Trends in Newsrooms
2014
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Introduction

The past year has been a defining one for newsrooms. Since publication of the 2013 Trends in Newsrooms report, the realities, reach, infinite possibilities and, in particular, the risks of the digital age have becoming ever more apparent.

For editors and journalists, this has been both good and bad news. The exposé of the extent of state surveillance through Edward Snowden’s leaks sparked stellar investigative journalism and unprecedented global collaboration between publications and editors.

But the consequences for the way we practice our craft and communicate with sources are significant. Further at risk is public trust in journalism and hard-won press freedoms. Worrying, too, is that the new stresses have emerged in established democracies whose behaviour so often leads change in regards to press freedom and media development internationally.

The relentless advances in digital technology continue to redefine the newsroom. They affect the way we organise ourselves, engage with audiences, find and verify increasingly diverse content and tell our stories.

Despite all the change, the tipping towards the digital first environment has shown how many practices need urgent revisiting, ethical codes need updating, and new skills need to be introduced to allow news producers to remain competitive and relevant. The result is a unique space for creation, innovation and reinvention.

The 10 trends we explore are:

I. Moves to shield journalism in the post-Snowden era
II. The rebooting of mobile strategy as “wearables” hit the market
III. How social media verification is supporting trust and credibility
IV. The way data and analytics are driving the news agenda
V. Newsroom video starts to challenge broadcasters
VI. The rise (and fall) of women editors
VII. Global collaborative journalism projects breaking barriers
VIII. The need for digital mega-stories
IX. The ethical challenges of native advertising
X. The evolving role of the editor

This is a must-read publication from the World Editors Forum and we look forward to continuing the conversation about its contents with you online.

Erik Bjerager
President
World Editors Forum
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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 21 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.

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Thought-leader Interview

Janine Gibson

The Guardian

By Julie Posetti

“"I absolutely think that journalists are like the proverbial cockroaches after the nuclear war — they will find a way, we will find a way!”
Deep journalism and the surveillance state

Janine Gibson is the Editor-in-Chief of The Guardian, US. She led the paper’s US coverage of the Snowden case to industry acclaim, and now she’s headed back to London as Editor-in-Chief of theguardian.com.

Gibson spoke to Trends in Newsrooms Editor Julie Posetti about what’s now being described as The Snowden Effect and her vision for the Guardian’s digital future.

"The implications [of surveillance for journalists] are so profound, and so hard to talk about without sounding like a member of the ‘tin foil hat brigade’, but it is going to become one of the most preoccupying issues for journalists.”

- Janine Gibson, Editor-in-Chief, Guardian US
I was in Australia when The Guardian did that excellent “Firestorm” piece in the big story context, very rich, very interactive and very moving. But very expensive and labour-dependent. I’m wondering how sustainable that is as a model, as we look at these two divergent ends of the storytelling spectrum?

I don’t think those things are disproportionately expensive. You don’t do them every day, of course, and also the cost of doing them comes down; things that you invent and innovate around are inevitably very expensive the first time you do them and then become easier and quicker. The NSA Decoded project we did was by some measure the best way of explaining and telling the story from the beginning through the prism of how that matters to you, and there was no person at The Guardian who asked, “How much did that cost?” We just say that’s the best way of doing that. Obviously you have to make choices about resources, and we have made active choices about not doing the middle-range stuff, but that’s just as expensive, doing stuff that you could just take off the wires.

Why did that approach work so well with the Decoded experiment? Why was the project so successful?

[The data team] came at it slightly separately from the team doing the storytelling and they said right, we are going to take the whole of the topic and do it through this filter of why this matters to you, why you should care about it because that’s the thing people are having the most trouble with. And it wasn’t an adjunct; it wasn’t ‘here’s a 5,000 word piece we’re going to put on the internet and then add some video.’ The words were the last thing we created. The videos and interviews and the style therein, the way the commenting and sharing worked — all those things were purpose-built for that project, and the words were just the bit that joined it up. It was just stitched on at the end like captions in a gallery, and I don’t think anyone has done a properly interactive piece of journalism before. I think that was the revolution. If you look at something like ‘Snow Fall,’ the next evolution of that is what they did with ‘Decoded’. And I’m incredibly proud of what they did. I think it’s an actual revolution.

The Snowden story seems to have been a fundamentally important moment in the contemporary history of journalism, largely because it woke journalists up to the threat posed by corporate and state surveillance. From your point of view, what critical points did it raise in terms of journalistic practice, especially as an editorial manager?

The most overwhelming factor for editors and reporters, that you just can’t escape post-Snowden, is the question of how can you protect your sources. I think even in the US, where you’ve got James Risen at The New York Times still facing prosecution, where huge swathes of the establishment were accusing our colleagues of being accomplices or collaborators, and that’s leaving aside what we now know technically of the impossibility of [protecting] your sources [See Trend 1: Shielding Journalism in the Post Snowden Era]. The really profoundly concerning question for all of us is, ‘Can you ever promise anonymity again to a source?’ And I just cannot say vehemently enough, we really need to think as an industry about what this means; not just secure ‘dropboxes’ - that’s not the answer. ... The implications are so profound and so hard to talk about without sounding like a member of the [paranoid] ‘tin foil hat brigade’ but it is going to become one of the most preoccupying issues for journalists, and should be more urgently.

Just how frightened should we be? Is it a matter of fear or proactivity?

I think we have to proactively use the tools that are available to us, such as they are, and we have to get used to using them regularly. And PGP [email encryption systems] are boring, and encrypted chat is tiresome and cumbersome, and continuing to take laborious measures in order to make sure your conversations are protected seems ridiculous, and yet that’s what’s available to us now. The regulatory landscape may change, the tech companies may change, and the tools may change and I very much hope that all three will. But in the meantime, journalists need to be aware.
I’ve had editors from major newspapers tell me that they have sent their journalists back to pen and paper - avoiding emails and mobile conversations, even landlines. Is that something you’ve observed among colleagues as well?

Really it’s the only secure way, however it’s not always practical and therefore you need to be very educated about what you can do in other situations.

**What kinds of approaches have you taken in your role as one of the senior editorial managers on this story? What did you tell your journalists in the midst of this?**

Well, for a start, you ask someone who knows more about it than you do and you get the best possible advice and get everyone to observe it. We used different categories of encryption for different categories of things. So if you’re having a conversation about travel, you’d use one method. If you’re moving a top secret classified document around, you need another method. If you’re moving copy that needs to be published and you’ve already told the security services, you use something else. It sounds very complicated but that’s because the tools themselves are complicated and the most secure things are really hard to use. So it’s hard to sustain, people do make mistakes. The tools available now are better than a year ago, and we just have to keep hoping that gets better and better. I’m very encouraged by the work by organisations like Electronic Frontier Foundation and the Freedom of the Press Foundation, with what Omidyar is funding for FirstLook. I think if the billionaire philanthropists turn their attention to the kind of tools we can use, it would be an enormous public service.

But as you say it also comes down to the states themselves. What should be done with regards to holding states to account when it comes to privacy and the preservation of investigative journalism, which is at stake now?

What gave us most comfort was when the Attorney General in the US said journalists should not be prosecuted for doing their job, and the former Director of Public Prosecutions said the same thing. Now, there’s always a moment when there’s someone jumping up and down saying ‘This is treason, these are collaborators, they should go to prison’. But you have to continue to apply the pressure and the rigour to those people making those decisions through the rule of law, to remind the world, when they’re jumping up and down and being hysterical, that this is what we do, these are our jobs, this is an important function, and those roles must be able to see beyond the political inconvenience of the moment. Because there will always be voices saying this is national security and this is too dangerous, and it will be difficult for journalists to argue that they have a better view of national security, which is why you need the voice of law to say this is the journalists’ job.
Alan Rusbridger, Editor-in-Chief of The Guardian, has warned that it’s now almost impossible to guarantee the safety of confidential sources. Are you any more hopeful than you were six months ago - at the height of the Snowden affair - about the future of investigative journalism?

I’m incredibly optimistic about investigative journalism, because I actually think this is a hugely rich time for it! Five, six, seven, eight years ago, people were predicting that investigative journalism would be the first to go, along with foreign coverage, but I actually think it continues to prove its worth over and over again and just will thrive. Organisations like The Guardian, New York Times, ProPublica, Der Spiegel, these are organisations that really treasure and sustain very high quality investigative journalism. Those are just the ones we’ve worked with over the last year, so I’m completely optimistic about it, and I absolutely think that journalists are like the proverbial cockroaches after the nuclear war - they will find a way. We will find a way! It would be great if there were better tools and we should be concerned about the chilling moves to silence us, but we will always find a way.

Rusbridger has said that Snowden has taught journalists that it’s essential to be paranoid. In terms of your personal safety, as a journalist, as an editor working on this story, did you have any moments where you felt afraid, where you were concerned about your own safety or your family’s?

I’ve never felt afraid - I have had moments where I have thought that I was in Enemy of the State [the Hollywood film about an NSA cover-up]. Moments like when James Ball, our tech guy, found an app on my phone that didn’t have a name and was sucking up data. There have been a couple of times where I have been aware of people sitting very close to us, seeming like they were following us... you just don’t know. You don’t know if you’re being paranoid or if it’s real. You try to observe sensible measures and most of the time you try to keep a sense of humour, that’s quite important. There was a point when my deputy was yanked out of a boarding queue from Rio to US and sort of dragged off behind some curtain... just as we were getting on the plane. And they said ‘Are you with him?’ and I said ‘No, not really’. And thinking, ‘Yeah, they’re now doing the take-off announcement and he’s not here. What do I do about this? Send a tweet? He’s a big boy, he’ll be fine...’. I mean every time you walk through an airport, you sort of think ‘Oh God’, especially after what happened to David Miranda. (Partner of former Glenn Greenwald - former The Guardian journalist who broke the Snowden story and was detained for nine hours at Heathrow Airport in 2013).

› The future of journalism is very live and very deep

› Anonymity of sources seems forever endangered in the post-Snowden era

› Despite the doomsayers, investigative journalism is thriving
Thought-leader Interview
Michael Maness
Knight Foundation

By Julie Posetti

“The reluctance of legacy news organisations to balance what they’ve done in the past and expand into the internet has always been a little bit frustrating.”
Newsroom innovation – and the lack of it

Michael Maness leads Knight Foundation’s Journalism and Media Innovation program. Before joining Knight in 2011, he was Gannett’s vice president of innovation and design, serving as vice president of strategic planning for the newspaper division. He also launched the industry’s first daily video web newscast without a television partner. He’s speaking here to Julie Posetti.

WORLD EDITORS FORUM: Can you please identify the biggest emerging trends in the news business that you have observed in 2014?

MICHAEL MANESS: The biggest thing you’re seeing is the creation of new newsrooms. The notion of Omidyar beginning to pull things together [eBay founder Pierre Omidyar is developing First Look Media, a group that aims to present new forms of independent journalism]; the rise of BuzzFeed [which has recently expanded its news offerings and moved into new regions]; Upworthy [a site with a social conscience that targets “things that matter” with a view to sending it viral]; and PolicyMic [a news analysis website geared to young people]. These are user-generated, very sophisticated enterprises around Facebook using social networking, using SEO. You’re maybe seeing more outside of legacy newsrooms in terms of impact.

Upworthy has built one of the fastest growing media companies in the history of the world. Looking at A/B testing of headlines on Facebook, for example [Upworthy curators create at least 25 headlines for a post, then editors test four of those on audiences before settling on one]. Those are the types of things where I feel like you’re really seeing a lot of dynamism in the content and media space. I don’t really see that in legacy newsrooms, though.

If most of the innovation is happening in startups, what does that mean for traditional legacy newsrooms, and how should they respond to that?

I’m surprised at how reluctant they are to engage in new [experiments]... I believe it’s the golden age of journalism, there’s never been more resources, there’s never been more people [telling stories]... Individuals can become powerful communicators and journalists, given the right formats and right approaches. And the reluctance of legacy news organisations to balance what they’ve done in the past and expand into the internet has always been a little bit frustrating. One of the things that is really key is that news organisations recognise they can’t be all things to all people, that this generalist approach probably will not hold. That they need to think about specific audiences, who are they reaching, how would they define them; stop doing other things in order to experiment and move forward.

There’s this sort of arc of the internet... these organisations are dying and they won’t last. But what we’ve been seeing in the last year, year and a half is the incredible valuation of content companies, including some of the largest digital titans of our age moving into content... There is a lack of transformational leadership (within legacy media organisations).
So the innovation you’re talking about is happening in organisations like Facebook, where they seem to be trying to turn themselves into newsrooms, but not within most traditional news organisations?

I think the biggest thing to say is that all of a sudden, all these major players want to be content creators, and here we are with people who are really experts at creating content but whose content is still incredibly focused on a platform. I had a very interesting conversation with the international director for The Guardian… Their paid circulation went up last year for the first time in many years. So it is possible to do that. It’s just that there’s not the energy. I haven’t seen enough of the focus on rethinking what you’re doing.

What are the critical elements that news organisations in your view are getting wrong, if we take The Guardian as an example of where things are going well? Where are the barriers and what are the ways in which editorial leaders are failing to get over them?

If you think about the way journalism used to be done, we’d never produce anything that wasn’t a very polished, finished product. But I think that what’s now important to recognise is that the threads of your content are as important as the finished cloth. What I mean by that is the content you use in the act of creating the polished piece is as important as the finished piece itself.

The Guardian does a very good job of enabling their people to do social media well. So if you’re working on a piece and you’re tweeting about it and Facebooking it and Instagramming it… and then you do a piece that’s a long-form piece that shows up somewhere and that’s smartly done and has a very good digital presence… that’s one thing.

And the other is… I think publishers have to start thinking about themselves as talent agencies. You’re going to have a group of people who are very talented, so how do you best deploy that, how do you help them become known, and not be afraid of them having a multimedia presence?

And then you’re going to have to stop doing some things. The fact that we still have sports reporters at games, writing what happened at the game, is mind-boggling. Because you know most people, the way they’re looking at sports, they have screens, they bring iPads to the football field… There’s no need to have someone saying this is what happened at the game; you need context, analysis, that kind of thing. So they really need to stop some of the things they’re doing in order to create space to try new things out. I’ve been in newsrooms where they’ll say, ‘Well, we have a social media editor, so why should I be on Twitter?’ And I’m like, ‘If you’re a journalist, you should be all over Twitter just because you’re a journalist.’ This notion that all these things are removed from ‘what I’m supposed to be doing’ is very damaging, I think.

Do you still hear in newsrooms, “I don’t do that Twitter thing. The young guy at the back does ‘the Twitter’”?

Yeah, it’s a little surprising… Or that when they do it, they use Twitter as a promotional tool… So it’s like ‘My story’s out, come and look at it.’ Rather than the entire time you’re working on the story, giving dribs and drabs of it.

We just came out with a Facebook study that we did with the American research centre Pew, looking at the way news consumption happens, especially for under-30s on Facebook. And it’s all driven by headline. So is there anyone sitting there thinking, ‘What are we doing with A/B testing of headlines? Let’s put two headlines out and see which one does better. Every day.’ That’s not that hard. But you have to have leadership at a morning news meeting saying what are we doing, what are we experimenting with, what else are we doing. But still it seems to be the same kind of news cycle every day. And I understand, because prior to working at Knight I’ve been at a company where we lost almost half the employees, I think, at this point, so I know there’s a tension, but it’s where you have to say, ‘We’ve got to stop doing some things, so we can start doing new things as well.’
So for organisations that don’t see this, where that is not embedded in the daily news conference, what does the future look like one or two years down the road?

Not good. I think you’re going to start seeing that. One thing we haven’t touched on is mobile. If you’re a news organisation that missed what the internet can do, which is a lot, mobile is your chance to rethink everything and do that. We’re two months away [Editor’s note: this interview was conducted in March 2014] from Google launching very significant ‘wearables’; we’re moving faster, mobile is something that’s going to feel dated. You’re going to have data, and receptors, and watches and who knows what. It’s going to be around contextualisation; [publishers will] know who I am, who my friends are, what I’ve looked at, where I am right now, where other people like me have been.

Those are huge potentials for news organisations to have, but we’re still behind a bit on social media. I haven’t really seen anything to get excited about from legacy news organisations in terms of mobile. And we’re moving into ‘wearables’ even before mobile’s become something. You have to start building these muscles of understanding that this is going to be an endlessly disrupted existence – and if you’re not building an organisation that’s seeking out these things all the time, or at least strategising about them, you’re going to be in trouble.

How do you do that, who should be doing it – CEO, editor-in-chief, social media editor? Who?

It’s a good question. You certainly have to have leadership in it… You have to have really strong operational components to make sure you’re maximising the things you’re doing well and making money in. However, you need a group or strategic focus on what we’re doing next. And you really see this with The Guardian, and they’re very focused – you know, print is the secondary brand, not the primary brand. What that did was to allow the print to try new things, explore different relationships with stores and offerings.

You need to have a group of people who want to start a new thing, and that new thing can ask anything of the mothership, but the mothership can ask nothing of it. So you have to create this kind of Chinese wall… It makes a lot of sense to have two different kinds of operating groups, but to make sure that the strategy group is the more powerful entity in the enterprise.

One of the organisations in the USA that has been very good at moving into the digital future is National Public Radio. The head of digital and content for NPR is the same person. They made the conscious decision to say the future has to have a digital focus.
An easy way for an organisation to embark on these efforts is to do scenarios. Get four or five people together and do a scenario. For instance, ‘Our website is gone – no one buys computers anymore, so we can’t do desktop. What do we do?’ That’s not to come up with solutions, but that gives you the flexibility and begins to bring strategic long-range discussions to the fore.

One of the hardest things for newsrooms... is that they’re incredibly proficient in putting out a new product every 24 hours in the case of print and every few hours in the case of the internet. If you have a system built to do that, it’s very hard to disrupt that, so you have to build these spaces outside of that to do these things. There aren’t organisations who don’t do this kind of thing that survive. Go and ask the chemists at Kodak if they had time to go out and try to figure out what the future would be...

If we were just making widgets and the world decided we don’t need widgets any more, that would be fine. But we’re not – we’re essential to a functioning democracy.

We still need robust news organisations to make sure democracy works, so it’s a strange moment, because it’s an industry that actually is a cornerstone in how we function in terms of civilisation and democracy... Everyone should be concerned about making these things not only to survive but thrive.

Then how do you respond to the critics within traditional media who point to the success of Upworthy and even Buzzfeed and say that’s just headline-grabbing aggregation, that there’s no real democratic function being served there?

The thing that [they should ask is] ‘How do we build audience?’ And if you look at that, instead of dismissing the whole enterprise, you should be saying ‘Holy cow, how did they get that many people paying attention so fast?’ Upworthy is a really good example. There’s nothing to suggest you can’t A/B test serious headlines.

The second thing you see from them [Buzzfeed and Upworthy] is, ‘How are we going to make a business out of this? And after we do that, how do we become more serious?’ I would encourage everyone to look at the memo from the head of Buzzfeed from this year. His point is, ‘We’re going to get a lot more serious this year. We’ve got the audience now and we’re going to have real discussions.’

And journalists forget that, you know. I might only be interested in the football scores, but when I’m going through them, I see that there’s other news that’s happened. It’s a portfolio – you have cartoons and horoscopes and all those things. Well, the difference is the web’s made all that possible all the time. You’re not just competing with another news source, you’re competing with anything that anyone gives attention to in the world. That’s a very different concept.

› Don’t focus on the weaknesses of successful startups. Ask what they are doing right in terms of audience engagement

› Legacy media must stop trying to be all things to all people

› For those who missed the internet, mobile is a chance to regain ground
Thought-leader Interview
Margaret Sullivan
The New York Times

By Julie Posetti

“I’m getting immediate reaction to things that haven’t even been published in the newspaper yet but have only been published online. People are tweeting at me about things, and people are emailing immediately... The pace has really stepped up.”
THOUGHT-LEADER INTERVIEWS: MARGARET SULLIVAN, THE NEW YORK TIMES

The changing role of the Public Editor in the digital era

WORLD EDITORS FORUM: You’re a Public Editor in a time of extraordinary change in journalism, especially with regards to audience engagement, which is one of the critical components of your role. How has your role changed as a result of real-time engagement?

MARGARET SULLIVAN: In the past the Public Editors at The Times really were receiving less letters, phone calls, or perhaps emails, from readers. [Back] then they would read the paper, take some time and deliberate and perhaps do some interviewing. And after a week or so, they might write an article. This was fine and effective but it’s not really my world anymore. I’m getting immediate reaction to things that haven’t even been published in the newspaper but have only been published online. People are tweeting at me about things and people are emailing immediately... The pace has really stepped up and I feel like I have to step up to that in real-time.

What are some of the experiences you’ve had where the feedback is coming at you directly, on Twitter, for example?

There was an obituary of a woman named Yvonne Brill who was a rocket scientist. But the way The

In the social media age, reader complaints land directly in the laps of journalists - or at least in the “interactions” stream of a Twitter feed. What are the effects of this always-on process of public critique on the people we used to call “gatekeepers”? Margaret Sullivan is The New York Times’ Public Editor. She discusses her changing role with Julie Posetti.

Image © Ray Whitehouse
Times wrote the obituary, it emphasised in the first paragraph her ‘domestic skills’. People went nuts about this, especially women and feminists who felt she was not getting her due because of this emphasis on her beef stroganoff. Immediately people were tweeting at me and I started to respond immediately on Twitter and said that I would address it the next day, which I did. The whole cycle took only about 20 hours I think.

To actually shift the direction of the story in other words? From an obituary that was flawed to a correction of sorts?
The obituary itself had changed before it had hit print. Not because of my role but because news staff were hearing the same kinds of things. My role was really to comment on it afterwards, to interview the obituaries editor, to get his explanation and to explicate all of this for the public.

Have you observed the impact of the same levels of engagement with other journalists at The New York Times - you’re often commenting in response to the critique that they’re getting. What about them?
I think they’re not particularly encouraged, for good reason, to be too quick to respond on Twitter. They’re really not supposed to get into any kind of road-rage situation on Twitter where people are tweeting nasty things at each other. A little bit of delay and some wisdom is encouraged, but there’s no question that every journalist is being responded to in different ways now and much more quickly.

What are some of the positive and negative impacts of that reality?
One of the positive impacts is that we’re finding out what we got wrong straight away. This goes for myself as well. If I have a fact wrong or I’m just saying something that is inaccurate, I’m going to find out about it within moments. It’s really quite incredible. The downside is that there’s this barrage of information coming at you and you really don’t know what to pick up on and what to leave behind.

What about critique that goes beyond fair and reasonable criticism, and ventures into abuse. What’s your approach to that?
You don’t respond. Sometimes the smartest thing to do is absolutely nothing and walk away from the keyboard. What I’ve found is that if you give it a day or two, sometimes it takes longer, but if things don’t deserve a response or it’s just too much or it’s just too crazy, then the thing to do is just to shut it down, move onto something else.

When should you respond, and if there is a justification to respond, how do you respond?
I think if there’s a valid criticism or a factual error or a thoughtful comment, that those are all great things to respond to but if it’s abusive or trolling, forget it.

How has your use of Twitter and other social media activity - your engagement with the audience via online comments - changed your approach to, and practice of, journalism?
Well, I think that one of the things that’s happening is that we’re using reader comment to form the next part of the story. That’s something that I’m seeing more and more of where an initial story, perhaps it’s about health care, brings forth this volley of information and then we pick up on that and write a second story from there. It can really inform the journalism in a user-generated way that’s really valuable.

What about the ways in which reporting processes have sped up courtesy of platforms like Twitter and their implications for credibility and accuracy in terms of verification?
One of the things I really admire about The New York Times is that it sometimes will not be first to report a story. I mean, I remember being really shocked, actually, at how slow it was to call the result of the presidential election in 2012. Where was The Times calling this election? It was pretty clear what had happened but they have a very strict internal process and a number of people including Jill Abramson (former Executive Editor of the NYT) who had to sort of sign off on it and say ‘Now we’re
going to do it’. I guess the overall big-picture answer is that faster is not always better. Sometimes it’s better to be - well, no one wants to be last, you don’t have to be last - but you don’t always have to be first because sometimes that means being wrong.

So there’s a role for slow news even in this high-speed environment?
I’m reluctant to say that because I think we do have to be fast but I don’t think we have to necessarily be first.

I observed your role in addressing the issue that came about when former NYT Executive Editor Bill Keller critiqued a woman for live tweeting her battle with cancer, which was hugely problematic, and there was a very big response. That must have been difficult to handle. How did you navigate that process?
I’ve had a number of situations in which it’s just extremely uncomfortable. I mean, Bill Keller is one of the most revered journalists at The New York Times and I admire and respect him very much, but in this case I thought that his tone was a little off, and that the whole idea of him and his wife, Emma Gilbey Keller, both writing columns on the same subject, it had to be addressed. I tried to be... moderate and I tried to get his point of view, express that and express my own point of view in this low-key, firm kind of way... It’s a tightrope, it’s not going to be comfortable at all.

But it has to be done?
It does. I mean there’s no point in me doing this job if I don’t take on the big stories that are coming up and that was a very big story.
Thought-leader Interview
Joseph Odindo
Nation Media Group

By Julie Posetti

“Newspapers that do not carry big stories, that do not blow their readers away every so often with a big exposé or a remarkable piece of explanatory journalism, lose relevance and respect as well as circulation.”
Africa’s push for its exploding young digital market

**WORLD EDITORS FORUM: What top three trends in newsrooms is Nation Media seeing? How are you responding to them?**

**JOSEPH ODINDO:** Three broad trends stand out around the content, the consumer and the container. That is, what kind of content is being consumed, who is consuming it, and how.

**Content:** We are seeing growing interest in functional content that both informs and empowers audiences. We recently launched an agricultural-focused section in Uganda and Kenya that takes an important subject, which was previously under-reported or reported in a dull, boring manner, and shows how people can make money from the land. These successful sections show us that sometimes what matters is not re-inventing content but making it more relevant.

**Consumer:** The demographics in our market are extremely young. In Uganda, which has one of the youngest populations in the world, more than six out of every 10 people are aged 24 and below. Their needs are not always the same as those in the traditional and now older demographics, so we are having to retool ourselves to speak to this generation. For instance, we have a growing focus on telling stories more graphically and simply, using ‘sticky’ techniques [which encourage people to stay with content] such as visualisations. We are also experimenting with a hyperlocal city paper, the Nairobi News, in Kenya.

**Container:** Many of these young people are digital natives. Some have never bought a printed newspaper in their lives and might never see the need to do so. They consume their media on-the-go, mostly through smartphones and tablets. This means retooling our newsrooms to serve bite-sized content, such as breaking news alerts, developing mobile-ready websites, and engaging more through social media, where sharing and feedback is at the heart of the information cycle. Working with telephone companies in Tanzania and Kenya, we have developed news apps and e-newspapers to follow this growing digital demographic to their devices. We have also equipped our journalists, many of them young digital natives, with smartphones and are training them to report on-the-go, through Twitter, and live blogging, to audiences that increasingly consume on-the-go.

**Given this focus on mobile news delivery and consumption, what lessons have you learned about mobile storytelling and content production in the past year?**

The most important lesson for us has been that even though many times mobile is treated as a distinct, stand-alone platform, for a media house like ours it’s just the first point of engagement with our audience. The people who get the SMS alert and social media updates on their phones are the same ones who end up buying the newspaper the following day. We are...
always seeking to understand how they consume content differently at all those levels, with the goal of seeing how to better serve them.

The mobile nature of audience engagement – which encourages instantaneous, unmediated responses via social media platforms – is problematic in regards to hate speech, both in terms of journalists being targeted and media outlets needing to change approaches to community interaction. How has NMG responded to this amplification of hate speech online through policies and procedures?

Hate speech is an ever-present challenge in our setting, and we have had to, for example, employ moderators to review web comments before they are published on our websites. The same team intervenes whenever debate on our Facebook wall gets out of hand, which tends to happen with some political stories. We have published summarised blog rules to guide web users on what we allow. This stance definitely chips off press freedom, but we promise our audiences a certain level of decorum in debates happening in our platforms, and this is just a standard we have embraced, have publicly communicated and expect to be held up to. One key duty of an editor is to set the tone on which issues would be canvassed in his/her platform. It only follows that those who breach such a tone forfeit their right to participate.

You have highlighted the need for “bite-sized content” to attract younger readers and outlined a focus on speed connected to mobile consumption. But at the other end of the spectrum, NMG has broken several big stories in the past year. Why do big stories still matter? And how do they fit into the public conversation around your content?

The Westgate terrorist attack in Nairobi last September was a breaking story, rather than a story we broke, but it played out for months and inspired several spin-off stories and investigations, particularly into the competence and professionalism of the Kenyan security agencies. The exposé, in the Daily Monitor of Uganda, of alleged killer squads in Uganda through the now-exiled former head of the country’s intelligence services, caused reverberations that continue to this day in that country. In Kenya, the Sunday Nation uncovered the scandal of the extravagant hire of executive jets for Kenya’s newly-elected deputy president.

Big stories matter because they have impact and context. They speak to the reader, showing them why the subject of the story matters to their lives, while allowing them to join the conversation and commentary once they are published. In a world of user-generated content and where form and functionality increasingly hold sway, it takes the substantiality of a big story told well to change lives, hold those in authority accountable, and advance the cause of democracy and good governance. Newspapers that do not carry big stories, that do not blow their readers away every so often with a big exposé or remarkable piece of explanatory journalism, lose relevance and respect as well as circulation. I would dare to say that in a world of 140 characters, big, bold stories are the lifeblood of the newspaper business.
Thought-leader Interview
Vivian Schiller

Twitter

By Julie Posetti

“With more than 500 million tweets sent each day, journalists are able to detect breaking news and trends, discover eyewitnesses and sources, and find images with previously unimagined speed and accuracy.”
THOUGHT-LEADER INTERVIEWS: VIVIAN SCHILLER

How Twitter continues to change news gathering

Before joining Twitter as Head of News earlier this year, Vivian Schiller spent 25 years working for some of the world’s leading journalism enterprises, with experiences across editorial and business. She was president and CEO of US public broadcaster NPR before joining NBC News as senior VP and chief digital officer.

“I used to believe that being on the inside of a news organization staffed with reporters was the only way to have an impact. But when Twitter came along, my thinking fundamentally changed,” Schiller told Julie Posetti.

WORLD EDITORS FORUM: What prompted you to make the jump from mainstream media to Twitter?
VIVIAN SCHILLER: Twitter has changed the way that people discover and engage with news – myself included. As a live and public platform, Twitter contributes to news cycles in a powerful way. In short, it is the perfect complement to news organisations to help them grow their audiences and their impact. So when the opportunity came along to join Twitter, I jumped at it!

What are your key goals in your first year as Twitter’s head of news?
My main goal is to help journalists and news organisations leverage the power of Twitter to grow audiences, revenue and impact.

How significant, in your view, is the role of news to Twitter’s success and its future business model?
Twitter’s goal is to reach every person on the planet. And every person on the planet cares about news. So it’s pretty important!

Twitter was first cast as a breaking news platform in 2008. How has that role evolved since then? How do you see Twitter’s role in the context of news and journalism in 2014?

Twitter continues to be an amazing platform for breaking news. But it also helps news organisations detect news, trends and shifts in public opinion. It is an amazing tool for reporters to use to find sources and eyewitnesses, a powerful platform for distributing news to a wide audience. And of course Twitter is a great platform to engage in a public dialogue about what’s happening around the corner and around the world.

What are Twitter’s main objectives with regard to individual journalists using the platform?
Twitter has become essential to journalists for news detection and reporting. With more than 500 million tweets sent each day, journalists are able to detect breaking news and trends, discover eyewitnesses and sources, and find images with previously unimagined speed and accuracy. Twitter is also a great way for journalists to build their profile and reputation among sources and audiences.

What are Twitter’s main objectives as the company connects with newsrooms and news organisations?
News organisations are finding Twitter to be the ideal complement at every step of their news cycle – from detecting breaking news, to reporting and...
verifying stories, to distributing stories to new and existing users and engaging with audiences to build loyalty and sources. My team is focused on helping news organisations take full advantage of those tools to grow their audience, revenue and impact.

**What do you predict are the next big challenges facing Twitter at the platform’s intersection with news and journalism?**

It’s all about continuous improvement. How can we reach more news organisations across multiple beats? How can we help journalists with more and better tools to help them detect breaking news? How can we help measure success? How can we come up with more creative ways to engage with audiences? This is the kind of stuff we’re working on and thinking about all the time.

**What’s the future of Twitter’s role in the ‘Holy Grail’ pursuit of social verification tools/processes?**

Verification is something our partners care a great deal about, and it’s a place Twitter has a lot to offer. For example, Tweetdeck contains a very powerful set of filtering tools that can aid with verification, with more on the roadmap. And we’re working with several third-party partners, such as Dataminr and Timeline Labs, who are working on detection and verification signals.

**How do you see audio, video and images evolving on Twitter?**

Twitter is committed to bringing media forward as part of the consumer experience, as you can see today with ‘Twitter cards.’ We started last year with expanded images in the home timeline, adding multiple photos and tagging just this past month. We know that media attached to a tweet drives engagement, and indeed it is a great experience, both for news consumers and for news organisations that want their stories seen and heard.

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To many social media users, it seems Twitter is increasingly mimicking Facebook and vice versa. Can you foresee a time when there’s only one dominant convergent social media platform?

The public, live, conversational and widely distributed nature of Twitter makes it uniquely suited to news, but certainly there is room for many platforms in our connected world.

**How is Twitter changing journalism, in your view?**

The fundamentals of journalism have not changed insofar as the principles of fairness, accuracy and impartiality remain paramount. But the tools and platforms have most certainly changed – with Twitter at the top of the list. Because Twitter is public, live and widely distributed, Twitter can help journalists in previously unimagined ways to grow and engage audiences, build their business and have an impact. It is already an indispensable tool for professional journalists and I envisage that will both deepen and broaden.

- Twitter remains an important platform for breaking news
- The platform is working with partners to develop better verification tools
Trend 01

Shielding journalism in the Age of Surveillance

Julie Posetti

The fallout from the #Snowden leaks has had a profound impact on journalism & should occupy editors much more urgently #TrendsInNewsrooms
...the new challenge this year is how to maintain the internet as somewhere for free expression and innovation.”

- Michael Maness, VP Journalism and Innovation, Knight Foundation

In the post-Snowden-leaks era, newsrooms are increasingly aware of state-sponsored breaches of privacy and the threat they pose to journalists and their sources. Many newsrooms have introduced sophisticated anti-surveillance technology, and others have literally reverted to notepad, pen and clandestine meetings in the interests of shielding their sources and avoiding state, and corporate, electronic surveillance.

As Editor-in-Chief of The Guardian, Alan Rusbridger, has observed: “Orwell could never have imagined anything as complete as this, this concept of scooping up everything all the time.”

To what degree is Big Brother watching newsrooms?

The media landscape has been transformed by the leaking of a vast cache of secret intelligence documents by Edward Snowden, a former contractor with the US National Security Agency. He leaked not only a trove of US federal documents but thousands of secret British, Australian and Canadian intelligence files. The first news reports based on the leaks were published by The Washington Post and The Guardian in June 2013. The headline story: the vast extent of global surveillance of both foreign nationals and US citizens by the NSA and its international partners.

- Extreme surveillance by the state is widespread and journalists must learn new techniques to combat it
- Lack of awareness, poor in-house training and poor management in newsrooms are contributing factors
- Without action to ensure confidentiality, investigative journalism is under threat
Rusbridger told a conference in New York in 2013 that the Snowden leaks had shown how the world of spying had changed incomparably in the past 15 years. “The ability of these big agencies, on an international basis, to keep entire populations under some form of surveillance, and their ability to use engineering and algorithms to erect a system of monitoring and surveillance, is astonishing,” he said.

This has enormous implications for journalism. Janine Gibson is The Guardian’s US editor and she led the paper’s coverage of Snowden in the United States. She told the World Editors Forum that the impact of the story cannot be over-stated: “...the implications are so profound and so hard to talk about without sounding like a member of the ‘tin foil hat brigade’, but it is going to become one of the most preoccupying issues for journalists, and should be more urgently [addressed].” (See Gibson’s thought-leader interview at the front of this report about her experience of the Snowden story).

Alan Pearce, journalist, broadcaster and author of Deep Web for Journalists: Comms, Counter-Surveillance, Search, says the threat to journalism posed by state surveillance cannot be over-estimated: “Any reasonable intelligence agency is capable of tapping phones, intercepting email and following our every move – both online and in the real world.”

The Süddeutsche Zeitung’s Deputy Editor-in-Chief, Wolfgang Krach, says the Snowden case has had a two-pronged impact on journalism. “I think on one hand it will encourage more journalists than before to investigate before putting any trust or faith into the authorities,” he told the World Editors Forum. “On the other hand, it is bound to change our journalistic behaviour; we have to re-think completely our dealing with sources, with people and whistleblowers who give us information.”

But it’s not just the agencies like the NSA that journalists and editors need to worry about,
according to Pearce. “There are all sorts of people who pose a threat to the Press and to our sources—criminal organisations, corporations, political parties, armed factions, the mega-wealthy, and law firms and the private investigators that they hire,” he says. “Most corporations have their own intelligence units. They want to know what their competitors are up to. They want to know who is asking awkward questions about them and who is leaking secrets. And they will be very happy to read your next story about them before you even publish it.”

That’s a warning that would no doubt resonate strongly with the author commissioned by The Guardian to write a book about the Edward Snowden case, Luke Harding. He revealed in an article for The Guardian earlier this year that he watched paragraphs of his work disappear from his computer screen before his eyes. “I wrote that Snowden’s revelations had damaged US tech companies and their bottom line. Something odd happened,” he reported. “The paragraph I had just written began to self-delete. The cursor moved rapidly from the left, gobbling text. I watched my words vanish. When I tried to close my OpenOffice file the keyboard began flashing and bleeping.”

The Snowden leaks brought the wrath of British intelligence down upon The Guardian. Editor Rusbridger was told to hand over or destroy all the Snowden material the paper was working on or face the paper’s reporting on the issue being shut down by legal action. “Prior restraint, near impossible in the US, was now explicitly and imminently on the table in the UK,” he wrote. In the end, the paper felt forced to destroy the hard drives and memory cards on which encrypted files leaked by American whistle-blower Edward Snowden had been stored.

Time to revert to meetings in dark car parks?

Rusbridger says that The Guardian journalists now use encryption techniques and have changed the way they talk on phones and use email following the Snowden investigation.

He told a conference at the London School of Economics in March 2014 that it is now nearly impossible for journalists to maintain the confidentiality of their sources because of the threat posed by surveillance. “Every journalist should understand that there is no such thing as confidential digital communication. None of us have confidential sources,” he said. “We are all going to have to work on this in this world where people can intercept everything.”

The Guardian’s special projects editor in the US, Alan Pearce, journalist, broadcaster and author of Deep Web for Journalists: Comms, Counter-Surveillance, Search

...I know lots of journalists who say they are willing to go to jail to protect the identity of a source, and yet they don’t even take elementary precautions to safeguard the contacts in their smartphone.”

- Alan Pearce, journalist, broadcaster and author of Deep Web for Journalists: Comms, Counter-Surveillance, Search
James Ball, worked closely on the Snowden story. In May 2013, he told the International Journalism Festival in Perugia that he resorted to flying across the Atlantic to discuss work in person rather than risk relying on technology. He estimated that he flew 130,000 miles in May 2013.

Pearce sees the irony of resorting to traditional, face-to-face methods of communication on a high-tech story but he appreciates the necessity. “Mass surveillance threatens the existence of the press. If we cannot research in private and correspond in confidence, then we are all compromised,” he told The World Editors Forum.

Understanding of that new reality has already dawned at Germany’s Süddeutsche Zeitung. “We may even have to resort partially to more old-fashioned methods, not to send important papers via email, to meet people in streets, stop communicating exclusively via email and phone. I think it’s necessary,” Krach cautions. “We are a leading newspaper with a strong team of investigating journalists; we have to be sure of our sources. The Snowden case revealed new and unbelievable things... The bitter experience for us is that we’ve been much too naive in dealing with our sources.”

Going back to paper and pen may seem like an over-reaction to the surveillance threat but Pearce argues that even that approach won’t guarantee privacy: “There is always a case for meeting contacts face-to-face and using a notebook and pen. But how will they arrange to meet secretly in a dark car park if their telephones are tapped and their email is being intercepted?”
Managing the threat

The Knight Foundation’s VP of Journalism and Media Innovation, Michael Maness, says that the need to manage exposure to surveillance is an emerging trend in newsrooms globally: “…the new challenge this year is how to maintain the internet as somewhere for free expression and innovation,” he told The World Editors Forum.

But Alan Pearce believes most editors and newsrooms are failing the challenge: “I know lots of journalists who say they are willing to go to jail to protect the identity of a source, and yet they don’t even take elementary precautions to safeguard the contacts in their smartphone.”

The Guardian’s Rusbridger blames the failure of journalists to try to shield themselves from surveillance on technology barriers: “…peer-to-peer encryption is difficult for most journalists and it is quite time-consuming and most journalists don’t do it.”

But the problem is amplified by a lack of newsroom leadership, according to Pearce. He argues that it’s every editor’s responsibility to ensure that all journalists they employ understand the threats and know how to work around them. “How many news organisations employ a cyber-security officer? How many have in-house training, showing journalists the threats they face and how to combat them?” Pearce asks. He also points to the absence of cyber-security and counter-surveillance methods in journalism school curricula as a problem that needs addressing.

The importance of training in the fight against the impact of surveillance on journalism, including defensive mechanisms against the misuse of technology to track journalists for physical retribution, has also been highlighted by Freedom House. In its report What Next, The Quest to Protect Journalists and Human Rights Defenders in a Digital World, Freedom House argues that there is an “irresponsible” emphasis on anti-surveillance tools at the expense of training, “Digital security tools are useless if they are not introduced with proper training.”

The rise of mobile technology in reporting, alongside the threat of state-based agency mobile data collection, heightens the risks experienced by journalists and their sources, in Maness’ view: “…we don’t even know the data, we cannot see the data that’s being collected, so that would be the first thing I would talk about as a solution - any piece of data that a company or government gathers on you, you (need to) see what that is,” he told The World Editors Forum.

Dan Gillmor is director of the Knight Center for Digital Media Entrepreneurship at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism, and a fellow at the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University. An online journalism pioneer, Gillmor has issued a ‘call to arms’ among journalists in response to the surveillance threat post-Snowden: “We have to take back the control that we are losing to these governments and other companies. In some ways we are giving it to them – if you use a mobile phone – these are spying devices as much as mobile devices”, he told a packed theatre at the International Journalism Festival in Perugia in May.

What can journalists and newsrooms do?

The Süddeutsche Zeitung’s Krach is acutely aware of the threat and his newsroom has changed reporting practices accordingly: “Investigative reporters are key to our way of verifying sources. Many of our colleagues are working with encrypted emails now - no one could’ve imagined that before! I partially encrypt my emails, which I never did before. And I know that even this isn’t sufficient - they can read anything in the end if they want.”

Pearce argues that cyber-security awareness should now be a standard feature of a working journalist’s essential skill-set. “In the same way you would expect a journalist to have a working knowledge of the law; you should expect them to be able to operate safely online, and not to compromise their employers or contacts,” he says.

Meantime, Knight’s Michael Maness points to the need for newsroom-specific data-protection programmes for databases and internet service providers (ISPs). These include the suite developed by one of the Knight Foundation’s funding recipients, Tor, an internet privacy tool developed to protect privacy and anonymity online. “…All these
people go off their company email and use Gmail and think that’s okay... doing things that are not safe by any means and so I would really encourage people to explore the suite of services Tor provides,” he said. Tor is designed to stop others – including government agencies and corporations – learning where a user is, or tracking a user's browsing. It’s technology, which some users describe as cumbersome, bounces traffic through “relays” run by thousands of volunteers around the world. (See also Pearce’s suggested tools below.)

Some editors cite the prohibitive cost of technology-based solutions as a barrier to better privacy protection in newsrooms. But Pearce insists that cost isn’t an issue. “ Mostly, cyber-security is a mind-set. It doesn’t have to be about expensive tools and equipment. In fact, most of the best tools are free and open-source because there are lots of people fighting mass surveillance,” he says. “If you combine technologies and tools in certain ways, you can go entirely unobserved because – no matter where the threat comes from – they can only see things if they know where to look. Mostly, we are dealing with computer logic. We have human logic. Our duty is to confound them all and operate in unexpected ways.”

**ALAN PEARCE TIPS: 10 TIPS FOR EDITORS**

- Raise the drawbridge: Install anti-spyware and anti-malware in all your devices - AVG or Avast.
- Be alert: Scan all attachments, be cautious following links and never accept updates. Update all software manually.
- Browse safe: Mask your identity with a VPN (Virtual Private Network) such as VyprVPN. Install HTTPS Finder or HTTPS Everywhere. Kill trackers with Do Not Track Me.
- Secure messaging: Scramble calls with Silent Phone. Encrypt text messages with Perzo. Open an email account with unseen.is.
- Protect sources: Hide contact details and encrypt all communications.
- Know your adversary: Understand who has a vested interest in knowing what you are doing and find ways to confound them.
- Standard procedures: Have systems in place to communicate secretly and transfer documents securely.
- Dive down rabbit-holes: Give them something to monitor. Carry on using unsecure email and texts but the instant you need secrecy, operate in unexpected ways.
- Get smart: Understand how the ‘bad guys’ operate so you can avoid their traps.
- Train every journalist: All news employees must be internet-savvy.

Alan Pearce is the author of “Deep Web for Journalists: Comms, Counter-Surveillance, Search”.

*...we have to re-think completely our dealing with sources, with people and whistleblowers who give us information.*

- Wolfgang Krach, Süddeutsche Zeitung’s Deputy Editor-in-Chief
INTERVIEW: Global action on rights to privacy and freedom of expression

The United Nations made history in December 2013 in adopting a resolution on the Right to Privacy in the Digital Age, which recognises the need to uphold people’s privacy rights online, as well as offline. This followed the adoption of a resolution on freedom of information and privacy by UNESCO’s 195 member states, formally recognising the value of investigative journalism to society, and the role of privacy in ensuring that function.

“...privacy is essential to protect journalistic sources, which enable a society to benefit from investigative journalism, to strengthen good governance and the rule of law, and that such privacy should not be subject to arbitrary or unlawful interference,” the resolution reads in part.

The resolution, which represents a significant but under-recognised endorsement of investigative journalism, was brought by Brazil and adopted at UNESCO’s General Conference in November 2013. UNESCO is now undertaking a consultative study on privacy, free expression, access and ethics on the internet and the Organisation’s Director of Freedom of Expression and Media Development Guy Berger is interested in hearing from editors and journalists on the issues. Research Editor, Julie Posetti, asked Berger to explain the role of privacy in the protection of journalists’ sources.

GUY BERGER: Whistleblowers will fear contacting journalists if they have reason to doubt confidentiality. The effect? Less news about corruption or abuse will enter the public domain, and everyone will be information-poorer. No action can be taken on problems that remain hidden. All this is why many countries have laws which shield journalists from having to reveal their sources.

WORLD EDITORS FORUM: What are the potential consequences if sources’ privacy is subjected to “arbitrary or unlawful interference”?

If there is no adequate protection, this has a “chilling” effect in that people do not feel safe to speak to the press. This is why it is a key journalistic ethic to shield sources from being exposed, sometimes even sustained by reporters at great personal cost and in the face of a legal process. It is especially the untoward pressures, however, which put the reputation of the profession at greatest risk.

How difficult to navigate are the tensions surrounding the balance between freedom of expression and privacy in the practice of journalism?

Law enforcement agents may cite a legitimate interest in overriding journalists’ interests in privacy of sources, and each side may have a case. The balance has to be made with reference to the widest public interest and the longer-term effect of information flows when sources are not guaranteed confidentiality. Any court of law that weighs the issues needs to keep in mind the international standards of necessity and proportionality. In order to pursue justice based on media revelations, it is often not necessary to demand that a journalist disclose secret sources – other channels are available. In addition, only a portion of information may be needed for law enforcement authorities to do their job. So, nuance is needed when resolving tensions.
Is there enough awareness of these issues among editors and journalists broadly? Why should they be concerned and active on these issues?

People in the media are very aware of these issues all the time. They know full well that their claims to source privacy are not so much individual rights as an attribute of their community of professional practice. The privacy is essential to them (in) their public service role. Most journalists know well that the general privacy of ordinary citizens should be respected, for example none would argue that there was public interest justification in the UK phone-hacking cases. At the same time, an investigative journalist will know that anyone’s claims to privacy are a sham if the intention is to conceal ills like theft, pollution, illegal money-laundering or domestic abuse.

With the benefit of UNESCO’s global view, what is the future for journalism based on confidential sources post-Snowden?

Just because it is technically possible in many cases to uncover journalists’ sources, does not mean that this is legitimate in terms of law or practice. By strengthening the social limits on surveillance, the technological threat to confidentiality can be mitigated. Increasing numbers of countries have laws protecting the confidentiality of journalists’ sources, which demonstrates a recognition of why this confidentiality is valuable for the public interest. This is a trend that needs encouragement.

What prospect is there to engage with states, nationally and internationally, to ensure that surveillance has boundaries, is transparent, has independent oversight and recourse, and also offers protection to whistle-blowers?

Governments themselves need to take the wider view: intrusion into the confidentiality of sources may yield short-term results for some state agencies, but in the longer term the impact is to cramp the extent of public information generated by journalists. Even spy agencies have an interest in sources and the public at large trusting the media, as this situation produces far more quality information that is relevant to intelligence, than even the biggest agency could generate through its own covert efforts. This and other arguments should be made to legislators, oversight agencies, prosecutors, police, military and so on.
Trend 02
Mobilising for a perfect storm
Karen Kissane

Hitting a moving target: how to keep up in an “endlessly disrupted existence” & thrive in the mobile-first era #TrendsInNewsrooms
Most media analysts agree the shift is now unstoppable: mobile devices – telephones and tablets – are about to overtake desktop computers as the main way the digital world gets its news. 

_The Financial Times_ reports that it already has 62 percent of readers accessing news from phones or tablets and only 38 percent using desktop. “Desktop is the new print. It’s static, one-dimensional and it’s slowly becoming more and more marginal to our business,” the _FT.com_’s Head of Operations, Lisa MacLeod, told a World Editors Forum board meeting in February 2014. She identified the shift as sudden and dramatic: at the beginning of 2010, “It was zero access by mobile. It’s an absolutely phenomenal change.”

In 2012, the International Newsmedia Marketing Association, (INMA) published a white paper highlighting the mobile publishing strategies of 15 news organisations – eight US-based and seven from other nations. The lead finding was a consensus that by 2015, more news would be consumed on mobile devices than on desktops or in print. It’s not surprising, given that by the end of this year there will be more mobile phones than people on Earth, with more than 7.4 billion mobile phones in use, according to the International Telecommunications Union. Mobile news “is not a fad,” says Robb Montgomery, a Berlin-based journalist and consultant on the creation of mobile-reporting newsrooms: “It’s the way the world is going.”

This is not just a first-world experience. “Mobile-first” has swept the developing nations of Africa even more dramatically. The continent’s news outlets now prioritise mobile, says Professor Harry Dugmore, formerly Chair of Media and Mobile Communication at Rhodes University in South Africa, where he now directs the _Discovery Centre for Health Journalism_. He says only 18 percent of South Africans have a computer but 84 percent have at least a mobile phone, and phones are becoming cheaper and more powerful every year. “Because most people who are online are online on their mobile phones, in almost every African country, it makes sense for news organisations to think ‘small screen’ and ‘mobile’ in everything they do,” he says. “Smart phones are also getting adopted rapidly (about 20 percent of all mobile phone users...
in South Africa), and those are very powerful news consumption devices. For some African publishers, it has meant a reprieve from having to run a news website at all, says Dugmore. “Social media changes things too; why run a website when you can run a great Facebook page?”

**The next big thing and the next big challenge**

For print editors scrambling to keep up with the industry’s perfect storm of technological and market change, the transition to mobile is yet another challenge. They must work out how to wrestle the technology into shape; how to maximise bang-for-the-buck with social media, which drives a lot of the traffic to news on mobile devices; how to reconfigure the newsroom around reporters using mobile devices to gather and file (see Top Tips for Mobile Editors at the end of this chapter); and, not least, how to make money from news on mobile phones, which so far has proved more difficult to sell to advertisers than news on tablets, which in turn has not attracted the same revenues as print. All the while keeping a weather eye out for The Next Big Thing, which is likely to be ‘wearables’ that deliver the news on Lilliputian screens, such as smart watches and the Google Glass head-mounted internet viewer.

Because most people who are online are online on their mobile phones, in almost every African country, it makes sense for news organisations to think ‘small screen’ and ‘mobile’ in everything they do.”

- Professor Harry Dugmore, Rhodes University, South Africa.

Is it a big ask at a time when revenues are falling and newsrooms are stretched thin? “You betcha,” says Stephen Hutcheon, Innovation Editor with the *Sydney Morning Herald* (Fairfax Media, Australia). “Most newsrooms around the world are in this transitional stage from the good old days, with many people on hand, to a much leaner and meaner set-up, and that is particularly true for the mainstream or traditional media which still has print going on.”

This means few publishers can afford the luxury of a mobile-only production team, such as the one that created *The New York Times*...
mobile app, he says. “This is the big year when the crossover [to consumers coming first to the site with their mobiles] happens. It’s already happened on Facebook, which was ahead of the curve. It’s just a reflection of the fact that everyone has a smartphone and everyone is using it at different times of day – in front of the TV, on the bus, when they get up in the morning. But we still have this situation where all the producers [of news] working on digital platforms work on desktop. Most of what they see is desktop; they don’t look at the phone as often, and even fewer look at the tablet.”

But mobile delivery is technically complex. Complicating factors include screen size, the brand of the device, the operating system, and whether the customer is accessing the site via the web or an app, to name just a few. All content needs to be mobile-friendly, says Hutcheon. “I see stuff every day that goes up on mobile by default,” he says. “It’s not necessarily us. It’s the same experience you got when something from print was migrated to online without any thought of that online audience. In most cases, it inherits elements that appear on the desktop website – say, a graphic or a font size – but when you shrink it down to a seven-inch screen on a mobile phone, you can’t read it. The same applies to things like interactives.”

Rick Edmonds is the media business analyst for The Poynter Institute for Journalism in Florida, USA. He warns that another trap is to link to a story or element, only for the reader to discover that the linked item is not functional on a mobile screen. Smartphone users are also more likely to demand quick and easy access to basic information such as weather and traffic reports, he says. For this and other reasons, “you need some key hires, tech-programming types, who are very specific to mobile, to bring it off,” he says. “Looking at smaller papers, and papers that struggled longer with print as the main focus, they may not be doing well ...”
Edmonds and other analysts believe that startups are often managing to gain a toe-hold in the mobile-first environment better than legacy media. “Legacy media are still finding their place in the system, but the experience of certain startups suggests that in some ways starting fresh is better, rather than struggling to adapt your content management system (CMS) from legacy,” he says. He points to BuzzFeed, Vice, and Vox as examples of new media outfits doing mobile well.

“Quartz, an online-only business, is a magazine put out by The Atlantic,” Edmonds says. “It was designed specifically for digital and for mobile; stories are very short and the display is very good. It can be done.”

Also notable for best practice is another new platform, Circa, says David Earley, Engagement Editor with Australia’s The Courier-Mail newspaper, owned by News Corp. “Circa are mobile- and app-based,” he says. “They are not like a big publisher, they are a startup. They allow you to follow certain stories and they send you updates on those stories: bite-sized chunks of key information. If you are following Ukraine, you will get notification when that story is updated with new information. You can tailor it, and it’s not static information every time.”

Earley’s new job title, bestowed in 2013, is linked to the realisation that the work of legacy media is now inextricably intertwined with social media. It is

“Desktop is the new print. It’s static, one-dimensional and it’s slowly becoming more and more marginal to our business.”

- Lisa MacLeod, Head of Operations, FT.com
Earley’s task to use social media to win – and hold – readers. For Fairfax Media, says Hutcheon, most traffic “still comes in through the front door.” For some other Australian publications, Google is the main driver of mobile traffic to websites, but this is followed by traffic from social media, particularly the mobile-first Facebook. “In the USA, it is easily up to 30 percent from social media,” Earley says. “Some of the bigger properties, like The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal, would probably get a much larger percentage than we do from social media because their brand is worldwide.”

The Courier-Mail decided to push harder to win social-media traffic, which mostly comes to news from a mobile device. “We have grown our Facebook audience by almost five times in the last six months,” Earley says. “It was a push. We made a concerted effort. We posted more stories, more often. We really consciously made sure that we were posting stuff in an engaging way and that we were doing stuff with pictures, and it’s worked.” He says the other challenges are to keep the reader on the story for longer, and then to seduce the reader into other stories on the site.

**The money issue**

So if you build it, they will come. But how do you pay for it? The person who reads news on mobile is a different animal from the desktop reader, says Edmonds, although there is also a third group that consumes across all platforms. But he warns, “Someone who consumes news on mobile for five minutes a day is a bit different to someone who reads the paper for half an hour on a more traditional website.” Patterns differ in lots of ways; the FT has found that its mobile customers tend to use phones on weekdays and tablets on weekends, while Earley reports that mobile access peaks outside of work hours, at the beginning and end of the day.

Hutcheon says that for Fairfax, tablets drive digital subscriptions; the FT and other iconic mastheads like the NYT offer bundled subscriptions across all platforms in an attempt to monetise digital. But mobile phone delivery of news is a hard sell. “The big problem with mobile is that it doesn’t make nearly as much money as desktop,” Hutcheon says. “While it increases the number of readers who are coming to your content, unfortunately it’s not delivering what the desktop delivers. It’s purely a real-estate factor; there’s not enough space on that tiny screen to charge high CPMs (clicks-per-mille or thousand page views).” If you do place prominent ads on such small screens, he says, “you take the risk of annoying your readers.” Mario Calabresi, Editor-in-Chief of Italy’s La Stampa, says of mobile content, “It’s really hard to find the right way into it. We managed to figure out a business model for the website and the tablet – if not sustainable, at least credible – but we’re not there yet for mobile.”

Edmonds says advertisers are wrestling with the same questions editors are, and are no closer
“Advertisers know that mobile is a key platform, and it’s good for things that are geo-specific or that you can actually use when you are shopping, or out and about – comparing prices at different sales, or finding a local restaurant. What is a lot harder is to have advertising that makes sense in the context of a news presentation. Does the ad display on the screen, is it logical, can it be broken into parts?” he says. “It’s partly for this reason that a lot of the digital advertising has been soaked up by the big companies like Facebook and Twitter. I think it’s an open question that’s going to be open for some years yet.”

**Wearables’ momentum**

Meanwhile, mobile is no longer the question in cutting-edge newsrooms. Wearables are the next challenge. “I certainly think the trend in wearables is on an unstoppable trajectory,” says Hutcheon. “It will happen this year with smart watches. I’m not sure how smart watches will help journalism per se, but I do see things like Google Glass and drones playing a big part,” he says. You can live-stream a news conference through a Google Glass; you could take pictures of people from that point of view. It’s a bit gimmicky still, but I think eventually it will be huge and mainstream. If you cast your mind back 20 years, to how odd it was for someone to be walking around the street in headphones and a Walkman, and now everyone has them.”

South Africa’s Dugmore is not so sure. He thinks the mobile phone will be hard to knock off: “The biggest existing wearable is the mobile phone. Other products are going to have to be powerfully better – creating new and better experiences, and something different – for the phone not to be able to do it all.”

According to *The Financial Times’* Chief Technical Officer, John O’Donovan, the term “mobile-first” has become meaningless in a multi-platform landscape, and publishers should not obsess over one platform and instead focus on the big picture. The *FT* has adopted a “universal publishing” strategy, experimenting with how content can live on all platforms that it makes business sense to be on, he told media and marketing website *The Drum* at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona in February. Tom Betts, Vice-President of Customer Analytics and Research for Pearson, publisher of the *FT*, says, “We need to be platform-agnostic.”

In looking at the future for digital platforms, it seems change will be the only constant. “We’re moving into wearables even before mobile’s become something,” says Michael Maness, who leads the Knight Foundation’s Program for Journalism and Media Innovation. “You have to start building these muscles of understanding that this is going to be an endlessly disrupted existence, and if you’re not building an organisation that’s seeking out these things all the time, or at least strategising about them, you’re going to be in trouble.”

- Mobile devices are about to overtake desktop as the main way consumers access news
- Mobile does not lend itself to easy profits
- “Wearable” devices are the next challenge for news producers
Top Tips for Mobile Editors

Mobile phones are transforming news gathering, with reporters using them and other digital technology to file pictures, audio and video as well as text. Robb Montgomery is a Berlin-based journalist, mobile-journalism trainer and the author of a four-volume book on high-tech reporting methods, *A Field Guide for Mobile Journalism*. “Mobile is currently seen as an extension, when in fact it is a whole new world,” he says. Here is his advice to editors seeking to make the most of the digital revolution:

**Sit in on the training**
I only get people from two days or four days, along with a laundry list from editors saying, ‘We want them to learn everything.’ But if there’s no follow-up after the training, and you’re not giving them assignments that are realistic, it’s not going to develop. When I was successful with training, it was because the editor-in-chief was in the room. That’s when they see how hard it is for reporters to do what they are asking them to do. That’s also when they see the possibilities.

**Equip your journalists**
Mobile reporters in the field will need a phone/tablet/laptop and notebook. If today, my focus as a field reporter is on a photo story, then I load up my kit for that. The idea is to get everything into a small, affordable package that’s durable; some things that are made for consumers aren’t sturdy enough for reporters.

**Give realistic briefs**
The reporter can’t file four different story forms [text, audio, video, photos] from the same event at the same time – no. If you need different reports, you need to divide up your workforce. And here are the questions for anyone who says ‘File [mobile] video’: Do you want a piece to camera? A live video? Raw footage? Newsclip that’s a voiceover with a set of pictures? A news report that’s like a film, with three or four interviews? A radio-style interview where you face the mike, or a documentary-style interview where you don’t see the reporter at all? Because all of these are possibilities.

**Redesign jobs and workflow**
Who needs to be in your newsroom, if your reporters are going to be in the field doing something much more powerful? How do you story plan around the mobile medium? Is there a contingency for breaking news – have you got the ability to swarm reporters intelligently based on the multimedia skills they are best at? If you do that, you get much better material. Think about technology – ‘How does this integrate into our publishing system? Do we need to design custom apps for our reporters?’ Then you will need developers in the newsroom; developers, who know how to build a platform, and data journalists who will get stories out of data sets... and designers who know how to do graphics. And producers, who have realistic ideas of what can be done with video and audio.

**Care about production values**
If you are a professional news organisation, production values matter. That’s what the audience expects. For audio, that means a good microphone, and a directional mike for something like a press conference; for vision, it requires a stable camera and good lighting. A reporter with an iPhone isn’t a replacement for a photojournalist with better equipment and better training.

**Use social media yourself**
The first question for editors is, ‘Are you on social media and are you using it?’ There is still, at the top, a lot of wishing that this would go away. You get excuses – ‘I haven’t any time for it, I have meetings, blah blah.’ It’s because [editors] don’t know how to do it: ‘The staff do it, I don’t do it.’ Pick one form of social media – Facebook, Reddit – and really learn what that’s about. You can go to conferences and learn all the buzzwords but if you’re going to build a mobile newsroom that works, you have to have personal experience with mobile technology and social media.
Trend 03

Trends in social media verification

Julie Posetti and Craig Silverman

Back to basics with social verification to avoid “breaking” journalism #TrendsInNewsrooms
The rapid spread of online misinformation was voted one of the top 10 trends facing the world in 2014 by members of the World Economic Forum’s Network of Global Agenda Councils. The communal and rapid-fire nature of many social media platforms creates the potential for errors and falsehoods – an emerging practice in conflict-related propaganda – to go viral.

“The next big thing is not attention; the next big thing is trust,” Director of Future Media at France Television Eric Scherer told the International Journalism Festival in Perugia in May. If trust is the most important factor in developing relationships between audiences and news producers, verifying material that comes from social media takes on even greater importance as a way to ensure the credibility and reliability of journalists and their content.

Newspapers, in particular, have built up trusted brands and relationships with their communities over decades if not hundreds of years. Part of that trust flows from people knowing that what they see and read is credible information that has gone through a verification process.

A shift by some journalists and newsrooms towards what has become known as “open verification” (popularised by U.S. National Public Radio’s former social media editor Andy Carvin during the Arab Spring) is now becoming more widespread. But it remains contentious because it involves publishing unconfirmed information, with an invitation to the journalist’s social media community to help with the verification process.

So how do we define verification in 2014?

Can it evolve in the manner of a radio news story, filling in blanks over time, with details unfolding hour by hour? Can it be crowdsourced, with news media consumers or “co-producers” acting as widely distributed fact-checkers with collective expertise? And what standards of verification and accuracy do audiences expect of professional journalists in the social media sphere?

The New York Times Public Editor Margaret Sullivan recently said that Twitter – the fastest social reporting platform and the one that journalists have flocked to – is “so closely intertwined with news now that it’s hard to imagine journalism without it.”

She has highlighted the need for “old-fashioned double-checking and transparency,” while also pointing to the value of third-party services like Storyful – the outsourced verification service used by The New York Times, ABC News and others – which has recently proven its value in the form of a US$ 25 million News Corp acquisition.

But Sullivan issues a warning (see below) that no journalist or newsroom can afford to ignore.
Why all the talk about verification?

As the internet, mobile phones and social networks spread across the globe, rumors and falsehoods are taking on new speed and urgency. For a long time, verification took place inside the newsroom. Information flowed in from sources, officials, companies and other entities. It was gathered and vetted by journalists, and a decision was made as to whether the information was credible enough to publish. Social media have turned this process inside out.

The same rumors and misinformation that in the past found their way into a newsroom and perhaps never saw the light of day are now instantly published and shared. This presents a chance for trusted news brands and experienced journalists to make sense of social content, to knock down rumors and misinformation, and to amplify accurate information.

During PhD research Julie Posetti conducted in 2012 on Twitter and verification, an investigative journalist said, “The rush to report breaking stories… means Twitter mistakes are amplified before they can be properly checked.”

Another journalist involved in the research cogently summarised the risks: “...as a story is breaking, there is lots of incorrect and exaggerated information. Sometimes people claim to be ‘there’ when they’re not; others have a political slant or opinion that can affect the way they tweet.”

Journalists must therefore adapt their processes to this new, networked world. In doing so, they continue to act as a trusted source of information – and also quickly source valuable content from people who are in the right place at the right time. The risk is that it’s incredibly easy for people...

“Twitter “…is now so closely intertwined with news that it’s hard to imagine journalism without it.”

- The New York Times Public Editor Margaret Sullivan
to set up fake accounts to seed hoaxes and misinformation. People with the best intentions are also prone to exaggeration or misunderstandings, or to unwittingly pass along errors of fact. This is especially true in breaking news and crisis situations. A failure to properly verify content sourced from social networks puts your hard-won trust and relationships at risk.

Canada’s Globe And Mail experienced that when it fell for a fake Twitter account that used the occasion of a shooting at Los Angeles Airport to spread misinformation. The account, which was set up to look like the real @BreakingNews service, tweeted that former NSA chief Michael Hayden was killed in the shooting. The paper added that information to its online report, and also tweeted the news from its main Twitter account.

Globe and Mail Executive Editor Jill Borra later said, “We have practices and policies around confirming information, which unfortunately in this case were not correctly followed.”

**Changing patterns of social journalism verification**

Back in 2011, a participant in a BBC social media summit from a major news organisation told Posetti, “Our default is to publish unchecked information with a disclaimer that it’s unverified.” (Posetti facilitated round-table sessions at the conference that operated under Chatham House Rules.) Such an approach has become relatively standard for some of the world’s big news brands on breaking news stories, but many journalists remain concerned about the implications of this shift.

But open verification is also becoming entrenched as a practice in some newsrooms: “You can retweet with a question posed. This opens debate and the truth can be found... or at least be attempted,” one of Posetti’s survey respondents told her in 2012. But another said crowdsourced content needs especially careful vetting and matching with traditional research methods: “I still tend to gravitate towards other reputable journalists for information if I am not on the spot... I try to build an accurate picture using that information combined with other sources – such as direct checking and wires.”

Still another (many of Posetti’s survey participants opted for anonymity) commented that they would never knowingly redistribute inaccurate information: “I don’t publish or retweet material I know to be wrong or misguided – at least not without some commentary to this effect.”

The addition of explanatory information or a question to a retweet containing potentially inaccurate content is a useful method for tweeting journalists. A point raised by many journalists interviewed and surveyed by Posetti is relevant here: Most journalists now view retweets as they would quotes. They do not necessarily endorse the content; they are just redistributing it,
believing it may be of interest to their followers.
As one commented: “I retweet a large volume of
information. I can’t possibly verify every article
that I retweet. I retweet what I think might be
interesting, useful, relevant or just entertaining...
my disclaimer is that I don’t necessarily agree with
everything that I retweet or publish.”

The concept of various platforms being imbued
with different standards of verification and
audience expectations regarding accuracy has
also emerged in recent years. For example, one
participant at the BBC summit spoke of the lower
threshold for publication of unverified information
on Facebook: “We might put it out there unverified
on our Facebook page, but we wouldn’t print it until
we’d verified it.” And another print journalist shared
a similar approach: “Our journalists use social
media to correct over time, in between print runs.”

Those comments reflect a view among journalists
that audiences have lower expectations of accuracy
and verification from journalists’ and media outlets’
social media accounts than they do from ‘appointment
TV’ or the printed page, for example. This was a
perspective echoed by one of Posetti’s respondents: “I
think the rules for Twitter are different… it is so much
faster than the (mainstream) media at breaking news,
there’s an inherent understanding that it’s a bit fast
and loose and not always… right.”
There is a traditional familiarity to social verification risks, as one journalist told Posetti: “These are the same pitfalls faced by any journalist using unfamiliar sources, and [they] simply require the same amount of care. That means ‘triangulating’ all information you receive – either via other contacts in the field (checking to see what they know about the source or the information the source is giving you; this is especially pertinent if the source is pseudonymous) or through background searches to confirm identity, which can often be done simply by Googling.”

On the positive side, open verification can help counter propaganda issued by official sources. Jess Hill, the former Middle East correspondent for the now defunct Australian online investigative magazine Global Mail, developed a way of using social media to verify facts that helped her expose spin in conflicts and political revolutions. She spoke to Posetti for a 2013 book, Investigative Journalism in the Digital Age, saying, “After verifying information about events occurring in real time on the ground, and then hearing/viewing contradictory ‘official statements’ in traditional media, I have come to question the latter’s willingness to broadcast such statements from official sources, especially after such sources have been proven to make false statements.”

Hill, now with Australia’s ABC Radio, places “official sources” on par with reliable social media reporters. “I now pit these versions of the truth against each other ... If the [social media] info contradicts the traditional media sources, I confront the source with it; but more critically, I can challenge sources making their traditional media statements with the eyewitness accounts from the scenes they’re speaking about.” This is a significant

**VERIFY THE SOURCE**

1. Find out when the account was created. New social media accounts are sometimes created to spread hoaxes and misinformation. One piece of good news is that the new Twitter profile design shows when the account was created.

2. Examine their network. Who did they follow/friend, and who followed/friended them? Who do they interact with? What do they talk about? A person’s connections and interactions on a social network say a great deal about the person.

3. Search for other online accounts. Search for the person’s name/online handle elsewhere online. Use Spokeo, Pipl.com, WebMii, and LinkedIn to try and get a phone number, address and other information.

4. Contact the uploader/creator. This is essential for verification and for reporting. Gather additional information and verify their claims, and secure permission to use the content.

5. Compare what they say to what you know. Search for other accounts of the same event to see if that information lines up with what else is out there. Also, ask if they have additional photos/video you can view.

6. Check for geolocation data. Twitter, Facebook and other platforms enable users to tag their posts with their location. This is one clue that could help determine if they are where they claim to be.

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benefit of social media – the capacity to challenge attempts at traditional message control and call out falsehoods with evidence acquired in real time. “The shift is essentially one engendered by the different speeds of social media and traditional media,” Hill said. “Many sources are used to making statements that take time to verify, and do so knowing that any gaps in their stories will not be news by the time they’re revealed. With [social media], these statements are made to answer to the voices on the ground.”

On the flipside is ‘astro-turfing’ – organised social media campaigns designed to masquerade as organic public reaction. It can be difficult to determine what is authentic in public outcries on social media – ‘Twitter storms’. Online journalism pioneer Paul Bradshaw has observed that the journalist’s task of verification in such cases is especially difficult when content is moderated after it is published. “Although there’s a skill to be built in knowing when to respond and when to ignore bait, it’s not so clear how to manage disinformation,” he said.

“I have seen well-intentioned journalists attacked for asking basic questions. This can be because there is a crowd of bored people out there, but it also ties into the widespread astro-turfing efforts... to misinform, befuddle and endanger journalists. I have seen journalists sucked into false breaking news and others sucked into the ease of Twitter. This may lead to them ending the chase of an investigative story as it is too hard,” one of Posetti’s interviewees told her.

The prevalence of anonymity and pseudonymity on social media sites also makes verification more complex.

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**VERIFY THE CONTENT**

1. Verify the location. Is this really from the place it claims to be? Google Maps, Google StreetView and Wikimapia are all helpful, free tools to compare a specific location to a piece of content.

2. Verify the date. Did this happen when claimed? Use weather data from a search on WolframAlpha to compare with what’s shown and what the source says.

3. Examine landmarks/accents/signs/clothing. A video, image or audio recording is filled with evidence. Street signs, accents, and landmarks are just a few key things to look for. Are they consistent with the story?

4. Use reverse image search. Images that are claimed to be new or recent are often old. Use Google Reverse Image Search or TinEye to see if that image has appeared elsewhere online. This also works for the thumbnail of a video, which can tell you where else it is online.

5. Check the EXIF data on photos. Every digital image contains metadata that reveal things you don’t see. An EXIF reader can tell you the type of camera used to take the photos, among other relevant information. Sometimes it will even offer location data.

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Our default is to publish unchecked information with a disclaimer that it’s unverified.”

- Participant in a BBC social media summit from a major news organisation.

- Social media has transformed the speed of reporting, resulting in more misinformation and mistakes

- Newsrooms must be diligent in their fact-checking before publishing

- Twitter is useful to locate and crowdsourced information but needs to be underpinned by traditional journalistic research
The verification process

Prominent U.S. online journalism pioneer Steve Buttry, most recently with Digital First Media, says the first question asked of all sources should be, “How do you know that?”

If that’s the right starting point, how do you structure a social content verification strategy in response?

There are two key elements: the source of a piece of content and the content itself. These two components must be independently verified and compared against one another to see if they tell a consistent story.

It’s often the case online that a piece of content is real, but the person who shared it isn’t the original creator. Or, alternatively, a trustworthy source may have fallen for a hoax. Good people share bad things, and good content can come from surprising places.

The Associated Press’s verification workflow separates source and content and requires that each be confirmed before a piece of content can be used. (They are also strict about obtaining permission prior to using a piece of user-generated content [UGC] – another best practice. See discussion on permissions and attribution below.)

“AP has always had its standards, and those really haven’t changed, and it was by working with those standards that we were able to specifically set up workflows and best practices for dealing with social media,” said Fergus Bell, AP’s Social Media & UGC Editor, International. “So AP has always strived to find the original source so that we can do the reporting around it. And that’s always the way that we go about verifying UGC. We can’t verify something unless we speak to the person [who] created it, in most cases.”

As Bell notes, the ultimate goal is to get a source on the phone or Skype and speak with them. To make that happen, it’s important to connect an online identity with a real-world person, and to confirm they are the originator of the piece of content.

Before speaking to them, it’s best to learn as much as you can about the person, their online presence and public interactions. If what they say doesn’t match up with what you’ve found out about them, and with the content, then you know you have a problem.

When it comes to verifying the content, today there are more (mostly free) tools than ever before that can aid in the decision-making process. (See our “Verify the Content” tips.) But you also need the journalist’s sense of healthy scepticism, and the right amount of restraint.

Verification is a process, and the more you do it, the faster you and your team will get at making good, ethical decisions. Yes, you can be fast and accurate. But it requires a commitment to implement a verification process, and to evangelise it in your newsroom.

Adequately resource social media verification processes, and, above all, remember that verification is a team sport. Work together, share skills and best practices, and always have more than one person making critical decisions about what’s true, and what’s next.
Always remember that social content can quickly be altered, reshared and repurposed. Verifying the date, location and provenance of an image or piece of video is essential work – and when in doubt, it’s always better to err on the side of caution.

Wolfgang Krach, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of the German daily Süddeutsche Zeitung, says his newsroom is very conservative about social journalism verification. “We have a very cautious approach. Our rule is that our own journalists must verify each fact via two different sources,” he told the World Editors Forum. “Sources like Twitter and Facebook are very helpful sometimes – they can be very fast and well-informed. In an ideal case we would never use anything published by social media without verifying it before. That’s not to say that we don’t make mistakes.”

But Gigaom’s Matthew Ingram told a panel on social media verification at the 2014 International Journalism Festival, “If you look at any major news event since the internet began you see the crowd at work … Journalists can’t verify alone.”

Permissions, attribution and editorial management

A new Tow Centre global study by Claire Wardle and Sam Dubberley examined over 1,000 hours of TV produced by eight news networks including Al Jazeera, BBC and CNN. Remarkably, they found that 72 percent of user-generated video studied did not include attribution to the source. And, in many instances, the content was attributed only to a platform (e.g. Twitter or Facebook), not the actual creator. This is problematic, both ethically and potentially legally.

The study’s authors argue that more transparency is needed, a view echoed by AP’s Bell, who highlights the importance of first obtaining a creator’s permission to use their content – even if it’s published openly on a publicly accessible platform.

“They’re sharing it with their friends and we happen to find it,” Bell says. “This is the currency we’re working with in ‘accidental journalism’. We must treat them [social media contributors] fairly if we want collaboration.”

While open verification is likely to find growing acceptance within professional journalism, the flood of information, disseminated at unrelenting speed on social media platforms, means that careful research and investigation by journalists is more important than ever. In the meantime, smart media organisations will invest in the development of better systems of social media verification – from human expertise to analytical tools designed to sift, assess and synthesise social data.

Best-practice social journalism at the organisational level requires adequate, targeted resourcing. At the BBC, a critical role is played by a group of journalists in the User-Generated Content Hub – a desk located in the physical centre of the London newsroom that seeks to verify social content. And many major media outlets now employ social media editors with a specific editorial brief to oversee social journalism production.
Trend 04

Analytics: when data drives the newsroom

Federica Cherubini

“Metrics are the light: a torch or a lighthouse”: Iannuzzi. Go beyond clicks & views & harness the power of analytics #TrendsInNewsrooms
Moving beyond clicks

Until recently, pageviews and unique visits were the two undisputed metrics for measuring digital audiences and were the recognised currency for showing value to advertisers. Pageviews (or page impressions), together with unique visitor statistics, tell us the number of times users load and visit one web page. They reflect a quantitative approach to measuring the traffic to a website and its performance.

But earlier this year, a debate arose, challenging the accepted value of these metrics in favour of qualitative metrics that measure attention and engagement: how interested the reader is in the page, and how long he or she remains on it. The debate was triggered by an article on Time.com by Tony Haile, CEO of real-time web analytics company Chartbeat. Carrying the provocative headline “What you think you know about the web is wrong”, the piece argued that there are myths about what readers click on, read and share, and that click-through rates no longer reflect reality. According to Haile, the first myth that needs debunking is that users read what they click on. A survey conducted by Chartbeat showed that 55% of users spent less than 15 active seconds on a page, suggesting that few people who click on an article actually read it.

Another myth concerns the assumed correlation between social sharing and reading. It makes sense for publishers to pay attention to social sharing, Haile contends, as recommendations by peers on social networks have an effect on the traffic, but the assumption that content ‘liked’ or shared is more likely to attract greater interest is not backed up by data. Chartbeat looked at 10,000 socially-shared articles and found that “there is no relationship whatsoever between the amount a piece of content is shared and the amount of attention an average reader will give that content.”

Seeking attention

Consumers’ attention is a scarce resource; every publisher is competing with everything everywhere when it comes to attracting news consumers’ attention. New methods allow the capturing of in-depth data about what Haile describes as a “second-by-second, pixel-by-pixel view of user behaviour.” Supporters of the “attention web” idea argue that instead of focusing on how many people see the content, we should be focusing on what they do once they click on a link and how they engage with it. New ways to measure this include tracking mouse movements, scroll depths and time spent on a page. However, measuring time spent is problematic. As Gigaom’s Mathew Ingram has said:

“There is a false cause-effect relationship that newsrooms build up [in which it is argued] that if you follow audience data then you’re chasing traffic.”

- Raju Narisetti, News Corp’s Senior Vice President Strategy
pointed out, many services such as Google Analytics show the amount of time spent on a page, but those numbers are not that reliable, since “in some cases they simply look at whether a web page is still open in a browser tab, which can be distorted by the fact that many users leave tabs open but never return.”

Tailoring metrics to your needs

Dissatisfaction with traditional metrics has prompted some companies to come up with their own new measurements. Chartbeat, Medium, YouTube and Upworthy have introduced their own branded metrics.

Upworthy, which makes “worthy” content available for social media sharing, was founded in March 2012 by Eli Pariser and Peter Koechley. It has introduced its own metric called “attention minutes.” “Attention minutes is a fine-grained, conservative measure of how long people are engaging with the content on our pages,” the founders say. More precise than “time on page,” attention minutes rely on various signals, such as whether a video is currently playing, a user’s mouse movements, and whether a browser tab is currently open – to determine the real level of engagement.

Upworthy doesn’t run banner ads, so pageviews have limited usefulness for them.

Pageviews still matter

Not everyone agrees pageviews are obsolete. News Corp’s Senior Vice President Strategy, Raju Narisetti, believes ‘vanity metrics’, such as pageviews, are still important. “I’m actually glad that the news industry is having a debate about what are the right metrics... whether we should look more to the time spent and attention is a good debate to have,” he told the World Editors Forum. “The problem with these debates tends to be that they are disconnected from the reality of the business of our industry. The reason why pageviews and unique visitors and visits matter is because they are a proxy for delivering a certain number of advertisements to our audiences, and that’s the easy way to measure that. And when our industry is still
67 percent dependent on advertising, the metrics that matter to advertisers also are the metrics that matter to the newsrooms.”

While he is in favour of developing more sophisticated metrics, Narisetti says it is just not feasible at the moment to simply abandon the old metrics and switch to the new ones without the business model following. “At the WSJ and Dow Jones we have 1,800 journalists in our global newsrooms. I have to make sure that the business model works, and for the business model to work I have to provide certain metrics,” he stressed.

As Narisetti argues, the objections in print-centric newsrooms to incorporating analytics into day-to-day workflow comes from the fact that audience data has long been considered a temptation to editors to pander to audiences and orient stories towards click-bait.

**Newsroom resistance**

In the traditional print world, despite the prevalence of “reader surveys,” it was difficult to ascertain whether anybody was actually reading specific content. And editors traditionally viewed their responsibilities as including deciding on behalf of readers what was important. Narisetti says it’s often difficult for those editors to suddenly accept that there is a lot of data and that the data says something about engagement, about what readers care about, what readers don’t care about, and to accept that you have to be able to use a mix of this data and your own news judgement to determine content priorities. “It’s the idea of morphing from being ‘gatekeepers’ to what I call ‘gate openers,’ where people still come to you for your trusted brand but your job is to say, ‘There are a lot of stories out there, too many stories, and we’ll filter that for you, some of it could be our content, and some could be somebody’s else content.’ ”

To rebut this resistance inside the newsrooms, it’s important that editors understand that data doesn’t fully replace professional news judgement, Narisetti contends. “There is a false cause-effect relationship that newsrooms build up [in which it is argued] that if you follow audience data then you’re chasing traffic. That’s why editors are there, to make sure that we don’t do all those things, right? That’s not the problem of the data, that’s a problem of how you manage your newsroom,” he told the World Editors Forum.

Startups are at an advantage compared to traditional newsrooms because they feel more nimble compared to the latter, which have trouble
adjusting in real time, Narisetti says. He also suggests that publishers have, by default, not made a good case with readers about the value of readers’ data. “There is nothing wrong in collecting data about your website readers, as long as you protect the data, as long as the data is safeguarded and you tell your readers how you are using it and what they get in return.”

‘Turn on the light’

Andrea Iannuzzi, Executive Editor of National Content for the daily newspaper network at Gruppo L’Espresso, vouched for the value of analytics during a presentation at the International Journalism Festival in Perugia in May.

“If we find ourselves in a dark room we have three options: moving very slowly, trying not to smash into something; moving very fast given the certainty that we will crash into something; or turning on the light,” Iannuzzi explained. “Metrics are the light: a torch or a lighthouse, depending on their level of accuracy and depth and on our ability to read them and interpret them without becoming subjugated. Today a journalist – and more widely anybody who produces content – who refuses to use data analytics to assess in real time the level of interaction he or she is having with the readers is someone who has decided not to turn on the light and stay in the dark room.”

So which are the right metrics for newsrooms to focus on if they want to emerge from the “dark room”? Iannuzzi explained that the answer very much depends on who you consider as stakeholders. “For marketers and advertisers, pageviews still have value because it’s a standard metric, accepted by everybody. For the journalists, and more broadly the newsrooms, the most valuable metrics are without doubt those based on attention, the time that a reader spends reading and thinking about the content. We know there are ways other than just ‘time spent’ to verify the level of attention, such as the interaction with the content, scrolling, touch of the mouse – but when it comes to the readers, trust is the metric. We shouldn’t discuss dismissing pageviews, but rather combining them with other metrics.”

Using more than one metric, or a “combinatorial approach,” has benefits, Chartbeat’s Haile said in Perugia. The important thing is to use the right metrics in the right context. Iannuzzi agreed, saying using more than one metric strengthened the results.

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Pageviews vs. Total Attention Minutes

Credit: Upworthy
Journalists fear ‘data dictatorship’

So overcoming the reluctance of newsrooms to introduce real-time data analytics as part of their daily routine is mainly a cultural challenge. Many journalists fear that they will be falling into a data-driven decision-making approach. The false arguments sometimes "conveniently cover up the disdain many editors continue to have for actual reader feedback, downplaying the decision-making value of reader metrics," Narisetti has written.

In his interview with the World Editors Forum, he stressed that this goes back to the idea that most newsrooms have never been held accountable in a detailed way for performance. Editorial success has been measured with a kind of “Oh, everybody is talking about your story” approach but never with real audience data. But he emphasised that online offers the chance to show the newsroom that on the web, they have an audience 10 times that of print. It is also potentially a global audience.

Narisetti cited the example of The Wall Street Journal, which has an audience of about 2 million in print but which had 67 million unique visitors to the WSJ network in March 2014. “I think you should use that to change behaviour, and you should say, “We need to address that audience’, because that’s increasingly where your journalism has been read.”

Increasingly, journalists’ work is being consumed via mobile devices. Narisetti reveals that approximately 37 percent of Wall Street Journal visits are registered on mobile devices – phones or tablets. “But if you look at how the newsroom is structured, and if you look at where their focus is, it is the opposite of that. There are probably 10 people out of 1,800 who are focused on mobile.” Narisetti argues that this data should trigger a change in newsroom practices and attitudes. “You’ve got to share that data and get reporters and journalists to start thinking differently about how users are consuming their content, because the entire Wall Street Journal experience for a lot of people is only going to be 3 inches, and you have to think very differently about the journalism experience of your brand.”

His overall argument is that data can help drive cultural change. “However, that’s a work in progress that will take a long time, and despite the industry feeling threatened by the current times, most newsrooms still are very comfortable. It’s time to get them out of their comfort zone. And using data to do that, I think it’s a good way.”
Editorial leaders should tap into the desire by journalists to be read by as many people as possible, Narisetti urges. “If you can show them data and give them tools that help them find more readers for their content, I think that’s a positive way to drive change. The truth is that in 2014 the very definition of journalism has to be expanded to include (the fact that) it is a journalist’s job to get more people to read their journalism; it’s nobody else’s job, so data and tools are enablers of that. I don’t think any journalist or editor will argue that getting more people to her or his journalism is a bad thing.”

**Seducing the ‘non-geek’**

Nieman Lab recently profiled a National Public Radio (NPR) experiment designed to build an analytics culture inside the newsroom as part of a wider shift towards digital. A small team, led by Digital Strategist and Associate Editor Melody Joy Kramer, was given six weeks to develop an in-house “analytics dashboard designed for NPR staffers to learn more about how readers and listeners are connecting with their work online,” Kramer explained to Nieman Lab. NPR was already using Google Analytics and Chartbeat to monitor audience data, but felt the need to develop something that could be more easily understood by its journalists. Rather than introducing new metrics, it takes the existing data and shapes them in a more digestible form for “non-geeks.”

“We started thinking about what UX [user experience] people call ‘personas.’ I don’t know if you’re familiar with that term, but we came up with several. Some of them were: I am a homepage editor, I am an editor of a section, I am a blogger at NPR, I am a radio reporter, I am a producer. Then we sketched out what each of them might need from a dashboard, because each of those people might need something different,” Kramer told Nieman Lab. “It was really important to think about what our audience – which in our case was our own newsroom – might need, because if you build a tool and the newsroom finds it difficult to understand, difficult to use, difficult to access, difficult because of company culture, or difficult to share, then what’s the point?”

Embracing real-time analytics will enable the newsroom to know its audience and better address its needs.

Eye-tracking patterns Credit: [www.miratech.com](http://www.miratech.com)
Case study: Analytics at The Guardian
Kira Witkin

The Guardian’s analytics strategy hinges on real-time data – so much so that the news organisation developed an internal system to meet its needs, called Ophan. Digital Audience Editor Chris Moran explained how Ophan was developed during an in-house hack day about two years ago, and since then The Guardian’s digital processes have been completely redirected.

Ophan goes beyond the traditional metrics of pageviews and unique visitors to provide breakdowns by sections, country, referrer, platform, browser and more. It also shows live Google search terms that are driving traffic to the site as well as front-page analyses that learn from previous days’ homepages. It displays this information in digestible top-10 lists and graphs.

‘People should be getting their hands dirty with data’
Moran, who works closely with the two programmers assigned to Ophan’s development, said his main goal was to bring data into the hands of editorial staffers who might not otherwise encounter it. “I believe that people should be getting their hands dirty with data,” Moran said. “We designed Ophan really carefully to make sure the graphs and everything are very simple to understand… If [staffers] look at it every day, they should get a real sense of who their audience is, where they’re coming from and how they’re coming to them. That’s absolutely invaluable in terms of making improvements.” Moran’s belief in the importance of interacting with the numbers has swayed him against automating processes using Ophan.

Analytics platforms such as Visual Revenue allow for homepage placement automation, where human editorial judgement is taken out of the equation; a high volume of clicks on a particular story sitting on an inside page, for example, means it will be automatically moved to the homepage. Moran thinks Guardian staffers would be short-changed if data was “hidden” behind automation. “We place a very clear emphasis on this: Ophan and data should not be dictating everything about the editorial process,” Moran said. “I don’t believe that for one instant, partly because we believe in content that isn’t just the most popular. But [data] is definitely an important element in making decisions around the front.”

The level of enthusiasm for analytics has been quite mixed among staff, Moran said. Journalists have tended to embrace it, since many were already interested in knowing how their articles were being read.

Real-time data allows more experimentation, immediate feedback
But among production staff, the data can seem a burden – now, they are expected to closely monitor stories for at least an hour after their launches, whereas previously the editorial process ended as soon as articles were sent to press. The site is toying with the idea of an automated email system to alert editors to take action when stories are under-performing, as well as to inform them about stories that have taken off particularly well. Analytics have also allowed more experimentation at The Guardian, Moran said. Real-time data means editors can easily test theories and get immediate feedback. For example, editors can find out whether holding articles until evening would lead to more mobile traffic.

Additionally, with analytics, The Guardian also learned the importance of publishing in time zones amenable to its global audience.
Trend 05

Video: If you film it, will they come?

Douglas Grant

“The point of entry is video”: Valles.

Rethink & reinvent for video in the digital age - make it short or make it last #TrendsInNewsrooms
Building a capacity for video news online remains an exercise in faith. Despite the fact that videos aren’t directly producing revenue, they still have an important role to play in a news organisation’s business strategy because they now act as the “point of entry” for many readers and viewers. For now, leaders in the field suggest, publishers should be working out how to do video well and think about revenue later. Andy Pergam, former Senior Editor for Video at the Washington Post, now at the McClatchy Company, emphasises that this initial phase is all about staking out territory: “It’s important to us to get into that space where video is going to be years from now,” he told the Tow Center. “The internet has created this fantastic sort of Wild West space for us, and so we can carve out our own thing.”

Editorially and commercially, news organisations are struggling to get to grips with the opportunities and challenges offered by the format. And users’ habits change quickly, so producing the right kind of style, length and tone is a difficult and moving target. The challenge is multi-faceted: Editors must look at how to harness the technical and creative capabilities of online video, respond to an audience’s needs, and effectively publicise and manage content. And organisations must work out how to transform video from an expensive outlay into a potentially profitable investment.

“You barely think of video as a separate thing anymore, it’s just a way of telling a story.”

- Janine Gibson, Editor-in-Chief, Guardian US
Pick your battles

Many appear to be failing to understand the complexities of the form, instead choosing to do video for video’s sake. Online video experts suggest that the first step in any video strategy should be identifying the kind of news that is suited to online video on your site. Stories that are human, local, as well as breaking news that holds the promise of good visuals, lend themselves to video (see the Washington Post’s ‘First and 17’ about a rookie footballer). Video should complement text and open up new, creative opportunities, rather than simply repurposing text stories and following the traditional inverted pyramid style.

Daniel Gawloski, of the Seattle Times, has spoken about identifying the aspect of the story that video can most effectively communicate: “I’m looking for something that carries emotion... what I don’t want is a video that tells the same story as the text. I want a video that helps you understand the story in a way that text doesn’t.” He was speaking as part of a panel discussion in April 2014 to launch the Tow Center’s multimedia report Video Now.

Playing to video’s strengths is vital. This means editors should be selecting case-by-case what kind of coverage they should give a story, rather than sending out a video team for a topic more suited to a text article.

Rethink and re-invent

It’s also important to develop your own online approach, rather than just mimicking broadcast TV. Television is usually targeted at mass audiences and designed to appeal to everyone, whereas newspapers tend to have a more specific audience and so can be more distinctive in tone. Embrace this, and develop your own style. Some of the Video Now panelists spoke about the different approaches at their publications:

Popular across the world with young news consumers, Vice uses a casual, “when the cameras are off” approach to its reportage. It releases news as and when it happens, and allows viewers to watch the analysis develop. Jason Mojica, Editor-in-Chief of Vice News, told the panel, “We found our way of doing breaking news, which is this sort of meandering, ‘Let’s watch Simon (Ostrovsky, the journalist Vice sent to Crimea) find out what the Hell’s going on here’.”

The Seattle Times gives reporters the power to publish, so they can release low-quality, breaking-news videos immediately while editors focus on the high-quality documentaries.

At Singaporean newspaper the Straits Times, Editor-in-Chief Patrick Daniel told the World Editors Forum, online means freedom from live programming. Videos can go up any time: “People don’t log on at, say, 9 a.m. each day to view online live programmes, like they do for TV. It’s easy to see that people prefer to view videos as and when they have the time. It also takes best advantage of the medium.”

The long and short of it

Getting length right is vital for finding and retaining online viewers, who are increasingly using mobile devices to access news websites. Marie-Noëlle Valles, head of video at AFP, echoed the prevailing wisdom that videos should be short, to appeal to those on the move. But she also told the World Editors Forum that while short might be the way to attract viewers initially, this does not mean long-format should be ignored: “It doesn’t mean these people will not return to longer formats, because they remain interesting and relevant, but the point of entry is... a short, agile, quick video.”

It appears that there is no ‘magic length’ that...
people like. It’s true that short, funny clips are more likely to go viral, but in-depth documentaries should not be ignored. Some of the organisations interviewed for the Tow report talked about the value of ‘letting it run long’.

- **Frontline** makes documentaries for the U.S. TV network PBS. Their online audience is exploding, with 1.7 million unique visitors a month from all devices. And their tablet users watch about three times longer than desktop users, who stay on average between two and seven minutes, according to Frontline Deputy Executive Producer Raney Aronson-Rath.

- **Vice** has 4.5 million non-paying subscribers who get regular updates from Vice’s YouTube channel, and it boasts some remarkable engagement statistics. One of its most popular videos, ‘Suicide Forest in Japan’, has almost 8 million views, 83,000 likes and 2,000 dislikes. When Vice dipped into shorter, “viral” clips, there was a backlash in reader comments. Mojica says his customers complained the viral videos were “bullshit.”

- **MediaStorm**, a film production studio based in New York, is seeing thousands of views a day of documentaries it made several years ago. Founder Brian Storm told Tow, “Yeah, it gets a lot of attention when it first comes out, but... years later, four or five thousand people a day are watching a story.” One of the main recommendations of the Tow report is to produce “evergreen” work that users can come back to time and time again.

  Storm says, “There’s two things that are really successful in the space that we’re in right now: being really, really funny – cats spinning on a fan – or the highest-quality thing that you’ve ever done on Darfur. Those are things that people tweet, those are the things people post on Facebook, right? The stuff in the middle, the volume, is noise.”

  Short videos may be the most effective way of attracting users and increasing traffic on other parts of the news website. But in terms of retaining an audience, increasing prestige and developing a video revenue stream, high-quality long-form video has an important role to play. The consensus seems to be that editors need to decide the degree to which video should be used simply as a “point of entry” or as a more developed, content-rich part of the website.
Follow the reader

When producing online video, editors also have to be able to respond to constantly shifting user habits and the various kinds of devices used. This affects both the content and how it’s presented. Tablet users might watch about three times longer than desktop users, but they’re also less likely to click on related links.

Videos mostly viewed on desktop need to be contextualised with a variety of links and additional information. Because a desktop user may have several tabs or programs running, they may be less likely to finish the video but be more ready to click away to related articles on videos.

But the device being used also hints at the kind of circumstances in which a video will be watched, as Valles points out: “When people do watch videos on a smartphone, on the Metro... we have come to realise that the ‘public-screen problematic’ has to be taken into account. Sometimes people can’t hear the sound, or not so well... so it means that these videos have to be watched and understood almost without being heard.”

According to research from the Pew Center, 40 percent of U.S. cellphone owners watch video on their mobiles. Video producers need to know when, where and how users are watching each type of video, and emphasise sound or visuals accordingly.
Finding the money

The Tow report emphasises that video has yet to become a financially viable product, with most videos receiving around 1,000 views. This means that, for most, ad revenue still can’t generate enough income to justify the time and money it takes to make high-quality video. But this is in a climate where consumption and demand for video is growing rapidly. In 2013, demand from advertisers outstripped supply in some quarters. Organisations like The New York Times are investing significantly in video, which is seen as a key component of its digital growth strategy because of the high premiums video advertising attracts. In the first quarter of 2014, digital advertising revenues at The Times were up 2.2 percent year-on-year to $37.8 million. But the year before, the paper closed the sale of just two out of five big video ad buys it was originally aiming for, and it ended up not having enough video content to carry the ads for those two deals, according to Capital New York.

The research from Pew found that 90 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds in the United States watch online videos, and almost half watch online news videos. And something to bear in mind both in terms of advertising and content is that the people most likely to watch are also university-educated and affluent, with an annual household income of at least US$ 75,000.

What successful video strategies are focusing on for the moment is producing a quality product and reaching a wide audience, with a view to translating that into increasing profits in the future.

Some organisations spoke to Tow about generating income:

• Mashable is using YouTube because of its shareability, despite recognising that the website’s Adsense system, which has been criticised for inefficient targeting and not generating enough income per view, makes it harder to make money. Journalists at Mashable also recognise the need to produce shareable gossip and celebrity content in order to be able to finance “the journalism we want to do,” said Matt Silverman, Mashable’s editorial director.

• Vice, with its 4.5 million Youtube free subscribers and a global fan-base, has started translating success into profits. This has also been achieved through savvy use of advertising. Rather than having jarring pre-roll ads, they’ve arranged targeted sponsorships, said Vice founder Shane Smith. “So if we come up with, let’s say, a
show called Far Out, which is going to the most remote places on Earth, we go to [outdoor product company] North Face, cause it’s a no-brainer and say, ‘Hey, you want to sponsor the show?’ They say yes. Boom.”

• In the case of MediaStorm, their long-form documentaries are proving that “evergreen” products are worth the long-term investment because of the interest and prestige they attract. This in turn supports their business model of making money through client work, workshops, syndication, software and publication. Brian Storm said, “The whole model around the publication always was what I call the crack-cocaine model of publishing. Give it away for free, build an audience, help people understand the type of storytelling that we’re trying to do. Get them hooked, then you charge them for it.”

**Should video be an independent republic?**

There are two schools of thought about how text-and photo-based organisations should structure themselves when developing a video department. Some choose to launch independent video startups while others integrate them directly into their newsroom, a difference Valles puts down to “how organisations are born.”

Torry Pedersen, editor-in-chief of Norwegian newspaper Verdens Gang, told Journalism.co.uk that you should “separate them in their infancy, otherwise legacy culture will win and it’s too conservative.”

But both AFP and Sweden’s national evening newspaper Aftonbladet spoke to the World Editors Forum about the benefits of integrating departments. Valles at AFP said, “Because we all work together, we all know about the others’ needs. So when ‘video’ goes out and does an interview, they provide the script and quotes to the text side. So often they don’t need to be in the same place. And that’s a very strong characteristic of AFP, that multimedia integration,” she said.

Aftonbladet, where Magnus Zaar is head of Aftonbladet TV, is a prime example of integrating video into the newsroom. One of its three television studios is in the middle of the central news desk.

Through its Tipsa! tip service, viewers can use a mobile app to film live and send the video straight to the control room. Aftonbladet is also proactive in seeking user video, thanks to a feature on its geolocation function. When a story breaks, they can push messages to everyone who has the paper’s app and is nearby, asking them for video. “You need the tools in place and you need the full toolbox,” Zaar told the World Editors Forum. “We are totally integrated into the editorial work.”

It seems to be a success in terms of readership: Aftonbladet Online has 3.2 million unique users each day in a country of around 9 million people. There are 1 million video streams started each day, four hours of live TV every weekday, and 10,000 clips posted every year.

It is also clear that it is important to identify the strengths and weaknesses of your particular newsroom team. AFP believes that because it already had a strong tradition of multimedia work, collaboration between departments was easier. However, in a more traditional newsroom, it may be better to allow digital innovation to flourish independently, at least in the beginning. At the Straits Times they “started with an independent service, simply because it’s easier to launch this way – hire the people and just do it.” But Daniel is “convinced that an integrated newsroom is the way to go. You get better synergy and productivity.”

“**We found our way of doing breaking news, which is this sort of meandering, ‘Let’s watch Simon [Ostrovsky, the journalist Vice sent to Crimea] find out what the Hell’s going on here!’**”

- Jason Mojica, Editor-in-Chief of Vice News

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VIDEO TIPS CURATED BY THE WORLD EDITORS FORUM

- Use video when it’s the best medium, and when it can really add to your coverage of a story. It’s too expensive and time-consuming to do just for the sake of it.

- Develop an online style instead of just mimicking television practices. Online has a different audience with different expectations and habits.

- Get the length right. If it’s meant to attract mobile users, make it short and to the point. If you want to keep an audience, people do want long-format content – it just needs to be good.

- Manage content – integrate videos into your news content by embedding them with articles and graphics to increase views. Be active on social networks. Create platform-specific content, in terms of both social media and devices. Know how and where people are watching.

- Better advertising – pre-roll isn’t the long-term answer, but when it is used, it should be matched to the video. Online video premiums are increasing and demand is growing, so even if it’s not yet providing a revenue stream, video is worth the investment.

- Video departments don’t have to be completely integrated, but you may be missing out on the valuable skills and content that come from collaboration.

- Perhaps the most important lessons from people like Duy Linh Tu of the Tow Center and Patrick Daniel of the Straits Times are that organisations need to be confident, flexible and willing to experiment.
Trend 06
The rise (and fall) of women editors
Julie Posetti

Are gender equity milestones reached in newsroom management proving fragile gains in a stubbornly male dominated sphere? #TrendsInNewsrooms
The high-profile and unexpected departure of two of the world’s top women editors – Jill Abramson, Executive Editor of The New York Times, and Natalie Nougayrede, Editor-in-Chief of France’s Le Monde, as this report was in the final stages of production in May 2014, has sharpened the focus on the success and failures of gender equity management in newsrooms worldwide.

Abramson, in particular, has left a significant legacy through the development and promotion of senior female editors in her newsroom. As the details emerge of how and why Abramson and Nougayrede lost the faith of key staff and publishers, there will be continued scrutiny to establish whether the advances recently recorded at top flight newspapers are real and sustainable, or if progress in newsroom management gender equity is, in fact, as fragile as male dominance is entrenched.

Elisa Lees Munoz, Executive Director of the International Women’s Media Foundation, told the World Editors Forum: “We may never know what is behind the firing of Jill Abramson. What we do know is that women make up less than a quarter of top management positions and less than a third of governance positions in US news media, according to the IWMF Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media. This paucity of representation makes each one of the representatives mean much more – both when they rise and fall.”

This statement resonates with Amanda Wilson who was appointed The Sydney Morning Herald’s first female Editor-in-Chief in 180 years, just days after Abramson smashed the glass ceiling at The New York Times. Wilson resigned in controversial circumstances – only 18 months into her editorship. “Yes, male editors are sacked or moved on, but the trouble for female leaders is that the mere fact of being a woman in the job attracts a vicious backlash. The more powerful a woman is, the more poisonous this is,” she wrote in The Guardian after Abramson’s sacking.

Internationally, research indicates that women remain badly under-represented in news management and poorly represented – subject to stereotyping and dramatically under-quoted as sources – within news content. A recent UNESCO report found that, worldwide, just over a quarter of senior media management positions are occupied by women. According to research conducted in Australia by the Women in the Media project, in which the author of this chapter was a partner, only 12 percent of major national and metropolitan newspaper Editors-in-Chief are women. In the UK, the figure is just 16 percent and similar research in South Africa indicates that 31 percent of national titles are edited by women. Meanwhile, in the US, the American Society of Newspaper Editors reports that only 10 percent of “supervisory or upper management” positions in newsrooms are occupied by women, while the Women’s Media Center’s (WMC) Status of Women in the US Media: 2014 report identified the stubbornness of gender inequality at the top of the news business.

At The New York Times, despite Abramson’s dismissal, there is evidence of significant change in the ranks of senior editorial management: “...there are a few women working as journalists, most are in clerical, cleaning, distribution and advertising departments.”

- Beata Kasale
is a generational shift going on and the available pool of talent in the future may be dominated by women rather than men,” Janet Elder told the World Editors Forum before Abramson was sacked. Elder was promoted to Deputy Managing Editor in 2013 and she is now the most senior woman in The New York Times’ newsroom following Abramson’s departure.

Abramson, appointed as NYT Executive Editor in 2011, was the first woman to fill the role in the newspaper’s 160-year history. “We are fortunate that Jill Abramson... and Dean Baquet, the Managing Editor [now installed as the NYT’s first African American Executive Editor, in place of Abramson], have made an effort to promote talented senior women in the newsroom to the management ranks,” Elder said. “In addition to serving on the masthead, there are now women running major departments and areas of news coverage – Washington, National News, Culture, The Book Review, Science and Technology.”

In fact, before Abramson’s dismissal, The Times was celebrating a milestone, having finally achieved 50 percent female representation among its top editors. That milestone has now been reversed, but Elder argued that there was a process of dramatic change underway at The Times, reflective of shifting newsroom demographics and strategic management. “In the past, men have been more likely than women to be assigned to some of the most coveted jobs in journalism - foreign posts, political campaigns, investigative reporting. These jobs, in turn, often propelled the men who held them into senior roles,” she told WEF.

“Currently, in our own newsroom, some of our most dangerous reporting assignments – Jerusalem, Beirut and South Africa – have all been given to women, some with young children. That in itself is a sea change.”

However, the WMC found that The New York Times had the lowest rate of female bylines of the top 10 US newspapers – with 69 percent of bylines belonging to men – in its 2014 report. This is a problem that Abramson publicly acknowledged and had promised to address - prior to her sacking. In an interview with WMC...
researchers, she also pointed to the paucity of women applicants for newsroom technology jobs as a growing problem that needed attention, as newsrooms increasingly integrated editorial and technology roles.

However, guardian.com’s incoming Editor-in-Chief, Janine Gibson, points to a shift in the digital domain. “…there are so many more women in management roles, it’s incredibly easy to have an all female management team now and I do think that’s partly because of the flexibility and complete change that digital journalism affords,” she told the World Editors Forum. “As we move into eras where it’s not about what we did for the last 200 years and absolutely about what are we going to do next week and next month, and then that might be wrong and we’ll change it again, it’s allowing generations of women to come through and say I know how to deal with this, and it’s fantastic.”

**Motherhood and newsroom management**

Hilly Janes, writer and former senior executive at UK titles The Times, The Independent, and Prospect, attributes the problem of women’s under-representation in senior editorial roles in Britain to the working environment in newsrooms, where the more demanding roles require employees to work long, irregular hours – making it hard to juggle work with the primary care roles which women continue to take the lead on. “Women who take career breaks can lose confidence, and with the advent of ever-changing digital and social media it is much harder to keep up, which saps their confidence even more,” Janes told the World Editors Forum. She pointed out that areas with more “family-friendly hours” are far more likely to have “women dominating at every level.”

Janes echoes the views of Head of Operations at FT.com, Lisa MacLeod - a former Financial Times Managing Editor – who is balancing a high-profile media management career with motherhood. “As a newcomer, and a late starter to motherhood, I do suddenly understand why so many women seemingly disappear after having children... My female colleagues [who] have not had families progress forward and upwards. Those [who] do have to make choices: these involve compromising seniority for fewer working hours, reduced working weeks, child-friendly hours,” she said. “This might only happen for five years or so, but that’s enough to amount to a serious setback in terms of career progression. Even the most supportive organisation cannot erase the effect of these choices on their female employees’ progression.”

This is a point acknowledged by the NYT’s Janet Elder. She heads her newsroom’s Career Development Committee, which focuses on diversity, inclusion and women’s career progression. “We still wrestle with some structural issues that seem to keep more women than men from wanting to move into the editing ranks of the newsroom,” she said. And she indicated that structural change might be necessary: “Many of our editors are tied to the print production schedule, which means they have less control over their time than reporters...”
do. For some, that is a formidable obstacle. We are starting to look at how we might experiment with scheduling.”

If news organisations are serious about promoting women to senior editorial positions, more flexibility is required to accommodate women with children, according to MacLeod. “...I think companies could be more flexible in working out the best way to handle mothers in organisations. One thing I do know for sure is that you can’t underestimate the effectiveness of a woman juggling a family and a career: because time becomes so limited, these women are functioning on full power throughout the working day. They may not be there for 14 hours, but you are getting eight hours of serious work out of them, and they are formidable multi-taskers.”

**Leaning in**

MacLeod also believes women journalists could be more assertive: “It’s a bit passe now, but Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook COO, is quite right about encouraging women to ‘lean in’ – take your place in the front row, sit around the boardroom table instead of in the cheap seats, speak up, don’t be apologetic, make yourself heard. Simple, but powerful tactics.”

Specifically, she points to the ongoing need for women to be more forceful in promoting their capabilities and demanding pay parity “...most women are less aggressive than men in demanding equal pay for equal work, at least, and less confident when negotiating their position at work. That’s a broad generalisation, but I saw it first hand as Managing Editor of the FT for three years. On one occasion I actually ended up coaching somebody on how to ask for a raise - from me!” [While the exact circumstances of Jill Abramson’s dismissal remained murky as this chapter went to print, reports that she was fired after demanding pay parity with her male predecessor is worth noting in this context.]

Echoing the Sandberg “lean in” principle, Botswana newspaper publisher Beata Kasale told the World Editors Forum, “Women must make themselves visible. The media is about visibility. If they take a back seat, nobody will know that they are there. They should be more assertive.” Kasale is publisher and former editor of *The Voice*, one of seven Botswana media organisations that recently united to devise and introduce a common gender policy designed to mainstream newsroom equality. She said that in African newsrooms, “Women are missing in key positions of leadership in the newsrooms. Although there are a few women working as journalists, most are in clerical, cleaning, distribution and advertising departments.”

Her advice: “[Women] should be more assertive. At *The Voice* women occupy the top positions - Publisher, Editor, Advertising and Marketing Director, Operations Manager, Advertising Manager and Sub Editor are all women. In the newsroom the photographer is a woman.” While Kasale describes women editors as their own worst enemies – “Once in power they forget about gender mainstreaming” - she acknowledges the impact of unequal caring responsibilities on the career progression of women with children. “Why should it always be the woman who takes the baby to hospital? Where are the fathers?” Kasale asks. “Male managers should ensure there are policies in place which accommodate the needs for women to take care of

“Currently, in our own newsroom, some of our most dangerous reporting assignments - Jerusalem, Beirut and South Africa - have all been given to women, some with young children. That in itself is a sea change.”

children, as in most cases the male managers leave these duties to their wives too,” she argues.

So, other than “leaning in,” what can aspiring female editors do in practice to speed up their progression through the management ranks? The FT.com’s MacLeod recommends taking every opportunity to manage things or people: “You don’t have to have a team of people to be a manager. Offer yourself up for projects, cross-departmental initiatives, and take on jobs other people don’t want to do – in all of these ways you are learning about management of people, time, processes and change,” she suggests. “Read about management, see how other people handle situations, ask lots of questions. The more you do it, the better you will become, and the more likely you are to be chosen to lead your own team.”

Former Sydney Morning Herald Editor-in-Chief Amanda Wilson says finding a reliable mentor is also vital. “I don’t want to discourage any woman from seeking leadership but I would strongly recommend she arm herself...by finding a good mentor – even if it is a paid professional relationship – so she is given honest feedback in a safe environment. Most senior women I have met since joining their ranks tell me they had and still have mentors. I limped along without that kind of help and probably made a lot of mistakes because of it.”

Back at The New York Times, Janet Elder acknowledges that there is “...still work to be done” - work that takes time and careful management. “The Times had women poised for leadership. Their careers were nurtured over many, many years. [Former Executive Editor] Jill Abramson had served as Washington Bureau Chief and then spent eight years as Managing Editor. One of our Assistant Managing Editors, Susan Chira, spent eight years as Foreign Editor before being ‘promoted to the masthead’” [i.e. being named as an editor in the newspaper’s acknowledgements column].

And it is not just a responsibility for the The Times to carry, Elder urges. “It is critical that we and other news organisations remain aggressive about putting the next generation of women leaders in place now so that they are ready when their time comes.”

Reflecting in The Guardian about the propensity for women to get a chance at the top job (or to be swiftly disposed of) in the context of industry crises, Wilson says gender equity at the Editor-in-Chief level is now even more important. “The future of news-gathering organisations is uncertain. But I believe if the media is going to remain relevant to all its readers, viewers and audiences, it needs to embrace gender equity, set in place targets and support women. It makes business sense.”

Meantime, we have another watching brief - in Saudi Arabia: The Saudi Gazette has appointed its first female editor, Somayya Jabarti. “There’s a crack that has been made in the glass ceiling. And I’m hoping it will be made into a door,” Jabarti told AlArabiya News in February.
How can the men in charge help women break through the glass ceiling?

Azrul Ananda, President and Director of Indonesia’s Jawa Pos newspaper, explained his approach to managing gender equality to Julie Posetti.

“We need all employees of Jawa Pos to understand the importance of women readers... So to make sure of that, every Thursday all employees must wear [a] pink uniform. Also, all employees [take] special classes... to understand women and women’s issues better. If they do not take part in the program, they are not eligible for salary raises!”

WORLD EDITORS FORUM: As the Jawa Pos CEO, what’s your view on the current status of women in newsrooms - including your own?

AZRUL ANANDA: The Jawa Pos has historically never had a problem with gender issues. In fact, we had a period recently that two of the top three directors were women, including the previous CEO before I took over. Currently, many of our most important reporters, editors, and managers [are] women... all the Jawa Pos ‘For Her’ (a section focused on women) staff are female and they are one of the most important sections in the newspaper. Our circulation and newspaper sales manager is currently female (which almost never happens in Indonesia), as well as our advertising manager!

Why is it important for women to progress through the ranks of newsrooms to occupy senior editorial and management positions within news publishing organisations?

We never think of gender as an issue. Historically, women have been in the top positions of the newspaper, and I believe it will continue in the future. Recently, we have understood even more about the importance of women readers. Many surveys of newspapers usually say that male is the dominant gender when it comes to newspaper reading [but] in 2013, Enciety Business Consult (a leading survey company in Indonesia) found that 49 percent of Jawa Pos readers are female! So it’s basically 50-50 now!

What are the key obstacles to women’s progression into senior editorial positions in your experience?

There have never been any promotional obstacles at Jawa Pos. We promote people based on merit and it doesn’t matter if the new managers or bosses are male or female. Especially now most of the managers are under 40 years old (I am the CEO and I am 36 years old), so we are part of the new generation that have no issues regarding gender. It is very common for employees in Jawa Pos to “jump” in terms of ranks, if he or she is considered special.

*ADDITIONAL RESEARCH BY DOUGLAS GRANT AND EMILY BENNETT.*
Trend 07

Trends in global collaborative journalism

Rosental Calmon Alves

As crime and corruption go global, so must collaborative investigative journalism #TrendsInNewsrooms
Globalisation and the widespread use of digital communication technologies have triggered an unprecedented era of cross-border collaboration among journalists and media organisations around the world. National and international reporting done by one newsroom is no longer enough to cope with the challenges of investigations that increasingly involve transnational connections and immense volumes of data.

As corruption and organised crime go global, so does muckraking, and investigative journalism built on innovative collaborative initiatives continues to pop up around the world.

It is a cultural change that is still in the works, but it has already become one of the most important trends in contemporary journalism. At the forefront is the Global Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN), a hub of almost 100 organisations of journalists from about 50 countries. GIJN was the brainchild of Brant Houston, a veteran American journalist, when he was executive director of Investigative Reporters & Editors (IRE), then the largest association of its kind in the world.

Houston saw a need for a network among organisations like IRE that were emerging in different parts of the world. He envisaged that the network would facilitate the muckrakers’ job.

"Cross-border investigations are the only way to truly follow the money in a global economy," says Houston. "So many local investigative stories quickly require contacts, information or colleagues in other countries, whether it’s health, pharmaceuticals, energy, agribusiness or environment."

"Cross-border investigations are the only way to truly follow the money in a global economy.”

- Brant Houston, founder of the Global Investigative Journalism Network
The network got international support, especially from Scandinavian journalists, who hosted the first congress in 2001. At GIJN’s 8th Congress in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in October 2013, 1,200 journalists from more than 100 countries had a chance to network and discuss the emergent trend of cross-border collaboration.

Kiev a wellspring for collaboration

Four months later, when reporters in Ukraine entered Viktor Yanukovych’s palace in Kiev, hours after the deposed president left the country, they found a trove of documents shredded and floating on a lake. Their attitude is the best example of the cultural change in journalism that puts collaboration above competition. Reporters immediately united to create a collaborative, cross-border project they called “Operation Yanukovych Leaks.” (See “Ukraine’s Journalism Revolution” in this chapter.) It was also in Kiev, during GIJN’s 2011 Congress, that Italian journalists were inspired to create their own organisation (See “An Italian case study in journalism-without-borders” at the end of this chapter.)

Chuck Lewis, a former television producer in the USA and founder of the Center for Public Integrity (CPI), was a visionary in the mid-1990s, when he saw the need for mechanisms to foster transnational collaboration among investigative reporters. As CPI consolidated as a non-profit U.S. journalism organisation, Lewis saw the trend toward globalisation and in 1997 launched the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), a network of dozens of the best investigative reporters from around the world.

As a member of the ICIJ’s advisory board since the organisation began, I’ve seen first-hand how intrepid investigative reporters from around the globe overcome language, cultural and stylistic differences to embrace the idea of cross-border collaboration. They have participated in many amazing transnational investigations that would have never been possible without ICIJ’s collaborative platform.

It was under the leadership of Bill Buzemberg, CPI’s executive director, and Gerard Ryle, ICIJ director, that the largest and most ambitious cross-border investigative journalism project to date was
launched. As Ryle investigated local fraud in his native Australia, he became interested in offshore tax havens. Eventually, he received a leak, a huge volume of data containing the records of offshore accounts. Those secret accounts in fiscal havens are normally used by wealthy people who want to avoid taxation in their countries, as well as by international criminal organisations.

The pack leaked to Ryle had 2.5 million files detailing 30 years of offshore financial activities of about 120,000 people from 170 countries. Like the Ukrainian reporters who entered Yanukovych’s palace, Ryle knew he could count on ICIJ’s well-established culture of global collaboration. It is hard to imagine any other structure in the world capable of dealing with the extraordinary volume of sensitive data Ryle obtained. It was 170 times larger than the Wikileaks trove of U.S. military and diplomatic documents.

In a long, painstaking process, Ryle, his deputy, Marina Walker, and the ICIJ team worked with 112 journalists and many newspapers from more than 60 countries to decipher and analyse the vast amount of highly complex data. The result was dozens of well-checked, high-quality stories published in some of the best newspapers in the world, which had even greater repercussions in international media.

The technical challenge was how to process and present the data to the public in an accessible and attractive way. ICIJ member Giannina Segnini, then head of the investigative reporting team at the Costa Rican newspaper La Nación, led an international team that solved that puzzle, developing a database that could be open to the public for easy review with interactive data visualisations.

The “offshore leak” has become the largest cross-border collaborative project in the history of journalism. It was preceded, however, by many other transnational investigative stories conducted by ICIJ members. Those projects would be exceedingly difficult for any news organisation to conduct alone. They included topics such as tobacco smuggling, the underground commerce in human corpses for medical transplants, and the devastation caused by illegal fishing.

It has been in the area of corruption and organised crime that collaborative cross-border initiatives have received a big boost lately. Founded in southeast Europe, the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) has fostered the creation and development of many investigative journalism organisations from Eastern Europe to Central Asia. OCCRP has been working in partnership with many other international organisations dedicated to cross-border journalistic collaboration.

One spinoff of OCCRP that has also stimulated this kind of collaborative work is the Investigative Dashboard, a digital platform created to help investigative journalists and researchers from around the world. The Dashboard offers three tools to help investigations on organised crime and corruption:

- A crowdsourced database of “persons of interest and their business connections;”
- A worldwide list of over 400 online databases and business registers in 120 nations and jurisdictions; and
A research desk that helps journalists and researchers to find information and sources.

In South America, organisations such as the Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism (ABRAJI), the Forum of Argentine Journalism (FOPEA), and the Consejo de Redacción (CdR) in Colombia have also facilitated cross-border collaboration. ABRAJI and CdR created their own databases on organized crime and connected them, helping journalists from the region to access information that could not be found anywhere else. Both databases have millions of entries.

CdR has led cross-border investigations, including a story about the trade of carbon credits among Latin American companies. And in Peru, the Press and Society Institute (IPYS) coordinated investigations on mining and fishing. Recently, Colombian journalist Carlos Eduardo Huertas created Connectas, a non-profit organisation aimed specifically to promote cross-border collaboration between South American journalists.

In Europe, journalists interested in cross-border projects can count on a new organisation. Journalismfund.eu was recently launched to “promote quality cross-border and in-depth journalism in Europe.” The fund gives “working grants to journalists that enable them to work on a project over a longer period of time” and provides “networking opportunities for the investigative journalism community to share ideas and methods.”

The Forum for African Investigative Reporting (FAIR) has promoted cross-border reportage in Africa, providing small grants to reporters. More recently, another organization has been created in Africa with an eye to “creating opportunities for collaborative, transnational projects” in journalism. The African Network of Centers of Investigative Reporting (ANCIR) was created by 16 investigative newsrooms in 14 countries, from the continent’s largest newspaper, The Sunday Times, to small investigative magazines like Noseweek, to non-profit centers such as ICIR and Maka Angola.

Other regional organisations like the Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA) and the Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ) may not have an explicit cross-border reporting goal, but their regional scope, networking reporters from neighbouring countries, has helped to stimulate transnational collaboration. SEAPA has given grants for investigative stories that included cross-border collaborations. Both SEAPA and ARIJ offer training to journalists from their regions, creating an opportunity for networking that usually is the first step towards cross-border collaboration.

So far, many newsrooms all over the world have benefited from transnational innovative mechanisms for collaboration. We are just scratching the surface of immense opportunities to create more cross-border journalistic projects that would have been unimaginable years ago, before the spread of digital communication tools that enable journalists located in different countries or continents to work together in an efficient, virtually costless way. Globalisation has just arrived in our newsrooms, blurring the borders between national and international coverage and allowing journalists to collaborate in new and effective ways, beyond their geographic, cultural and language differences. This new culture of cross-border collaborations is here to stay.

If crime and corruption have gone global, so must journalism

Collaborative investigative journalism organisations are being created all around the world

The world’s biggest joint project involved a cache of documents 170 times larger than Wikileaks
Ukraine’s overthrow of its pro-Russian president, Victor Yanukovych, followed the historic pattern of protest movements there. A public space was occupied, the protests intensified, and a regime crumbled. Maidan Square, the place central to Yanukovych’s demise, had been occupied during the earlier “Revolution on Granite” in 1989 and the Orange Revolution in 2004.

But the 2014 revolution involved transformation of a different kind, revolutionising the way the media work both inside and outside Ukraine. Groups of Ukrainian journalists collaborated with one another, used new channels such as video livestreaming operated by citizen media, and communicated with the public in ways that were ground-breaking. Ukraine proved to be both a testing ground for new technology already conceived and a launching pad for future media strategies.

Yanukovych’s departure turned out to be a bonanza for Ukrainian journalists. Tens of thousands of documents were found, either floating in the lake of his palatial property or hidden in his house, many of them evidence of corruption. This treasure trove of raw data led to the formation of the ground-breaking collaborative investigative journalism project YanukovychLeaks.

Ukrainian journalist Oleg Khomenok, senior media advisor for Internews Network and logistical coordinator of the project, says, “The reporters found about 30,000 pages of documents in Mesigiria, in President Yanukovych’s residence, preserved them from destruction, and published them online. That was actually probably the first time in the former Soviet Union that such a large number of financial documents of [a] regime became available for the media and for the people.”

A report on the leaks by the Global Investigative Journalism Network says the documents included “receipts for millions of dollars in cash. Lavish spending on exotic zoo animals and luxury goods. Records of Yanukovych’s sprawling investments. A black list of the local press.”

The website came about because Ukrainian reporters first at the scene realised that those critical documents of the history of their nation were at risk of being lost or destroyed. Rather than see that happen, they abandoned the profession’s time-honored tradition of competing with one another for the best stories. They combined their resources and worked together to recover and publish the documents online.

Khomenok emphasises that the collaboration did not come about overnight. In 2003, the Danish organisation Scoop was set up to support investigative journalism across Eastern Europe, and since 2009 there had been an informal network of investigative reporters whose coordinator was the Regional Press Development institute, a member of the Global Investigative Journalist Network. Reporters also contacted the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, a consortium of investigative centres from Europe to Central Asia. That was the high-tech end of the operation; the low-tech end was the heat-lamp used to dry sodden documents found at the bottom of the lake.
“These reporters shared same values; they were ready to share the information that they gathered during their investigations to make the synergy effect,” explained Khomenok. “They were cooperating in different projects despite [the fact that] they were working for different media. As soon as the documents were found, the YanukovychLeaks group of reporters was almost immediately formed to work with these documents.”

But with such a vast volume of papers, there was more work than professional reporters alone could handle. Using social media, the fledgling organisation sent out a plea to journalism students and immediately got hundreds of responses. The hard work – first posting all the documents, then the stories that reporters wrote about their significance – paid off. There were millions of pageviews, and the Ukrainian justice system began to launch criminal cases.

But much of the work is still to come. Denys Bigus, an investigator at the Ukrainian TV channel ZIK, says he is now not working to produce news reports but to save evidence of crimes. “So truly, audience isn’t my main problem... today. This is work for the future, almost.”

The site, yanukovychleaks.org, modelled the way a non-news platform can also become a centre for news. It not only shows the documents – currently more than 23,000 of them – but also reposts and links to content written about the documents by journalists working on the scene. “YanukovychLeaks becomes not only the portal that has all the documents, but also works as an aggregator of the news pieces or the reports produced by reporters participating in this project,” explains Khomenok.

The website is also ready to collaborate with non-Ukrainian journalists on international issues, he says. “I already got the request from my colleagues from Finland who actually have an idea to do a transnational investigation about the companies from Finland involved... There are a lot of papers dedicated to the supplying of a lot of stuff from European countries... There are a lot of traces from the transactions between western countries and Russian countries and the companies that are all located in Mesigiria.”

Veteran journalist and media development specialist Drew Sullivan founded and now spearheads the Journalism Development Network and the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project. He said the key to the future of press freedom lies in unique forms of innovation such as this.

“When we did Yanukovychleaks with our Ukrainian partners, we wanted just to get the documents up as soon as possible. Now we are doing crowdsourcing and text analysis. Everything is more complicated. I think media in the future will all have – besides the reporters, editors, photographers and graphic artists – they will have programmers, interactive specialists, data scientists, database programmers, videographers and other information specialists.

“We deal primarily with investigative reporting, which is being re-invented. You can’t just have a story anymore. You need interactive multimedia. You need data and information graphics. You need feedback and discussion. Investigative reporting is becoming an experience and even the nature of how it is done has become part of the story (like in YanukovychLeaks).”

Meanwhile, back in Kiev, as the possibility of war looms in Crimea and the global focus shifts from the downfall of a corrupt president to a revival of Cold War tensions, journalists on the Yanukovychleaks projects are still hard at it. Former Deputy Editor and Head of Investigations at Forbes Ukraine Oleksandr Akyemenko is one of the lead journalists on YanukovychLeaks. He said the project continues apace, despite the threat of war in the east of the country.

“We will finalise all the investigations and make something like a collection of the articles or even a book, and each journalist from YanukovychLeaks will get great experience because the situation was unique,” he said. “We’re working on the stories connected to different projects, some on the banks, some on the development and building, some on the charity foundations, some on his hunting and fishing club, some offshore campaigns, so we are trying to do this job well and then we will look at the whole picture.”

*ADDITIONAL RESEARCH BY ALEXANDRA SAZONOVA-PROKOURAN
TRENDS IN GLOBAL COLLABORATIVE JOURNALISM

An Italian case study: Journalists without borders

Federica Cherubini

Economies are globalising. Corporations are globalising. Organised crime is globalising. And so, too, must investigative journalism; without cross-border collaborations, the fourth estate’s traditional scrutiny of corruption and dirty tricks will languish, unable to map hidden trails of money and influence as they become much longer and more complex.

During the Global Investigative Journalism Conference (GIJC) in October 2011 in Kiev, eight Italian journalists started fantasising about an organisation dedicated to investigative journalism in Italy. What if they could join forces and establish a centre based on collaboration, fully dedicated to investigative journalism, following the model of other such centres in Europe and the USA, such as the Global Investigative Journalism Network (USA) and the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (Bosnia and Herzegovina)?

As journalist and Investigative Reporting Project Italy (IRPI) President Cecilia Anesi told the World Editors Forum, “We can’t forget organised crime in Italy is one of the strongest in the world. Italy is the homeland of Cosa Nostra, ’Ndrangheta, Camorra, Sacra Corona Unita. These organisations don’t think or act inside the national borders anymore. They internationalised their activity, work transnationally and cross-border, they are interconnected in this global world. Therefore, to keep up we have to follow the same transnational and cross-border, interconnected, global approach.”

Months of discussions followed that initial meeting between Anesi and seven others, via Google groups and Skype, on how to make it possible. One of the major issues was which kind of legal entity to choose in order to ensure the organisation could apply for funding as a non-profit body but also sell its services (not an easy status to achieve in Italy).

Finally, IRPI was born on 21 July 2012 in Rome. To gain the desired legal status, it took the form of a cultural promotion association. Its main areas of interest are public spending, organised crime, environmental degradation, corporate policies that lead to illegal profits or social injustice, the interests that hide behind certain political or corporate policies, and illegal trafficking of any kind.

In a single year, IRPI grew to 12 members from the original eight: Anesi, Giulio Rubino, Lorenzo Bodrero, Alessia Cerantola, Guia Baggi, Cecilia Ferrara, Leo Sisti and Guido Romeo. They have different backgrounds and skills; some have long-standing careers, such as Sisti, a contributing reporter for the weekly magazine L’Espresso with 30 years of experience investigating corruption, financial crimes, the Mafia, politics, terrorism and organised crime. He is also a member of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ).

The qualities they most share are energy and resolve. Some have already won prizes:
Cecilia Anesi and Giulio Rubino co-authored the investigative journalism documentary *Toxic Europe*, which won the Best International Organised Crime Report Award 2011 (BIOCRI).

For now, all IRPI members devote their time to investigations mainly on a voluntary basis, in the hope that it is a long-term investment. One of the big issues facing IRPI is the need to achieve a sustainable business model. Some investigations are commissioned, others funded through grants, others have a limited budget to cover expenses, and some stories are sold, once completed, to news outlets that publish them. Italy is its homeland and the members are Italian, but the approach is most definitely global, the watchwords being “transnationality” and “cross-border” investigations.

IRPI is experimenting to find new ways of producing and distributing investigative journalism. With the ICIJ as a model, it aims to become a binding agent between different news media around the world to cover the big picture on corruption and organised crime. “We work with publications in South America and from all over the world to be able to cover the full story,” Anesi says.

The financial maths do not yet add up. When stories are not funded through grants or commissioned, the big problem is how to compensate six months of journalistic work for an investigation with the relatively small amount of money that comes from selling a single piece to a news outlet. The main income at the moment comes from offering a “fixing service” to foreign media and reporters, acting as a “professional tourist guide” for foreign journalists who need insights into the Italian “jungle.” IRPI is also considering launching its own publication.

Some stories are specifically commissioned for, or in partnership with, a news outlet. In the case of the recently published story “Mafia in Germany,” which unveils the powerful network of organized crime operating in Italy and Germany, the story is produced by Funke Mediengruppe in Germany in collaboration with IRPI. Funke originally reached out to IRPI for a fixing service that eventually developed into a real collaboration, with IRPI co-authoring the investigation. IRPI has involved its contact in southern Italy, the local newspaper *Il Grandangolo* of Agrigento, which also contributed to the reporting.
The story was then published in Italy in *Wired Italy* and in *Il Grandeangolo*.

Some stories start from an Italian perspective and develop an international angle, as in a food-fraud investigation that covered tomato puree imported from China but labelled “Produced in Italy.” The story was done by IRPI, sponsored by the European Fund for Investigative Journalism, and published in the *Guardian* in the U.K.

A joint investigation by IRPI’s Anesi and Martelliano and the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists revealed the inside story behind the fall of Chinese green energy giant Suntech Power. The story, a new chapter in the ICIJ’s “Offshore Leaks” saga, shows how Suntech’s investments in Italy entangled the company in what Italian prosecutors call “the biggest solar energy fraud in Italian history.” The investigation was published on the ICIJ website and in the *International Business Times*.

The Italian angle of the story was published in the weekly *L’Espresso* and a more locally detailed one on the online Sicilian newspaper, *Marsala.it*. A Spanish angle was published on the Spanish online paper *El Confidencial*.

IRPI is also battling an historic disdain for investigative journalism in Italian newspapers. Astonishingly, some stories that involve Italy are more easily published in foreign media than Italian ones. Often, after an investigation that lasted six months and produced in-depth journalistic pieces, Italian media are not interested in publishing more than about 600 words. “That is not an investigative story, that is [more like a] simple court report,” Anesi says.

Those who conduct investigations often don’t have the time to focus on looking for funding. This is why, alongside continuing in-depth investigations, IRPI’s main goal is to apply for substantial funding to be able to hire a fully dedicated fund-raising person.

“IRPI is an experiment,” Anesi said. “Sometimes we feel like real pioneers, sometimes like guinea pigs. Sometimes we ask ourselves why are we doing this, and sometimes, when after days of investigations, we hit the mark we realise there is nothing better than what we do. I feel blessed for living in a time when something like IRPI is possible, when doing cross-border investigations that benefit from the immediacy of the world wide web, becomes an amazing adventure that involves each time at least four languages, places in the world, corners of history.

“It’s indeed the work in close contact with colleagues from all over the world that gives us the strength to push ahead.”
Trend 08
Why the mega-stories matter
Andrew Nachison

Mega-stories “Herald a potentially game-changing new direction for online news. They are proof of life”: @anachison #TrendsInNewsrooms
In October 2013, *The Guardian* published a digital showpiece. It was an elaborate, painstakingly crafted microsite focused on a single story and presented to show off the British publisher’s design, technical and story-telling mastery, as well as its “ownership” of a complex work of journalism that, by virtue of its special treatment, the *Guardian*’s editors signaled was more important than others. ‘NSA Files: Decoded’ [see Janine Gibson’s ‘Thought Leader’ interview on the project at the beginning of this report] advanced the state of the art of rich, narrative, multi-perspective web journalism. Like a number of similar story-telling blowouts from other publishers, NSA Files was striking both for the care taken over its production and for how far it departed from the norm in online news.

It wove text, graphics and videos about the U.S. government documents leaked by Edward Snowden into a simple, mobile-friendly scroll – with no advertising or any of the usual distractions encountered on “ordinary” online news pages. The story was designed to be read and viewed with concentration, to woo, inform and delight an audience through a “lean back” and time-demanding experience. It was like a well-designed print magazine. But unlike a series of *ambitious failures* from magazine publishers who had pinned high hopes on the design-friendly reading experience of *iPad apps*, NSA Files was easily viewed and shared in a web browser on a computer, tablet or smartphone. It was native to the web.

Stories like NSA Files are exceptional, and this is why they matter. They are stretches. They are creative bursts in a sea of sameness. They are a proof of life. They offer hope for the future – and also a hint at what the next generation of digital news products could look like, and how they might demonstrate distinctive value, rather than simply claim it.

Senior content and strategy executives tell me they are expanding their use of photos, videos, maps and interactive data tools in routine stories. But singular, special blow-outs like NSA Files are too expensive and too difficult for everyday stories. That’s also why they are important. The mega-stories show us not only what everyday stories could look like, but what using them could feel like.
The return of design

Although still uncommon, well-designed online story pages started appearing a few years ago, first in mobile apps and then in websites inspired by them. Spacious, easy, distraction-free reading is the defining characteristic of a variety of mobile apps that aggregate and re-format stories from publishers, such as Flipboard and Zite, or “save for later” reading apps such as Instapaper and Pocket. It’s also the most obvious feature of Twitter founder Evan Williams’ new web publishing platform, Medium.

But virtuoso web productions of individual stories are still rare, even from the biggest news publishers, whose websites are often limited, and sometimes crippled, by chaotic and unforgiving templates, awkward publishing tools, conflicting business goals and the relentless crush of continuous production.

A microburst of experiments in story-telling and design is a sign of curiosity from companies that have spent the past decade looking inward, managing down expenses, setting up paywalls, chasing after audiences on social networks, and figuring out the finer points of photo slide shows and other forms of link bait.

The business of news, dwindling except for those who seek to overtake it (such as startups like Vox), has overshadowed the practice, craft and creative fringes of online journalism.

So experiments in new story-telling styles and better ways to present distinctive, differentiated, long-form reporting are daring, icy shocks to the system. Their mere existence, even from an elite publisher like The Guardian, signifies success for their creators and overshadows annoying quirks like auto-play videos and slow-loading pages – and

Segregation Now ProPublica
http://www.propublica.org/article/segregation-now-the-resegregation-of-americas-schools#intro

“Stories like NSA Files are exceptional, and this is why they matter. They are stretches. They are creative bursts in a sea of sameness. They are a proof of life.”
– World Editors Forum Board Member Andrew Nachison
complaints that they are over-blown vanity projects, full of “superfluous bells and whistles,” so ego-driven journalists can strut their stuff. It’s also what distinguishes them from those who have no stuff to strut.

**Something neat**

Last year, an even more ambitious story production from *The New York Times*, Snow Fall, was viewed more than 3.5 million times in its first week online, suggesting rich, non-fiction digital story-telling had finally “arrived.” *The Times* enhanced its reputation, earned bragging rights – and won a Pulitzer Prize.

A number of technical advances, such as open-source code to simplify production of interesting image-and-text scrolling effects, made it likely that more Snow Falls would follow. And they did. *The Times* published *The Jockey* earlier this year. *Rolling Stone*, *Grantland*, *Pitchfork*, *USA Today* and *The Wall Street Journal* have all produced similarly showy stories with screen-spanning images and a mix of text, video and funky scrolls.

*ProPublica* published what it called “one of our most ambitious reporting efforts” when it ran its Segregation Now project in April of this year, examining the resegregation of schools in the USA. The presentation included a mixture of text, “arresting” photographs, interactive timelines and a tool for readers to “look up whether their districts remain under federal desegregation orders.”

*The Telegraph* in the U.K. ran a similar, albeit less technologically ambitious project with its article on German prostitution, *Welcome to Paradise: Inside the world of legalised prostitution.*

*Polygon*, a gaming blog from Vox Media, took the concept even further: Its exhaustive reviews of the *Sony Playstaton 4* and *Xbox One* gaming consoles featured not only beautiful type, illustrations and scrolls but screen-filling advertising that elegantly appeared and disappeared during the scroll. Polygon also applied the same visual language found on the web page to the animated video review embedded within it.

For now, these projects matter because they are outliers – visually distinctive rarities, painstakingly compiled over a period of months by teams of reporters, photographers, designers and developers. Like *The Serengeti Lion*, an extraordinary production from National Geographic, they stand out in an ever-expanding web universe of chaotic, jumbled news pages we endure but rarely enjoy.
Those “regular” pages are engineered to meet the needs of publishers, not readers, to earn money with a jillion links scattered everywhere. Some think the mega-projects are a waste of time for everyone — including the audience.

“I suspect that years from now, we’ll look back at Snow Fall, The Jockey, and their copycats in the same way we now regard 1990s-era dancing hamster animations — as an example of excess, a moment when designers indulged their creativity because they now have the technical means to do so, and not because it improved the story or readers’ understanding of it,” Wall Street Journal tech columnist Farhad Manjoo wrote in Slate.

I see the opposite, or at least its possibility: A turning point for online news, a moment when editors, writers, photographers, videographers, developers and designers converged to express creative instincts that had been suppressed for so long their mere appearance was a sensation. These stories, imperfections and all, herald a potentially game-changing new direction for online news: thoughtful reading and viewing experiences baked into higher-value journalism, higher-value stories and higher-value productions in every encounter with every story and every page.

Multimedia isn’t the future — it’s the past

I’m still hungry for new designs, formats, story forms and reading experiences that feel inherently “webby.” But in a world drowning in stories from professionals, eyewitnesses, social networks and marketers, I’m less sure of what news should look like, let alone what it inevitably must look like, where it belongs, or if anybody other than dreamers really cares.

Stories could have many different entry points and pathways — and this “non-linear” approach had to lead to some new, deeper and more intrinsically digital, “webby” and better form for news.

I still hear this dream in people who say we’re “early” in the era of digital media. But we aren’t. Complex, self-directed, non-linear, immersive, emotion-packed, full-screen, multimedia digital experiences have truly arrived — just not for news, or the web. Anybody who has played Halo or pre-ordered Destiny knows this. Video games, which eclipsed the film industry’s revenue and production budgets five years ago, have in many ways fulfilled the craziest story-telling fantasies I and others used to attach to online news. Just not for news. To put Snow Fall’s traffic triumph in perspective:
In September 2013, the game Grand Theft Auto V earned more than $1 billion in its first three days of retail sales.

Online news, and the needs and expectations of its mobile, social, info-saturated devotees, is no more like video gaming than it is like Hollywood entertainment. The crumbling business model of news has pushed production budgets lower, not higher; and users have shown a preference for speed and brevity over depth and detail. So instead of becoming more complex, news businesses have maintained relatively simple production processes built around the work of individual writers, photographers and videographers. News products have fragmented into simpler, sharable components: headlines, links, lists, summaries, shortcodes, likes, tweets, photos, videos, infographics, animated GIFs, maps, memes and comments.

Like a multi-directional video game, this makes the social news experience deeply personal. Individuals, rather than editors, directors or executive producers, choose their own paths, compose their own narratives from the assortment of texts, images and social cues encountered in browsers and apps. Narratives are only barely and briefly contained by publishing brands and their money-making pages. They are also deconstructed and shared out, liked, pinned, tweeted, discussed and excerpted elsewhere. The web itself, rather than mega-projects like the Guardian’s NSA Files, has become the non-linear “roll your own” story canvas.

Although there was once an expectation that

A microburst of experiments in story-telling and design is a sign of curiosity from companies that have spent the past decade looking inward, managing down expenses, setting up paywalls, chasing after audiences on social networks, and figuring out the finer points of photo slide shows and other forms of link bait.”
news publishers would need, or at least want, to flex their creative and journalistic muscles to establish a distinctive experience and value for their digital audiences, they have for the most part focused on a simpler and easier course: extract revenue by any means possible through familiar story forms and clever headlines to drive audiences to them. Dreams of multimedia moonshots gave way to the industrial realities of routine production.

On a practical level, it’s obvious why “big” stories are so rare. They are big. For sheer scale alone, they are more expensive to produce than routine reports, even investigations and features that take months of reporting.

Multimedia story-telling has undoubtedly arrived, only in a much simpler form: the web is filled, every day, every second, with text, photos, videos, maps, infographics and social media artefacts. Nearly two decades into web culture, online publishing remains dominated by old forms that have proven resilient and powerful. These are the elements of everyday stories, all easily produced and combined by anyone with a smartphone.

The only thing that hasn’t flourished, yet, is putting them all together. That’s why the mega-stories matter.

With 41 percent of US newspapers charging a subscription fee for access to their websites, and other publishers around the world doing the same, the mega-stories offer a glimmer of hope that news businesses can figure out higher-value products and user experiences. Story-telling, still the core of media and publishing, is a good starting point for the next round of product innovations. The mega-stories matter because they suggest a possible future for the businesses that make them possible in the first place.

* This is an edited version of an essay that was first published at We Media. Nachison is a former World Editors Forum Board member

- Virtuoso treatment of “mega-stories” shows what technology can offer journalism
- One technologically ambitious story at the NYT was viewed more than 3.5 million times in a week

Justin Arenstein on the value of small data journalism projects, social justice and revenue

Justin Arenstein is a Knight International Journalism Fellow who is helping the African Media Initiative (AMI) establish a digital innovation program supporting experimentation in newsrooms across Africa. He spoke to Julie Posetti about profitably using data journalism to improve, and even save, lives.

**WORLD EDITORS FORUM:** What are your key objectives in terms of identifying projects and then acting with regard to data journalism in developing countries?

**JUSTIN ARENSTEIN:** With all of our projects... we say, are they citizen-focused? Is this an indulgence of a politics desk, which thinks it’s a sexy project they would have fun doing, or does it really speak to the pain in citizens’ lives? Is it trying to solve something that keeps a normal audience of a normal media company awake at night? Things like school fees and access to health care. Secondly, is it action-oriented? In other words, is it going to give people actionable information that they can do something with?

We do try to do things that could be used as a benchmark or a comparator in another country... like medicine pricing, educational data, elicit money flow data, that kind of stuff... Obviously the other thing is... that data projects are expensive... [so we] try and build evergreen projects. If you’re going to spend time scraping, collating, and cleaning, then try and target the kind of data that can be used multiple times or remain as a long-term [resource].

**Can you give us a couple of tangible examples of recent projects you’ve developed?**

[We have some] very small projects with a very small team, a very small budget, but tackling a very big problem. Ghana is undergoing new oil wealth... These oil extraction companies are supposed to be paying 3 percent of the money they make from the oil back to the affected communities. It should be going to a local authority and the local authority should use it to build and improve the lives of local citizens... The reality is that hasn’t been happening.
The money was siphoned elsewhere?

It sat in an expense account, the government wasn’t spending this money... because of capacity problems... The data allowed [people to] send in the name of their village (via SMS). They could find out how this impacts ‘me as an individual’. Then people get outraged.

[Then] we then built second set of data tools, SMS tools, that allowed the audience to... send an SMS to the relevant minister or authority, effectively signing a petition to do something about this. In other words, positive constructive action. That’s where we step across the line from being traditional journalists... We allow communities to find themselves and mobilise themselves. Journalists were then able to monitor this data and were able to zero-in on communities that were actually doing something, and then it feeds back into the news cycle.

Can you tell me a bit about what project you’re working on now with the World Editors Forum for your upcoming digital journalism master class?

The leading cause of death in rural Africa is water-borne diseases... you’re drinking it out of a river, a downstream-of-sewage kind of problem. So we’re using the cameras in phones to build microscopes

“With our projects, we say, are they citizen-focused? Is this an indulgence, or does it really speak to the pain of citizens’ lives?”
that can magnify and then analyse the contaminants in water, specifically looking for the things that cause cholera, E. Coli and various others, and then sending out an SMS to locals, who are invariably women, whose job it is to walk and fetch water from the river, telling them when it’s contaminated, when it’s at dangerous levels, and give them options to go somewhere else that’s clean.

These are the kinds of resources and analysis that not even governments are capable of doing at the moment with the problems that they face. The reality is people are drinking from these rivers multiple times per day. We’re looking at doing this with a small budget with devices that could be built in any country, by any newsroom, resulting in data that any newsroom would be able to analyse and turn into stories.

You’re saying that you actually have technology that is able to test the water and then upload the outcomes of those tests to the web for journalists to investigate and report? That’s quite extraordinary...

Multiple times per day for the cost of an SMS... The idea is because we’ve got multiple sensors, you could triangulate where the contamination comes from, so if it’s a municipal sewage works that has burst the banks of the river, you could effectively rechart to local citizens in that area and say, “Could you get us a picture?” rather than flying or driving in a reporting team. In very rural areas this means getting someone to drive four or five hundred kilometres at great expense, which is why it doesn’t happen.

We’re hearing about the trend for Western newsrooms struggling with legacy business models to launch premium offers – which might involve discounted tickets to festivals or preview cinema screenings – to attract readers, and you’re talking about monetising actual public interest outcomes and services in developing countries...

In our world, people don’t have electricity or piped water. They’re really not going to stump up money to see Hugh Grant or anyone else. What these people need in their lives is an information service. How can we... provide that service and then once we’ve provided [it] how can we mine that and turn that into journalism? On top of that, we’re also building a citizen-reporting app that allows people then who are in a contaminated area to potentially send us video or photograph of images that could be turned into news reporting, and then we can start paying contributors to the citizen media.

You’ve talked a lot about very economical, high impact projects. What is your view on the kinds of investments that are being made in very expensive, multi-layered projects such as Snow Fall that are often discussed in Western contexts compared to those that you were talking about?

In my world, which is kind of Latin America, Africa and potentially India, it’s indulgence. It’s an indulgence that we can’t really afford but that doesn’t mean that we don’t do data visualisation. So [instead of] doing a Firestorm, we would rather look at recurrent stories, stories that happen every year, so things around public expenditure and budgets, and try and figure out a template around telling those stories in a more meaningful way... We’re building a framework like you have with Snow Fall and that you can repackage and re-skin multiple times to tell those kinds of stories.

More information about these projects is available on the Code for Africa website.
Trend 09

Native advertising – the challenge to journalistic integrity

Brian Veseling

Native Advertising: A challenge to journalistic integrity or a viable funding option? #TrendsInNewsrooms
Traditionally, journalists and editors have fought hard to maintain what they called “the wall between church and state” — a metaphor for the newsroom’s effective day-to-day division between advertising and editorial. It has always been seen as essential to a masthead’s integrity that advertisers have no influence over stories. But the past year has seen several world-famous news providers announce that they were softening their policies on this. In the past six months, The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal have both started offering what is being described as “native advertising” — the new buzzword for the sponsored content previously called “advertorials” or “branded content.”

Margaret Sullivan, Public Editor for The New York Times, described the contentious form of advertising this way during a presentation at the International Journalism Festival in May 2014 in Perugia, Italy: “Native advertising is shorthand for advertising that looks like editorial content. Is this intended to fool the reader? Well, no, you could never get anyone to say that, but it is intended to draw readers into the advertising in part because it does look like editorial content.”

Of course, native advertising isn’t exactly new to publishing. In the past, this kind of paid-for content frequently appeared in print publications as “advertorials” or even large-scale, multi-page “special advertising sections” that often seemed to be, for example, in-depth country reports extolling their unique business opportunities.

Whenever the concept is brought up by newspaper publishers, it puts their journalists and editors on high alert. While native advertising contains clear rewards for the business side, it also carries clear risks to editorial integrity and the brand at large.

The main benefit to publishers, of course, is money — potentially loads of it.

Sullivan wrote in an article about The New York Times’ foray into this form of advertising in late 2013, “The Times has high hopes for this effort. Mr. Mark Thompson, the paper’s CEO, said he is hoping for ‘eight figures’ — tens of millions of dollars — in advertising revenue. That won’t be immediate, he said, but it’s not in the distant future, either.”

While the money might be much needed these days, the potential downsides to using native advertising can be many, first and foremost of which...
is the risk to editorial integrity. This needs to be addressed by publishers right up front. For example, on the day The New York Times announced that it was branching into native advertising, Publisher Arthur Sulzberger Jr. sent an e-mail to the newspaper’s staff saying, “We will ensure that there is never a doubt in anyone’s mind about what is Times journalism and what is advertising.”

Some six months into The Times’ use of native advertising, Sullivan told participants in Perugia, “The Times has actually done it very well, in that it is labelling the native advertising very carefully and so you’ll see the words ‘Paid Post.’” She added that in her role as public editor for the paper, her admonition from the previous year “wasn’t meant so much as criticism as it was, ‘Here’s something to watch.’”

Custom studios

In the case of The Wall Street Journal, parent company Dow Jones announced in March 2014 the launch of a new content strategy department called “WSJ Custom Studios,” which is a part of the company’s advertising division and works with brands to create native advertising.

In making the announcement, Dow Jones published an internal Q&A with Trevor Fellows, Head of Global Media Sales at The Wall Street Journal and Raju Narisetti, Senior Vice President of Strategy for News Corp, explaining The Journal’s plans and approach for the new division.

“We have been in the branded content business for a long time,” Fellows said in that interview. “We’re taking our finely honed skills to push our own limits and create a new, standard-setting definition of branded content. We are using

“Is this intended to fool the reader? Well, no, you could never get anyone to say that, but it is intended to draw readers into the advertising in part because it does look like editorial content.”

– Margaret Sullivan, Public Editor for The New York Times
video, infographics, surveys and data to create intellectually demanding stories. We want our readers to notice that we are engaging them in new ways. We want them to connect with brands in ways that they haven’t before.”

Fellows also said the company had given careful consideration to its native advertising plans and guidelines. The Wall Street Journal is doing that by using a light yellow box across the headline of a story and also stating at both the top and bottom of the sponsored story that the content was not created by the WSJ editorial team.

“We created our own guidelines in order to implement content that complements, rather than interrupts, the reader experience,” Fellows said. “We make it very clear that The Wall Street Journal news organisation is not involved in the creation of sponsored content. That clarity benefits our clients and our readers because all sponsor-generated content is absolutely distinguishable from news and editorial content.”

A slippery slope

While Sullivan has been pleased with the way things have worked out with native advertising so far at The New York Times, she was right in noting there is still healthy concern about the use of native advertising at papers throughout the world.

For instance, during last year’s World Editors Forum in Bangkok in 2013, Siddarth Varadarajan, formerly editor of The Hindu, gave an example of a print advertorial in The Hindu that the advertiser then clipped and displayed on its Facebook page as if it were an endorsement from the paper itself.

He added that this kind of content has also become a slippery slope towards another evil: paid news. Some of the largest media houses in India have been caught up in this, he added, highlighting one scandal in which political candidates were paying for coverage.

“We have to take a clear stand against paid news of any form,” he said, adding that professional bodies and associations must do that. Another important point is that all stakeholders in the paper need to understand that any material that originates from an advertiser is promotional material and not journalism. If sponsored content is used, disclaimers need to be prominently displayed, he said.

“The bottom line is that it’s essential for the future of news that the readers’ interests are protected,” Varadarajan concluded. “People are willing to spend money for news – for objective information – but if this is seen as compromised, it will be the kiss of death for the news business.”

Concerns such as Varadarajan’s remain for many. That was evident in South Africa in late January.
2014 during the Future of News colloquium, co-sponsored by Wits University and the World Editors Forum, where journalists expressed unease at the growing acceptance by news titles of taking revenue for content not produced by their own newsroom.

This sentiment was echoed by Wits University’s Caxton Professor of Journalism, Anton Harber, in a newspaper column. Harber said even when done transparently and according to a set of internal standards, native advertising has major implications for journalistic quality: “What will readers make of it when they find a report one week criticising something, and then a paid-for report the following week taking the opposite view (as happened recently with one of our local papers)?”

“Will petrol or energy companies be allowed to sponsor stories – made to look balanced and fair – that question climate change? Will pharmaceutical companies be able to pay for portraits of patients thriving on their drugs, and underplaying the costs and dangers?”

Harber feared this would cause audience confusion, and that short-term revenue gains would be offset by a long-term loss of credibility and authenticity for quick profit.

Also speaking at the event, News Corp’s Narisetti provided examples of business brands such as GE and Dell, whose corporate marketers were now creating high-quality content and wanting to engage with news platforms. Newsroom concerns are addressable, he said, and editors should work with advertising departments to create standards, so that when the paper is offered sponsored material, policies are already in place detailing the conditions under which the content can be accepted.

Narisetti said it is a myth that advertisers wanted to compete with news. “Advertisers want to be part of the flow of news, in the news well. But they don’t want to compete with news. I see nothing wrong with sponsored content as long as it is labelled and transparent.”

While discussions on this issue are certain to continue, it seems that at least for now, clear sign-posting and transparency are a newsroom’s best options when it comes to dealing with native advertising.

― Siddarth Varadarajan, former editor of The Hindu

Some publications steer clear of sponsored content, while others embrace the advertising and revenue it brings.

It’s important to be clear with audiences when using “native advertising,” in order to maintain the publication’s credibility.

If audiences lose trust in a publication, it will ultimately mean a long-term loss in revenue for short-term financial gains.
“Trying to slip something in by sleight-of-hand is a recipe for disaster,” Australia’s Andrew Holden, Editor-in-Chief of The Age, says of native advertising. Holden told Brian Veseling how he likes to manage this sometimes contentious form of advertising.

**WORLD EDITORS FORUM:** How often are native ads appearing in The Age or on your website?

**ANDREW HOLDEN:** Our native ads appear under the Brand Discover label. Articles are published across all masthead websites as well as spin-off sites (e.g. Good Food). Promotion of the articles is limited to specific spots across the network which are clearly labelled as “advertiser content.” We’re averaging 1-3 campaigns per month.

**What are the main concerns of the newsroom staff about these ads, and how have those been addressed?**

Identification (has to be) very clear to readers what is commercially driven content (the old advertorials), what has a commercial association, and what is pure editorial. If that labelling is clear, then I don’t get any pushback from staff.

**Based on your experience, what is your advice to other newsroom executives about dealing with native advertising?**

Be very clear about the boundaries. Journalists understand a company’s commercial imperatives, but they also know that their own value is based on credibility – as soon as readers feel the journalism is compromised, then the journalist and the company lose that credibility. And be honest with staff: this is what we’re doing, this is why, this is the income it brings us. Trying to slip something in by sleight-of-hand is a recipe for disaster.
Trend 10
The evolving editor – new age, new skills
Brian Veseling

“As an editor, journalism is only 20 percent of your job”: Jonathan Hall
#TrendsInNewsrooms
Chief editors have always been required to wear a variety of hats. But the perpetual changes in newsrooms demand a new kind of editor, one who is not only an expert at managing news and leading people, but one who also understands new technologies and products as well as the increasing importance of the business side of news. That last point is perhaps the biggest change in recent years, and it is one that was brought home in our interviews with a number of top editors.

“First, the reality is such that the top editor increasingly must also worry about the commercial side of the business, hence the collapse of the church/state divide, or wall, between advertising and editorial,” says Joseph Odindo, Group Editorial Director, Nation Media Group, Kenya.

For David Boardman, Dean of the School of Media and Communication at Temple University in the USA and former Executive Editor and Senior Vice President of the Seattle Times, the major change during his last few years in the newsroom “was the degree to which the editor really needs to be squarely involved in the business and evolution of the business model.”

Today, Boardman says, “Every significant decision made outside the newsroom affects the newsroom, and every significant decision made inside the newsroom affects the business. That wasn’t the case for most of my career.

“As we experiment with new models and think about new streams of revenue, it’s essential that the editor be right at the table on that,” he adds. “So I found my time spent far less on the day-to-day of the newspaper and more involved in the longer-term discussions about the future of the business.”

Boardman says that means those who want to lead newsrooms could benefit from a business-related degree.

“If I were 20 years younger and heading into that period of my career where I aspired to lead a newsroom, rather than the Master of Communication degree that I have, I would probably get an MBA or a degree in finance or something that was even more focused on business,” he says. “I think this is important for journalism, actually. You want the representative of journalism and of the newsroom to have the same depth of understanding of business that the other people around the table do.

“That said, it’s still essential that the editor be the strategic leader of the news operation, the spiritual leader of the news operation. People are still hungry to have that sort of beacon, that sense of confidence and somebody who stands for a certain set of standards that ultimately they have to believe are inviolate, that no matter how much change and how much evolution we go through, there’s somebody
who will make sure that certain things are held dear and protected in terms of the values and ethics of journalism.”

Boardman’s thoughts on the editor’s role as “spiritual leader” were echoed by Sukumar Ranganathan, Editor-in-Chief of Mint, a major financial newspaper in India, which is part of HT Media and a partner of The Wall Street Journal. He told us in an e-mail interview that the editor remains the “moral compass” of the newsroom and sets the direction.

He added that being the chief editor also has “become more hectic,” and “physically and mentally taxing.”

Having ‘a multi-platform understanding’

Beyond strong business and leadership capabilities, it is of course also essential that today’s top editors have a good handle on the range of technical platforms that the modern news consumer uses to access content.

Carlos Guyot, the new Editor-in-Chief of Argentina’s La Nación, says, “I think the significant change in the audience’s habits and the growing complexity of our industry demand editors with vision and leadership, with the ability to create an environment where individual talent combines with the interdisciplinary task of highly motivated teams focused on creating value to the readers.”

“The top editor increasingly needs to have a multi-platform understanding, as she or he will lead journalists who tell stories using text, pictures, video, data, etc., and drive newsrooms that operate 24/7.”

- Joseph Odindo, Nation Media Group
Nation Media Group’s Odindo concurs: “More and more people are consuming journalism through technology; hence it is not enough to ferret out the facts. Telling the story in formats that appeal to the audience is becoming ever so important... The top editor increasingly needs to have a multi-platform understanding, as she or he will lead journalists who tell stories using text, pictures, video, data, etc., and drive newsrooms that operate 24/7 with major implications for gatekeeping and a much shortened news cycle.

“We have redesigned our print products to make them appeal to a younger, tech-savvy audience, and we have made filing for digital platforms part of every journalist’s job, including equipping them with the right devices.”

‘More compelling journalism’

In April, during his first public speech since becoming Editor-in-Chief and Chief Content Officer of the Telegraph in the UK in late 2013, Jason Seiken noted that, “Of course, all the culture change and new technologies are pointless if they don’t result in more compelling journalism for our audiences.”

At least those sentiments should sound familiar to most editors and, indeed, aiming to do the best possible job of creating compelling content and connecting with their audiences are frequently cited as top priorities by chief editors.

“I think our challenge is to preserve the identity of our strong editorial brand and great tradition, while putting in place the organisational and editorial transformations necessary to maintain our relevance among readers,” says Guyot. “La Nación has to offer poignant, intelligent and accessible journalism on all of its platforms, so that our readers feel part of a conversation that enriches and enhances their lives.”

Move faster, and focus on unique stories

Boardman said that while he thinks the Seattle Times was definitely moving in the right direction, if he had it to do over again, he would try to increase the speed of change and intensify the focus on unique stories.

“I would really try to get the staff and the entire organisation, including the business side, to move faster and farther away from a focus on the website as destination and focus far more on effective ways of getting into the social stream in a really prominent way, and making sure when people get there, they find something that will then navigate them to other places on the website.

“We were moving that way,” he adds, “but far too slowly. I think they, and certainly most American newspapers, still are moving far, far too slowly. I would move even more quickly there because I see...
people moving so quickly from destination website consumption to a social stream consumption of news. I would get the staff to focus even more intensely on unique stories of potentially high impact, because routine stories are a commodity; they’re everywhere.”

Instead, Boardman says, the newsroom should focus on “stories that have the opportunity to change laws, save lives, or at the very least, really enlighten reader on an important topic.”

To help do this, he said, the Seattle Times began to bring representatives of community sectors into the newsroom each week to interact with staff, and this continues to be done today.

During his tenure, those representatives included not only people from various social activism groups but also the CEO of Alaska Airlines (a major Seattle-based company), members of the protest group Occupy Seattle, parents of school pupils, school officials, labour leaders, and athletes from local sports teams.

The meetings were split two ways, he said. In the first half, the community representatives would take part in the news meeting and the weekly major planning news meeting, and have the opportunity to “ask questions, offer suggestions, make comments and see how the sausage is made,” Boardman says. “And the second half of the meeting, we turn over to them and hear from them about stories that we might be missing in the community or things that we could do better. That’s resulted in dozens of spectacular story ideas.”

Building relationships

Looking ahead, it seems clear that top editors would do well to keep their audience at the centre of their focus in everything they do, and try to build on their relationships within the community, both at-large and individually.

Speaking at last year’s World Newspaper Congress and World Editors Forum in Bangkok, Jeff Jarvis, Director of the Tow Knight Center for Entrepreneurial Journalism at the City University of New York, asked participants, “What if we were not in the content business?” It’s not that we should stop producing content, he said – but if we consider ourselves as being in the content-production business, we structure everything around manufacturing content and obsess over the value of our content.

By contrast, if we think of news as a service, that changes our relationship with the public, Jarvis said. We start thinking about what the public wants to know. Moreover, media don’t have to be mass-oriented any more; it’s now possible to serve people as individuals, as companies such as Amazon and Google do.

“We should be in the relationship business,” Jarvis said, creating and finding value in relationships with people. That’s a point particularly pertinent to editors, who need to be both audience-focused and switched on to their editorial teams’ aspirations, capabilities and challenges.
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