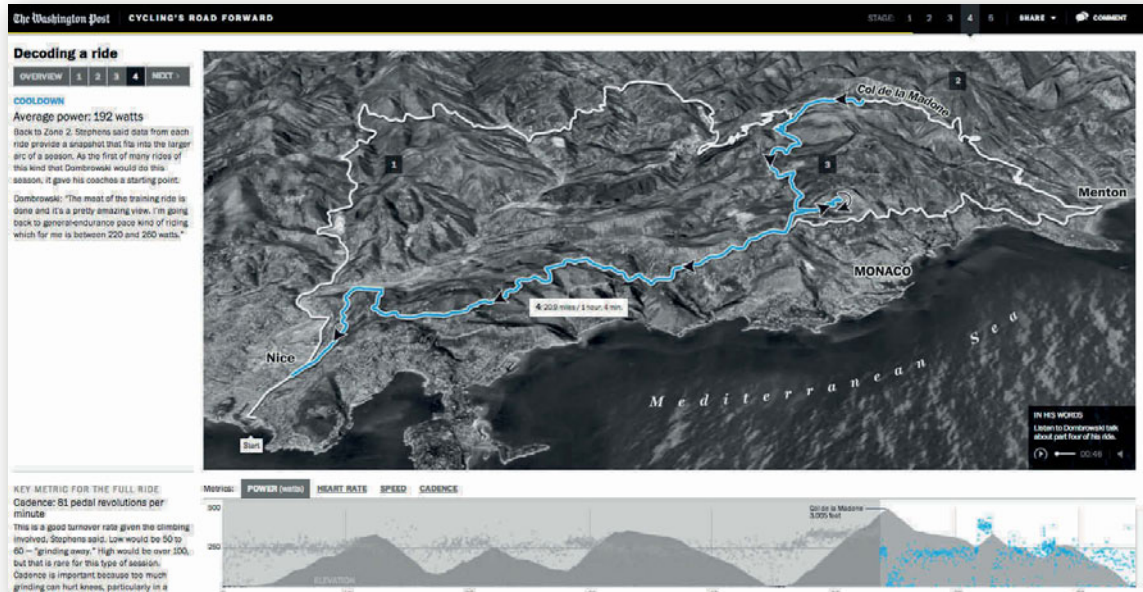
Then there was the question of video: how can you present clips in a way that won't detract from the reading experience?

"The challenge from the video standpoint was to make something that people are compelled to click on while they're in the story, but also something that they can consume quickly then get back into the story," Chavar said. "You want it to meld pretty fluidly with the writing in the design."

With this goal in mind, the team chose a series of short clips that pulled the story line forward and added dimensions to Maese's narrative, Chavar said.

The piece has received about 100,000 page views on desktop alone, but more telling data is user engagement: During the project's early days online, people were spending an average of 7.5 to 8 minutes on the page, Rubin said.

"I heard from a lot of people who said, 'I wouldn't normally read a cycling story.' A lot of people were sucked in by the presentation," Maese said. "As a reader, if you see that an outlet put a lot of time and energy into something, they're saying, 'Hey, ... this is worth your time.'"



"There's a lot of ways to enhance the experience for our readers. The more often we're doing that, the better," says Maese.

It might have been something they might have otherwise skipped over."

The duration of user engagement also suggests readers were diving into Maese's more-than-4,500-word piece.

"If you write anything that you consider to be long-form, your hope is that the reader gets all the way through it," Maese said. "I certainly hope that some of the bells and whistles and graphics and design encouraged the reader to stick with the story."

While Andrews said he's happy the piece proved the Post's visual potential, he and Maese agreed long-term success will only be seen if the Post replicates and improves this type of project.

"For me, that's how you judge [success]: What does this spawn? Where does this take us?" Maese said. "There's a lot of ways to enhance the experience for our readers. The more often we're doing that, the better. If this story in any way helped push us down the road, I'd be happy with that."

‘Nursing Home Inspect’

ProPublica, April 14, 2012

Nursing homes are hardly a fresh topic – but when government reports detailing their ‘deficiencies’ went online, ProPublica Senior Reporter Charles Ornstein saw a story. Or rather, he saw a series of stories and an app. He saw what would become ‘Nursing Home Inspect.’

Released online in July, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services data, while rich in detail, was elusive, barely searchable and hard to find. Ornstein requested the raw data files from CMS and, alongside News Applications Developer Lena Groeger, turned it from spreadsheets into a searchable tool for journalists, researchers, patients and their loved ones.

“We want to make this an experience where you don’t have to know Excel or Access tools to compare nursing homes,” Ornstein said. “We wanted to make it so that it was as low-click as possible and you could find what you were look-

ing for quickly but you could also exercise your curiosity.”

Search the key

The focus of Nursing Home Inspect is a tool that allows users to search more than 260,000 nursing home inspection reports at once by keyword (for instance, “neglect,” “choke,” “maggots”), so users can hone in on what’s important to them. CMS has a similar tool, Nursing Home Compare, but its search capabilities are limited to location or nursing home name. Groeger said CMS officials weren’t even able to internally search their data by keyword before Nursing Home Inspect.

It was important to keep the app’s capabilities broad, Ornstein said. In this way, it is useful for both consumers making decisions about where to send their loved ones and also for reporters and researchers looking to find patterns in problematic homes or areas in the country, Groeger said.

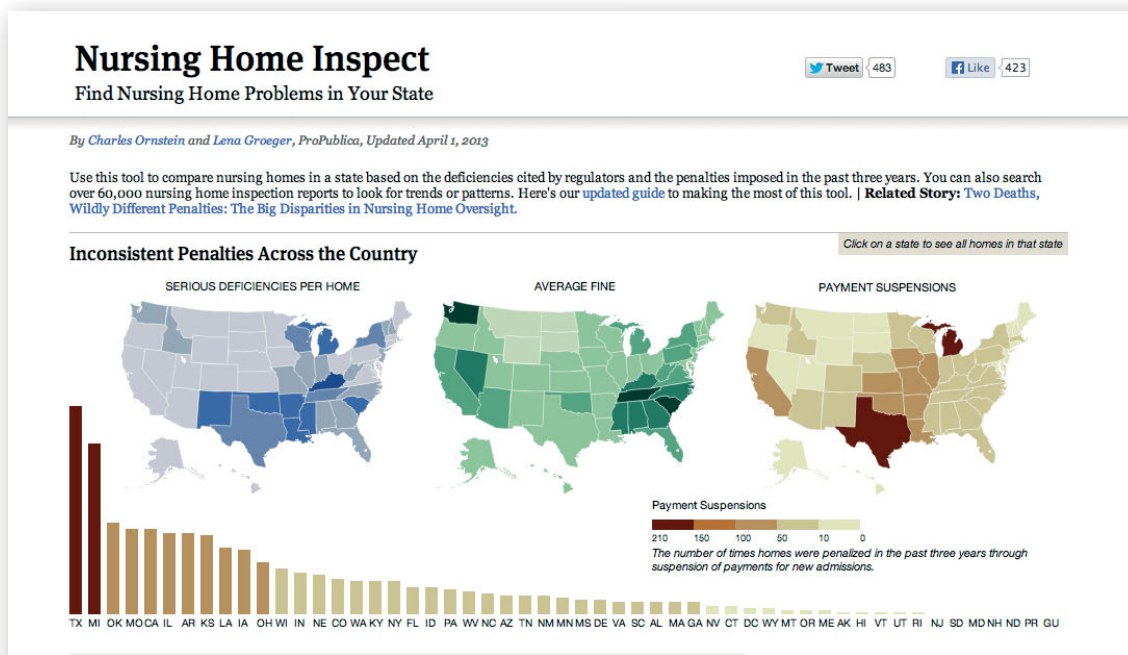
“I think very much our mantra here is we want to make information available in a format that people can customise to their needs,” Ornstein



Charles Ornstein,
Senior Reporter,
ProPublica



Lena Groeger,
News Applications
Developer,
ProPublica



Nursing Home Inspect allows users to search more than 260,000 nursing home inspection reports at once by keyword.

Search for Terms Inside Nursing Home Deficiency Reports

A keyword, city, or nursing home name

All States All Severities Search Tips

Examples: choke, Sacramento, Marcus Garvey

2,656 results with this term
(3,916 Deficiencies)

← Previous 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 ... 73 74 Next →

The number and severity of deficiencies shown below relate only to the search terms, not necessarily all deficiencies against the home.
Important: If you searched for a city or home name, results for that home may be spread over several pages. To improve results, select a state and sort by city.

Date	Nursing Home	City	State	Def.	Severity Range
Jan. 5, 2010	LAKE TERRACE HEALTH AND REHABILITATION CENTER (REPORT) of 1:1 supervision due to elopement risk behavior. On 10/10/09, Resident ... and #1) were able to elope or fall from bed despite ... <small>Home Info</small>	Milwaukee	Wis.	1	L
Aug. 30, 2012	DIAMOND HILL NURSING & REHABILITATION CENTER (REPORT) the facility. Resident #2 had	Troy	N.Y.	2	L

Deficiencies With "Elope"

By Severity

- B 30
- C 12
- D 1,883
- E 880
- F 89
- G 261
- H 31
- J 428
- K 277

Each of the more than 14,500 homes included in Nursing Home Inspect – is identified in CMS data by a unique code.

said. “The idea that a newspaper or news organisation decides what or how people should want to look at information I think is very outmoded.” After compiling the data in spreadsheets, focus shifted to how to structure it. The main goal was to make the thousands of pages of narrative reports searchable, which, over two months, Groeger accomplished.

Groeger merged three different data sets: a listing of all Medicare-certified nursing homes, a database with nursing home inspection violations and penalties and a database containing the deficiency report narratives. She weeded out fire safety violations to focus only on health violations and combined routine inspection reports with those from complaint visits.

Each home – and there are more than 14,500 included in Nursing Home Inspect – is identified in CMS data by a unique code. Groeger matched the codes to the appropriate nursing home information to make the app as user-friendly as possible. Because the sheer magnitude of the task, Groeger said she quickly learned to automate the bulk of these processes.

“I’ve never worked with a data set this big,” Groeger said. “Things that I had gotten used to either doing by hand or being able to check weren’t possible. It was very much putting in a lot of safeguard checks in the process to avoid getting some weird situations afterwards.”

Now that she’s streamlined the process, she says it only takes about an hour a month to update the app with CMS’ newly-released reports.

The web app uses the programming language Ruby, web framework Rails and search engine Sphinx, Groeger said.

After the app went live in August, Groeger and Ornstein updated it to include an interactive map that shows nursing home fines by state, state pages and nursing home pages. The update also includes top 20 lists showing homes that have paid the most fines and have the largest numbers of serious deficiencies. In adding new information about nursing home fines, Ornstein said the major discrepancies state-to-state and even home-to-home became clear. This presentation of data showed that there were some homes with more serious deficiencies identified but fewer

fines. “There’s really no consistency, and that’s something we didn’t know about and only found by adding the feature,” Groeger said.

Laying out this data will make it easier for local reporters to investigate these issues in their states, Ornstein said.

Having this information online in a user-friendly format is of great interest to the public, said Michael Connors, an advocate with California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform.

“It presents a tremendous opportunity to examine the scope of serious nursing home problems such as understaffing and misuse of antipsychotic drugs, and to see what, if anything, is being done about them,” Connors said in an interview with ProPublica.

Ornstein wrote a few stories through his analysis of the data, but Groeger said the real goal for

the project was to provide other reporters with the tool they needed to seek out their own stories. By this measure, Nursing Home Inspect has been successful: ProPublica cites more than 60 news stories that use the CMS data their tool links to. One such article by The Shreveport Times tells the story of a 57-year-old nursing home resident who went missing for over three hours before officials began searching for her. She was later found laying in the grass in the fetal position, dead, her body temperature at 118 degrees.

The app has become one of ProPublica’s most popular and has received more than 18,000 page views, Groeger said. But the project’s real success has yet to come, Ornstein said. He hopes the data will one day help bring regulatory change to the way nursing homes are inspected.

OTHER INNOVATIVE STORYTELLING PROJECTS

Use of illustration



‘In Jennifer’s Room’
California Watch, November 29, 2012
californiawatch.org/node/18695

This video combines music, actress-narrated interview transcription and un-animated drawings to emphasise the drama of a mentally disabled girl’s abuse. It sparked a number of others in a new genre, “illustrated storytelling.”



‘Lost and Found’
NPR, September 14, 2012
www.npr.org/news/specials/2012/cushman

This interactive video uses photography to tell the story behind the lens — amateur photographer Charles W. Cushman’s dramatic personal life. While listening to a narration, users can scroll through pictures, optimized through impressive web design. This piece is a great example of how a newsroom can take a big chunk of data — in this case, boxes of pictures — and turn it into a story.

‘America: Elect! The action-packed journey to US election day in graphic novel form’

The Guardian, November 6, 2012



Gabriel Dance,
Interactive Editor,
The Guardian US

Although The Guardian is based in the UK, the US interactive team approached the American presidential election hoping to ‘make a splash,’ said Gabriel Dance, interactive editor for Guardian US. About a third of Guardian readers are US residents, but Dance said election news was sure to resonate across the Atlantic Ocean.

“When you come to a big news day, [it’s best] if you’re able to bring something that’s interactive or perhaps not cut from the same cloth as everything else while still compelling and contributing to the report in a journalistic way,” Dance said.

Dance said other outlets, likely even the Guardian, would have written 2,000-word recaps of the opponents’ campaigns, but he saw something more: a story with strong characters, pivotal scenes, villains, arch enemies, a great narrative arc – the hallmarks of a graphic novel, a concept lead animator Greg Chen had been toying with for some time.

So about three weeks before the election, the team dove into creating a graphic novel, which eventually became “America: Elect!” The time constraints meant the script writing, illustration and coding process were simultaneous.

“That’s not necessarily the way I would recommend doing it the next time,” Dance said. “We don’t hold this up as a model of how we would do this in the future. The deadline was as hard as it gets.”

The quick turnaround, though constricting, was key: Releasing the project shortly before the election greatly increased its chance of success.

“There’s a big appetite for news before the election, but then there’s that lull before it when there isn’t actually that much to report, when the polls just start to close and everyone is still checking websites, looking for new information,” Interactive Developer Julian Burgess said. “So in that point of view it was a really good time to release something so you get something new to look at.”

Chen immediately began working on treatments of illustrations to determine the best tone

and illustration style. He had never done this type of illustration before, he said, but co-worker and comic book aficionado, Erin McCann, tutored him in story-telling paradigms comic books use. She brought in many examples, Dance said, and Chen drew the most inspiration from graphic novel 300. Chen said he wanted something clean and dramatic, with a bit of stylistic flair.

It took Chen about one-and-a-half weeks to finish the illustrations, which he hand-drew then scanned in for coloring and animation.

The agreed-upon tone balances both light-hearted pop culture memes, including allusions to the blog “Texts From Hillary,” body-builder images of Paul Ryan and the Mad Men theme sequence, with serious elements, such as the foreboding scene where Romney scratches off each of his opponents, Dance said.

As Chen was busy with his illustrations, Burgess went to work experimenting with production techniques. He decided on the Skrollr library, which he had never used before. He began using <div> tags but later switched to tags, as constant changes proved too time-consuming with sprites.

A major issue encountered by all scrolling packages, Burgess said, is how to make the piece compatible to a wide range of screen sizes. Burgess said a lot of testing was required to make sure the graphic novel was as easily viewed on a small laptop as a large desktop screen. The targeted minimum screen height was 800 pixels.

Considering the time constraints, Burgess was unable to make the package compatible on mobile devices. The Guardian released an unanimated version of the graphic novel that could be viewed on smartphones, he said, but he hopes to be able to optimise similar future projects for mobile viewing.

Despite the seemingly endless HTML tweaking this sort of project necessitated, Burgess said the results were worthwhile.

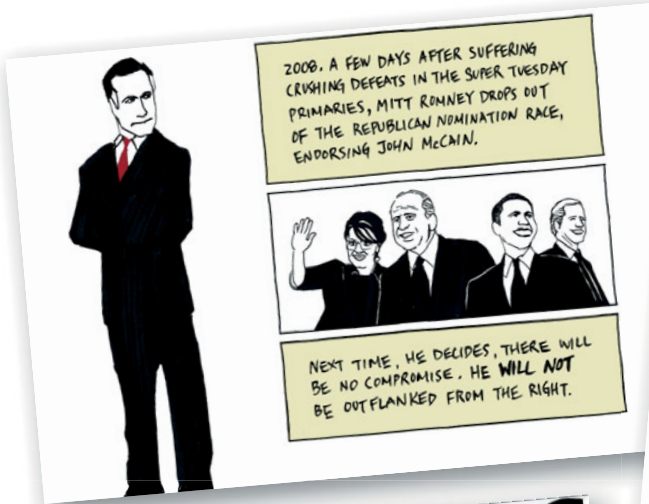
“It does make it much more captivating,” Burgess said. “You feel much more engaged because you’re scrolling, because you’re actually dictating how fast the story runs. ... I think that really appeals to people. I think that gives them a real sense of control over the story.”



Greg Chen,
Lead Animator,
The Guardian US



Julian Burgess,
Interactive
Developer,
The Guardian US



About three weeks before the US presidential election, the Guardian's team dove into creating a graphic novel, which eventually became "America: Elect!" The time constraints meant the script writing, illustration and coding process were simultaneous.

In the lead-up to the election, Chen drew two different endings. The project went live election day, concluding with the cliff-hanger, “Romney is behind by one point in the polls. Will he be able to overcome the odds to win the White House?”

When Obama officially won, the team posted a final ending, with Romney’s face fading away by the shakes of an Etch-A-Sketch.

The article has been tweeted more than 4,100 times and shared on Facebook nearly 15,500 times via the Guardian’s Twitter and Facebook buttons. The article’s success was a particular point of pride for Dance, as the US interactive team was only four people at the time.

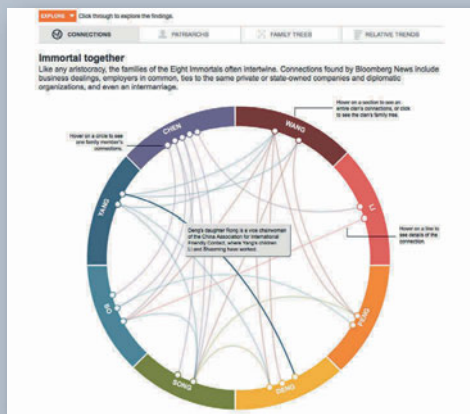
“It showed that we can absolutely compete with any news organisations, regardless of the resources, as long as we have creative, compelling ideas and we’re ready to put in the required time and effort,” Dance said.

Despite the project’s success, Dance said it’s unlikely that the team will do a same-style graphic novel any time soon.

“Part of my goal for the team is we’re always trying to be very innovative,” he said. “While that doesn’t mean we can’t do something very similar to this, we’re always trying to do something new.”

OTHER INNOVATIVE STORYTELLING PROJECTS

Data



‘Mapping China’s Red Nobility’
Bloomberg, December 26, 2012
go.bloomberg.com/multimedia/mapping-chinas-red-nobility

This project showcases mounds of data on the genealogy of China’s “Eight Immortals” in a digestible way: A chart that shows the connections between the families, an infographic with bios of each patriarch, interactive family trees and graphs that show trends within the families.



‘Mapping the Dead: Gun Deaths Since Sandy Hook’
The Huffington Post, March 22, 2013
data.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/gun-deaths

This interactive map tracks gun-related deaths in the US in the 98 days following the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. Each death is linked to name and a relevant news story. The information can be filtered by date or city and showcases the magnitude of gun violence in America.

Lessons from these projects

When asked what they learned from their work on these pieces, many of the reporters and editors echoed the same themes.

Collaboration

Several emphasised that the projects taught them how critical collaboration is for success, especially as these efforts often require input from several different departments.

“I’ve been doing this for a little bit, and the truth is in interactive journalism, maybe a little bit more than traditional print journalism, it’s a very collaborative event always. There’s always a lot of moving parts,” Dance said. “There are different people that bring different skills to the table, all of which are necessary.

“It can certainly be challenging to organise ... but it’s part of interactive journalism and journalism in digital newsrooms going forward, and you have to be ready for that.”

Maese agreed about the importance of collaboration, adding that his story might have stalled if he had not involved so many different individuals. The decision to expand it evolved as he bounced ideas off others, with different departments’ unique perspectives developing the package.

“I just know that communication is huge,” Maese said. “Now when I approach a story, even if it’s not a huge story, I want to run it up the flag pole.”

Technical integration

Ornstein said one of the biggest lessons he learned was how important it is to work closely with the technical team from the beginning. Chavar added that his most important lessons were what types of meetings worked best and most efficiently for the Post newsroom.

Early deadlines

Several echoed the same takeaway about deadlines: As Rubin said, “No matter how much advanced time you think you need, you should

even start before that.” Deadlines proved to be major issues with “Cycling’s Road Forward” and “America: Elect!” The Post newsroom pushed up the deadline for Maese’s article to two weeks before publication, as so many different teams were basing their work off his narrative, Rubin said. Maese said he wished he had more time to write, but he realised why the advanced deadline was critical to the project.

Unpredictable events can shorten even already-tight deadlines, as The Guardian team learned with Hurricane Sandy. For several days, the team had to work from home. So “America: Elect!” provided an important lesson about time management.

“I think this first time, we had a lot of things we could improve on as far as time management,” Chen said. “We learned how to make it quicker and got a better grasp of what you can do in that timeframe.”

Time management

Beyond deadlines, time also becomes an issue in the context of other news. Bad timing can kill even a great enterprise piece’s potential for something more, Andrews said, if editors and reporters become swamped with other stories. A key to the success of the cycling piece was the post-election news lull, which allowed Andrews to devote a significant chunk of his time to design.

“I think that’s the biggest hurdle on doing this consistently, it needs a lot of time spent by someone who can design and build something new,” Andrews said. “But we’re hoping to streamline that process to make it easier for anyone to create a better experience.”

With time as an adversary, Rubin said a realistic goal for this type of immersive project is three to four times a year for The Post’s sports section. He said another similar project is already in the works.

Integrating innovative projects like these into the newspaper’s daily workflow will become easier with practice, Andrews said.

“There’s a big production cycle that has to go into creating something like this, and I think it’s always longer on the first time we do it,” Andrews

said. “And now that we’ve done it, we have a lot of repeatable parts that we can reuse. Now we’ve just got to do it some more.”

Rich data

Rubin also noted the challenge of finding a story with all the three elements necessary to put together a full package: photos, videos and interactive elements. But with all the data available to journalist nowadays, Groeger said that story possibilities are endless. She noted that the data used for Nursing Home Inspect is just one set from an organisation that releases thousands of rich data sets.

“I think it really just drove home how much you can do by putting together different data sets that are maybe already available, how much you can do by putting them together in a way that gives people power over them,” she said.

Andrews noted that while innovative storytelling projects like “Cycling’s Road Forward” have the “wow” factor, similar templates, released by non-news organisations, were on the web long before the cycling piece.

“This kind of thing has been going on for a long time outside of media,” he said. “Web design reaches a certain level, then media organisations take a year to catch up. I’m hoping that we can bridge that gap and start to be the cutting edge of web design ourselves, rather than always following boutique web design.”

Chapter 3

Paid online content

Paid online content's impact on the newsroom

Whether or not to charge online, and if so how to do it, has been a question at the top of many news executives' minds for some years now.

Although it no longer promises to be the “silver bullet” revenue solution that news organisations have been hoping for to replace declining print advertising revenue, paid digital content can provide a significant stream of income, and seems likely to become the norm in many parts of the world. Hundreds of newspapers in the US are already charging online for at least some content, and the trend is also spreading through Europe and the rest of the Americas.

The two main approaches being taken are metered – limiting readers to a set number of free articles each month before asking them to pay – and freemium – restricting access to certain types of content to paying subscribers only. A metered model only targets frequent users, Thomas Schultz-Homberg, head of electronic media at Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, pointed out at Digital Media Europe in April, while a freemium model targets all. There might therefore be more potential for selling subscriptions with a freemium model, but it's more work in terms of deciding what's free and what's not, and appropriately branding that premium content.

The New York Times is the classic example of the metered model (even though the Financial Times did it some years before) and is now familiar to most. “If you're deciding for users it can be confusing,” Paul Smurl explained at the same conference: “we let them decide what content they want to use towards their free allotment.” The paper is now planning to produce further paid-digital products, including one at a lower price “for consumers looking for an efficient way to stay informed,” and an enhanced digital product that would offer extras at a higher price, such as access to Times events, the ability to gift subscriptions and provide full family access. Maybe even when it you have settled on a paid online content strategy, you find that one size doesn't fit all.

Freemium can be done in a few different ways: either by creating a specific premium area of the site, or by charging for specific channels, or making a selection of articles each day subscriber-only. The Wall Street Journal, which has pioneered the freemium paid model since 1996, operates the latter policy. There can also be great variation in the amount of content offered paid and free.

How to make money from news content is clearly a challenge for the business arm of a news organisation. But increasingly, editorial staff must play a role in initiatives that can help define the future of their organisation. Charging for content online often has an impact on the way that editorial staff work, and on their attitudes to their digital products.

We looked at how some newspapers outside the US are handling the change to charging for online content, and what advice they have for other papers considering a similar move. We focused on the impact that paid online content brings with it from an editorial perspective, looking at issues such as:

- How does a paywall change the way journalists work for the web?
- Does the type of paywall make a difference?
- How does it change an editor's job?
- Do paywalls lead to better, higher-quality journalism as it means that journalists aren't just looking to publish as many pieces as possible?
- How do you select which content is behind the wall?

The Globe and Mail, Canada

The Globe and Mail introduced a metered paid online model in October 2012. Publisher and CEO Phillip Crawley described the initiative as ‘one of the more complicated and sophisticated things we’ve had to do’ in a March interview, and Editor-in-Chief John Stackhouse agreed that it had been a significant challenge for the paper.

Readers can now read 10 articles free before being asked to subscribe. Video content is freely available (The New York Times recently announced that it would do the same), as is some niche content covered by specific advertising deals, but this isn’t advertised as free as it’s thought that this would complicate and dilute the subscriber offer.

“It has been pretty fabulous,” was Stackhouse’s overall verdict on the effect of the paywall on the newsroom so far. While it posed “Herculean challenges,” for the IT team, digital development and customer services, the editorial complications are less onerous, he said. “We’re still journalists, trying to produce great journalism and original content.”

The importance of data

One of the key reasons the newsroom has benefited from the paid online model is the customer data aspect. Now that readers have to register on the site, the paper knows a lot more about its audience and what subscribers are reading.

KEY DETAILS

- Globe Unlimited is free to five- or six-day print subscribers, or \$19.99/month (about €15)
- The metre is set at ten articles.
- Regarded as Canada’s newspaper of record, The Globe and Mail is the second largest daily in terms of print circulation.

“It has provided a great reaffirmation of what we already suspected: our subscribers have been devouring business, political and world content,” Stackhouse said. “While it’s important not to lurch or swing too much in one direction because of a certain appetite of the day, it has given us a lot more confidence in focusing on our core areas.”

Consequently, The Globe and Mail has started to increase coverage of these areas: it has moved a couple of people to Ottawa to add to political coverage and is investing in business content. Stackhouse said that the paper was in the process of hiring someone in Calgary to add to its energy coverage after seeing “subscription appetite” in this area.

This has in turn led to cutbacks in other areas, Stackhouse noted, the economic challenges that media face mean that overall costs must be managed “more aggressively.”

Not just what, but when

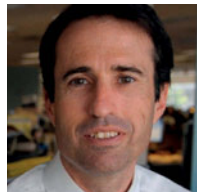
As well as knowing what their subscribers are reading, The Globe and Mail now knows when they are reading, and this has been very helpful for assigning editors. Resources have been shifted to the times of day when readers are particularly active.

“We have known for a long time that our core readers are very active first thing in the morning,” Stackhouse said, “but some sections are now seeing that there’s a reasonable appetite in the evening for end of day content, so we are modifying both our creation of content and our editing and publishing of it to be a bit more mindful of that end of day appetite.”

“We’re elongating the day, and the week, which is stressful in different ways,” Stackhouse noted. “We need to do more reporting and editing earlier in the day when our readers are there and that is a tug of war with the end of day production geared towards the next day’s paper.”

Subscriber-only content

The Globe and Mail didn’t do a redesign to accompany the launch of its metered model, as



John Stackhouse,
Editor-in-Chief,
The Globe and Mail



The Globe and Mail launched a metered paid online model in October 2012. Readers can now read 10 articles free before being asked to subscribe. Video content is freely available, as is some niche content covered by specific advertising deals.

some other publications have done, but it did launch some subscriber-only content.

In the business area, the paper launched two vehicles just for subscribers last autumn, called Streetwise and ROB Insight (Return on Business). Encouraged by this, in winter “a more ambitious” subscriber-only political channel was launched. This features two or three articles per day that come out regularly – morning, afternoon, evening – from Ottawa and provincial capitals on the politics of the day.

“ It has provided a great reaffirmation of what we already suspected: our subscribers have been devouring business, political and world content... it has given us a lot more confidence in focusing on our core areas.”

John Stackhouse

Premier political columnist John Ibbitson has also been put fully behind the paywall, Stackhouse said.

This was intended partly to “reward subscribers and deepen their commitment,” trying to avoid a situation where the paper’s fans enthusiastically sign up but then let their subscription drop after a couple of months. “It’s to heighten the addiction, if you will,” Stackhouse said.

The other motivation for making a columnist like Ibbitson subscriber-only is to up the number of ‘paywall encounters,’ as Stackhouse put it. “We want people hitting a subscription message,” he said, and so as well as after reading ten articles, readers will get the subscription message whenever they go to Ibbitson’s column.

The Globe and Mail has found that the subscriber conversion rate is higher in the business and politics sections: when somebody has a ‘paywall encounter’ on a business or politics article they are more likely to subscribe. “In that case

we need more of that content behind the wall,” Stackhouse said.

However, he added that, “there has been some debate and agonising in the newsroom about limiting the influence of journalism if it’s subscriber-only.” Although Ibbitson was happy for his column to go subscriber-only, Stackhouse noted that the columnist has both a newspaper slot and a TV show so has a wide base of influence. Stackhouse said he was mindful of the social value of journalism and how this must not be sacrificed for an economic value.

Journalists positive about perceived increase in quality

Overall, journalists have been positive about the move to a paid online model, Stackhouse said. “Journalists in my experience want their journalism to be paid for,” he said, “and frankly they’re a little tired of the doom and gloom around the industry and excited to see us doing something that is fairly ambitious, and a big bet on journalism.”

It has also sent a message to those who are concerned about the effects of digital on journalistic practices. “There has been a concern among some journalists that we are on a race to the bottom – that news sites will do anything to grab traffic, and as a result our journalistic practices have been compromised,” Stackhouse said. “There’s also a concern that the web has forced journalists to be a bit more fast and loose and as a result the quality of journalism is not as good. Some people would argue that the rigour of reporting and editing has gone down.”

Charging for content changes the focus, from traffic-grabbing to cultivating a loyal, paying audience.

Advice: the importance of reader research

Stackhouse’s key advice to other papers looking to implement paid online content was to do as much reader research as possible, and crucially, to share this with the journalists. “Journalists are generally smart people and they are market-savvy. They also have the most intimate relationships with our readers,” said Stackhouse, so it makes sense to include them in data-sharing and to present it in a way that they understand it.

“Journalists in my experience want their journalism to be paid for, and frankly they’re a little tired of the doom and gloom around the industry and excited to see us doing something that is fairly ambitious, and a big bet on journalism.”

“Get in front of the newsroom and say these are our readers, and these are the readers we want, and this is what they want from us,” he suggested. The Globe and Mail has trained a couple of editors in the newsroom to be data specialists: they work with the analytics department and are tasked with helping the newsroom to understand what both paying and free readers want from the paper.

It is also extremely important to learn from this data, he added. “We have to be more honest with ourselves and our staff, to say what isn’t as important to our readers and then to reduce or cut that entirely in order to better finance the core areas,” he stressed.

Fædrelandsvennen, Norway

Fædrelandsvennen, a regional Schibsted-owned daily newspaper in southern Norway, took much of its content behind a paywall in mid-May 2012. The introduction of this new subscription model, which includes print and digital in one package, has seen subscriber numbers start to rise for the first time in 17 years.

Now, about 70 percent of the content is reserved for subscribers, comprising all the in-depth, original content that the paper makes a significant effort to produce. The shortest stories and agency updates are available free to all, as a sample.

Readers are offered one package at one price: no longer do they subscribe to the paper, but to the brand. Subscribers can specify that they don't want the newspaper delivered, but the price is the same.

"Like many other media houses we realised we had to do something about our business model," said Christian Stavik, Fædrelandsvennen's news editor. The paper wasn't in severe financial difficulty, he said, in fact, it had been in a strong position in terms of readerships and finances, but had been losing subscribers each year since a

peak in 1995, and the decision was taken to look to a more "robust, future-orientated model." The average age of a print subscriber before the new model was introduced was 60 years old.

"The biggest risk for us was to do nothing," Stavik said. "That was the worst option."

Redesign towards a single brand

Taking digital content subscriber-only coincided with a complete redesign of Fædrelandsvennen's digital presence. "We had to show our customers that they were getting something more," Stavik said. "We wanted to go from the look and feel of a free site to a paid site where it was clear not only that it was new but that it was primarily for subscribers. So we had to use the site to get that right." The paper has Android and iOS native apps but focused mainly on the browser-based experience, with specific mobile and tablet versions.

Given the length of the name Fædrelandsvennen, the website had originally been branded as FVN.no. But as part of the online redesign, the full name was restored to the header, with the same logo as the print product, so readers would see the print and online products as part of the same brand. "We have to have the same brand in all channels, that's important to us," Stavik said.

“ We had to show our customers that they were getting something more... We wanted to go from the look and feel of a free site to a paid site where it was clear not only that it was new but that it was primarily for subscribers.”

Christian Stavik



Christian Stavik,
News Editor,
Fædrelandsvennen

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Rather than having an open site with some locked stories, Fædrelandsvennen is now a subscriber-only site with some unlocked stories. Stavik believes this is a more appealing way to present the model.

Impact on the newsroom

The paid model has changed the way that the newsroom operates, Stavik said. “Production and publishing are now more adjusted towards the reader, rather than the newspaper’s print time.” he explained. “We are focusing much more on reader habits and needs than on tomorrow’s edition of the newspaper.” One consequence of this approach is that the paper is using more journalists and resources in evenings and weekends than before, because site traffic is high at these times.

The newsroom had been moving towards integration before the change, now it is completely integrated. “The most visible and physical thing we did was to move print production out of the heart of the newsroom,” Stavik explained. “We physically moved that out and replaced it with the leaders of the news sections, and I sit there myself as the news editor.”

“Print, which we have much more time for, has moved to another place and that has done something to the mentality. We are much more focused on the digital channels and that’s also visible,” he said. The newsroom also has screens with analytics tools for traffic and competitors, he added, which add to the more significant presence of digital in the newsroom.

The type of content has changed with the introduction of the digital subscriber initiative. “We work harder to get more exclusive stories,” Stavik said, and when there is a big story in the region, the paper will spend more resources on it. “We go deeper than we did before, because there’s more of a need to have the best stories, to be in front and to be exclusive,” he said. Readers respond

KEY DETAILS

- 70 percent of content is now subscriber-only
- Price is 199NOK a month (about €26) for print + digital
- With 75 editorial staff, Fædrelandsvennen is one of the 10 largest newspapers in Norway

quickly if the paper is not offering enough: “We don’t get away with being second best on our core areas,” he added.

The paid model has also had an effect on the tempo of content production, Stavik said. “We have to update much more often on the same stories to stay ahead and to give subscribers what they expect of a digital offer, which is pretty much updated all the time.”

Lastly, it has been important in changing the attitudes of editorial staff: “there’s now just as much pride in having the top story online as on the front page of the newspaper.”

“We work harder to get more exclusive stories... We go deeper than we did before, because there’s more of a need to have the best stories, to be in front and to be exclusive.”

Results

Between the launch day in May and the end of the year, the number of subscribers increased by 2.6 percent to 35,000, Stavik said, the first rise since 1995. “We are really happy with that,” he added. The average age of new subscribers is 50 years old, and there are many more young subscribers, Stavik said.

One of the key goals when introducing the subscription package was to get print subscribers to register online and become digital customers also, Stavik said. More than 70 percent have now done so, considerably more than the target of one third. “That is one number we are really focused on.”

Advice

Fædrelandsvennen’s model aims to work at that one paper, Stavik stressed, but he believes that there are some criteria for success that would work for many others:

Simplicity

“I think that a model that is simple to understand and easy to communicate, like we feel ours is, that is one success criterion. It’s easy to understand what you’re buying and easy for us to tell people what they’re paying for and why.”

New design

“I also feel that the development of the digital offer with a new design and a look and feel that’s different to the one we had before is really important – you can feel that it’s different, you feel something new there.”

Internal culture

“We spent a lot of time changing the culture, and we are still working together with the journalists to develop a – new culture – this has been really important.

We felt that everyone was onboard on this project, they saw what we saw in our business model and the need for change, and they had a will to also have success online. I think they felt more motivated than intimidated, and that is possible because we were so open with every part of what we were doing.”

Jyllands-Posten, Denmark

Jyllands-Posten launched a 'freemium' paid online content initiative in December 2012 as a key part of the company's strategy to transform from a newspaper to a multimedia company.

Jens Nicolaisen, the paper's digital director, said the aim is to get more people reading the brand's quality journalism by providing it digitally as well as in print, to acquire new digital subscribers, and to increase value for subscribers and therefore retention.

Breaking news and short stories are free, while JP Premium, the "quality journalism" is only available to subscribers. Print customers who subscribe to the paper at least five days a week receive JP Premium free, those who take it for less than five days get a 50 percent discount, while for digital-only subscribers the price is 99DKK a month, or about €13.

Nicolaisen estimated that about 25 percent of the content is now premium. The premium content is more analytical, offering perspective and background, although the division has nothing directly to do with length of article, he said: it's more to do with how many sources are used, or how much analysis there is. Often a short, one-source story will go online immediately and be free, to be followed up by a more in-depth background article in the premium area. "Less speed and more quality," is the goal, Nicolaisen added.

A tab on the site's main navigation opens up the JP Premium section, but articles are also integrated into the flow of news on the home page and elsewhere as teasers to increase awareness of the product. JP Premium has a slightly different look and feel to the rest of the site. It is less lively than the rest of the site, Nicolaisen commented, with more reflective writing, in a lean-back mode.

Newsroom reorganisation, from print to premium

The introduction of this premium content has prompted a reorganisation of the newsroom. There was a degree of integration before, Nicolaisen said, with the editor of digital news sitting next to the editor of print news. But there was a feeling that to achieve the necessary speed for online it made sense to keep this separate from the print operation.

Now, all print journalists are "premium journalists" and write for all platforms. The editorial meeting, that used to be focused on the newspaper, is now cross-media. The paper's CMS has been updated so that it can be used to feed into multiple platforms.

"We work differently and we think differently to before premium," Nicolaisen said. For example, an anticipated story, such as a press conference with a minister, used to be covered by a short online article immediately after and two or three analytical pieces in the paper. Now, there



Jens Nicolaisen,
Digital Director,
Jyllands-Posten

A tab on the Jyllands-Posten's website's main navigation opens up the JP Premium section, but articles are also integrated into the flow of news on the home page and elsewhere as teasers to increase awareness of the product.

will be at least one premium piece online the same day also.

“Our journalists are very, very ready for this,” Nicolaisen said. “But it is a learning process.” One difficulty, he explained, is that many journalists are finding that they have more to do, because of the need to add multimedia content to print stories that go online.

“It means a lot for the editorial department to not give away content for free.”

Jens Nicolaisen

A premium editorial group of about five people is purely focused on enriching the journalism of the subscriber-only section, adding maps, for example, or uploading additional documents. This team has been a “gift,” Nicolaisen said, as they take some of these tasks away from the journalists.

A premium product that has had a significant effect on the newsroom’s time schedule is newsletters. These go out at 6 am, midday and 7 pm. The morning edition offers the essence of the newspaper in digital form, with any relevant updates since the deadline, the midday edition is an overview of the day so far and the 7 pm version looks towards the next day.

KEY DETAILS

- JP Premium costs 99DKK/month (€13) or free to five-day or more print subscribers
- An estimated 25 percent of content is now subscriber-only
- Jyllands-Posten is one of the largest papers in Denmark, based in Aarhus

Changing attitudes: one journalistic goal

JP Premium has changed journalists’ attitude to online, Nicolaisen said. There used to be a “battle” between print and digital but this has largely evaporated, he said. Before, some of the better-known journalists found it strange to write high quality articles to distribute freely. “It means a lot for the editorial department to not give away content for free,” he stressed. Now that digital content is covered by a subscription model, and is “enriched” for online, there is more of a sense of a common journalistic goal, he said.

As well as sharing experiences with Jyllands-Posten’s sister dailies in the JP/Politikens group, Politiken and Ekstra Bladet, staff have travelled extensively to study what others are doing, such as The Times and Le Monde, Nicolaisen said. “I think it has been very important for us to get inspiration from others,” he noted, but also to be prepared to adapt solutions to the Danish market and to Jyllands-Posten as a brand.

Results

By early April, more than 50,000 Danes had tried the new product. Many were existing subscribers activating their print subscription, but more than 1000 new subscribers signed up in the first week at 99DKK/month, and this number is still rising, Nicolaisen said. The paper has seen a yearly decrease in circulation, which fell by about 6 percent the past couple of years, but in March there was a net increase in subscribers.

Advice

Nicolaisen advised being very clear about the goals of the new model and involving journalists and other staff from the start. Then it is important to arrange training and discussions on how to work with this kind of journalism. “Be ready to learn and correct if there are workflows which aren’t working,” he said.

Berliner Morgenpost, Germany

At the Berliner Morgenpost, paid online content hasn't had a huge effect on the way journalists work, and this is welcomed by the newsroom. The paper introduced a freemium model at the beginning of 2010 at the same time one of its sister dailies, the Hamburger Abendblatt.

Now, around 35-40 percent of content is available only to subscribers, Head of Online Sonja Haase estimated: the exclusive (non-agency) local content about Berlin and the surrounding area.

"Our focus is that we are a Berlin news website: this is what we are really good in," Haase said. "So we decided that that should be reflected in the payment model." The paper gets much of its national and international content from Axel Springer sister paper Die Welt. All-access to morgenpost.de costs €5.95 for one month, or €4.95/month with the purchase of a 12-month subscription and €3.95/month for 24 months. There were 11,000 digital subscribers in late 2011, but the paper declined to provide recent numbers.

Paid content is management's responsibility

The newsroom considers making money to be management's responsibility, and therefore "really tried to make the payment model something that was part of management," Haase said, while the journalists focus on journalism, rather than worrying about management decisions. "When we ask a reporter to write a piece for the web, it's not because we want a paid piece specifically but because we want news from our reporter," she added.

"When we decided to put our content behind the wall, our newsroom was horrified," says Dirk Nolde, former managing editor of the Berliner Morgenpost, at a conference back in October 2011. "Fortunately," he continued, "our readers are indeed willing to pay, and we think it is because they believe there is quality content and it is OK to pay for that."

The paper's first model, which involved offering short versions (about 1,800 characters) of each Berlin story free while the full versions were subscriber-only, lasted just four weeks, Haase

Today, all Berlin-specific content on Berliner Morgenpost is charged for and it is a straightforward process for the reporters who put it online: they just have to pick the right channel and the channel dictates whether it is subscriber-only or free.

The screenshot shows the Berliner Morgenpost website interface. At the top, the logo and navigation menu are visible. The main content area features a large image of a protest with a banner that reads 'Lehrerstreik'. Below the image is a headline: '07:16 Warnstreik Schüler wollen gemeinsam mit Lehrern demonstrieren'. To the right, there is a sidebar with 'Meistgelesene Berlin-Artikel' (Most Read Berlin Articles) listing five items. At the bottom, there is a 'Zeltung heute' section and a small video player.

said. The online team had to write short versions of every article, and it was just too much work, she explained.

“Our focus is that we are a Berlin news website: this is what we are really good at. So we decided that that should be reflected in the payment model.” Sonja Haase

Now, all Berlin-specific content is charged for and it is a straightforward process for the reporters who put it online: they just have to pick the right channel and the channel dictates whether it is subscriber-only or free. The only time that the newsroom is involved in a decision is when there are big stories which the team decides to offer free even though they would normally be paid-for; Haase gave the example of a helicopter crash in the city.

The newsroom is not aware which types of stories convert subscribers most effectively, and Haase thinks that this is appropriate: “we don’t want to be doing stories just to get people to pay,” she said. She was clear that the newsroom has not changed its coverage to reflect the new model.

KEY DETAILS

- An estimated 35-40 percent of content is now subscriber-only
- All-access costs €3.95 - €5.95/month depending on length of subscription
- Also owned by Axel Springer, national daily Die Welt has just established a metered online payment model

Simplicity is preferable

“Our model is quite difficult to understand for the reporters,” Haase said. Frequently at Berliner Morgenpost, journalists are unsure if their work is subscriber-only or not.

Some reporters are satisfied that their work is being charged for, she said, while others don’t like it because they want to be able to send around their articles and make them as widely read as possible. They are afraid that if people have to pay for their stories, they won’t read them so much.

“This would be one of the advantages to having a metered model,” Haase believes, “as you never know which stories people will end up reading free.” She thinks a metered model is also more straightforward to understand.

“Journalists should work as they always have, the technical functions should decide whether stories are paid or not.”

Haase’s advice was to have a simple, understandable model, both for the editors and for the readers. “Don’t make it complicated,” she said, adding that if it makes sense to readers, they will be more likely to pay.

She also recommended against introducing a model that impacts with the way that journalists work, such as the original model that Berliner Morgenpost introduced with a shorter version of stories. She believes that from a journalistic point of view, the less involvement that journalists have the better. “Journalists should work as they always have, technical functions should decide whether stories are paid or not.”

Chapter 4

Interacting with the audience

Interacting with the audience

Digital news publishing offers an abundance of new ways for organisations to interact with and engage their readers. They can communicate with readers directly on a personal level, they can invite their feedback and contributions, and they can understand much better what their audience likes to read, and when, and how.

Online commenting

In some ways a digital development of letters to the editor, enabling readers to almost instantly express their opinions on an issue or an article, online comments also offer the chance to communicate directly with journalists, and crucially allow readers to interact with each other. They can be a way to make journalists and news organisations more accountable to their readers and offer the chance to more easily gather reader input.

However, the many insightful, observant comments that news outlets are attracting are often accompanied by an equal or greater number which are irrelevant, offensive or hateful. How to tackle these while not limiting freedom of expression and allowing the interesting comments to shine is a key challenge for news organisations today.

Social media

Most organisations are now using social media both for finding stories and for distributing news. For breaking news during a crisis, social media is becoming the first place that many, particularly young people, go for updates. It is also becoming more common that a journalist's first instinct when covering fast moving news is to tweet about it. Some news outlets now offer impressive live blogs, and these also often compile information that was first released on Twitter. Maintaining high standards of accuracy while working at this sort of speed is not always easy, and many are wondering where to strike the balance between being right and being first.

Analytics

Analytics are increasingly becoming a tool used by journalists as well as by data specialists to understand traffic and reader habits. Using analytics isn't strictly a way of interacting with your audience but it is a way to understand how your audience interacts with your content. This knowledge can be used to make sure you are giving readers the right kinds of content when they want it, and more of the types of content that they like, with an overall goal of increasing readership. It can also be invaluable when preparing for significant changes to your site, such as a redesign or a paid model.

The ups and downs of social media

Why journalists should flock to Reddit

Reddit, often incomprehensible and inaccessible to those unfamiliar with it, is becoming a social force to be reckoned with. Founded in 2005 with primarily male users, and allowing an unusual degree of anonymity for a “social” network, Reddit has made significant inroads into mainstream consciousness in the last couple of years. Reddit’s top post of 2012 was US President Barack Obama’s first post in his “Ask me Anything” thread, with 5,598,171 page views.

As well as a place for discussion about anything and everything, it has become somewhere to compile coverage of breaking news. The site came under harsh criticism for its role in the hunt for suspects of the bombing at the Boston marathon, when its “Find Boston Bombers” thread, an attempt to use the power of the community to locate the suspects, wrongly named several people. The site issued a public apology, admitting that it helped to fuel “online witch hunts,” and said that “We all need to look at what happened and make sure that in the future we do everything we can to help and not hinder crisis situations.”

Some journalists have scoffed that the self-proclaimed “front page of the Internet,” Reddit, “upvotes” more gifs of animals than hard news stories. But reporters should still be curious about the quirky community, which offers users valuable lessons applicable to reporting.

A ‘boot camp’ for journalists

Reddit is a great training tool for writers because unlike on Facebook and Twitter, users cannot lean on their followers and friends to make their posts successful. Instead, each post’s quality of writing and message is individually evaluated. Each post has an equal likelihood of making it to the site’s front page at its genesis, regardless of its author. Thus large follower bases aren’t rewarded, as they would be on Twitter and Facebook. What’s instead rewarded is concise and witty writing, the length of “half-tweets” – the same skills vital for writing headlines, which in the digital era are more important than ever. And with the deluge of posts on the site (last month

there were over 55 million unique Redditors), users must hone these skills for their writing to make the front page.

For this reason, Reddit is like “boot camp” for journalists, Boston Globe correspondent Dan Adams told Poynter: “A funny or relevant one-sentence post can get upvoted and seen by thousands of people. An overwrought treatise can get downvoted and lost in the wall of text – unless it’s really, really good. Writing for such a capricious audience makes you efficient with your prose and deft at accounting for the perspective of your readers before you publish.”

A gold mine for story ideas

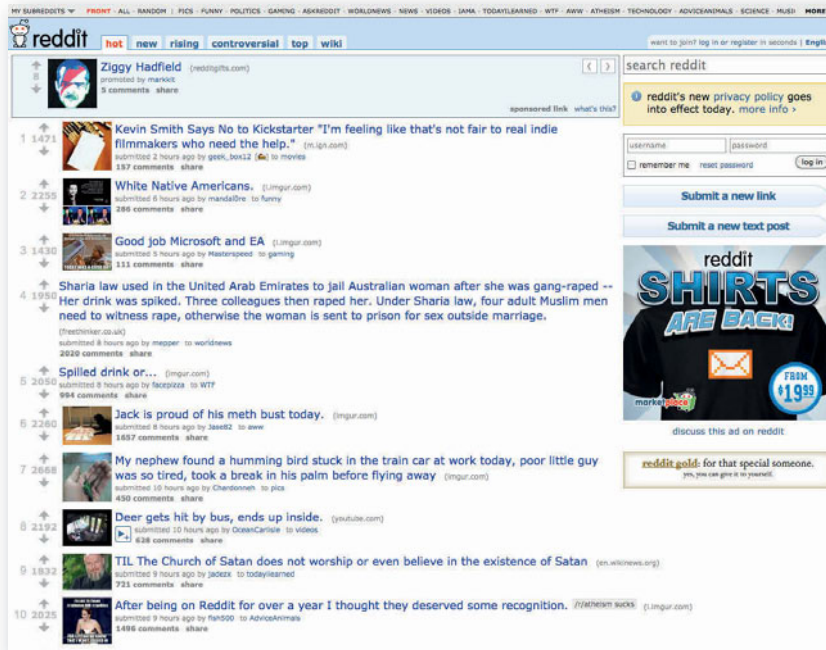
Reddit is overflowing with information – and while some of it may not be useful or accurate, what’s “upvoted” is at least interesting. Topics that rise to the top of Reddit threads are likely to be the same ones that could develop into top-read news stories. Moreover, the voting system makes finding potential stories much easier than doing so on Craigslist and Twitter, where posts are filtered by time rather than relevance.

Not only can journalists find human interest feature scoops on the site but also hard news. According to Poynter, Adams’ article about local credit card fraud was inspired by a Reddit post, marking just one of “many times” he’s used the site for story ideas.

“[Redditors] may not be demographically representative of Boston as a whole,” he told Poynter, “but it’s amazing how many trends and stories start there, then percolate to the mainstream media a few days or weeks later.”

A community that newspapers lack

Redditors beat journalists in reporting some news of the summer 2012 shootings in Aurora, Colorado, and Toronto, Canada, because of the magnitude and environment of the Reddit community. The site promotes conversation and sharing, which were essential for compiling details about the shootings. Users shared the tiny fragments of information they each had, from first-hand accounts to tweets and news clips,



Reddit is overflowing with information – and while some of it may not be useful or accurate, what’s “upvoted” is at least interesting. Topics that rise to the top of Reddit threads are likely to be the same ones that could develop into top-read news stories.

and combined them into coherent timelines and narratives, the same way a journalist might after interviewing dozens of sources.

With Reddit, journalists did not have to scour Twitter and Facebook for relevant sources. Redditors did the heavy lifting for them by upvoting the most relevant information and sources to the top of centralised threads, which dramatically reduced the amount of time journalists would have to search for witnesses on other social networking sites.

“What’s unique about Reddit is that there are so many people that you will almost always have an expert on everything, although the chances of them showing up are random,” Reddit user themysetriousdoor told Daily Dot. “Think of it as a giant spider web with a colony of spiders, whenever there is a vibration, tons of spiders jump to the source and give their input. World wide web at its best.”

ProPublica has begun making use of the unique Reddit community by creating a subreddit where users can contribute story ideas, according to a report on Journalism.co.uk. Senior Engagement Editor Amanda Zamora told Nieman Lab that she

hopes other newspapers will also make use of the subreddit to find story ideas.

...but not a newspaper

While Reddit was one of the first places that information about the Aurora and Toronto shootings emerged, Redditors aren’t about to replace journalists, primarily because they aren’t paid – and their work shows it, as Michael Barthel wrote.

Reddit will never be a “public newsroom,” as Daily Dot reported, but rather “a hope for news,” a supplement, as David Weinberger suggested. This is chiefly because Reddit is held to different standards than any other news organisation.

For instance, rather than calling and verifying information, user “Bitchslappedbylogic” compiled the narrative of the Toronto shooting purely from tweets. That’s not to discount the work – Jesse Brown called it “the most riveting piece of journalism I’ve read in recent memory.” But Barthel said that if more reporting were done this way, it would be a “disservice” to readers. He said that an obituary based purely on social media profiles

would be inaccurate because the person's death changes everything that precedes it.

Barthel noted that for all the accurate, exclusively reported scoop on the Aurora Reddit thread, there were just as many blunders: misreported names and numbers of victims, inaccurate motives of the shootings and even kitten pictures. True, other news organisations, such as ABC, made grave errors in their Aurora reporting, as Mathew Ingram noted. But on Reddit, those sorts of errors are tolerated. Redditors do indeed fact check their information – they edit one another's comments and strike through inaccurate information after it's posted – but speed seems to be emphasised rather than accuracy.

“People will put up with minor inaccuracies because they know someone will call them out and change it,” Morgan Jones, the 18-year-old who compiled the Aurora timeline on Reddit, told GigaOm.

When Bitchslappedbylogic beat the Toronto Star in reporting about the shooting, the Star's editor responded that the newspaper was aware of the Redditor's coverage but that “much of what was published in the Reddit post is not publishable in the Star, given our current journalistic standards.”

So while Reddit won't be a replacement for traditional media, as Ingram wrote, news publishers can – and should – learn from it.

Lessons from Boston

The news media's less-than-perfect coverage of the recent Boston bombings and subsequent hunt for suspects, with false reports coming out at a surprising array of usually reliable news organisations, has reignited debates about the role of social networks and their impact on the speed of publishing.

This issue arose during several discussions at the International Journalism Festival in Perugia in April 2013, and panelists overwhelmingly agreed that being right is far more important than being first, and this should be reflected on social media.

In the age of social media, scoops can last just a matter of seconds. As New York Times interactive editor Aron Pilhofer noted in a session on moving towards smarter, better online content, gone are the days when competitors would have to wait 24 hours to take your scoop. Now, he said, it's almost irrelevant to be first, and the value of being right outweighs the value of being first by magnitudes.

It's not just traditional news organisations that feel this way. Adam Baker, founder of citizen journalism site Blottr, said that his team can't afford to get anything wrong, because they don't have the reputation of an established brand.

Most normal people don't even know who broke a story, said Anthony De Rosa, Reuters' social media editor, in a session on citizen journalism. Eric Carvin, social media editor at the Associated Press, suggested that scoops are becoming less relevant, with great investigative pieces becoming more important. Pilhofer made a similar point, commenting that any blog could cut and summarise a breaking news article, but a piece like Snow Fall will always be unique to The Times.

The Economist is an antidote to the obsession with speed, said community editor Mark Johnson. The paper uses social media to strengthen its already strong community, but focuses on sending out links to articles and cultivating discussion rather than covering breaking news. “You don't need to know what's happening minute by minute, sometimes a good analysis 24 hours later can be more valuable.”

“The use of social media shouldn't be changing our overall value as journalists,” said Carvin. “We use social to further our goals as a news organisation. Our number one priority at the AP is to break news: to find stories.” He is happy for AP journalists to use social media primarily as observers, looking out for stories and potential sources. Of course the advantage to having a prominent presence is that it helps you to build your network and widen potential sources: you want to be the person who people want to come to. This has to be done with care, however.



The AP has a rule that its reporters should never tweet something that the organisation wouldn't be happy to share on the wire.

"I think we really need to re-establish a commitment to accuracy on social. Lots of people view it as a 'softer' platform," Carvin continued. The AP has a rule that its reporters should never tweet something that the organisation wouldn't be happy to share on the wire.

This point became particularly pertinent during the events in Boston. "As news organisations, we are tweeting news," Carvin said. During the hunt for bombing suspects, however, many reporters and others were live-tweeting what the police were saying over scanners, but this was often unconfirmed information and discussions.

'Verify, verify, verify'

Sue Llewellyn, digital media strategist, agreed that it's far too easy to get carried away on social media, and stressed the necessity to remember that you have the right to remain silent and you are often right to be silent. She recommends that

journalists think a bit more before posting on social networks, urging them to ask "is it true? Will it add any benefit to the story and to myself?" All panelists agreed that inaccuracy can be very damaging to a news organisation's brand. As Carvin pointed out, inaccuracy that goes out as a tweet might be seen more than anything else you publish. The three golden rules of using social media, Llewellyn said, are "verify, verify, verify."

Fewer tweets, more live coverage when dramatic news is breaking

Carvin said that he only tweeted once or twice the day of the hunt for the suspects, rather focusing on watching what was coming in and looking for people to talk to. "I find that a lot of times, when big dramatic news is breaking, it's better to focus on news gathering."

De Rosa expressed a similar sentiment. "I have decided to slow down, do fewer updates on social media and do more live coverage, taking time to pull in more context around the things we're seeing."

It is widely accepted that social media will continue to play a key role in breaking news. Will journalists find new ways to use it more effectively, and more safely?

Data, data, data: the growing role of analytics

Analytics and metrics that allow news outlets to understand their audience's digital reading habits have recently made significant advances and are playing a greater role in various areas of decision-making. The main change in the last couple of years has been bringing analytics into the newsroom, into the hands of editors and journalists, rather than leaving them to data specialists.

For some time, news organisations have used services such as Google Analytics, which is well suited to providing detailed overviews of traffic over a period of time – anything from a day to a year. This is extremely useful for perceiving trends, and it is widely used at news outlets, particularly on the business side.

However, the analytics revolution that has brought the use of metrics firmly into the newsroom has been the arrival of real-time services that allow editors and journalists to see how an article is performing right now. This enables them to make informed decisions about where to

place articles on pages, or which articles to heavily promote on social media, for example.

Two key competitors in this field are Chartbeat and Visual Revenue. Chartbeat claims to offer “insight tools built exclusively for content creators and managers” that present data clearly so that its users can make quick decisions. Visual Revenue will even place your stories for you, and offers instant A/B headline testing.

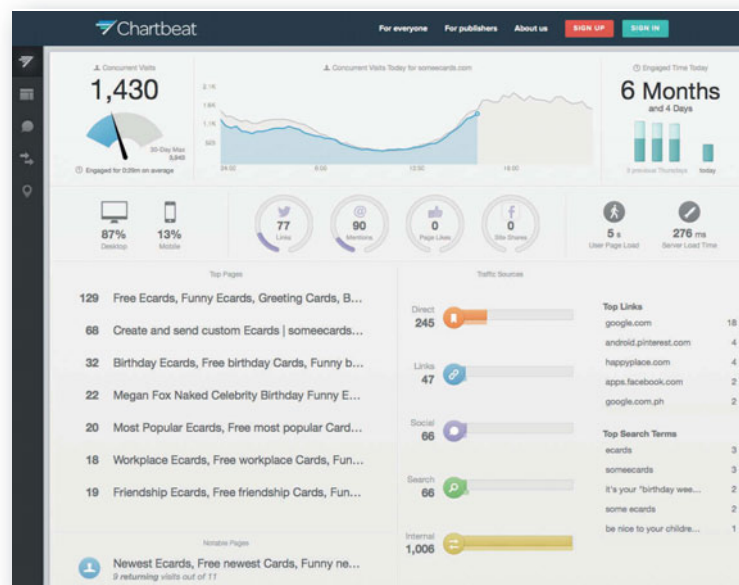
Automation is a theme of both tools, which can provoke concerns that editorial judgment and a publication's editorial line could start to take a back-seat when it comes to their web presence.

Both companies maintain, however, that their products are there to assist rather than replace the editorial hand:

“The editors' role is to understand where automation can support them in areas where they've traditionally been burdened – the things they're stuck doing, the time-sucks, that keep them away from making the best decisions for their audience,” said Chartbeat CEO Tony Haile in an interview in early 2013.

“The algorithms that determine automation can be improved upon when you inject distinct editorial viewpoints – not just most-read, most recent, or most shared stories. Our model, and

One of Chartbeat's main uses is in where to place stories. On a slow news day, the paper might look at which recent stories are doing particularly well on social media and reposition these on the homepage.



we have seen it to be very successful for one news property after another, is to apply a media property's editorial guidelines to the algorithm. It results in a more optimised automation module for the publisher, and a more engaging, less commoditised experience for the audience" said Charlie Holbech, VP of operations and co-founder at Visual Revenue.

We spoke to an editor who uses each tool to see what the practical impact is on their work.

Chartbeat

Carina Novarese, head of digital at Uruguayan daily El Observador, said that starting to use Chartbeat "was really like magic" for her and her colleagues. She signed up to the service a year ago, and gradually introduced the other Observador editors to it. "Day by day they began to realise and understand the benefits of this amount of real time data that you can discover," she added.

Now four or five people use the service at any one time, she said: she would be happy to let more use it but it slows the Internet connection so has to be limited. Sometimes individual journalists can see it to check what's working and what's not, and "the ones who make the decisions watch it all the time," she specified.

One of its main uses is in where to place stories. "When we are deciding which stories go in the upper part of our web pages – we take into consideration a lot of what they are reading," she

said. Some stories are moved down when they are already working well: "once a story has gone viral we can afford to move it lower down," she said.

On a slow news day, the paper might look at which recent stories are doing particularly well on social media and reposition these on the homepage.

Novarese finds the "Engaged Time" metric very useful: it reports how long readers are spending on a story. Often, the most-read stories are not the ones that have the longest engagement. "This was an index that we didn't consider before," she said.

As Haile explained at Digital Media Europe in April 2013, this engaged time metric was intended to track loyalty. Chartbeat has found, he added, that if a user spends more than one minute "engaged" on a site then they are 50 percent more likely to return the following day.

Information from Chartbeat would be particularly useful for a redesign of El Observador's website, Novarese said. Google Analytics is useful in the long term, she added, but she doesn't look at it every day. The marketing department uses ComScore.

Novarese was clear that editors don't use Chartbeat to entirely dictate the positioning of articles: if a story is deemed important it will be placed significantly regardless of traffic. "We really stress the importance of editorial judgement," she said.

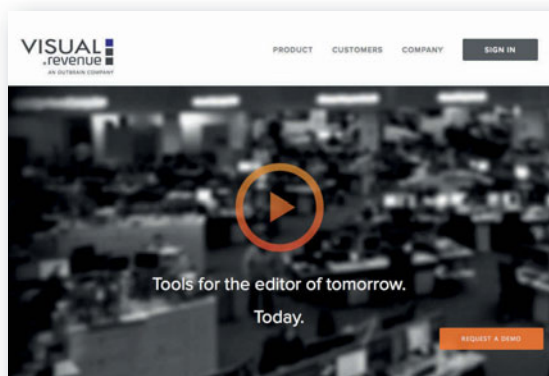
Equally, such metrics don't have a great influence on coverage, Novarese said. "We decide what to cover based on what's newsworthy," she clarified.

There is a risk that tracking story performance can become addictive and lead to editors worrying too much when stories aren't performing well, she added.

"One think that I would really like to know in the future is how many people are reading on mobile devices," Novarese said. "That would be interesting for us to develop new content."

Visual Revenue

Pedro Doria, executive editor of digital platforms at O Globo a daily based in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil,



Visual Revenue will even place your stories for you, and offers instant A/B headline testing.

was enthusiastic about Visual Revenue. “It’s so much better than any other analytics tool that will give you something every two days,” he said, “I am actually a fan: there are not many tools I would say that about.” Editors at the paper use Visual Revenue primarily to understand live traffic and to learn what readers actually like. It is used on the site’s homepage.

The paper also uses Google Analytics extensively, but during the day, Visual Revenue is preferred as it’s more precise when dealing with large traffic numbers. There are five editors who are responsible for the front page of the website and they have Visual Revenue open all day, and editors in each section will have it open all day also. “Pretty much anyone in the newsroom who asks to have access to Visual Revenue or Google Analytics will be allowed,” Doria added.

“We use the ‘recommend’ tab a lot,” Doria said. “The algorithm makes suggestions, such as ‘you would get more traffic if you moved this headline to that position.’” The editors don’t always act on the suggestions, and Doria explained that the algorithm often recommends moving stories about films or celebrities from low down the page to the main story position. “But we are a quality paper, that’s not something we would ever do,” he said. “Our main headline would always be something like local or national politics or finance.”

You don’t need software to know that celebrity stories will do well in terms of clicks, Doria added, but there are times when editors are surprised by the popularity of some other pieces. If there is no editorial risk to move a story, they will.

However, Doria explained that editors don’t use all the tools, such as automatic story placement, as the paper wants to retain that sort of control. “Traffic is a concern, but it’s not important enough to give up on editing,” he said.

“They have tools that say that if you move that headline, it would get you so much more money, but we didn’t implement that at all,” he added, “because that’s not how we want our editors to be thinking.”

“After a while, you start learning what it is that you do that is actually popular,” Doria said. “Sometimes it’s not even about what stories to



Google Analytics can help publishers understand who their readers are by offering specifics about their behaviour.

tell, but about how to tell them,” he said. “We have been doing some pretty sophisticated top 10 lists. Even with a serious story, the way you present content can be so much more engaging.”

If a particular issue is receiving a lot of attention, the paper might cover it more. “We just wouldn’t highlight something more on the front page,” Doria specified. “If we see that there’s a lot of interest in a particular story, we write followups, as many as readers want. We don’t see that as betraying our readers’ trust – because we are just telling them more about what they are interested in knowing.”

Google Analytics

Google Analytics is still very important at O Globo, particularly on the business side of the newspaper, to understand who the readers are, and specifics about their behaviour. O Globo is preparing to put up a metered paywall and has developed its own filters to put on top of Google Analytics’ raw data to better study its readers.

“It has been really enlightening – we know how many users would face the paywall on a certain number of clicks, how important the website is for them, how engaged they are, and because we compare that data with our databases we have the profiles of those users also,” Doria explained. “We have a pretty clear idea of what’s going to happen, how many are going to pay.”

Monitoring, managing and making use of online comments

How to moderate online reader comments and make sure that they add to, rather than detract from, the value of a publication is a highly significant challenge that news organisations around the world are currently facing. Allowing sufficient freedom of expression while maintaining constructive conversation can be an extremely difficult balance to strike.

Allowing comments and cultivating conversation on your site can be a way to build a tighter community around your site, and make it a place your readers gather to discuss the issues that matter to them. Comments can provide story leads, or add more pertinent information on a specific topic, or insightful personal experiences. As well as showing that they are open to engagement, comments can give journalists an increased feeling of accountability to their readers.

We have spoken to online editors and community managers around the world to find out more about their specific difficulties, concerns and successes. The full results of our research, along with suggested best practices going forward, will be available in a study to be published in July 2013, but here are some early observations.

Quick and easy commenting

Thanks to third-party systems that provide online commenting solutions, such as Disqus or Livefyre, it is now quick and easy for even small publishers to introduce commenting on their sites, and the vast majority of those who have a significant web presence also allow commenting.

While many are enthusiastic about the potential of online comments and proud of the communities they have cultivated, others don't seem clear about why they are allowing them, and for some, it seems to be a painful necessity. At many news organisations, journalists don't always read them looking for feedback: some are frustrated by spam and irrelevance, others don't care. There was widespread agreement on the impor-

tance of moderation, and the need to have control over anything that counts as a news organisation's territory. Deleting comments is not seen as potentially limiting for freedom of information: an overwhelming number of editors and managers believe that there are an infinite number of places online for the public to express their points of view, it doesn't have to be on news sites. Many delete comments without informing the user, and several sites close articles to comments if they have attracted particularly offensive comments.

Publish community guidelines to help define moderation policy

Most news organisations with developed commenting strategies have published community guidelines to steer readers in their commenting: as well as banning hate speech, libel and offensive remarks about minorities, some prohibit spam and irrelevance as well. It is these guidelines or codes that define the moderation team's policy and are used to justify the removal of comments. Some papers are experimenting with new ways to reduce the number of unwanted comments and the impact of online "trolls."

The vast majority of news organisations have adopted a post-moderation approach: readers can post what they like, as long as it is not caught by a spam filter, and comments will either be read after publication by a moderation team, or they will be left for readers to flag. A considerable number of editors felt that in an ideal world, they would moderate all comments before they were posted, but very few have the resources to do that.

There was a pervading lack of awareness of the precise laws surrounding reader comments: who is responsible for what is being said where, what exactly is illegal, and the best way to deal with this. Several knew that it was "safer" for them to post-moderate, or rather, to rely on readers' enthusiasm to point out offensive comments, because this protected them from liability. But "it's a grey area," was a comment we heard on more than one occasion. There are additional questions of how far they can, and should, protect their readers when authorities request information or more specifically, IP addresses.

Whether or not to force readers to use their real names for commenting is also a divisive issue. Several have found that requiring real name registration – either based on trust, or through requesting ID cards or forcing sign-in through social networks – is effective at reducing spam and raising the quality level of conversation in the thread, but at the same time it restricts people who might have much to say but a compelling reason to remain anonymous. Publications must decide if the advantages of the former outweighs the risks of the latter.

Experimenting to highlight ‘best’ comments

There was a great variation of opinions on the appropriate degree of involvement of journalists and editors in comment threads. Some encourage all staff to follow comments and contribute when they can, and believe that this has a significant and positive impact on the quality of conversation. Some, on the other hand, believe that too much journalistic involvement risks taking the platform out of the hands of the readers, and others see it as inappropriate for journalists to contribute at all as they feel it’s necessary to retain a degree of separation between the news organisation and the reader.

Many are experimenting with ways to highlight the “best” comments. Some offer editor’s picks, others allow readers to “like” specific comments and move these up the thread accordingly. Some offer rewards or points to users who comment frequently or whose comments are “liked,” although this can create problems when the quality of comments is not taken into account. These efforts show appreciation of the fact that comments really do have something to offer.

A new level of complication

Moderating comments on social media provides a whole new level of complication. A news outlet doesn’t own its presence on the social media platform in the same way as it does its website, but social networks – particularly Facebook – allow a significant degree of control to those who manage pages, although clearly there is no option to pre-moderate. Many news organisations do not have the resources to moderate another platform as thoroughly as they do their own sites, which are the first priority, and some refrain from posting their more controversial stories to their Facebook pages because of this.

UPCOMING RESEARCH PROJECT

Online commenting at news organisations

WAN-IFRA/WEF are conducting a research project in partnership with the Open Society Foundations looking at online commenting at news organisations around the world. The full report will be available to download at <http://www.wan-ifra.org/research-reports>

Chapter 5

Ethics and standards

Ethics and standards

In many ways, in times of financial difficulty, the odds are stacked against quality journalism. As surveys have shown, people may know that the Financial Times is the most credible newspaper in the UK, but that doesn't mean that they read it.

Meanwhile, publications like Mail Online and BuzzFeed, which both rely on masses of repurposed entertainment content to support the original journalism that they do produce, are high on the list of online success stories so far.

But amongst all the Internet noise, reputation for high quality is a key differentiator that established news brands have. And if they are to maintain this advantage, it's essential that they work to sustain reader trust.

Here we will take a look at several recent developments to highlight the importance of this:

- Standards are under intense scrutiny in the UK where a new press regulation system is being established
- In the US there has been concern about The Washington Post's decision to change its ombudsman position to a "readers representative" after 43 years
- Sponsored content, also known as native advertising or advertorials, is seeing a new lease of life online, offering more attractive financial returns, but has the potential to pose a serious threat to credibility

Sponsored content: fair or foul?

As standard digital advertising shows little hope of being able to support the journalism it accompanies, sponsored content, also described as native advertising, is emerging as an alternative. This is not an entirely new phenomenon: advertorials have appeared in print for some time, but now they are seeing a new lease of life online.

As the Pew Center's State of the News Media 2013 reports, sponsored content is fast becoming a more significant revenue stream in the US. In terms of growth it is second only to video: spending on sponsorship rose 38.9 percent between 2011 and 2012 to \$1.56 billion, following a jump of 56.1 percent in 2011.

Native advertising should be independently compelling content – whether text, video or other – that should neither stick out like a sore thumb, nor dupe the reader into believing it is true editorial content. This is in contrast with many interruptive ads, such as banners or pop-ups, which are often far from compelling. Many people instinctively ignore banner ads, and are impatient to close any pop-up ads that fill the screen. It was reported in 2011 by Business Insider that you are more likely to survive a plane crash than click on a banner ad: in the US, click through rates are about one in a thousand. Combine this with the fact that banner ads are abundant, means that prices are plunging and only in exceptional cases are they providing enough revenue to make up for print ad losses.

And hence the main argument for sponsored content – it brings in more money. Brands are willing to pay significant sums for this type of exposure to key audiences and affiliation with relevant publishers.

One of the emerging champions of sponsored content is BuzzFeed, the social-oriented site notorious for its cute animal lists that attract millions of views and shares, as well as some more serious political reporting. 100 percent of BuzzFeed's revenue comes from sponsored content. If content can be social, advertising can be too: this is the premise on which BuzzFeed's advertising efforts are based.

Designed to be interesting to the reader

Jonah Peretti, founder of BuzzFeed and hater of banner ads, justifies his site's use of content marketing by stressing how it is designed to be interesting to the reader. "Why not try to make the advertising something that adds to the site?" he asked at a session at South by South West in March 2013. At BuzzFeed, content marketing is created by a team that is separate from the editorial team but it uses similar principles to much of the editorial content. And it even gets shared. Social sharing is an increasingly powerful force.

“For the first time in history you can do word of mouth marketing at scale.”



Andy Wiedlin, BuzzFeed's chief revenue officer, spoke at Digital Media Europe in April 2013.



The Washington Post's first sponsor for BrandConnect is CTIA – The Wireless Association.

“People share things that make them look clever and cool. They are building their own personal brands,” said Andy Wiedlin, BuzzFeed’s chief revenue officer, speaking at Digital Media Europe 2013 in London. “Consumers have moved from portals to search, and now from search to social,” he added. And as people come to BuzzFeed to find this shareable content, this is something that advertisers can try use to their advantage. “For the first time in history you can do word of mouth marketing at scale,” Wiedlin stressed. “Banners don’t give you space to tell a story,”

“The goal is to increase the interaction between content creators, audiences and marketers. Get those three voices talking to each other and do it with legitimacy and transparency.” Lewis D’Vorkin

Peretti said. He believes that “social can make ads great again,” if the advertising is done right. BuzzFeed’s content marketing efforts include GE’s ‘Time Machine’ series that shows old advertisements for GE products, 10 Movie Plots That Would’ve Completely Changed If They Had Cell Phones for Virgin Mobile.

BuzzFeed’s sponsored content has a two to three per cent click through rate, Wiedlin said. In March 2013, it launched an ad network to show the sponsored content it creates on other sites. To begin with, BuzzFeed was working with eight niche publishers, and was paying a minimum of \$3 per thousand impressions, and some considerably more based on how much the content is shared, AdAge reported.

Other publishers building up expertise in sponsored content are Forbes and Quartz. Forbes’ BrandVoice content allows brands to create and place their own content on Forbes’ site. Content marketing was a central element to Forbes’ web redesign in early 2011; as a quote from chief product officer Lewis D’Vorkin reads on the site, “The goal is to increase the interaction between content creators, audiences and marketers. Get those three voices talking to each other and do it with legitimacy and transparency. That’s the future of the free press.”

“All content is clearly labeled and transparent. Everyone knows who’s talking and the vantage point from which they speak,” Forbes says. Examples include NetApp’s post on “Innovative Companies Embrace IT Geeks,” SAP’s “How Do You Find The Time For Social Media?” or Oracle’s “Getting On Board With Customer Experience.”

Posts are indeed clearly marked with the word “Voice” after the company name in each link to the post, and an explanation of ForbesBrandVoice at the top of each post. The site continues to feature both banner ads and screen-filling pop-ups, however.

The Washington Post became the first major US newspaper to adopt sponsored content in March 2013 when it announced the launch of BrandConnect, which allows marketers to create and display blogs, videos and infographics on the newspaper’s website. The Post’s announcements of BrandConnect have put decided emphasis on the fact that sponsored content will not be written by editors and will be clearly marked as advertisements. CTIA – The Wireless Association is the first advertiser to use BrandConnect with planned weekly posts on The Post’s website.

The big question: ethics

The big question, of course, is it ethical? Even if it content is marked as sponsored, will some readers still be fooled? Do such advertorials damage the credibility of a news outlet? Sponsored content has been described as “insidious,” “poisonous,” “a slippery slope,” and it must certainly be used transparently, and with care.

There is a clear risk that editorial and advertising could become too close. As Felix Salmon noted: “At the extreme end of the spectrum, the most valuable content, to an advertiser, is content which genuinely is editorial content.” And brands might well be prepared to pay more depending on how editorial the content appears.

Google recommends clearly indexing non-editorial content separately from news content. “Otherwise, if we learn of promotional content mixed with news content, we may exclude your entire publication from Google News,” wrote Richard Gingras, Sr. Director, News & Social Products on the Google News blog.

Of course, it depends what is being advertised, and where. In many cases, depending both on the topic of the ad and on the nature of the site, it is arguable that sponsored content is harmless, even if readers might not immediately realise it’s funded by an advertiser. BuzzFeed’s piece on The 20 Coolest Hybrid Animals (for Toyota Prius), e.g., is unlikely to be taken seriously by many.

A sponsored piece in The Atlantic, however, caused a great deal of controversy in January 2013. “David Miscavige Leads Scientology to Milestone Year,” the headline read, above a large



BuzzFeed’s ‘The 20 Coolest Hybrid Animals’ was sponsored by Toyota to promote the new Prius.

picture of the religion’s leader. The piece went on to document Scientology’s international expansion throughout the year.

Following an outpouring of harsh criticism, The Atlantic apologised. “We screwed up,” it admitted. The publication still intends to make use of sponsored content, however, and developed new guidelines, with a focus on transparency, and an indication that it will consider sponsors more carefully and avoid content that might “undermine the intellectual integrity, authority and character of our enterprise.”

TIPS FOR USING SPONSORED CONTENT

Love it or hate it, it seems as if it’s here to stay. If you are going to try it, here are a few tips for pulling it off:

- Mark it clearly, and prominently as sponsored
- Identify the sponsor’s role: did they just pay for it, or did they create it?
- Make sure it’s entertaining, informative and relevant for your type of reader, as you would with

your editorial content

- Ask yourself ‘if a reader didn’t realise this was advertising, would it have a damaging effect on my publication?’
- Choose your brands carefully – be wary of association with controversial companies or topics
- Ensure that editorial and marketing teams cooperate, while keeping the ‘wall’ between the two strong

Is an ombudsman necessary in the digital age?

The Washington Post's announcement in March that it was eliminating its ombudsman position in favour of a new 'reader representative' sparked debate about the necessity of the position in the digital age.

The Post had had an ombudsman for 43 years: it had been the second newspaper in the US to establish the position, and the first to offer the ombudsman a weekly column.

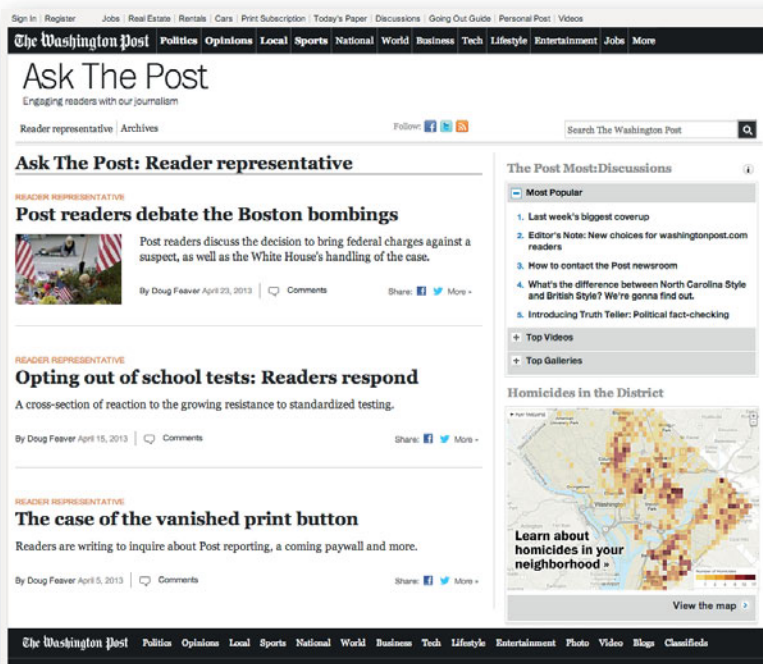
On the one hand, given low rates of reader trust, you can argue that an ombudsman is more necessary than ever. "In a media world where none of the numbers add up, being transparent and accountable can buttress a business against the bad times," wrote Stephen Pritchard, readers' editor of The Observer and president of the Organisation of News Ombudsmen.

On the other hand, it is now so much easier for readers to publically make their opinions heard through online comments or social media, that maybe they are less in need of an ombudsman to

speak for them. As Washington Post Executive Editor Martin Baron told outgoing ombudsman Patrick Pexton, "There is ample criticism of our performance from outside sources, entirely independent of the newsroom, and we don't pay their salaries."

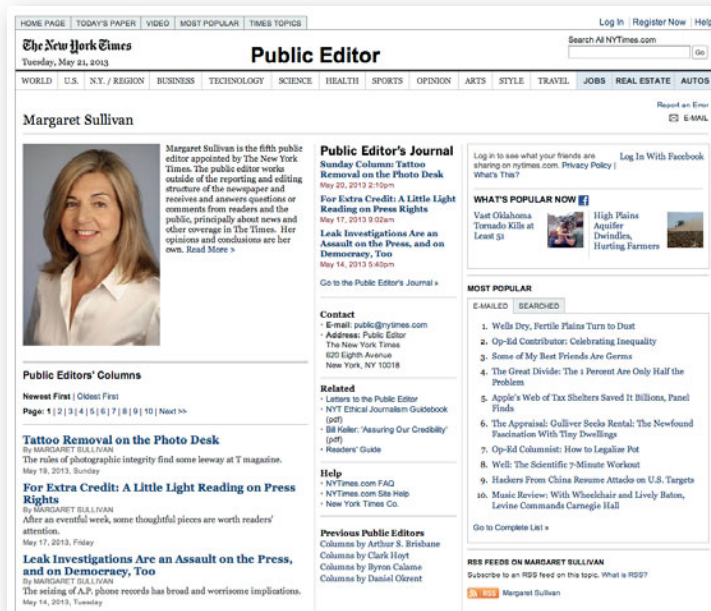
"Those duties [of an ombudsman] are as critical today as ever," Publisher Katharine Weymouth wrote at the time. "Yet it is time that the way these duties are performed evolves."

The man to take The Washington Post job, Doug Feaver, said in an interview with Poynter in April 2013 that his "primary mission" was to respond to readers, rather than to hold the newsroom accountable. So, he is clearly not an ombudsman. NPR likened the new position to a customer relations representative, whose chief alliances will be to the publication and not to its audience. Instead of conducting independent investigations, the new official will field problems to the appropriate authorities who will answer reader's concerns. Notably, these problems will be addressed privately, not in a weekly column.



The Washington Post replaced its independent ombudsman with a reader representative in March 2013.

Margaret Sullivan is The New York Times' fifth public editor, reporting directly to the company's chairman.



The importance of independence

Margaret Sullivan, public editor (effectively, the ombudswoman) at The New York Times, said the key difference between a position like hers and a position like Feaver's was the fact that Feaver is on staff indefinitely, and in the newsroom. Sullivan reports direct to chairman Arthur Sulzberger, has no hierarchy within the newsroom and has a limited time contract; she doesn't run the risk of being fired. "So the element of this as an independent and outside voice is different," she explained.

Just because readers have more of a chance to communicate directly with journalists, it doesn't mean that this happens. As Pexton said, "in the utopian view of social media, reporters and editors would be responsive to every reader complaint instantly online, eliminating the need for a go-between like an ombudsman. But in truth, reporters and editors have more demands on them than ever before to be faster, to write more, to tweet, blog, take photos, videos and all the rest." They don't have time to deal with reader concerns.

As Pritchard wrote, "the argument goes that giving the readers online access to comment and contribute instantly on stories removes the need for the ombudsman." For him, this theory doesn't hold up. "That's clearly a cheat: readers may enjoy the cathartic experience of seeing their complaints published on a website, but that's where it ends. There's no independent adjudication process and no critical analysis of their complaint. In short, no transparency; no accountability."

Sullivan is an example of an ombudswoman who has embraced the opportunities offered by digital. More vocal than her predecessors in the role, she has kept the fortnightly column in the print paper but is far more prolific in her blog, the Public Editor's Journal, and on social media. She communicates with readers "all day long, every day," she said. She replies to some readers directly via email, and responds to individual comments on Twitter, where she has more than 14,000 followers. She uses her blog to aggregate input from users as well as to express her own views, hoping that it serve as a kind of forum for readers.

“In a media world where none of the numbers add up, being transparent and accountable can buttress a business against the bad times,” Margaret Sullivan

Breaking through the noise

When asked for her thoughts on the relevance of an ombudsman in the digital age, Sullivan said that “things have changed, and now there’s more of a constant flow of information and conversation.” But she pointed out that readers have always had ways of communicating with newspapers, whether “letters to the editor, a boycott, or standing outside the newspaper burning the paper.” She noted Baron’s point that the increase in communication meant that an ombudsman might be less relevant, but also said you could argue that given the potential volume of criticism and discussion, it was more necessary to have someone who could break through the noise and respond.

Another strong point in the ombudsman’s favour is an obligation to uphold standards: he or she is not just there to complain. For instance, no casual reader would have looked into The Washington Post’s supposed “interview transcript” with China’s Vice President Xi Jinping that Pexton exposed as a written declaration from the Chinese government, more press release than interview by any means.

“I think for a paper like The New York Times which has such an important role, it is really useful and it shows great commitment to the reader,” Margaret Sullivan

However, many news organisations simply can’t afford to fill this position, especially when there is no clear proof that having an ombudsman has a direct impact on increasing reader trust.

“Newspaper editors and publishers have to make some really tough decisions these days,” Sullivan said. “I can see how an ombudsman is a thorn in your side as an editor – there’s no question about it. A thorn that some are willing to have for a greater good but I can certainly see that it would be tempting and seem like a really good idea not to have one... I was the editor of a newspaper for 12 years and I didn’t have an ombudsman,” she added. “But I think for a paper like The New York Times which has such an important role, it is really useful and it shows great commitment to the reader.”

Ultimately, the role of an ombudsman is not defined by the platform they use, Sullivan said. “I think that people get hung up on the medium. The medium is important but it’s not the most important thing.” The position will inevitably evolve, as all newsroom positions evolve, but “I think it’s very possible to reinvent it,” she said.

After Leveson

As predicted, Lord Justice Leveson’s report, the culmination of a mass inquiry into the British press begun in July 2011 and published in November 2012, was extensive in length, running to four volumes and more than 2,000 pages.

Leveson proposed a regulation system that aimed to uphold self-regulation, overseen at an appropriate distance by a statutory backstop. Such a system would consist of a new, independent self-regulatory body, the make-up of which would expressly exclude serving editors or politicians. Crucially, its existence would be enshrined in law, validated by a statutory underpinning that would, according to Leveson, be an “essential” component to “protect the freedom of the press, to reassure the public and validate the new body.” Membership of this new body would be voluntary, but incentivised (with exclusion, in turn, disincentivised). Refuseniks would be subject to the normal costly libel proceedings of the courts,

and vulnerable to exemplary damages, whilst members would have access to cheap, fast and fair arbitration.

Prime Minister David Cameron declared himself, while broadly in favour of the recommendations, as having “serious concerns and misgivings” about the use of statute, highlighting its potential to “infringe free speech.” It was clear from the beginning, then, that the contentious, apparently insoluble issue of statute and the spectre of “state regulation” would ensure that this debate was far from over.

To all to whom these presents shall come, greeting!

On 18 March, politicians cobbled together a cross-party agreement for a new system of press regulation established through Royal Charter, to avoid it resembling statutory control. Royal Charters, which date back to the 13th century, start with the reassuringly-old fashioned phrase ‘To all to whom these presents shall come, greeting!’ and

Leveson and press self-regulation

Are you a relevant publisher?

Relevant publishers produce the newspapers and newspaper-like publications that we are incentivising to join a self-regulator. If you are not a relevant publisher then nothing changes: you carry on as you are.

Department for Culture Media & Sport

Start

<p>Does your publication contain 'news-related material'? <small>This means news, opinions about news or gossip about celebrities or other public figures.</small></p> <p>Yes → No</p>	<p>Does your publication have more than one author?</p> <p>Yes → No</p>	<p>Is it published 'in the course of a business'? <small>Are you carrying out commercial activity?</small></p> <p>Yes → No</p>	<p>Is your publication under editorial control? <small>This means that someone decides what the articles are about, what they say and how they look.</small></p> <p>Yes → No</p>	<p>Is your publication a blog?</p> <p>No → Yes</p>	<p>Is publishing news the main focus of your business? <small>For example, your business is mainly about news rather than a bit of news on a website that largely covers something else.</small></p> <p>No → Yes → ★</p>
					<p>Do you have 10 or more employees and an annual turnover over £2m?</p> <p>No → Yes → ★</p>

This is not legal advice

This is a guide to help you understand the relevant publisher definition

www.gov.uk/dcms

Key

- You're probably not a relevant publisher, based on your answers.
- ★ You may be a relevant publisher, based on your answers. However, there are other exemptions such as charities publishing news connected to what they do, special interest titles, scientific journals, and companies publishing news about their activities.

have been used to establish organisations such as the BBC.

However, the politicians' proposal included a crucial clause stating that the charter could be modified with the agreement from two-thirds of both houses of parliament, meaning that the government would have a degree of statutory control over the press. While Cameron maintained that "it's not statutory underpinning," Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg and Labour leader Ed Miliband both addressed the clause as such.

According to the cross-party agreement, only one individual from the newspaper industry would sit on the regulator's appointment board, and would not have the power to veto any appointment. Furthermore, by being able to "direct" apologies and corrections, as well as fines of up to £1 million, the group would have more enforcement power than if it were merely able to "require" them. Cameron previously said this regulatory body would be unmatched by any in the Western world in terms of firmness. A group comprised equally of editors, journalists and those outside the industry would write a code of conduct for the industry, and the new regulator would be responsible for enforcing it. Unless the regulator repeatedly failed at this task, it could not be derecognised.

A 'hammer blow to investigative journalism'?

During the weeks following the government's announcement of their royal charter plan for press regulation, it became clear the British news industry was outraged, condemning it as an unacceptable resolution. Hailed by Lord Black as a "hammer blow to investigative journalism," the charter also fell under attack from former Guardian editor, Peter Preston, who expressed his lack of faith in its ability to make any real difference to the issue of press accountability as it stood before the Leveson inquiry.

The Daily Mail emphasised that Leveson's proposal was an overreaction to the phone hacking scandal, something that was not a result of inadequate regulation but inadequate enforcement. "How can phone-hacking by a coterie of renegades possibly justify a new Press law that would ride roughshod over liberties we have cherished for three centuries?" the editorial commented. The Independent's response was more tempered. Though statute is not ideal, in this case it is necessary to restore readers' trust in newspapers, an editorial in The Independent said.

Writing in the Guardian, Columbia University's Emily Bell raised concerns that the government's proposal shows a "fundamental technical illiteracy." The government's charter ignores the power of social media and blogging platforms, and leaves Google, Facebook and Twitter exempt from

18 March 2013 v6 (clean)

DRAFT ROYAL CHARTER ON SELF-REGULATION OF THE PRESS

ELIZABETH THE SECOND by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of Our other Realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith:

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME, GREETING!

WHEREAS on 13th July 2011 Our Prime Minister announced to Our Parliament the establishment of an Inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the press:

AND WHEREAS Our Baroness Browning, Minister of State at the Home Office and the Right Honourable Jeremy Hunt, Our Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport appointed the Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson as Chairman of this Inquiry, pursuant to section 3(1)(a) of the Inquiries Act 2005, by letter dated 28th July 2011, to be assisted by a panel of senior independent persons with relevant expertise in media, broadcasting, regulation and government appointed as Assessors under section 11(2)(a) of that Act:

In March, politicians cobbled together a cross-party agreement for a new system of press regulation established through Royal Charter, to avoid it resembling statutory control.

the new charter “because they do not seek to exercise ‘editorial control’ or indeed report news as part of a business model.” Bell sees the charter as inadequate in the age of the Internet since “what [it] does not address at all is whether there are new concerns about privacy and protection that should be under consideration.” The impetus for the Leveson Inquiry, the phone-hacking scandal, was after all concerned with invasions of privacy.

Would the government’s proposed new regulator lead to higher quality journalism? The Northampton Chronicle worried that its restrictions would pose a great threat against investigative journalism. Anything written that is “contentious or remotely investigative will be open to such widespread challenge that our papers will be anaemic,” they commented.

To the relief of smaller blogs, and following widespread outrage, it was announced on 19 April that the government had finally agreed to exempt them from their plans to impose punitive damages on news outlets that refuse to join an approved press regulator. It was agreed that sites with a turnover of less than £2 million per annum and/or fewer than 10 employees would not be subject to the new royal charter.

The industry steps in

In reaction to the cross-party royal charter, it was announced on 25 April that the majority of the UK newspaper industry had clubbed together to create and endorse its own rival proposal for a royal charter for press regulation.

The cross-party agreement, according to a statement published by the Newspaper Society, had been “condemned by a range of international press freedom organisations,” and “has no support within the press” due to the fact that it “gives politicians an unacceptable degree of interference in the regulation of the press.”

The new proposal, said to be a “tough and enduring system of regulation” but, crucially, not underpinned by statute, was backed from the outset by News International, Telegraph Media Group and Associated Newspapers. The Financial Times, Independent, and Guardian were not consulted and so far have not given it their backing.

Differences between proposals

So what exactly is the difference between the government’s charter and the press’s rival proposal? First, the government’s proposal states the charter may be changed with the agreement of a two-thirds backing from the House of Lords and the House of Commons, whereas the industry’s charter strongly rejects this on the grounds that it would allow politicians to impinge on press freedom. Instead, the industry advocates a “triple lock system which would require the unanimous permission of the newspaper industry along with the watchdog and the recognition panel that would audit it before any change could take place.”

Furthermore, the government’s royal charter orders that no members of the newspaper industry should be appointed to the Recognition Panel, whilst the press’s royal charter rejects this, asking for a member of the industry to be appointed to the panel to ensure the industry is justly represented.

The press’s royal charter also gives the board of regulators “discretion not to look into complaints if they feel that the complaint is without justification, is an attempt to argue a point of opinion rather than a standards code breach, or is simply an attempt to lobby.” It therefore tightens up the rules governing the complaints system to ensure that the new regulator would not be inundated with complaints that have no grounding in an actual breach of press conduct.

One aspect of the government’s charter that the press has adopted is the imposing of exemplary damages of up to £1 million on publishers facing libel actions who have previously refused to sign up to the new regulator.

It appears that the number one difference, then, is that the industry’s version of the new regulator would be founded upon “genuine independence from the industry and from politicians with all the bodies making up the new regulator having a majority of independent members appointed openly and transparently.” It would aim to be an independent regulator rather than a politician-controlled one.

What's next?

The Privy Council is consulting the public and then will consider the responses before deciding how to proceed. The decision is expected in June. In an official statement, the Newspaper Society welcomed the government's announcement: "We have always said the Independent Royal Charter would be open to consultation and are confident it will receive the widespread public support shown in opinion polls."

However, a recent YouGov poll commissioned by the Media Standards Trust revealed that a majority of members of the public do not have faith in the industry's rival royal charter. The fact that the owners of the Financial Times, Guardian and Independent have not pledged their support to the industry's charter does not count in its favour, suggesting as it does that the rival charter cannot truly be considered an "industry proposal."

It is becoming increasingly evident that finding a solution to the complex issue of press regulation is turning into something of a saga. In short, we cannot expect a quick and simple resolution to such a multi-faceted problem, but rather a struggle between politicians and the newspaper industry that has the potential to drag on for many months to come.

Chapter 6

Looking into the future

Although financial difficulties make this a hard time to be in the news business, many would agree that developments in technology and communication make this one of the most exciting times to be involved in journalism. Digital journalism is progressing in leaps and bounds, new news start-ups are appearing on the scene more frequently than ever before, and traditional organisations are constantly adopting new products and new ways of working.

Here we speak to a small selection of experts about the trends they see as most important to the future of journalism and the distribution of news, from wearable computing to hardware hacking, from the creation of long-lasting data apps to multi-platform video apps, from monetising content rather than the audience to forming direct connections with readers.

Dan Sinker on hacking hardware and cross-border collaboration



Dan Sinker is the director of the Knight-Mozilla OpenNews project which is dedicated to helping build and strengthen the community writing code for journalism. One of the project's key initiatives is placing developers – fellows – in newsrooms around the world. From 2008-2011 he taught in the journalism department at Columbia College Chicago where he focused on entrepreneurial journalism and the mobile web. He is the author of the popular parody @MayorEmanuel twitter account and the creator of the election tracker the Chicago Mayoral Scorecard, the mobile storytelling project CellStories, and was the founding editor of the underground culture magazine Punk Planet until its closure in 2007.

Which of the current trends in journalism do you see having the most impact in upcoming years?

There's a primary trend and a resulting secondary trend that's a result that I think is the most exciting thing and the thing that's going to have a lot of impact.

The primary trend is simply a lot more development happening in the newsroom itself. Even a year ago, you could probably count on one hand the number of newsrooms that had a real team of developers who were really developing news apps and news code. Now we are at a point where you can probably count the number of dev teams on two hands – and you might even need a foot.

“What you are suddenly seeing is the sort of collaborative, open culture of development moving into the newsroom itself. And this is really, really important, especially at a time of smaller budgets.”

And that's only growing. I would point to WNYC in New York and KPCC in Los Angeles as two examples of smaller but certainly well-funded news organisations that are beginning to build development teams. And I think you are just going to see more of that, especially as more attention is paid to what the top tier teams are doing: as The New York Times, the Guardian, Zeit Online and

others like that get more attention and traffic for their news applications, more and more people see it.

The bi-product of that trend is actually the thing that I'm far more excited about: the sharing of code-bases and as a result the collaborative coding across news organisations that you are beginning to see happen. A lot of these dev teams – especially the top tier ones – are open-sourcing their stuff that is abstractable and open sourceable. And then that's getting used by other news orgs and the code base is getting contributed back. What you are suddenly seeing is the sort of collaborative, open culture of development moving into the newsroom itself. And this is really, really important, especially at a time of smaller budgets and things like that. As news organisations begin to realise that they can truly collaborate, either on code, or on investigations, or really on anything, you are beginning to unlock some powerful stuff.

Everybody says there isn't and won't be a 'silver bullet' for news organisations that will replace print advertising. But do you think that they will find a sustainable business model and if so, how long will this take? Do you anticipate a wide variety of revenue streams?

There are already news organisations, mostly new ones, which are sustainable. They don't look like traditional news organisations and they are

certainly not as big as traditional news organisations, but to me the idea that there is no business model for news – that it’s something that we still have to find – is a bit of a fallacy because there has been profitable news and information content on the web for a long time. It just doesn’t look like traditional journalism.

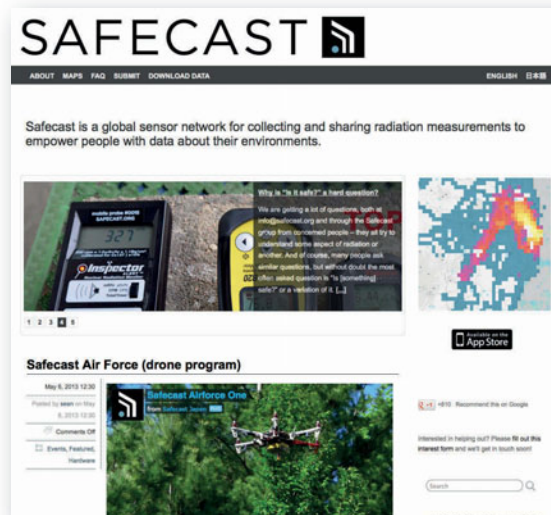
If we are looking for that silver bullet that allows us to flip a switch to get the same amount of money that came in during the largesse of ads during the late 80s and mid 90s – then yes, we will never find it. The economy is just incredibly different than it used to be and the dependency that advertisers had on newspapers and local television to distribute their ads is just gone.

There was never one way that everyone made money before and there won’t be again. But will people make money? Absolutely. Will they necessarily be the same players as before? No.

One of my favourite analogies was made by Josh Marshall, who runs Talking Points Memo, which is a profitable news organisation. When airplanes came around, the train companies didn’t get into the airplane business, we are not flying Union Pacific air. It’s very hard for very big business to adapt to something totally new and something they don’t understand. We are seeing new things emerge and we are seeing old things go to ground. That’s the nature of it.

What trend or development in technology are you most excited about?

The thing that I’m really excited about right now is the introduction of hardware into the kind of datastream that journalism is thinking about being able to harness. There are not a ton of examples in traditional news of utilising hardware in interesting ways, but you can look at something like Safecast, an organisation that started in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear meltdown, who tapped a network of open hardware hackers to build a new type of Geiger counter. They got those plans out, they built software and they began to collect radiation data from all over Japan, at a time when the government was not forthcoming with that information. The data that they have collected is from something like five million data



Safecast describes itself as “a global sensor network for collecting and sharing radiation measurements to empower people with data about their environments.”

points, while the government has issued something like 20,000. This is absolutely journalism at its most raw: it’s the collection of data and getting that out to the community that needs it most desperately. And it’s doing it in an entirely new way. There’s also an organisation called the Public Laboratory here in the US which, during the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, built incredibly low-cost cameras attached to balloons that they then floated out into the gulf to take pictures of the actual damage happening along the coast there. They’ve opened up that kit for other people to do other balloon mapping projects.

“The economy is just incredibly different than it used to be and the dependency that advertisers had on newspapers and local television to distribute their ads is just gone.”

There are some really exciting possibilities when you get into hardware-based data collection in terms of being able to tell stories and do journalism out of that data. I’m thrilled about this and really excited about seeing it take the next step.



The Cicada Tracker project encourages users to build their own hardware to help predict when cicadas will emerge from 17 years of hibernation.

There's a very new example happening at WNYC in New York which is tracking the appearance of the billions of cicadas that emerge every 17 years. They only emerge from the ground when the ground is a certain temperature at a specific depth. The team at WNYC realised that they could build a simple piece of hardware that you stuff into the ground and it takes a regular reading of the ground temperature. You can begin, through a distributed network of these sensors in the New York area, to get a sense of when these cicadas were going to emerge. It's a really fun, really smart way for users to participate and to collect some really interesting data.

“This is absolutely journalism at its most raw: it's the collection of data and getting that out to the community that needs it most desperately.”

Which of your own projects are you most enthusiastic about?

The project that has really blown my mind coming out of our 2013 fellows right now was started by our fellow in Buenos Aires, Manuel Aristarán, but has really been picked up by one of our fellows in New York, Mike Tigas. It's a PDF data-extractor called Tabula that takes what has been an ongoing open data problem: all kinds of tabular data is released exclusively as a PDF, and you can't easily get that information out of the PDF because of the awful way that the PDF file format was built.

So what Manuel did was to create some really smart software that allows you to just draw a box around your PDF table, and it almost magically extracts the data in a matter of seconds and gives it to you in an actual machine-readable format. It's a really smart project, and to me, what's exciting about it is that it began with one person who's working at La Nacion in Buenos Aires and it was picked up by another fellow who's working at ProPublica in NYC. Some other folks from ProPublica have joined in: it's a real cross-news organisation and cross-border collaboration and it's really exciting to see it evolve.

Justin Arenstein on utility apps, potential of wearable computing



Justin Arenstein is an investigative journalist, OpenData advocate and social entrepreneur from South Africa, who is working across Africa, with partners including Google, the African Media Initiative and the International Centre For Journalists to improve investigative reporting and the take up of new technologies. He is currently a Knight International Journalism Fellow, helping the African Media Initiative to establish a digital innovation programme that supports experimentation in newsrooms across Africa. He serves on various media industry boards and think-tanks and advises Google on data-driven journalism and digital newsroom strategies in Africa.

Which of the current trends in journalism do you see having the most impact in upcoming years?

I think that the fundamental question that the newsrooms I am working with are grappling with is what is journalism as a revenue model or a financial model, and that goes beyond a lot of the rhetoric around things like are we web first, or mobile first, or even data first: it's more fundamental.

Are we audience first – are we packaging audiences and monetising those audiences? Or are we content first – meaning that we create content and then we try to create monetised models around this? Those are the two major structural discussions that a lot of the newsrooms and media companies I'm working with are having at the moment.

The answer to that question shapes how they approach all these things like video, data, narrative, paywalls vs. free access and so forth.

The most common answer of the newsrooms I'm working with in Africa seems to be that we are a content-first enterprise and that's leading to increasing amounts of investment in some of the early-adopter markets into some of the more data-driven approach. I think it's important to differentiate between data-driven and data journalism, because at the moment a lot of the early-stage data journalism experiments that we see are very fixating on visualisation.

But some of what we are seeing in Kenya and South Africa is going beyond that and saying, how do we actually change the workflow of the information collection, processing and then packaging phases of editorial workflow so that we become platform agnostic and even that we become journalistically agnostic? You don't have to tell stories through narrative any more, you could for example be building utility apps, or 'news that you can use.'

“Are we audience first – are we packaging audiences and monetising those audiences? Or are we content first – meaning that we create content and then we try to create monetised models around this?”

An example comes from The Star in Nairobi, where the health team did a story into qualifications of doctors in Nairobi and then built a mobile stand-alone app that allows you to check that your doctor is in fact a registered doctor and not a veterinarian (which is often the case in fact in Kenya). Therefore it starts becoming a utility tool that is in fact something that citizens would use completely separately from the journalistic end product, although obviously they synch very well.



Screenshot of Mxit, the leading social mobile platform in Africa, <http://site.mxit.com>

Do you think mobile-first strategies will become the norm at traditional and/or new media? Will this mean a completely new way of working?

In Africa, mobile is the only real digital option in the vast majority of the markets.

Mobile is definitely on the radar of all publishers, right from USSD-kind of products, which is like a kind of sub-text messaging, not an SMS, that costs a fraction of a US cent to send a message. So that gets over the barrier-to-entry problems in your mass market, or in shantytowns.

“In Africa, mobile is the only real digital option in the vast majority of the markets.”

We’ve seen very successful and almost counter-intuitive experiments there, for example with Media 24, in some of the worst shantytowns in South Africa. They’ve used a service called Mxit, the biggest social mobile platform in Africa, to offer subscription services targeted at the youth in shanty towns, which simply gives the headline and the synopsis of a news item, and people pay for those via micropayments using Mxit’s virtual

currency. They actually made a profit out of their pilot, proving firstly that youth in deprived communities are prepared to pay for news, and secondly that you can deliver a meaningful content service on text-based, short messaged-based platforms.

Everybody says there isn’t and won’t be a ‘silver bullet’ for news organisations that will replace print advertising. But do you think that they will find a sustainable business model and if so, how long will this take?

I think it’s not just that there’s no silver bullet – but in terms of geography, there’s not going to be one solution that works all over the world. We have seen some of the same experiments that you are seeing in the global north. South Africa, for example, is going through a paywall frenzy at the moment, despite fairly good evidence that the revenue earned from paywalls would be nowhere near what they are losing from advertising or what they would potentially lose from the ability to sell large audiences. I think that that’s a painful phase we’re going through.

We are also seeing experiments at pure subscription services, for example, a tablet-only publication called iMaverick, where the publication, longform narrative and analysis, is only available on mobile devices. Based in South Africa with a pan-African audience, it moved to profitability within the first year: it has a very small elite audience, but spread over a continent it becomes sizeable.

In a lot of markets, such as Ghana, Tunisia, Kenya, South Africa – generally on the rim of the continent where there is better web access – we are seeing experiments in diversified digital revenue streams. So everything from building stand-alone content businesses which are not traditional journalism, or creating Africa-specific or industry-specific branded verticals and selling those as solutions, or spinning off platforms and selling them as white-label products.

In Africa there are additional potential revenue streams that might not be available in more connected markets.

Europe, America and much of the global north are data-saturated societies, where, if I wanted to create a tourism app, for example, I would have lots of content that I could pull into it. In Africa, because we are such a data-scarce environment, there's very little data available for app developers and others. The media realise they are sitting on a bit of a goldmine because they've often got data and editorial archives going back 100 years. So if I were to build a tourism app, I am now able, in Kenya, to plug into an API of the Nation Group and suck out all of their tourism reporting into my app and then I pay a royalty-based licensing scheme back to the company. It's a real scaled attempt to turn content into revenue, as opposed to simply monetising audiences, which means subscriptions or paywalls around content.

Another of the more lucrative immediate revenue streams has been premium SMS. Because few people have smart phones a lot of services are accessed by short codes and SMS-based query systems.

For each one of those SMSs you can charge a premium rate. It's still incredibly cost-effective for the user because they get data that ordinarily they either would not get, or they would have to stand in a queue or drive many kilometers for. Media companies then either get the premium add-on added to the base SMS rate, or where they're not doing premium SMS services, they are doing a revenue share with the mobile company. That's not a preferred route because it means that the mobile operator ends up owning the user base, so a lot of media companies are going the premium route, and then they are effectively building new audiences and new subscriber bases that they can then re-leverage for other kinds of outreach and products in future.

Some of the more advanced and valuable databases that are driving some of these utility tools are being charged as a subscription service – for example, access to information about state procurement opportunities, tenders, and so forth, which, currently are only available either in a very fragmented way or almost after the fact through legacy publication in newspapers and so on, can now be got real time and personalised. You can put in your interests – for example 'I'm

only interested in sanitation projects' – and you would get personalised alerts coming to you. They are selling that as a subscription service.

In South Africa some of the electronic media are starting to explore becoming virtual retailers – you look at a fashion spread or a décor spread in a magazine and, through one-click purchasing, you can buy any of the items in the piece that you see.

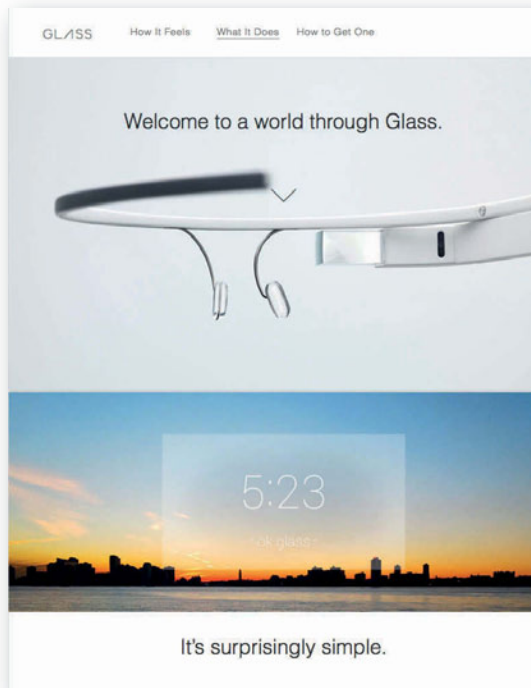
What trend in technology are you most excited about?

Looking four to five years from now, a platform of choice that will be as disruptive as laptops or mobile are will be wearable computing. Whether it's Google Glass or an equivalent kind of device that you wear on your body, it physically means that you are going to be in an augmented reality world.

“ In Africa, mobile is the only real digital option in the vast majority of the markets to get data that ordinarily they either would not get, or they would have to stand in a queue or drive many kilometers for.”

I am both excited and a bit concerned: I think media aren't quite grasping the importance of building geolocation into editorial information collection right from the beginning.

Wearable computing means you are going to consume information around you in a disaggregated way. When I look at your face I am going to be getting a profile of how I'm linked to you on LinkedIn, whether you've been mentioned in any news articles or RSS feeds that I have, all those kinds of information. But additionally, if you look at the experiments of Google Now – real-time location-based disaggregated content services distributed to you in a temporal fashion – they take into account both that I'm here now physically, but also in time. What is most relevant to me in terms of information that I can use now?



Google Glass, the best-known example of wearable computing.

“We often talk about how people who have never had access to computers are now leap-frogging directly to smart phones – four years from now people will be leap-frogging directly from having no access to technology into a world where suddenly they can put on a piece of wearable computing.”

News content as it's currently produced cannot be disaggregated and published on these platforms. We are not geolocating the events, the people, the entities that we are reporting on. When that technology arrives we are suddenly going to have to go into our newsrooms and try to reverse-engineer content that we have already got. Building it into the production cycle right now would offer immediate value returns in terms of producing mobile and tablet apps, but the real value is going to come when these new wearable devices start becoming commercially available, and we are sitting with content that firstly we can publish ourselves, then secondly we can resell to other content services.

Effectively what I want to do is walk through a landscape and I want that landscape to be able to speak to me. So when I'm standing in front of a public building I want to know that maybe this specific spot I'm standing on is a scene of regular car-jackings – drawing on crime reporting at local newspapers, I know that this is really dangerous – or alternatively I want to know that the spot I'm standing on is where Mahatma Gandhi delivered a speech. Or that years ago this was the scene of an IRA bombing.

Suddenly landscapes start speaking with relevance to me. That resonates in an African market where we have less-digitised communities and still place much value on oral histories.

We often talk about how people who have never had access to computers are now leap-frogging directly to smart phones – four years from now people will be leap-frogging directly from having no access to technology into a world where suddenly they can put on a piece of wearable computing and the mythology which they've grown up with isn't mythology. Suddenly the landscape speaks to them, tells them the value of the house or building they are looking at, tells them whether the minister is in residence or they can turn on a Twitter feed and see who's tweeting around them.

‘The age of disruption will continue for decades to come’



Gabriel Kahn joined the University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism in 2010, where he jointly runs the Media, Economics and Entrepreneurship programme. He also leads the Future of Journalism project at the Annenberg Innovation Lab. Previously, he worked as a newspaper correspondent and editor for two decades, including 10 years at *The Wall Street Journal*, where he served as Los Angeles bureau chief, deputy Hong Kong bureau chief and deputy Southern Europe bureau chief, based in Rome. He has reported from more than a dozen countries on three continents. In 1998, Kahn launched *Italy Daily*, a joint venture of the *International Herald Tribune* and *Corriere della Sera*, based in Milan, Italy.

Which of the current trends in journalism do you see having the most impact in upcoming years?

A lot flows from journalists and newspapers having a tighter relationship with technology.

I see a very important opportunity for the development of data visualisation. On the one hand it can be a very powerful form of storytelling. The other thing about a digital asset like a data visualisation is that if you pick the right data set that has the following criteria:

- it's data that is periodically updated anyway, such as economic data, finance data or wealth disparity
- it's data that is visualised in such a way that it can be periodically refreshed when new data appears,

... then all of a sudden this digital asset has a much longer shelf-life than your normal journalistic product. That is crucial because the investment of time and money in the creation of these things is so great that it becomes a real challenge if you need to monetise it fully within a short window. But if you have a data visualisation that people can go back to month after month and find utility in it, then you have created something that scales, basically.

The other thing about this, is that done right, using the right kind of data, it has the other thing that I think newspapers have been always trying to shoot for – the ability to tell a broad story.

Let's say it's you have economic data in the state of California: it's going to tell me something very important about the state of California but it also can also drill down to a smaller level: cities, counties. I can get a broader truth, and I can get something that's going to give me relevant specific information about my surroundings.

I see the opportunity to monetise these kinds of things because of a) their extended shelf life and b) the ability of these kinds of products to have a real relevance to people: two very important components of being a successful journalistic product.

There was one example in Los Angeles that sums this up. We have a major public school crisis – graduation rates from high school are abysmal – so people really have a serious crisis of confidence in the system.

“ I see the opportunity to monetise these kinds of things because of a) their extended shelf life and b) the ability of these kinds of products to have a real relevance to people: two very important components of being a successful journalistic product”

The Los Angeles Times created a database with publically available data that looked at each teacher in each classroom in the Los Angeles



The Los Angeles Times' California Schools Guide provides a searchable database that can be updated each year.

public school system and how much better their students performed in standardised tests that year versus the previous year. This proved one way of measuring teacher effectiveness. Teachers hated it, but it addressed this big long-running problem in Los Angeles – the ineffectiveness of public schools – which is a crucial topic for newspapers in general.

The database can be updated each year with new data. It both tells you a story about the Los Angeles unified school district and its 660,000 students, but at the same time it gives each parent in that school district the ability to look at their own child's teacher's effectiveness with standardised tests, and then look at the teacher across the hall and think, why is my child in the room with the bad teacher while the one across the hall is getting all the results?

That's the kind of data that can actually help force political change. It gives the people formerly known as the audience the tools to really transcendently look at the world that their children are living in.

You've got something that people are going to come back to again and again and they are going to have real connection with that information. That's the other thing that newspapers really need to emphasise: that they provide an essential service here.

Everybody says there isn't and won't be a 'silver bullet' for news organisations that will replace print advertising. But do you think that they will find a sustainable business model and if so, how long will this take? Do you anticipate a wide variety of revenue streams?

When we talk about things like the newspaper business model – we have to realise that for a long time it was a very artificial consequence of a couple of factors, such as a static technological environment and high barriers to entry that allowed monopolies to continue in many areas.

The age of disruption will continue for decades

to come, it won't stop. We have got to remember the upside – that the actual product the consumer is getting is so much better, more interesting, engaging and relevant than ever before in human history. But there is not going to be one kind of stable advertising-style business model ever, ever again in news.

This is not a news problem, or a journalism problem, it's a digital distribution problem – and it's important to look at it in that context because then things become a little bit clearer. Music had its problems, the television industry has had problems and is now about to have much larger problems, and the same thing for movies. They are all going to experiment with different ways of solving that problem. But the era of being able to solve a problem and have it go away is gone.

There are a couple of important components. One is that the notion of a newspaper with its newsroom and its printing press is a 19th/early-20th century industrial model of organisation. Newsrooms simply do not need those kind of structures anymore to operate. The less structure that exists, the more flexibility and nimbleness you have.

If you take companies like Newsmodo or ebyline and think about what they are really proposing – I know that they pitch themselves to manage freelancers or something like that – really what they are saying is that a large news organisation can exist like Wikipedia. It can be distributed, and it can be informal, and you don't need everybody with all these assigned roles who show up to work at a certain time in order to pull off this kind of thing.

We think of news organisations as organisations that produce and sell news.

I think we have to get away from that notion. News is going to be valuable when it's served up in the right context, so I don't think that we necessarily need to think of the future as this distinct being of organisations that are trying to produce only that. Lots of different organisations have a news component to them because news adds value as part of a broader suite of services

The other thing is that we see a lot of B2B opportunities. I think it's really important to understand what that is: that means that you are

able to serve news into different environments in ways that it has significant value. If you are picking a key audience and news is one element of a broader diet of experience and information and services then all of a sudden it's relevant. The biggest example of this is Bloomberg, which is, I think, the most profitable news organisation in

“This is not a news problem, or a journalism problem, it's a digital distribution problem – and it's important to look at it in that context.”

the world – and it's yet it's not even really a news organisation, it's a bond-trading platform. That's what it was originally created to do, but when you have people trading bonds, and you serve them relevant news, all of a sudden that news is incredibly valuable because people are transacting based on that information.

When it comes to native advertising and the example of The Atlantic and their Scientology gaffe – everybody wrings their hands and says 'oh my this is so terrible.' But we don't think about why The Atlantic is selling native advertising – it's because advertisers are demanding it. Why are advertisers demanding it? Because they are really not seeing utility in the traditional banner or display ad.

“Instead of brandishing all of this as evil or ethically circumspect, publishers really need to realise that they are not providing the service to advertisers that they once did.”

So that is the real problem and instead of brandishing all of this as evil or ethically circumspect, publishers really need to realise that they are not providing the service to advertisers that they once did. Advertisers can go elsewhere and dis-



Kahn leads the Future of Journalism project at the USC Annenberg Innovation Lab.

tintermediate the publisher. So native advertising needs to be seen in that context: how do you reestablish a viable relationship with an advertiser? And we are going to have to really reevaluate what used to be our kind of ethical firewalls in order to achieve a new relationship that works.

“ I think there’s a tremendous waste in not making the archives accessible in the right moment.”

Which of your own projects are you most enthusiastic about?

I am working on a way of reimagining video news. We are trying to create something that realises that your consumer is going to have different experiences with you on different devices at different times of day. It could be that at 10.22 in the morning your consumer has 22 free minutes and you have to be ready to serve him/her the right content at that time.

It’s an app that also tries to realise what consumers want. We don’t have any hard empirical data to prove this but what they really want for news is a combination of customisation and curation. We often think about these things as being in opposition to one another but they kind of actually work together.

So the app – you wake up in the morning and there are seven stories being suggested to you by this video news producer. And you choose the ones that are interesting to you, and at the same time it’s pulling in stories recommended on your social networks. You basically have a queue of things that you choose and things that have been recommended to you.

There are topics that have been surfaced for you, and it’s dynamic, it changes throughout the day. If you decide at any time of the day to watch these stories you just press a button and you can watch them on any device: a big screen, PC, mobile.

One other element will be surfacing the archive. If you are watching a story about Syria and you like it – the app could give you the opportunity to say ‘I need to know more about this,’ and you would get a list of relevant links to previous articles and you would be able to work your way backwards, using that archived content to help recreate a narrative yourself that you find answers your questions. I think there’s a tremendous waste in not making the archives accessible in the right moment.

‘Think about the fundamental value inside the news business’



***Mathew Ingram** is a senior writer with GigaOM, where he covers media in all its forms as well as web culture and related issues. He is an award-winning journalist who has spent the past 15 years writing about business, technology and new media as a reporter, columnist and blogger. Before joining GigaOM, he was a blogger and technology writer for the Globe and Mail newspaper in Toronto, and was also the paper's first online Communities Editor. Ingram is also one of the founders of mesh, Canada's leading web conference.*

Which of the current trends in journalism do you see having the most impact in upcoming years?

If I was going to pick something that was the biggest force or the biggest effect, it would be all the things that fall under the term crowdsourcing or networked journalism or open journalism or whatever term you want to use.

I think we are really just starting to see the beginning of these things, I know if you are immersed in it all the time you think well that's old news, that's been going on for a while, but I think we are really just starting to see the tip of the iceberg and I don't think that the media industry in general has figured out how to do it or how to take advantage of it.

We have tools like Storify or Storyful, we've got things like the Guardian Witness app and so on – but to me that's just starting to scratch the surface of what is possible and what the media needs to do when it comes to making that a reality, when it comes to taking advantage of the fact that anyone can publish information, news, journalism, anyone can distribute, anyone can be at the scene of an event.

How do you process that? How do you take advantage of it and how does it work inside a changing media ecosystem? That, to me, is the biggest single change that I think is going on that the media has to figure out how to adapt to.

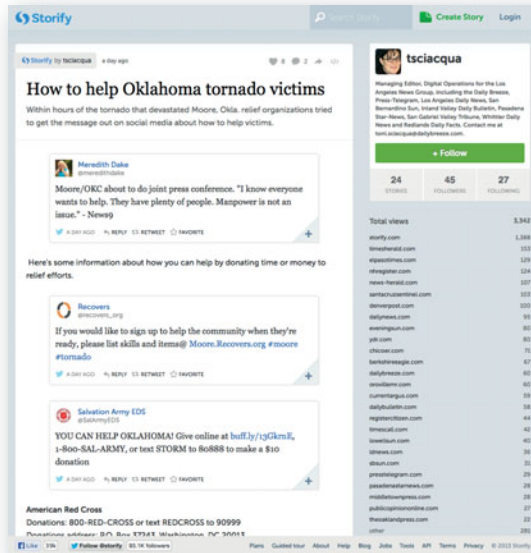
I guess the frustrating thing is that there isn't really anyone who's doing this particularly well. There are bits and pieces here and there, there are people who use Storify quite well, Craig Kan-

alley at the Huffington Post has done that in some cases, Anthony de Rosa at Reuters is good at doing it, there's the Guardian's experiments around open journalism and allowing readers to help with reporting on stories. But there isn't anyone really that you can point to and say 'they've figured it out' or 'they're the one you need to emulate.' Certainly the Guardian is the most open to those ideas and the most willing to experiment.

“ If I was going to pick something that was the biggest force or the biggest effect, it would be all the things that fall under the term crowdsourcing or networked journalism or open journalism or whatever term you want to use.”

Do you think mobile-first strategies will become the norm at traditional and/or new media? Will this mean a completely new way of working?

I think it is already happening – depending on who you look at they are further or not as far down the road. But it is happening: mobile and the rise of mobile are disrupting all sorts of social businesses, such as Facebook or LinkedIn. The ones who are adapting the fastest are those who don't have legacy businesses, but we are starting to see a lot more focus on mobile even from



Storify allows journalists and others to create narratives from snippets of content from around the web.

companies like Reuters and The New York Times. I think it's a trend that we are just starting to see the beginnings of: how that changes the way you do your job, how content is generated, how it's distributed, the feedback that you get, and how you incorporate that, the never ending-stream-of-news-approach as opposed to publishing specific things at specific times... We're still in the early days of how that's transforming our business. To me the interesting thing is people who are experimenting with more than just 'let's just

“ To me the interesting thing is people who are experimenting with more than just 'let's just reformat our content for a mobile device.'”

reformat our content for a mobile device.' The Guardian Witness app is one interesting experiment in using mobile, and apps like Circa, for example, are interesting experiments in trying to rethink about how news functions on a device, how we interact with it and how we can sort of adapt that instead of just taking content and making it shorter.

Everybody says there isn't and won't be a 'silver bullet' for news organisations that will replace print advertising. But do you think that they will find a sustainable business model and if so, how long will this take?

That's a really big question. I think some will, and some won't. In any kind of disruption or process like what we are seeing in media – if you look back at the kinds of disruption that Clay Christensen describes in his book, and others describe in other industries – not everyone makes it. In evolution, hundreds of thousands of species die out and others survive, and in some cases it's impossible to predict which ones. I think there are going to be some clear winners and clear losers but I would never presume to pick them because I think we don't even understand what the criteria for success are. It's not just being big; big companies have failed before. It's a combination of having resources, being adaptable, and being innovative or trying to be, which is hard for established companies to do.

I think there is a business model, or there are many, for news and for media in general. Different companies may wind up at different points on the spectrum. Some may be more inclined towards ads or some towards subscription, some may find a third way that provides the bulk of their income. One of the things I took out of our paidContent conference was that nobody has a single answer that is going to work for everyone. The smartest companies, like the Atlantic, are trying everything, because they admit that they don't know what would be the answer.

Do you have any advice for news organisations struggling to find new revenue streams?

My advice would be to think about the fundamental value inside the news business: the connection that a news entity or media outlet has with its readers. The purest form of that connection is something like what Andrew Sullivan is trying to do with his subscription model – it's just him and his readers: the connection that

they have formed and the relationship they have around what he writes.

That is the essence of what journalism and the media are becoming: they are more personal, more real-time, more direct, there are fewer barriers between readers and the people that they want to read. And so the more that you can strip away those barriers, the easier you can make it for your journalists to create those kinds of relationships, the easier it will be for you to find a business model.

What technology trend are you most excited about?

One of them is the automation of large chunks of what we think of as journalism, and that encompasses data journalism to some extent. Companies like Narrative Science are generating sports, business and other news stories in an automated way by pulling in information, parsing it and producing fact-based articles of the type that used to be produced by human beings.

“That is the essence of what journalism and the media are becoming: they are more personal, more real-time, more direct, there are fewer barriers between readers and the people that they want to read.”

That to me is actually a benefit, because most of those stories were a waste of time for human beings to produce in the first place. And so in the same way that mechanisation and automation allows us to stop having to produce every shoe single-handedly in a factory filled with 11-year-olds, I think we are coming to a point where large chunks of what newspapers used to do will be automated. There will be bumps in that road, but I think that overall it is a good thing because it frees up journalists to do the other stories that are more important.

“There will be bumps in that road, but I think that overall it is a good thing because it frees up journalists to do the other stories that are more important.”

Narrative Science began life as a Northwestern University research project called StatsMonkey that automatically generated sports stories, and is now focusing on business analytics.

The screenshot shows the Narrative Science website interface. At the top, it says 'NarrativeScience' and 'Start gaining insight from your data today!'. Below that is a navigation bar with 'WHY NARRATIVES', 'WHAT IS QUILL™', 'INDUSTRIES', 'SOLUTIONS', and 'COMPANY'. The main content area features the heading 'WHY NARRATIVES' and 'Bridge the Gap Between Numbers and Knowledge'. It displays a dashboard with a line chart, a pie chart, and text-based data summaries. A prominent quote at the bottom reads: 'The truth is simple: With spreadsheets, you have to calculate. With visualizations, you have to interpret. But with stories, all you have to do is read.'

Arianna Huffington on engagement and community



Arianna Huffington is chair, president and editor-in-chief of the Huffington Post Media Group. In 2012, she was No. 29 on Forbes' list of Most Powerful Women in the World. The Greek-born Cambridge University graduate is also the author of more than a dozen books as well as a syndicated columnist. Along with Kenneth Lerer, Andrew Breitbart and Jonah Peretti, she launched the Huffington Post in May 2005.

Most traditional news outlets can only dream of engaging their audience the way the Huffington Post does on a daily basis. The site's engaging leader, Arianna Huffington, deserves most of the credit. As chair, president, and editor-in-chief of the Huffington Post Media Group, she has steered the site from a startup to one of the most recognised media brands in the world.

The journey has not been easy. Despite its incredible traffic (see box) and apparent success, the Huffington Post has often been labelled as a mere aggregator of traditional news outlets' content. But that rebuke took a severe blow in 2012, when the site won a Pulitzer Prize for national reporting with David Wood's 10-part series on the struggles of wounded American soldiers returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan, "Beyond the Battlefield."

A watershed moment, but there have been several others, such as in February 2011 when AOL paid US\$ 315 million for the site.

Last August, Huffington Post launched the HuffPost Live video network, which currently live-streams 12 hours of original programming, five days a week.

Huffington Post is also creating international editions at a rapid pace. They are already in the UK, Canada, France, Spain and Italy, and others are set to launch later this year.

What are Huffington Post's three main focuses right now?

Arianna Huffington: We are launching new international editions (up next: Japan), emphasizing

the growing importance of service and giving back, and putting a spotlight on the destructive force of stress in our lives and helping people – across our 18 lifestyle sections – to Stress Less, Live More.

How would you explain HuffPost's success? Did you ever think when you launched the site back in 2005 that it would go on to win a Pulitzer Prize?

No, back in 2005 we were not thinking about prizes. We were simply thinking about ways to start conversations. Bringing together people from different parts of my life and facilitating interesting conversations has always been part of my Greek DNA. So from the beginning, the whole point of the Huffington Post was to take the sort of conversations found at water coolers and around dinner tables – about politics and art and books and food – and open them up and bring them online. I think our success has to do with our ability to do that, and to tell the most important – and the most entertaining – stories of the day.

Would you re-consider a paid-for product as part of the Huffington offer?

No, we're sticking with our free business model. We're living in a golden age of engagement, and at HuffPost we provide free access so our readers can engage with the best stories from around the world, and then comment, interact, and form communities around them.

In 2010, HuffPost was profitable for the first time, but as I understand it has not been since? Why do you think that has been the case and what are some of the keys to getting in the black again?

For AOL, a goal of the acquisition was to turn HuffPost into a global brand. That has required investment in three strategic areas. On the domestic front, we have tripled the number of verticals and dramatically expanded our audience. On the international front, we have launched the five international sections and are about to launch three more in Japan, Germany and Brazil. We have also invested in HuffPost Live, our innovative live-streaming video network.

How would you characterise the changes in HuffPost since it was purchased by AOL?

In 2011, I wrote in my announcement post that, for HuffPost, the merger would be like “stepping off a fast-moving train and onto a supersonic jet” – or “1 + 1 = 11.” That turned out to be an understatement. Since the merger, we’ve launched several international editions, launched Huffington Magazine, have brought together our 18 lifestyle sections under the tag line of “Less stress, more living,” and launched HuffPost Live which uses the most engaging stories on The Huffington Post as the jumping-off point for real-time conversations and commentary – and invites viewers to join the discussion as on-air guests. Just as importantly, through all this growth, we have stayed true to our DNA, rooted in our core values of engagement, starting conversations, and helping people live the lives they want, not the lives they settle for.

How would you rate HuffPost Live’s success, acceptance and development thus far?

HuffPost Live is going great, a success both critically and from a traffic point of view. On the critical front, along with being named the Biggest Innovation in Media for 2012 by Mashable (after only four months on the air), we have been



Safecast describes itself as “a global sensor network for collecting and sharing radiation measurements to empower people with data about their environments.”

nominated for a slew of design and programming awards. The head of Community Development at Google, Steve Grove, recently said HuffPost Live is “re-defining live web video, and making a new kind of contribution to the public dialogue.” And traffic has been very strong, increasing by leaps and bounds every month.

Just as important, we are giving a seat at the table to people who might not normally have one. We are giving a platform to people who you don’t usually see on TV, expressing points of view you don’t normally hear. It’s the democratisation of media.

Do you think web TV has a key role to play in the future of traditionally text-based sites like Huffington Post?

Absolutely. The Internet has given us unlimited access to data – but what we need is more storytelling and narrative. That’s what HuffPost Live is all about. And we’re having real conversations – not just pre-packaged exchanges of soundbites.

Huffington Post's 'engaging' figures

■ Comments on a single day (7 November 2012):	448,521
■ New commenters signing up per day (7 November 2012):	9,466
■ Social referrals for a month (November 2012):	38,200,000
■ Facebook referrals in a day (7 November 2012):	3,000,000
■ Blog posts in the past year <all editions>:	143,621
■ Stories published per day <all editions>:	over 4,000

How do you see sponsored content/native advertising possibly playing a role in your business model going forward? How significant could it be?

Sponsorships have already been very important to us, making possible several of our verticals committed to making the world better, including Global Motherhood (sponsored by Johnson & Johnson), Good News (Capella University), TED-Weekends (Chevy Volt), and Impact X (Cisco).

How do you envisage the future of the US newspaper industry? Do you think that the traditional general interest metro newspaper will survive, or be replaced by something else?

I believe that the obituaries for newspapers are premature. Many papers are belatedly but successfully adapting to the new news environment (like the NYT). And it's my feeling that as long as they keep adapting, there will be a market for newspapers. There is something in our collective DNA that makes us want to sip our coffee, turn a page, look up from a story, say "Can you believe this?", and pass the paper to the person across the table.

The future of news is a hybrid future, as traditional outlets adopt the tools of digital journalists – including speed, transparency and engagement – and new media adopt the best practices of traditional journalism, including fact-checking, fairness and accuracy. And the line between old media and new, between digital and print, will be increasingly blurry.

Where do you see HuffPost fitting into this eco-system?

At the Huffington Post, we're all about engagement, connection and community. And I would say our secret ingredient has always been our embrace of change – our willingness to innovate. For instance, we continue to grow, adding new sections, featuring more original stories, adding more video and continuing our rollout of more international editions of HuffPost, while always staying true to our core values.

What's next for the Huffington Post?

So much! We are doing a great deal around the theme of "Redefining Success: The Third Metric." This is a great moment for all of us to acknowledge that the current male-dominated model of success – which equates success with burnout, sleep deprivation, and driving yourself into the ground – isn't working for women, and it's not working for men, either. We need a third metric, beyond money and power, that places value on our well-being, wisdom and our ability to make a difference in the world.

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