Empower the newsroom!

Smartwatch, new apps, new websites, live blogging, web TV... whatever comes! Journalism can take any form.
INTRODUCTION

BY WORLD EDITORS FORUM PRESIDENT ERIK BJERAGER, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF AND MANAGING DIRECTOR, KRISTELIGT DAGBLAD

In this 2015 edition of Trends in Newsrooms, we highlight some of the exciting digital developments that have brought a new dimension to news content and delivery: from chat apps to analytics, to automation and drone journalism.

But newsrooms are not only about tools and processes. They are also about the people. Tangible advances from experimentation and constantly challenging the way we work have helped narrow the gap between seasoned print professionals, digitally-minded editorial people and developers in our newsrooms.

This year, along with a couple of high profile female editor appointments, there has been a pleasing shift of women into digital leadership positions within news organisations. It is reason to celebrate, but the challenge of promoting gender equality in news remains huge. Fortunately an increasing number of leaders, like Bloomberg’s Emeritus Editor-in-Chief Matthew Winkler, are realising that it makes sense, particularly on a business level, to put more women in charge.

Sadly, the rapid technological advances driving much of the change in newsrooms also have a dark element. For as fast as we are changing our craft; so too are many state security machines, surveillance specialists and professional hackers.

Their ability to access our emails, listen in on conversations and map our every move through location tracking software, poses a threat to journalism. In this environment can sources realistically be guaranteed anonymity and protection?

The growing threat to investigative journalism posed by surveillance occupied the minds of WAN-IFRA colleagues in our Paris office for much of the past year.

However, focus shifted on that fateful day in January when 10 editorial staff were gunned down in Charlie Hebdo’s newsroom - less than two kilometres from our office.

The event has huge ramifications for the way we work; what we publish, how we use cartoons and, ultimately, how we defend free speech when it is so offensive as to incite violence on the horrific scale it did in Paris.

Here, we have tapped the opinions of 50 plus standout industry professionals to decode some of the challenges we face. Perhaps most notable is the distinguished now former Editor-in-Chief of The Guardian Alan Rusbridger who left the editor’s chair last month after a remarkable career.

The top 2015 trends in global newsrooms we’ve identified are:

1. New Convergence - where games, Virtual Reality and wearables meet news
2. Source Protection Erosion – the rising threat to investigative journalism
3. The Rise of the Robots – welcome to your automated news future
4. Journalism After Charlie – lessons learned as the shockwaves continue
5. The Podcasting Revolution – the audio renaissance needs your attention
6. Chat Apps Surge – riding the new wave of social media
7. Analytics Evolution - key metrics for growing audiences from the newsroom
8. The Business of Gender – removing barriers to promotion and confronting online harassment
9. Innovation in Small Newsrooms – inspiration from around the world

We hope you find value in our detailed analysis of these trends, along with the ideas of our seven Thought Leader interviewees. We look forward to continuing a conversation about the content of this report, personally, at our events, and online where you can find us @Newspaperworld and use the #TrendsInNewsrooms hashtag.
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ABOUT THE WORLD EDITORS FORUM

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

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

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

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

For the past 22 years the World Editors Forum has proved its value as a supportive partner to editors: providing information and intelligence from daily news on our editors weblog (www.editorsweblog.org) to in-depth reports such as this Trends in Newsrooms study.

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

The World Editors Forum is guided by a board of editors, representative of the media community from all corners of the world. If you would like more information about how we can be of value to you and your organisation, email Cherilyn Ireton at cherilyn.ireton@wan-ifra.org.

To join our network go to www.wan-ifra.org/microsites/membership
“I KNOW INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM HAPPENED BEFORE THE INVENTION OF THE PHONE, SO I THINK MAYBE LITERALLY WE’RE GOING BACK TO THAT AGE – WHERE THE ONLY SAFE THING IS FACE-TO-FACE CONTACT, BROWN ENVELOPES, MEETINGS IN PARKS OR WHATEVER.”
ALAN RUSBRIDGER has just stepped down as Editor-in-Chief of The Guardian after 20 years at the helm and a record of extraordinary editorial leadership that peaked with the seismic Snowden revelations.

ON THREATS TO INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM IN THE DIGITAL ERA

I interviewed Rusbridger in late January at his central London office, as the search for his replacement was underway in earnest. We spoke about an issue critical to the survival of investigative journalism – and one closely tied to his professional legacy – the need to protect confidential sources in the digital age.

Rusbridger: It is relatively easy now for law enforcement and governments and intelligence agencies to tap into digital stores of information to find out who sources might be. The ease of doing that from somebody’s desktop makes it a really significant factor. And I think the changed atmosphere since 9/11 has meant that the sort of civil liberties concerns that were more prominent in people’s minds before 9/11 are increasingly under threat, or not discussed at all. Politicians find it very hard to find the language of civil liberties to talk about this stuff, and so you’ve got a sort of creeping authoritarianism and willingness to give security agencies what they say they need.

How much has The Guardian’s experience of reporting the Snowden case – the need to physically destroy hard drives, for example – changed the way you’re doing journalism, particularly thinking about your response to the ongoing threat of surveillance and explicitly how that relates to sources?

Rusbridger: Well, on a mundane level everything becomes much more expensive, so the amount we pay on legal fees has shot up. We’re doing a big investigation into tax at the moment, and there are probably 20 solicitors’ companies in London challenging us over that. And they’re all wanting the return of documents, they’re all citing data protec-
tion laws, privacy, everything. So the bills on these things just mount and mount and mount and mount... You can easily be spending tens or hundreds of thousands of pounds trying to get a story into the paper. And, of course, once you get into secure reporting there is a significant cost in equipment, in software, in training, (and) particularly in trying to create a safe environment where we feel we can offer our sources the kind of protection that they deserve. So, I think all kinds of reporting are becoming much more difficult and more expensive.

More expensive and more time-consuming?

**Rusbridger**: Expensive and time-consuming. Labour intensive in terms of learning and training.

Have you had to make decisions about not pursuing a story because of the cost?

**Rusbridger**: Well, we have enlightened owners who believe in supporting journalism, and touch wood, although we’re losing quite a lot of money, they realise that the journalism is the purpose that we’re all here. I mean, let’s guess and say we’re spending a million more than we would have done about five years ago – if you put together the extra legal costs, the extra resources, the time spent, the training, the equipment... If you’re spending a million that you weren’t spending before, that’s had to come out of some forms of reporting, so its definitely having a bad effect on the overall ability to report. But there are regional papers struggling, national papers with different forms of ownership (as well) and this kind of stuff is devastating (to them) – regional papers can’t afford to get tied up in defending their staff, or equipment, or the IT backup.

And what about risk – both potential physical risk and certainly digital exposure risk? Is that something that you’re dealing with as well, particularly as Editor-in-Chief?

**Rusbridger**: Well, yes, I mean there’s a real dilemma of colleagues working in dangerous places abroad now, you want them to have these devices [he waves his smartphone] because you want them to be constantly in touch, and you want them to file and take pictures, but these devices are also tracking devices. So, we have genuine dilemmas of reporters going into difficult areas, or going to meet sources. Because if you go and take one of these to meet a source in Iraq, or Afghanistan, or most places in the Middle East, then that can be monitored to see who you’re meeting. But if you don’t take it, then we have no idea where you are, or how to stay in touch with you. So, either the reporters go without any kind of electronic equipment – in which case they’re at potentially great risk, they could be kidnapped, you’d have no idea where they were. Or, they take them and know they might be followed by the intelligence services, or whoever else, to see who their sources are. So, again, it becomes increasingly fraught.

You’ve said in the past that you think perhaps it will become impossible to do investigative journalism in this context now.

**Rusbridger**: Well very difficult, yeah. I know investigative journalism happened before the invention of the phone so, I think maybe literally we’re going back to that age – where the only safe thing is face-to-face contact, brown envelopes, meetings in parks or whatever.

Except for the risk of facial recognition technology, and CCTV which make that whole ‘Deep Throat’-style encounter somewhat more problematic than it used to be, as well. All of this is interrelated of course – in addition to the threat of surveillance, there are data retention laws, and the handover of data by third-party intermediaries. You’ve been reporting on the revelations that international journalists working in the UK have had emails captured and trawled by GCHQ [UK’s Government Communication’s Headquarters] for example. And revelations that Google has handed over [to the US] data connected to Wikileaks’ editorial staff. And all this is moving, it seems to me, incredibly rapidly. Where does it leave you in terms of your concerns about investigative journalism based on confidential sources?
Rusbridger: Well, I’m very gloomy. I mean I think it’s moving very fast. And, you know, the way this legislation just suddenly appears... with no significant debate being allowed... you just feel there’s this constant zombie-like [he waves his arms and gestures towards his office door]...every time you stop it there, it comes in through that door. And if you stop it through that door, it comes in through that door, and there’s a feeling that the security agencies have got their tentacles right into Whitehall now, and the countervailing arguments that used to exist are disappearing. As journalists, you watch all that and you think, we can lobby to stop all that but in the end we’re not making the law. And, so, we’re significantly increasing the training within the organisation to get this on the radar of reporters and to try to help them get around it, but it’s one thing to teach reporters, it’s another thing to try and educate the public.

And the sources?

Rusbridger: And the sources.

Is it even possible to promise confidentiality to sources anymore? Have you issued any kind of directive to colleagues on that, and the ethics of it?

Rusbridger: Well we have had informal guidelines saying: “Think about it, you don’t want to promise it if you can’t give it.” So, there are journalists who do clearly promise and sometimes they come and see me and say: “How can I live up to that promise because I take this seriously.” There’s at least one circumstance going on at the moment where I know of somebody’s source, and if that source is revealed it would be a life-or-death matter. Literally. So, there are very big responsibilities here that don’t exist in all professions.

So what’s your advice to that journalist?

Rusbridger: I’m individually talking to him and (giving) him the sort of expertise, equipment, training, legal advice that he needs in order to continue his dialogue with his source without being compromised. But because often sources are of interest to people with access to surveillance equipment, corporate or government, it feels like an unequal battle really.

In that case, the life-and-death case that you describe, you can give advice taking every precaution possible but are you actually changing practice such that you say to sources: “We will do our very best to ensure confidentiality but here’s the risk...”?

Rusbridger: Yeah, I suppose an honest conversation would be, we will do our best.

And do you think the awareness of these issues is rising among sources, too?

Rusbridger: Very much, yeah. I mean these have been front-page leads, even in Britain in the week of standing up for press freedom in the wake of Charlie Hebdo, you’ve got the British state essentially saying ‘we feel completely enabled to look at journalistic sources.’ We’re the country that thinks we invented free speech, so if that’s happening here, how could we go and lecture other countries. And what lesson do other countries take from that, ‘well if it’s okay in Britain, we’ll have a bit of that’. I don’t think MPs think of their wider global responsibility to the debate.
Is it also the case that defending media freedom as a political discourse has become unpalatable?

**Rusbridger:** Yeah, I think that’s fair. I mean journalists have never been high on any scale of trust, as you know, but I think we haven’t done ourselves any favours in respect of our ethical standards and our professional practices. And so I think it has become a bit harder in recent years to persuade people that we should be trusted or given any kind of protection or privileges, because you get a sort of world-weary shrug about why you don’t deserve it. So, as I say, politicians find this a difficult area to negotiate and are not likely, by and large, to come to the aid of journalists – except in a sort of lip-service kind of way. I mean something has happened which is quite disturbing in the last 10 years, which is the degree to which journalists are getting killed now. Which, again, was comparatively rare 20 years ago, even in war zones. There was a kind of shield that seemed to apply to journalists and people didn’t, by and large, target them or kill them. But that’s happening more and more now. Whether that is part of the same pattern of governments treating them with less respect, or treating them as the enemy, I don’t know. I think people don’t understand about sources really...

Do you mean society broadly doesn’t understand the role that sources play in upholding democracy – their role in investigative journalism?

**Rusbridger:** Virtually all good, responsible, valuable journalism comes from unauthorised sources but I don’t think the general public necessarily understand that. And then you’ve got these trials at the moment with all these Sun journalists which came about not through Guardian reporting, but because Rupert Murdoch – the newspaper itself – handed over all the sources to the police. It’s quite difficult for the press to sort of stand up and make a unified response to this, when you’ve got press proprietors shopping sources and you get into really complicated minefields. My instinct is to come to the protection of these journalists, but in some cases there was no public interest - they were paying sources, public officials have gone to jail. So, we’ve gotten into a sort of terrible mess by our own behaviour in this country. I think the British press is in a very muddled state at the moment. (They) can’t knit together two arguments, or hold a thought in their head for more than about 90 seconds. We’re going through a grim period, but these things are never won or lost at any moment and it would be easier to fight on a unified front. I think somehow we have to educate people.

“THERE WAS A KIND OF SHIELD THAT SEEMED TO APPLY TO JOURNALISTS AND PEOPLE DIDN’T, BY AND LARGE, TARGET THEM OR KILL THEM. BUT THAT’S HAPPENING MORE AND MORE NOW. WHETHER THAT IS PART OF THE SAME PATTERN OF GOVERNMENTS TREATING THEM WITH LESS RESPECT, OR TREATING THEM AS THE ENEMY, I DON’T KNOW.”
TREND 1 - THE NEW CONVERGENCE

WHERE GAMES, VIRTUAL REALITY & WEARABLES MEET

By Angelique Lu

“THERE’S NO REASON GAMES SHOULD ONLY BE FOR ENTERTAINMENT. IF YOU CAN MAKE MOVIES OR YOU CAN MAKE COMIC BOOKS ON SERIOUS ISSUES WHY COULDN’T YOU MAKE VIDEO GAMES ABOUT THAT?”

- FLORENT MAURIN, JOURNALIST & GAME DESIGNER
There is a growing movement to combine two seemingly incompatible industries: gaming and the news. The gamification of news – where video game technology and practises are used in conjunction with traditional journalism methods – is attracting interest from newsrooms around the world. Media organisations like the BBC, the Guardian and the New York Times have all created their own ‘news games’ in recent years, while BuzzFeed recently announced the creation of a ‘gaming’ team devoted to creating content for the site.

What is driving this interest?

Engaging with serious subject matter

The BBC attracted controversy in early 2015 over the interactive text-based game Syrian Journey. The choose-your-own-adventure-style game allows users to become Syrian refugees fleeing the country as they attempt to enter Europe. The participant begins by selling their Damascus home at a vastly reduced price, and then makes a number of decisions to get to mainland Europe. Consequences and alternative endings include drowning and arrests.

The Daily Mail and The Sun criticised the decision by the BBC to gamify the Syrian refugee crisis and collated criticisms of the game that were posted on social media. The Sun quoted a Middle East expert who said: ‘In the midst of probably the bloodiest Syrian crisis this century, the decision of the BBC to transform the human suffering of literally millions into a children’s game beggars belief.’

The criticisms, The Guardian’s Games Editor Keith Stuart wrote, come from a “misunderstanding about what games are – or can be.”

“The inference is that all games are for children, and that this is not a medium that can support or explore serious subject matter,” Stuart writes. “It is, in short, an old-fashioned moral panic, a dated reaction to a medium that has been maturing for over 40 years.”

Florent Maurin, a game designer and journalist, agrees that people misunderstand the potential for games to cover serious topics. “Most people think that games have to be trivial, they are not fitted to serious topics,” Maurin says. “They are not adapted to serious issues. That’s because the entertainment industry took games and made them what they are today.”

“There’s no reason games should only be for
entertainment,” Maurin says. “If you can make movies or you can make comic books on serious issues why couldn’t you make video games about that?”

Maurin’s company The Pixel Hunt worked with a team of journalists, game developers and programmers to develop the game Rebuilding Haiti. A choose-your-own-adventure-style interactive story, it allows the user to make a series of development decisions as they attempt to rebuild the island nation after the 2010 earthquakes. Despite the billions of dollars in aid money pledged to the country following the natural disaster, Haiti continues to be plagued by issues surrounding long-term sustainable housing and health care infrastructure, along with a number of other social and economic problems.

The European Journalism Centre (EJC) granted funding to the Rebuilding Haiti project, because the Centre was impressed with the story’s gaming element. “We thought that the news gaming approach was very interesting for development reporting,” ECJ’s Antoine Laurent explains. “We see a lack of engagement and a lack of innovation on these topics, on development issues and developing countries.”

The gaming platform, Laurent says, brought a new dynamic to the way development is covered. “The economic situation of developing countries, the development aid delivered by Western countries, it’s covered in quite a traditional way by media organisations.

“For Laurent, gaming allows audiences to engage with content in a way that traditional journalism techniques do not offer. “When you read an article, of course you want to read the article until the end but you can always stop because you’re distracted or something like that,” he explains.

Gamification is popularly seen as a way of engaging audiences with otherwise complex content. Maria Ressa, Editor-in-Chief of Rappler, has used the format to build communities around statistically heavy data. Ressa and her team noticed that despite the increase in Philippines GDP, there was no correlating reduction of the incidence of hunger in the country. Ressa was faced with the dilemma of how to make the content engaging. “How do you make a story like this sexy?” she asks. “As a traditional story it’s boring... Right? It’s a statistics story, but on the web, on the internet, on your mobile you can do so much with it.”

In Rappler’s project #HashtagHunger, the website saw gamification as a solution to this problem. “We gamified certain aspects of it – we do videos, we do infographics. It’s not the major hit driver on Rappler but there’s a community that gathers around it.”

For Laurent, gaming allows audiences to engage with content in a way that traditional journalism techniques do not offer. “When you read an article, of course you want to read the article until the end but you can always stop because you’re distracted or something like that,” he explains.
“But if you have a game, then there’s really the beginning and the end and if you stop in the middle you kind of lose, or you don’t see the end of the game if you are doing good or not, so there’s a very strong mechanic,” he says. There is a pull to stay in the game until the end. “The reader’s engagement is very strong.”

Learning through play

Editor-in-Chief of USA Today, David Callaway says that the benefit of gamification of news is its capability to teach users. “I think it really helps people understand the news,” Callaway says. “It’s another way of telling the story and helping educate, and in some cases, entertain people.”

Maurin agrees that gaming has potential to help people understand complex material through play. “I’ve been playing games for the last 30 years,” Maurin says. “Very soon I noticed that when I was playing games I was learning lots of stuff.”

“When I was playing (Super) Mario for instance you learn you should avoid falling into the pit or you are going to die. That’s something you learn through play,” he says. “Nobody explains to you the rules of the game, you just try, and lose, and then you know you shouldn’t do that again.”

“So I thought about that critically, and I thought to myself if I learn a lot through playing games, maybe those things can be not only relevant for entertainment but also real stuff, such as news.”

“As I was a journalist, I thought to myself maybe it’s possible to design games to be a bit of fun but also a lot of information through the rules of the game. So that’s how I tried to mix journalism and games together to see if it’s possible to achieve some new way of conveying information.”

According to Al Jazeera documentary film maker Juliana Ruhfus, gamification allows people to engage with a topic on a much deeper level. “You learn by doing a lot more than by being told,” she says. In conjunction with Altera Studios and Al Jazeera, Ruhfus turned what was originally a two-part video documentary into a game. Participants in Pirate Fishing become investigative journalists, collecting evidence and taking notes as they chase illegal fishing trawlers off the coast of Sierra Leone. Working as an investigative journalist, Ruhfus says, naturally lent itself to becoming a game. “Where it started overlapping with game-like elements where you really work yourself through an investigation and at the end, we felt very rewarded when we solved it on location,” Ruhfus says. “I think where gamification works is that it introduces an element of competition and that reward system,” she explains. “That would lead to what you actually do as an investigative journalist on location.”

On mistakes and failure

Allowing users to make decisions in games, and as a corollary, allowing them to fail, enlightens participants to the complexities of certain issues says Maurin. “We wanted to
involve people and we wanted them to make actual decisions and understand the consequences of the decision,” he says. “The main problems that Haiti is facing is that a lot of things are made for beneficial short-term consequences, but the downside to that is that the long term consequences are very bad and terrible for the country,” he explains.

“So we wanted the people to make mistakes and choose things they thought would be right at the first time and understand that what is right in the short term can end up very wrong in the long term.”

Ruhfus agrees that allowing users to make mistakes facilitates the learning process. “You really pass on moral choices on a much deeper level and the consequences of your action,” she says. “I think that will be an exciting thing to explore the consequences of action. What if you get it wrong? In theory we could have included something, like ‘Sorry, you haven’t got enough evidence, you’re being sued by a South Korean fishing company.’ I think that’s when it could get really exciting.”

**Interactivity**

With the popularity of gaming, as well as on demand services like Netflix, newsrooms are embracing unconventional forms of storytelling because younger audiences expect interactivity says Virtual Reality (VR) story telling pioneer Nonny de la Peña. “The people working in news who are warming up to this are often people who have kids who have played Minecraft,” she explains. “These kids are used to having a virtual representation of themselves, they’re very comfortable on the computer.

“They’re not necessarily reading a newspaper or watching TV news, but this would be a really great way for them to get their knowledge and keep them informed with a global sense of the world.”

A former documentary journalist, de la Peña is a world leader in using VR technology to create what she calls “immersive journalism.” Using VR goggles, an individual walks through a 3D-rendered reality, which recreates scenes and events. The stories she covers have a distinctive human rights element to them. In *Hunger*, you walk around a food bank line in LA where a man collapses from low blood sugar. In *Use of Force*, you witness Anastasio Hernandez Rojas – an undocumented immigrant – being brutally beaten to death at the US-Mexico border. In *Project Syria* – a virtual reality project funded by the World Economic Forum – you witness a bombing in Aleppo and you’re transported to a refugee camp in Syria.

“Once I started working in this format,” she says, “Once the technology kind of caught up, to me it has a whole different impact than a documentary film – extremely visceral, extremely deep.

“I feel like I get stronger reactions now in the pieces that I build in VR than I did in even the most powerful of my documentary films,” she says.
de la Peña’s work is different to the other journalism gaming pieces we’ve looked at so far. Compared to Rebuilding Haiti and Pirate Fishing, where the user has autonomy, you’re given few choices as a participant in de la Peña’s stories. You can’t change the narrative and you don’t score points. A person taking part in de la Peña’s immersive journalism project is a passive observer in an event. So, why is there no agency for the user? This was a deliberate decision, she says.

“I don’t think that any more than you’re allowed to change what you’re reading in a newspaper, or what you’re watching on television, that you should be allowed to change the events as they unfold,” she explains. “Do I want to make you feel engaged, or make you really feel like you’re a witness present there?” she asks. “Yes. I think you can do an interaction but it has to be done in a careful way. So that you’re staying within good ethical journalism tradition.”

**Gaming and revenues**

In 2014, the gaming industry grew four times faster than the US economy, due largely to the growth of smart phone sales. The popularity and financial returns that video delivers, Callaway says, means that VR stories are a natural progression that capitalises on this new market. “The ads on video pay higher premiums than the ads on stories so everybody is looking to do new stuff on video,” he says. “Virtual reality is the next component, not just to show the reader what’s happening, but also to bring the reader there. So it’s a logical step in the progression of newsrooms becoming more video adept.”

The technology company Gannett, which owns USA Today, has also been exploring VR stories. Subject matter covered include the piece Harvest of Change, which explores the stories of generations of American families on a farm, to the Vail Colorado Ski Championships, where users can ‘ski’ down virtual mountains, and their latest work in 360 degree video, where users can ‘participate’ in protests in Selma.

**Gaming and audience development**

One of the benefits of the game Pirate Fishing, says Ruhfus, was the new audience it introduced to the organisation. “The analytics showed that it brought over 80% of first time users to the Al Jazeera website,” she says. “Now that to me is really exciting because that was the thing that we were trying set out to do.”

“Take investigations out of the ivory tower, and stop preaching to the converted and try to bring it to a different audience – over 80% first time visitors is fantastic.”
On making games as a journalist

There are additional factors to consider when making a game as a journalist. Is it entertaining? What’s my goal? How do you explain the rules? Should I let people have agency? How do I keep people until the end of the game?

Overwhelmingly, all the journalists interviewed for this chapter agreed on one thing—fundamental journalistic skills still matter. “When you’re a journalist you have to understand the topic you are talking about globally, and you have to think about the situation and what are the elements that made the situation the way it actually is right now,” Maurin says. “That’s exactly what a game designer does. It’s almost the same thing.”

According to Maurin, a journalist making a game needs to think about additional factors. “The only difference is that a classic journalist only tells about what actually happens in reality,” he explains. “A game designer thinks about every thing that might have happened.”

“When you make a news game, you make a game about what actually happened but also what might have happened in different situations should people have made different choices.

“So that’s what’s really interesting about this game, they are not just about telling stories, they are about describing entire realities, and reality is not a monolith,” he says. “It’s not only one thing, it’s not only what happened, it’s also what could have happened.”

It’s an issue that Ruhfus encountered when she made Pirate Fishing. Having never made a piece on a gaming platform before, testing the game on journalism students and gaining their feedback was her steepest learning curve. “I kept presenting the project to MA journalism students at City University in London and they kept asking and saying, ‘Why are you asking us to go forward? What’s the point? Why shouldn’t we just watch the documentary?’ and so on,” she says.

On controlling the narrative

Ruhfus explains that gaming projects require balance between two competing factors: “the contradiction between giving the user, giving the audience freedom to make choices, in particular freedom on how to direct the narrative, and as a creator maintaining creative control over the narrative,” she says. “Because somehow you need to shepherd the people from the beginning to the end.”

“We spent hours on that. We had massive diagrams that we kept doing, how do we give choices? Where’s the parallel process that still leads people to the point where we have them? I really love that bit, but it’s a giant headache.”

“It’s not what the audience finds the most engaging because usually the most engaging news about these countries is when there’s a big crisis, or catastrophe, or war. We want to help produce a different kind of reporting about these countries and about these issues.”

- Antoine Laurent

de la Peña’s work in VR and journalism requires different considerations. As people walk through her immersive journalism pieces, de la Peña has to direct people physically, without the benefit of a linear narrative—like the ones you can find on a traditional television or radio program.

“The thing you have to remember is that these are spatial narratives, meaning that things are happening all around you, it’s not like anybody’s focus is on one place,” de la Peña explains.
She uses physical cues to combat this. “You can get people’s attention through an audio cue, or if a crowd of people is looking at something - just like in the real world if you see a bunch of people staring at something you’ll try and stare at it,” she says.

“These are the sorts of things that in the real world, if you’re emulating a real moment, a crowd staring at something, [it] is appropriate to assume that your participant will turn to look and see at what people are looking at.”

In particular, when making a virtual reality piece, there are other physical considerations to take into account. “I think that one of the crucial things that you have to remember if you’re building in virtual reality is that people’s bodies are along for the ride.”

When people move in their virtual reality experiences, but not physically in real life it has the potential to make people nauseous de la Peña says. “What we do is we fade to black before taking people to a new scene,” she explains. “So they get a second to know that they’re moving somewhere else and they’ve been brought up in another location.”

Leading the industry or betting on the wrong horse?

Is it a gamble to explore this format? Virtual reality, in particular, appears risky on face value. Facebook recently acquired Oculus Rift - a company specialising in virtual reality technology - for two billion dollars. It’s a technology that’s not yet available to the general public. Should people be developing products and stories on a medium that’s untested by the general public? It’s an issue that Google Glass development faced. Exclusive sales, poor consumer response, and backlash by the general public to “glassholes,” mean that developers have left the technology in droves after seeing little consumer potential.

Gannett and USA Today are exploring other avenues to safeguard against risks that consumers will not respond positively to Oculus Rift Callaway says. “The Oculus Rift goggles are a very limiting factor, most people don’t have them, or have access to them.”

“That’s why we’re experimenting with 3D video so what makes those things cool can be applied in different ways,” he says. “Nobody has quite yet invented the product which is going to catch on as the iPhone of virtual reality but everyone is looking at different ways to do it. So it’s pretty cool.”

de la Peña predicts that virtual reality and journalism will take on differing forms based on budget and format, no matter which company or goggles succeeds or profits. “I think the way that it’s going to work is that it’s going to be three-tiered,” she explains. “You’re going to have your mobile phone viewing experience which is kind of like watching something on YouTube.”

“You’re going to have your Oculus Rifts, or whatever goggles, and that’s going to be like having a DVD on a home entertainment system, and then you’re going to have the full walk around experience, which I really specialise in and that’s going to be an Imax version,” de la Peña explains. “You have the three tiers and there’s no doubt that these are going to become platforms that are just going to explode. The hardware is coming out very quickly, what we don’t have is the content yet.”

The future

Is combining gaming and news a viable and sustainable pursuit for mainstream newsrooms? Maurin, like the others interviewed for this story, agree that gaming is a valuable new journalistic tool, but it won’t replace traditional methods of reporting news and features. “They are using games as a tool, as they are using video or text or photo or anything else,” Maurin says. “I don’t think games should replace all other forms of journalism. It’s one other tool in the journalism toolbox.”

Gaming platforms and news, Ruhfus says, have increased the storytelling potential for journalists. “I think what is happening is we’re looking at an increasing register of storytelling, we can do a lot more,” she says. “We’ve had for the last decade, print stories, television and radio, but now to the mix come interactive projects, news games, animated projects, so I just think there’s an increasing repertoire of how journalists collaborate with others. We just have to look very carefully what medium we choose for a story.”

Enthusiasm is another commonality among the journalists using gaming platforms and methods. de la Peña’s enthusiasm is infectious. “It just seems like absolutely the right place to be doing journalism,” she says. “It’s really fun! It’s a really fun place to work and the tools are getting easier and easier.”

“So if you’ve got a dream to do one of these just go for it and hammer at it. It’s possible, it’s doable.”
“VIDEO IS SUCH A HUGE COMPONENT OF WHAT ALL NEWSROOMS ARE DOING NOW. THE ADS ON VIDEO PAY HIGHER PREMIUMS THAN THE ADS ON STORIES SO EVERYBODY IS LOOKING TO DO NEW STUFF ON VIDEO AND VIRTUAL REALITY IS THE NEXT COMPONENT.”
Gannett has become an industry leader in virtual reality storytelling and its flagship newspaper USA Today is embracing the technology with strategic purpose.

Editor-in-Chief David Callaway says the growing use of VR in news is a natural progression from the widespread uptake of video in online content and it’s about to take off.

I asked Callaway to outline his observations on the strongest trends in newsrooms in 2015.

Callaway: They’re not really surprises, but two of them for sure are the greater and more rapid shift to mobile; delivery of news where mobile will dictate how news is covered and delivered, and greater and more rapid use of data in terms of reporting, of data journalism, so that it will no longer be just a small corner of the newsroom where there’s a couple of people crunching numbers but that every journalist will become a data journalist in some format. Those are probably the biggest two that we’re seeing.

I think that’s quite terrifying for most journalists because I think that most people come into journalism because they hate numbers. I know I did.

Callaway: Yeah [laughs] I know, but once you get the hang of it, it really opens up a lot of story ideas for you. It’s something that, if you look into the Bloombergs of the world, they’ve been doing it for 20 years. Journalists use data every day in the Bloomberg system because it’s easy to get. But now because of improvements of technology and the internet, it’s much more available to every newsroom, so I think we’ll see a greater rush towards that type of news coverage.

Are you training journalists at USA Today to produce data journalism?

Callaway: Yes, we are. We have a team of people that have been doing it for several years, we’ve increased the team and we’re bringing in more folks, having the team train the wider newsroom so that everybody can be part of it.
How are readers responding to data-heavy news pieces?

Callaway: They love it! Don’t think of it as ‘data heavy’ or just a bunch of numbers – it’s a different way to tell a story. If you look at some of these new microsites that are starting, like FiveThirtyEight.com and some of the Vox stuff, The New York Times one, the David Leonhardt, The Upshot, that’s all based on data. What they’re doing is, they’re using the data to tell a story; not a traditional story with words and paragraphs with a lot of numbers in it but a map with various pieces on it, stuff like that. The rush, the move towards data journalism coincides with the move towards telling stories in a mobile, graphic friendly way rather than straight copy.

In relation to the internet age as well, the trend is reflected in people trying to make sense of so much information – do you agree?

Callaway: Absolutely. Yeah because there’s so much information out there now that people need help making sense, and this type of journalistic coverage is helping people do that.

Something that you’ve alluded to before is analytics and the role that analytics will play in newsrooms in 2015. Do analytics shape the way USA Today approaches stories?

Callaway: Absolutely, we use analytics every minute of every hour of every day. ChartBeat is one of our favourites. We’re monitoring how our stories are doing on the desktop; we have analytics that track mobile, we have analytics that track social, analytics that track video. So yeah, it’s one of the principle guideposts we have for how we cover the news.

What have you learnt from keeping an eye on your analytics? Is there anything in particular that stands out?

Callaway: It teaches us a bunch of things. Obviously it shows us what our users are using, what they’re reading, it gives us some idea of what to do in the future that might also be popular. We’ve noticed, for instance, that long-form journalism works on mobile, which is not very intuitive. You would think only short things are working, but long form does really well. We can tell how far people are reading in various stories, so it definitely helps guide what we do and how we plan coverage.

Are there any metrics in particular that you find most important? Is it the number of shares? Or how long people stay on a page or how often they comment? Are there any ones in particular that you keep an eye on?

Callaway: I would think engagement is the primary metric that we’re really trying to drive, but shares are very important, much more so than hits or clicks or anything like that. Comments not really so much anymore - that used to be bigger than it is now.
One of the trends that we've identified is the gamification of news. What's your view, as Editor-in-Chief of USA Today of the role that gaming will have in news?

Callaway: I think it really helps people understand the news. It's another way of telling the story and helping educate, and in some cases, entertain people. It is something we're doing a lot of at USA Today, we've got a team in the middle of the newsroom that basically looks at stories that are being done, that could be done in interesting ways. It's not just graphics but it's quizzes, it's contests, it's that type of stuff. It appeals to the younger crowd but it's also another way of conveying information.

Gannett and USA Today has been an industry leader in relation to virtual reality pieces like Harvest of Change, which explored the stories of generations of American farm life, the Vail Colorado Ski Championships as well as the 360 degree video of the Selma protests. Why are you exploring virtual reality in particular?

Callaway: Video is such a huge component of what all newsrooms are doing now. The ads on video pay higher premiums than the ads on stories so everybody is looking to do new stuff on video, and virtual reality is the next component, not just to show the reader what's happening but to bring the reader there. So it's a logical step in the progression of newsrooms becoming more video adept.

Virtual Reality, historically, can trace its roots back to the 50s, it was quite popular in the 80s, and then it became unviable. Investors withdrew in the 90s and it's coming through with a renewed popularity, especially with Facebook buying out Oculus Rift, a virtual reality goggle company. What do you make of this new interest in VR?

Callaway: I think it coincides with the interest in video and the technology has gotten to the point where it's just easier to do. It's not as limited in terms of who can do it...it will become a major trend next year...

The Oculus Rift goggles are a very limiting factor, most people don't have them, or have access to them. We're now taking that beyond Oculus Rift into an experiment with 3D video. I think once it becomes more mainstream people will not only find more uses for but there'll be a broader pick up.

I found it quite interesting that Gannett and USA Today are looking into virtual reality since Oculus Rift isn't available for consumers yet. We saw what happened with Google Glass, for example: there was a lot of hype but ultimately they didn't find a market for it. Is that why you're exploring 3D instead of limiting yourself to Oculus Rift?

Callaway: Yeah, absolutely. Oculus Rift, it's not there yet for a broad consumer base. Neither was Google Glass. Although, I tried Google Glass too and I thought it was cool, but that's why we're experimenting with 3D video – so what makes those things cool can be applied in different ways. Nobody has quite yet invented the product which is going to catch on as the iPhone of virtual reality but everyone is looking at different ways to do it. So it's pretty cool.

“I THINK [THE RISE OF VR] COINCIDES WITH THE INTEREST IN VIDEO AND THE TECHNOLOGY HAS GOTTEN TO THE POINT WHERE IT’S JUST EASIER TO DO... IT WILL BECOME A MAJOR TREND NEXT YEAR.”
TREND 2 - SOURCE PROTECTION EROSION

THE RISING THREAT TO INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

By Julie Posetti

“EMAIL I THINK IS MOST DANGEROUS BECAUSE IT PASSES SO MANY HANDS, IT IS NOT ENCRYPTED. IT’S LIKE A POSTCARD.”

- SWEDISH MEDIA LAWYER AND OMBUDSMAN PAR Trehoring.
It used to be possible to promise confidentiality to sources – guaranteeing protection of their identities, even on pain of jail – in countries where legal source protection frameworks were robust. But, internationally, ethical commitments to, and legal protections for, journalistic sources are being undercut by surveillance (both mass surveillance and targeted surveillance) and mandatory data retention policies; trumped by national security and anti-terrorism legislation; undermined by the role of third party intermediaries like Google, Facebook, Twitter and ISPs, and restricted by overly narrow interpretation of laws designed for an analogue world. So, the attention of investigative journalists and their editors is necessarily turning to risk assessment, self-protection and source education.

How much confidence do investigative journalists have in the ability to protect sources in 2015?

At the time of our interview in his London office in late January 2015, outgoing Editor-in-Chief of The Guardian Alan Rusbridger is despondent about the threat to investigative journalism posed by the erosion of source protection. “Well, I’m very gloomy,” he says. The limitations on existing legal frameworks supporting source protection in the UK are coming thick and fast. It’s like fighting a “Zombie War,” he says, waving his hands in exasperation.

Rusbridger has previously suggested that investigative journalism may not be possible in the post-Snowden era. That’s a concern shared by Committee to Protect Journalists’ Global Advocacy Director Courtney Radsch: “I think that we are really potentially looking at an environment where it becomes virtually impossible for journalists to protect their sources, but where journalists are no longer even needed in that equation, given governments’ broad surveillance powers.”

Bolivian investigative journalist Ricardo Aguilar is seriously concerned about the reliability of legal source protection. He was charged with espionage and threatened with 30 years jail for refusing to reveal his source on a 2014 La Razon story. “…(M)ass surveillance, data retention and the appeal of (the) National Security category leaves the protection of secret sources in latent vulnerability,” he says.

Director of the US-based International Consortium for Investigative Journalism (ICIJ) Gerard Ryle is similarly direct. “I’m not confident that there is any protection at all to be frank…I would say as a general rule these days, much more than in the past, it’s very difficult to protect sources because of the fact that electronic communications can be back-tracked and people can be found much easier than they may have been found in the past,” he says. Ryle, who oversaw the global investigative journalism projects known as Offshore Leaks, China Leaks, Luxembourg Leaks, and Swiss Leaks, once faced jail in Australia while reporting on police corruption for The Age, after refusing to give up a source to an ombudsman’s inquiry.

In Sweden, where source protection legislation is so strong that journalists can be jailed for revealing their confidential sources, top investigative journalists are taking extraordinary measures to protect them from the impacts of mass surveillance, and other risks of the digital era. One of the threats identified by the director of the investigative unit at Sweden’s national public radio (SR), Fredrik Laurin, is the risk of police seizing digital content due to gaps in source protection legislation in his country: “…It’s not an exception – this is definitely the modus operandi. The police, they don’t go into newsrooms very often here, but when they do they have no problem in grabbing digitally stored information.”
The chilling effect

Co-founder of Pakistan’s Centre for Investigative Reporting Umar Cheema believes his status guarantees that he is under surveillance and his sources know it. “I am a prominent journalist, a distinction with its own advantages and disadvantages. Some [sources] tend to approach me out of respect and belief that I am the right person to be taken into confidence. Others hesitate, fearing any contact with me will put them on [the] radar screen since I am under surveillance, right from phone to emails, and [my] social media accounts are monitored.”

Cheema was kidnapped and tortured in 2010 in a source-hunting exercise. “...the captors, who I strongly suspect belonged to our premier intelligence agency, took away my mobile phone apparently for investigating in detail about my professional contacts through my phone contacts,” he said. “Some of my sources, who had shared information about national security, were coerced into silence. They never contacted me afterwards, other than telling in brief...about the harassment they had to face.” Cheema says that threats to his safety sent via phone and email are now routine.

International Editor of Algeria’s El Watan newspaper, Zine Cherfaoui, says sources now increasingly require face-to-face meetings. “Since Snowden and mass surveillance, sources speak with difficulty and people don’t have as much confidence. To really discuss with people we prefer to avoid electronic means or social networks. The Snowden Affair turned upside down the work of journalists... It’s harder to speak to people. We really have to go out and meet them. It’s face to face,” Cherfaoui says.

However, it should be noted that the risk of exposure travels with journalists heading to face-to-face meetings with sources if the route they take is subject

“THE SNOWDEN AFFAIR TURNED UPSIDE DOWN THE WORK OF JOURNALISTS... IT’S HARDER TO SPEAK TO PEOPLE. WE REALLY HAVE TO GO OUT AND MEET THEM. IT’S FACE TO FACE.”

- ZINE CHERFAOUI, INTERNATIONAL EDITOR, EL WATAN
to security camera surveillance, or they travel with traceable mobile devices that deliver geolocation data.

At the time of my interview with Rusbridger, The Guardian was in the midst of a major tax investigation, and the paper was being challenged by approximately 20 companies of solicitors over it. “…They’re all wanting the return of documents, they’re all citing data protection laws, privacy, everything…so the bills on these things just mount and mount and mount and mount, so you can easily be spending tens or hundreds of thousands of pounds trying to get a story into the paper,” he says. “Of course, once you get onto secure reporting there is a significant cost…in trying to create a safe environment where we feel we can offer our sources the kind of protection that they deserve.”

The cost of digital security technology, training and legal fees connected to source protection in the post-Snowden era also represents a significant chilling effect on investigative journalism. The Guardian spends about a million pounds more a year on legal fees than they did five years ago, according to Rusbridger: “It’s definitely having a bad effect on the overall ability to report,” he says, pointing to the devastating impact of the changed landscape on regional newspapers, in particular. “(They) can’t afford to get tied up in defending their staff, or equipment, or the IT,” he says.

But isn’t this a golden age for investigative journalism?

“Technology is allowing information to be leaked on a vast scale... For me as a journalist we’re in boom times, because you’re able to get information that’s incredibly detailed and you’re able to get stories that you couldn’t possibly [get before],” ICIJ’s Gerard Ryle says, declaring the digital era a “golden age for journalism,” despite the risks.

Prominent Jordanian investigative journalist and founder of the Arabic Media Internet Network, Daoud Kuttab, echoes Ryle’s view of the digital era: “On the one hand I think it has accelerated and widened the amount of data available to everyone and made it very easy to transfer information and documents. Now you can put thousands of documents on a USB so you don’t have the problem of having to carry things out of offices – you can email, send as an attachment. But at the same time governments are able to invade your privacy much easier and get information.”

Editor-in-Chief of Argentina’s La Nacion, Carlos Guyot, also acknowledged the significant benefits of digital era investigative reporting involving confidential sources, including access to leaked documents that would have been impossible to get even five or ten years ago. “New technologies bring new challenges with them, but also new opportunities, like encrypted conversations via new software, although this must be combined with old fashioned practices...there is nothing like a face-to-face meeting with a source,” he says.

However, one of the risks of this data-boon is the rush to legislate against the impacts of leaks, according to Gerard Ryle. “The leaks are getting bigger, therefore the law is scrambling to catch up...and that’s the danger for authorities and for people who want secrecy, and I think that there is a push generally across the world to try and cope with this,” Ryle says. “[It’s] a problem for governments, agencies, any organisation that wants to keep secrets. It’s becoming more and more difficult to keep those secrets.”
Just assume you’re being watched

How do reporters protect their confidential communications with sources in the age of surveillance? “I’m more careful with any digital platform that I’m involved in – whether it’s email, phone or any other digital format. I assume that [I am] probably being watched, listened to, or read. That’s my starting point and I take it from there,” Daoud Kuttab says.

ICIJ’s Gerard Ryle adopts the same mode. “I just assume that it’s possible to collect that kind of information, and you work in that environment, and you just assume that all your emails, any form of communication, is potentially found out and so I just be sensible about it. Don’t put things in writing, don’t do certain things if you don’t want them to come out afterwards. You have to assume that everything you do is being recorded or traced or whatever.”

A change of practice in managing digital communications is required in response – at both the personal and professional levels – according to Deputy Director of the Tow Centre for Digital Journalism, Susan McGregor. “It means that we have to be thoughtful about our devices and our communications in the way that most of us aren’t accustomed to doing yet... Some of the habits we’ve developed as private individuals, taking our phone everywhere, always having wifi on, emailing everything, we’re just going to have to think differently about those things when it comes to work with sources,” she says.

Going back to basics

Alan Rusbridger has despaired that investigative journalism based on confidential sources may not be possible in the digital age, unless journalists go ‘back to basics’: “I know investigative journalism happened before the invention of the phone, so I think maybe literally we’re going back to that age, when the only safe thing is face-to-face contact, brown envelopes, meetings in parks or whatever,” he says.

UK QC Gavin Millar, who has advised The Guardian, tells his clients to revert to traditional methods of investigative journalism. “They actually have a contract phone and throw it into the Thames at the end of each week, they will meet sources in pubs, write notes, hide the notes. In notebooks, in distant places where people can’t get them if their houses are searched by police and some of them are very, very good at it.”

Bolivia’s Ricardo Aguilar avoids using digital communication in order to protect his sources. “Extreme distrust is the only defence against the possibility of a raking of secret sources in email accounts or social networks,” he says. And La Nación’s Carlos Guyot says his investigative journalists are spending a lot more time on the road now. “…Our main investigative reporter drove for three hours to a different city for a 15-minute conversation with a source, and drove back to our newsroom. If we are willing to endure the challenges, we can still do good journalism.”

El Watan’s Zine Cherfaoui says journalists in the Middle East and North Africa have also reverted to face-to-face meetings with confidential sources, being particularly concerned about email communication. “We’ve become very cautious with social networks and everything that is electronic. Generally, we prefer to meet the source in person when it is very important. ... because of mass surveillance and new anti-terrorism laws we like to avoid social networks.”

Swedish Lawyer and Press Ombudsman, Par Trehorning agrees: “I’ve talked to a lot of editors and the best thing to do today is to write an ordinary letter. Email I think is most dangerous because it passes so many hands, it is not encrypted. It’s like a post card.” Three journalists interviewed for this chapter mentioned the trend of relying on chat-apps as a more secure form of source interaction than email, but Mexican journalism safety expert Javier Garza Ramos warned against such an approach. “If we’re sloppy and we say everything we know about our sources on our Gmail and on our WhatsApp, then of course the government is going to
find out who our sources are, or whoever is spying on us,” he says.

Simple approaches like stretching the timeline between contact with a source and publication of their leaks can also be used to disguise connections and minimise the chance a source will be “caught”, Gerard Ryle says. “I mean the more layers you can put between you and the source sometimes is better, and a lot of that is time... if someone gives you some really hot information, the temptation is to publish that right away, but that’s also when your source is potentially at most risk.”

Taking responsibility for digital security

In 2015, it’s not just lead investigative journalists and war correspondents who need to deal with the digital era threats to source protection, according to Alan Rusbridger: “It’s become increasingly hard to report on the national health service because you know they all have confidentiality agreements, so if you’re a health reporter you probably want to make sure that you begin to understand this stuff.”

The other factor to consider is that seemingly innocuous local stories built on anonymous sources can turn into large-scale investigative journalism projects. From little stories, big stories grow. But careless initial contact with a source makes such a person increasingly vulnerable as the story develops.

Swedish public radio’s Fredrik Laurin says journalists are underdeveloped when it comes to protecting sources in the “digital hemisphere.” “Very few journalists use encryption and very few journalists even know how to use it – it’s not in their toolbox and that is a major problem,” he says. “And when you do come into contact with sources...you often get confronted with very important questions – how do you, in reality, protect this source? Are you going to store the information on the company server? How are we going to communicate? I cannot use my corporate phone, for example. What level of encryption do you use? Serious questions.” According to Laurin, his team’s digital security expertise gives them an edge in journalism based on confidential sources. “(W)e are some of the few people in the journalistic community who actually employ encryption and who are trying to get wise on these issues and keep up with that.”

Laurin’s hardcore dedication to digital security in the interests of protecting his sources may seem extreme, but it needs to be understood in the context of the Swedish legal source protection framework that actually criminalises unauthorised source revelation. “It’s me, Fredrik who goes to prison if you are my source and I lose my notebook, my note pad at the bar and your name comes out because of that. That’s my fault and I go to prison. That’s why I don’t use Gmail for example. Or Facebook,” he says. And Laurin also bans his staff from using Apple products because of concerns about security weaknesses connected to Apple devices revealed by Edward Snowden. “I need to survey – which I do, very thoroughly – who my suppliers are. I know exactly where my server is standing, I know exactly what the contract says, the hard discs in that server are named in my name, with my phone number. There’s a tag on the material that says this material is protected according to the Swedish constitution.”

However, ICIJ’s Ryle, who remains utterly optimistic about the future of investigative journalism in the digital age, despite the threats to source protection that he acknowledges, says that too many journalists are growing unnecessarily paranoid. “(T)here are some reporters I know they’re completely paranoid about their computers – they’re fantastic at encryption, everything is offline. But so what? Most of what they’re working on isn’t relevant.”

Another issue to consider: digital security measures designed to protect sources can be unwieldy and
time-consuming, and these factors remain a deterrent to many investigative journalists. “[W]hen we were doing the Offshore Leaks project we started off by trying to encrypt a whole email communication with everyone we were working with, it became a complete nightmare, because, first of all not all of us are very technological, including myself, and it became a hindrance to communication,” Ryle admits.

Journalists’ attempts at balancing the need to protect sources against the risk of becoming crippled by technology or paranoia might be aided by a recently released UNESCO report on “Building digital safety for journalism.” It recommends producing a risk assessment plan or “threat model” to help discriminate between different risks, along with developing a more nuanced approach to digital security.

**Journalists need training in digital security, but so do their sources**

There is a new trend emerging in reference to source protection: journalists are beginning to train their sources in digital security to help them ensure their anonymity. *La Nacion’s* Carlos Guyot says: “If we want journalism to survive and flourish in the 21st century, there is no other option than give our reporters, and sources, the tools necessary to do their jobs.”

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**SEVEN TIPS TO HELP MAKE YOUR SOURCES MORE SECURE**

- Don’t grow unnecessarily paranoid – instead act smarter, get properly equipped and go back to basics where necessary
- Be aware that even face-to-face meetings can be compromised by the presence of geolocatable mobile devices and security cameras
- Assume you’re being watched
- Encrypt your data
- Be aware that using Tor, PGP and other forms of data encryption can ‘red flag’ digital communications with sources i.e. such practices can make you and your sources a bigger target
- Recognise your ethical responsibility to protect your sources and consider training your confidential sources in digital safety and security
- Recognise that it may no longer be possible to guarantee protection for your confidential sources and consider the ethical implications of that realisation
Alan Rusbridger acknowledges this challenge. “But because often sources are of interest to people with access to surveillance equipment, corporate or government, it feels like an unequal battle really.”

However, as Executive Director of Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism Rana Sabbagh points out, even the best training cannot keep up with global intelligence services: “(W)e train our journalists in encryption and how to protect their data, and tell them to always assume that everything you’re doing online, on your computers, is accessible, because even if you give them the best software and training, the intelligence agencies are always a step ahead. They are using the latest technologies to decrypt the content, they are using technologies coming from countries that are supposed to protect free speech like the US and Switzerland.”

Nevertheless, encryption may buy time in the course of an investigation, and it may at least keep other potentially hostile actors at bay – even if not the intelligence agencies.

**Outsourcing source protection**

In its global investigations that involve myriad international publishing partners, ICIJ essentially becomes the source: “By taking all the responsibility of source protection and also putting the responsibility on each organisation to do whatever it is according to their own laws. So we don’t take responsibility for the publication of our projects in each country, each organisation has to do that, but in terms of giving them the information, we become the source...in other words we give them the documents... ICIJ is the source of the material,” Gerard Ryle says.

Meanwhile, international news organisations have begun collaborating on platforms designed to securely receive digital information from confidential sources.

_AfriLeaks_, for example, is a Pan-African project that uses a highly secure mailbox designed to receive leaked documents, which connects investigative media houses to whistleblowers. It’s operated by the African Network of Centres for Investigative Reporting. And, in Mexico, _Mexicoleaks_ launched recently.

_Sourcesure_ and _Balkanleaks_ are similar Francophone and Bulgarian websites that allow whistleblowers to upload secret documents anonymously. Sourcesure, which is based in Belgium, to take advantage of strong source protection laws there, was jointly established in February 2015 by France’s _Le Monde_, Belgian publications _La Libre Belgique_, _Le Soir de Bruxelles_ and RTBF (Radio Télévision Belge Francophone). Yves Eudes, Sourcesure’s cofounder and a journalist at _Le Monde_, believes that the cross-border, multi-platform collaboration between leading Francophone news organisations is a spring of immunity for journalists and their sources against coercion. “Unity is strength. This initiative could not have been launched by _Le Monde_ or RTBF alone. Sourcesure is underpinned by a whole spectrum of collaborators, from liberal to conservative media outlets, united by common journalistic values,” he says. Sources using the system are encouraged to download TOR software at their end before connecting with the system.

Ultimately, is it sustainable to promise confidentiality to sources in an era when it is so easy to identify a source without the involvement of the journalist, especially considering it can be a life or death matter? ARIJ’s Rana Sabbagh is clear in her response: “Even in the best and most democratic of countries, one can’t promise that anymore. There is no hundred percent guarantee.”

*Additional interviews for this chapter were conducted by Angelique Lu, Alice Matthews, Federica Cherubini, Alexandra Waldhorn, Jake Evans, Farah Wael and Alexandra Sazanova-Prokouran*
“OUR REPORTERS WHO COVER NATIONAL SECURITY ARE CONSISTENTLY EXPERIENCING PROBLEMS IN JUST TALKING TO PEOPLE IN THE GOVERNMENT, JUST HAVING ANY CONVERSATION WITH A REPORTER, RECEIVING A PHONE CALL BECOMES CAUSE FOR SUSPICION WHEN LEAK INVESTIGATIONS ARE CONDUCTED.”
Just how important is investigative reporting to the Post’s identity and how much emphasis do you place on investigations as Executive Editor?

Baron: Well, I think investigative reporting is incredibly important to The Post’s identity, and I also think it’s incredibly important to our profession. I think perhaps our highest purpose is holding powerful institutions and powerful individuals to account. I think if we were to give that up for some reason – because we felt that it was too risky, or too expensive, or a distraction from other things that we need to do, that would be the greatest act of irresponsibility on the part of the press. If we don’t hold powerful institutions and powerful individuals to account, who will?

How much has investigative journalism changed do you think from Watergate to Snowden? What does that trajectory look like?

Baron: I think that certainly the people who are the subjects of investigative reporting have become much more sophisticated about how to deal with enquiries – they put up greater barriers now to our investigations. There are phalanxes of public relations people, lawyers and others whose sole purpose is to stymie enquiries of the sort that we make. So, I think the degree of difficulty is sometimes greater. Certainly on issues like national security, there’s greater concern about surveillance and about the security of our communications. That’s something that we obviously did not have to consider in the past. For
example, we know that in authoritarian regimes, and some regimes that are not so authoritarian, that there are sophisticated methods of surveillance and the people they most wish to monitor are people in the press, and perhaps people in the foreign press. We know that they monitor us every step of the way, and so if we want to do investigative reporting overseas we can certainly suspect with good reason that people are trying to monitor our communications, so we have to be extra careful in that regard.

You've highlighted two of the key threats to investigative journalism in this era - one of which is resort by governments to national security or anti-terrorism defences on the one hand, and the other being the rise in mass surveillance. What did you learn though the process of trying to navigate those issues on the Snowden story?

For our own internal communications at The Post, I didn’t expect that we would have to be communicating with each other in an encrypted fashion and yet on many occasions we did just that. And on many occasions when we had meetings everybody turned off their cellphone, left their cellphones behind, and there was concern that they would be monitoring in that form of surveillance as well.

In the aftermath of the Snowden story how many of these practices have you carried forward into your newsroom communications particularly regarding investigations?

Well reporters use encrypted communications when they feel it necessary to do so. I believe that they consider it necessary on more occasions now than they have in the past. But we have had training in that regard, we also implemented a secure drop box system for sources to leave us information in a way they themselves can’t be tracked.

Our reporters who cover national security are consistently experiencing problems in just talking to people in the government, just having any conversation with a reporter, receiving a phone call becomes cause for suspicion when leak investigations are conducted. So very often people in government will simply respond with an email saying ‘here’s a number for the press person don’t call me ever again.’ Just so that there is a record that they didn’t speak to us because they just don’t want to get involved and a leak investigation, even if they’re not leaking anything, they’re just giving the normal background that government officials have given for many decades.

So sources are extremely cautious these days about speaking with us. They don’t want to get caught up in a leak investigation, it could turn out to be very expensive for them, and they would just rather avoid them. And that creates an additional barrier for us in these investigations.

How concerned are you about the impacts of all of this on your reporters’ ability to work with confidential sources?

Well I am concerned about it. Obviously in order to cover government we need people who are willing to provide us with information. That’s especially true at a time when the US Government classifies such an enormous volume of documents including many documents that never should have been classified at all. Then to get them unclassified is incredibly difficult. To file Freedom of Information requests can take forever and with uncertain results. In order to provide in real time, or close to real time, accountability we need access to individuals who are sources and we also need access to documents. So these additional impediments to our work are greatly concerning. They do make conducting investigations much more difficult.
Which is a really problematic scenario as far as accountability journalism goes isn’t it? What’s the way forward?

Baron: Well, just doing our job. You work with what you’ve got. It’s not that investigative journalism can’t be done, there are many great examples of investigative journalism in this country and around the world all the time. So, it is possible to do it, it’s just more difficult. I think we have to make a case for the American public through our own advocacy and through, primarily, the work that we do. This is important work. I find the public is generally supportive of investigative reporting, if anything I’m encouraged by members of the public to do it more often, not less often. They may not like all the investigations that we do, but they’re generally urging us to do more investigating and to dig deeper. I find that encouraging. They do believe that the only institution that can hold government to account is the press.

What are the three big challenges facing the Washington Post as you see them today?

Baron: The dominant challenges are, they tend to be commercial in nature ... the first challenge is for us to continue to progress digitally. This is how people are reading us, it’s not just the digital age, it’s a mobile age, we not only have to be sure that we’re providing information in a way that works digitally, we have to be able to make sure to provide information in a way that works on mobile devices because a huge portion of our readers are coming to us via our mobile devices, primarily smartphones. That’s a huge change. The web is a different medium and mobile is a different medium as well so we have to adapt, not just adapt but embrace these technologies and do it quickly.

Number two is the continuing pressure on budget. We’re not a monopoly or oligarchy enterprises anymore in the newspaper business. We used to have very secure businesses and people talked about a lot of competition when there were three newspapers in a city. That’s nothing compared to what we face today. We face seemingly unlimited competition and that’s competition for readers and also competition for readers for advertisers. And that puts tremendous pressure on the financial resources that we have to work with.

And so we have to think very hard about how we work, where we deploy resources, what kind of organisational resources we should have and really question everything we do. And that’s challenging because everybody wants a little bit of a breather from all that’s happened, but the reality is nobody is going to give us a breather and so we have to accept that change is going to be a constant and it will be something that we have to embrace. So that can be unsettling for people who’ve been in this business for a long time, including myself, but it’s absolutely necessary.

And then I think the nature of the business given the speed at which we’re working now and the level of competition. The kinds of safeguards that we’ve had in this business where you can sit and ponder a story for a period of time and run it through several layers of editing – that becomes increasingly difficult these days and speed has had a huge influence on our business and it runs contrary to the idea of rigorous editing.”
“I THINK FOR ANY NEWS OUTLET TO SURVIVE WE HAVE TO PRODUCE CONTENT THAT NOBODY ELSE HAS, AND IN ORDER TO DO THAT YOU NEED TIME, AND YOU ONLY GET THAT TIME BY GETTING RID OF THE STUFF THAT ISN’T HIGH VALUE ANYMORE. SO I LOOK AT AUTOMATION AS MUCH MORE A METHODOLOGY BY WHICH TO GIVE PEOPLE BACK TIME TO DO THE STORIES OF HIGHER IMPACT AND HIGHER VALUE.”

-LOU FERRARA, VICE PRESIDENT AND MANAGING EDITOR OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
The Associated Press (AP) has just hired an Automation Editor, a first for the industry. So, if nothing else, at least one journalist will get a job out of this. At the time of writing, the most recent news from AP on the automation front was that they would also be using automated reporting to cover thousands of college sports games that they didn’t previously report on.

“If people think this isn’t going to happen quickly - it is,” says Vice President and Managing Editor of the Associated Press (AP) Lou Ferrara who sits at the frontline of automated reporting.

If you don’t believe that journalism and society as a whole are about to face serious change at the hands of automation software, then consider these examples from The New York Times’ Human or Computer quiz:

“Kitty couldn’t fall asleep for a long time. Her nerves were strained as two tight strings, and even a glass of hot wine, that Vronsky made her drink, did not help her. Lying in bed she kept going over and over that monstrous scene at the meadow.”

–From the Russian novel “True Love,” written by a computer in St. Petersburg in 72 hours.

“A shallow magnitude 4.7 earthquake was reported Monday morning five miles from Westwood, California, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. The temblor occurred at 6:25 a.m. Pacific time at a depth of 5.0 miles.”

–An excerpt of a poem written by machine-learning app Swiftkey after being fed a dataset of Shakespeare’s words.

Now that you’ve climbed back into your seat from the floor (seriously, that poem was written by a computer?), let’s examine where automation technology stands, and how it is poised to affect every newsroom in the business.

A software update: Automated reporting so far

The prospect of automated news became more real when AP announced last July that it would be fully automating its corporate earnings reports. This meant that from the sourcing of data to the publishing of a complete story, no human would be involved in the reporting process. A program written by the automation software company Automated Insights would pull data from Zacks Investment Research, sift it for “newsworthy” information, and then report this information in a way that is indistinguishable from human writing.

The stories that this automated reporting took over were simple, but the impact on the AP newsrooms was huge. The AP’s Ferrara says that not only did the software from Automated Insights put out 10 times the number of earnings reports for AP than before, but that it also freed up about 20 percent of his staff’s writing time.

“My staff in general is feeling like: ‘Wow, we have time we didn’t have before – it’s allowed us to do things we weren’t able to before,’” says Ferrara.

This development was hailed as the good news story that newsrooms had been desperately waiting for. Automated reporting was “the best thing to happen to journalists in a long time”, wrote New York Magazine’s Kevin Roose.

“Bring on the goddamn robots,” called TechCrunch’s Alex Wilhelm.
The reaction to automation developments has been “giddy,” and any concern of future job-losses has typically been waved away with reassuring statements like: “Nobody has lost a single job because of us,” in the words of Kristian Hammond, founder of automation software company Narrative Science – the main competitor of Automated Insights.

But despite the generally enthusiastic reception from journalists, critics such as Martin Ford, a leading commentator on job automation, MIT economists Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee, and even Bill Gates, are worried.

Unemployment by tech: It’s different this time

“If you talk to the companies of these technologies – the same is true of companies who make robots – almost without exception they will claim that their technology is not going to displace workers. Nobody wants to be accused of that, so they always put a positive spin on it,” says Silicon Valley entrepreneur Martin Ford, a leading commentator on the potential impact job automation will bring to the economy. His latest book *Rise of the Robots* details how Artificial Intelligence is making “good jobs” obsolete - including journalism.

“Usually what they’ll say is ‘This just does the boring stuff, and it will free up people to do more interesting things,’ but realistically you know that that’s just spin. People will lose their jobs and they have lost their jobs already,” says Ford.

However, Automated Insight’s Vice President of Product Engineering Joe Procopio makes a valid point that as it stands, automated reporting is best-suited to number crunching and doesn’t have the capacity for the “how” and “why” of a story.

“We’ve done over a billion stories and we haven’t lost any journalists yet, and me having an affinity for that world, I can understand how the evolution of technology will impact the journalism career in the future, but I see way too many examples of journalists embracing where we are, and in some senses trying to be ahead of where we are,” says Procopio.

The threat to jobs is not something the AP’s Lou Ferrara agrees with either, since he believes that any work taken from journalists by automation will only give them new opportunities for deeper reporting: “I’ve talked to enough editors and producers and executive producers to know, that if they got rid of certain jobs, they would redeploy those positions into more important positions for the operation,” says Ferrara.

Procopio also argues that the work automation takes from journalists is “not so much a job to be replaced as it is a bunch of tasks that really don’t belong in the job description to begin with.”

“Maybe it will, in some markets, eliminate some jobs that are no longer needed,” says Ferrara, “The way printing presses changed, and pagination changed, and digital photog-
raphy changed things over time in the news business; those jobs did in fact go away. But I would argue that over time the journalism industry creates other jobs of things we need that are frankly of higher value and more important, and I see that here too,” he says.

This Keynesian long-arc theory – which suggests technological unemployment is just a temporary phase of maladjustment – sounds rational, but unfortunately Ford believes that this time it doesn’t apply. “This time is definitely different, I believe that we’re looking at something really dramatically different than what we were looking at in the past [industrial and technological revolutions] – but it will take some time to really see that disruption,” says Ford.

Job displacement by this automation explosion is not news – as The Economist, MIT and Oxford have all noted – and it would be naive to think journalists are immune to automation.

However, there will be no “slaughter of all the journalists,” Ford says. All the classic woes of the journalism profession have had a much more dramatic impact than automating stories has, or probably will have, according to Ford. The problem is more subtle:

“If you want to have a career in journalism and you’re just graduating from school, the place you might start, your first assignment may be one of those routine formulaic things, like sport stories and corporate earnings reports and maybe even obituaries or something like that, you know, those kinds of things where there’s not a lot of creativity to it … that’s been the way that journalists have learned the ropes from the beginning,” says Ford.

Procopio disagrees with this claim: “I don’t see how the regurgitation of fact is something that a fledgling journalist necessarily does to learn the ropes, so much as it’s the garbage work that the experienced journalists don’t want to do.”

As far back as 2010, automation software was taking jobs from young journalists, like when Narrative Science software took over the recaps of baseball and softball games for The Big Ten Network – a job previously done by university sports offices.

“No newsroom is saying, you know, I don’t need as many reporters as I have,” Ferrara says. But while a company with the scale of AP probably won’t be using automated software to save a few newsroom jobs: “It’s like any technology, some people are going to use it for evil purposes, right: ‘Okay, I’m going to get rid of 100 jobs by doing this.’ But my goal remains to free up time and to free up resources to do the stuff that matters most.”
"WHENEVER I HAVE THIS DISCUSSION ABOUT ROBOTS AND AUTOMATION, PEOPLE TEND TO HAVE THIS IDEA THAT THESE TECHNOLOGIES ARE GOING TO ARRIVE IN HUGE NUMBERS AND PEOPLE ARE GOING TO LOSE THEIR JOBS RIGHT AWAY. THAT'S NOT NECESSARILY GOING TO HAPPEN, BUT IF OVER TIME WE HIRE FEWER PEOPLE, IF FEWER JOBS ARE CREATED THEN IN THE LONG RUN THAT'S TREMENDOUSLY DISRUPTIVE."

-MARTIN FORD, SILICON VALLEY ENTREPRENEUR AND AUTHOR OF RISE OF THE ROBOTS

Getting personal: writing stories for the individual

Users of automated reporting software must tread ethical water when it comes to personalisation of content, and how far they might take the trend. And personalisation is something that Evgeny Morozov, an authority on the political and social implications of technology, indicated in Slate the software is well positioned to do:

"Imagine that my online history suggests that I hold an advanced degree and that I spend a lot of time on the websites of The Economist or the New York Review of Books; as a result, I get to see a more sophisticated, challenging, and informative version of the same story than my USA Today-reading neighbor. If one can infer that I’m also interested in international news and global justice, a computer-generated news article about Angelina Jolie might end by mentioning her new film about the war in Bosnia. My celebrity-obsessed neighbor, on the other hand, would see the same story end with some useless gossipy tidbit about Brad Pitt.”

It is also one of Ferrara’s concerns as automated reporting develops. “The thing that I worry about the most as it relates to journalism is if you give people only what they want to hear, that’s not a good thing for anybody,” he says.

But Procopio doesn’t see personalisation being used this way. “I don’t think the draw of it is the personalisation or the contextualisation of fact for a single reader,” he says.

“Personalisation to me makes much more sense when you’re talking about, for example, if you were to do a story about stocks, their performance in the market today, we would personalise that based on the stocks in your portfolio, so you have the most relevant information to you at your fingertips at any given time.”

Procopio points out that personalisation already exists on an organisational level, as businesses cater to their demographics, and that automation is unlikely to take that to the nth degree.

“I don’t think rearranging the facts in those stories really buys an organisation anything,” he says.
A light at the end of the churnalism tunnel?

Before you take an axe to your laptop, consider that while automation – especially in its current state – will not completely free journalists from the constant 24-hour news cycle, Ferrara believes automated reporting “actually gets us something back.”

“In automating [news] we’re getting out fast and quick with just the facts, the basics, and I think for any news outlet to survive we have to produce content that nobody else has, and in order to do that you need time, and you only get that time by getting rid of the stuff that isn’t high value anymore. So I look at automation as much more a methodology by which to give people back time to do the stories of higher impact and higher value.”

“I’ve always looked at things that way – I oversee sports, entertainment and business news, and when I got into sports and entertainment, it was not lost on me that sports and entertainment are key news verticals that drive a lot of revenue for companies, and they help feed the larger journalism mission for the AP, there’s no question about that, and I see the same thing here. If this is able to solve problems and make customers happy and feed the larger mission, then that’s success.”

“I think the opportunity is there,” says Procopio, “To be able to update stories [automatically] as new data comes in, and certainly be available at any time.”

“Everyone talks about Quakebot, that’s an excellent example: not only did Quakebot sense that LA earthquake last year but it woke the journalist up, sent a message to his iPhone, got the journalist out of bed so that journalist could write the story to it. In that sense, it could allow the journalist to lead a normal life, so to speak, being made aware immediately when the data changes enough for it then to be necessary to do a rewrite, or do a new story.”

Your automated future

The first AP Automation Editor started in March. “That person is actually designed to go through the AP and figure out what else we can automate. Because you can imagine after 168 years I’ve got a lot of processes in this place,” Ferrara says. “You’re going to see it more in the core operations of what all newsrooms do.”

However, Martin Ford is certain that for the rest of the

THE PROS
OF AUTOMATED REPORTING

- Gives journalists time to work on more complex stories
- Does number-crunching quickly to allow journalists to focus on the “how” and “why” of a story
- Gets simple stories out more quickly than journalists
- Doesn’t make typos

THE CONS
OF AUTOMATED REPORTING

- Will displace jobs in the journalism profession
- It might be used, problematically, to rearrange facts to suit individual readers
- Could be deployed for propaganda purposes
- Could homogenise local reporting (though Ferrara notes when a story is big enough, journalists usually go back and do it anyway)
- The stories automation software does take over, while reliable and believably human, end up dry and lacking in depth
Industry, as automated reporting develops, it will only continue to stifle new jobs. "Whenever I have this discussion about robots and automation, people tend to have this idea that these technologies are going to arrive in huge numbers and people are going to lose their jobs right away. That's not necessarily going to happen, but if over time we hire fewer people, if fewer jobs are created then in the long run that's tremendously disruptive." It's also a trend that won't stay within the bounds of professional journalism. "Ultimately," says Procopio, "I think it's going to be very broad and that's one of the things that we've been chasing, it sort of defines what we do. Eventually anyone will be able to create their own automated report, based on data they have."

"Finding the facts is easy," says Procopio, "It's the prioritisation and the contextualisation of those facts that are difficult. That's where I think [automation software] is going to evolve, especially in the next two or three years, and that's where I see journalists evolving with it – having all that work done for you, and then as a journalist following up with the 'how' and the 'why.'"

"You can't dismiss the fact that it's going to be more dramatic as the technology progresses," says Ford. "Moreover, it's not just automated content that's evolving the technology – analytics, drones, sensors, crowdsourcing – they're dealing with technological advancements on a day-to-day basis and automated content is just one of them," Procopio says.

Whether you're ready or not, automated reporting is set to make a big appearance in the journalism profession, and as it develops, to take larger and larger slices of the journalism employment and production pie.

**IBM’s Watson**

IBM’s Watson is an artificial intelligence computer system designed to be able to answer questions asked in natural language. It was able to win the TV quiz show Jeopardy! using structured and unstructured data.

(Wikimedia commons)
Kenya announced it would use drones in its national parks to help tackle poaching (April 2014)

Journalists in Kenya use drones to cover disaster stories, where previously they had to rely on police or military vehicles for aerial reporting, which compromised editorial independence (August 2014)

Police in England arrest a photojournalist for using a drone and confiscate the equipment, despite the photojournalist having approval to use drones by the Civil Aviation Authority, and his claims that he had permission from the landowner to film. Police claim he was acting in a disrespectful and intrusive manner. (December 2014)

A Queenslander becomes the first Australian to be fined for flying a drone after posting videos on YouTube which show breaches in Australian aviation laws. Some Australian media companies have been using drones to film cricket matches. (January 2015)

Journalists use drones in conflict areas in the Ukraine, Thailand, Venezuela and elsewhere to gather news where it is unsafe for journalists to enter. In Venezuela, drone footage published online which circumvented the usual strict control of traditional media contradicted official estimates of low numbers at anti-government rallies. (2014-15)

At the World Economic Forum in Davos, three BBC journalists are questioned for breaking high-security protocols using a drone. The BBC has been using drones in several stories recently, such as in their filming of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp for the anniversary of its liberation by the Soviets. (February 2015)

Tech company Perceptiv develop an app which lets users auto-track a target using drone cameras. (February 2015) (Problematic from journalism safety and source protection perspective)

Drone product company Aeryon develop a camera for lightweight drones which can zoom-in on and identify faces from 300 metres (1,000 feet) away. (Problematic from journalism safety and source protection perspective)

The FAA releases proposed drone laws, which are more accommodating than some journalists were expecting (February 2015). More recently, the FAA warns users that they can’t post drone videos on YouTube, since it constitutes ‘commercial use’. (March 2015)

Drone coverage by NBC of a Vanuatu cyclone prompts questions of whether drones might be allowed to fly over people (though still not crowds) if equipped with safety features. Most drone laws currently prohibit flying anywhere less than 100 feet within a person. (March 2015)

A drunk flyer crashes his drone on the White House lawn (January 2015), which may have been what prompted the US Secret Service to begin experimenting with ways to knock drones out of the sky, such as hacking them to seize control, or using signal jammers. (March 2015)

Three Al Jazeera journalists are arrested for allegedly flying drones in Paris, one of whom is eventually fined, and four journalists working for a German public broadcaster are detained days later while planning to fly a drone. This was in a climate of heightened security in the wake of the Charlie Hebdo massacre, and successive nights of unidentified sightings of drones around Paris landmarks (not connected to the Al Jazeera drone). It is illegal to fly drones in Paris without a license. (March 2015)

Indian police begin using drones with pepper spray (April 2015)
“IN FRANCE, THE MEDIA HAS EXPERIENCED ADDED LAYERS OF SECURITY SINCE THE ATTACK. MACHINE GUN-TOTING RIOT SQUAD POLICE AND POLICE VANS ARE A COMMON SIGHT OUTSIDE MEDIA HOUSES.”
The Charlie Hebdo terrorist attack in central Paris was a wake-up call for journalism globally. It graphically demonstrated that journalists are now terrorism targets – at their desks as well as in war zones. It created a new set of safety crises for newsrooms, and it put press freedom on the front page internationally. But it also highlighted the need for culturally sensitive reporting; the disparity between coverage of terrorism attacks affecting the West and those that plague developing countries; the threat of government censorship as a counter-terrorism measure; and the increasing risks involved in reliance on User Generated Content in the context of conflict.

The question facing editors and journalists now, is how to respond in the longer term – ethically, editorially and managerially.

Anatomy of a massacre

On January 7, 2015 terrorism struck the heart of a European newsroom. The staff of the satirical French weekly, Charlie Hebdo, which included some of the country’s most cherished political cartoonists, had gathered at their Paris headquarters for a routine editorial meeting. But at 11:30 a.m. two brothers brandishing Kalashnikov machine guns forced their way into the building before unleashing a targeted attack ultimately claimed by Al-Qaeda in Yemen. Ten people died in the newsroom that day.

The loss of Charlie Hebdo’s much-loved cartoonists – Charb, Wolinski, Cabu, and Tignous – did not cause remaining staff members to abandon the presses. Before the January attacks catapulted the magazine onto the international scene, Charlie Hebdo was a low circulation satirical publication. Just a week after the massacre, people queued before dawn to get their hands on a copy of the magazine’s “survivors” issue that ultimately sold 7 million copies worldwide.

For decades, the magazine promoted its right to offend under France’s strict 1905 law on secularism – laïcité. But to its critics, Charlie Hebdo represented the epitome of gratuitous offence. And while it ridiculed all religions and political leaders, the Prophet Muhammad was among its most frequent targets.

A watershed moment for the safety of journalists

Before “Charlie,” such violence against journalists had largely been contained to war-torn and corruption-riddled corners of the developing world, where practicing journalism had been at its most deadly – Syria, Somalia, Iraq, and Mexico, among others. But with the attack on Charlie Hebdo, the global threat to journalism woke up the world, smashing the illusion that the killing of journalists only happens in war zones. The attack propelled France to the top of the list of deadlist countries for journalists in 2015 (correct at time of printing).

“Safety has come in the mind of journalists everywhere since Charlie,” Middle East and Arab World Coordinator of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) Monir Zaaour told a UNESCO debate on Journalism After Charlie earlier this year.

French authorities recently advised Zaaour not to disclose details of the Paris venue hosting a journalism conference on the impact of extremist violence on media workers, because of security threats – an approach usually only taken in conflict zones.

Through the United Nation’s Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, UNESCO has been at the forefront of creating strong security plans for media worldwide.

In a series of conferences, titled “After Charlie,” Guy Berger, UNESCO’s Director of Freedom of Expression and Media Development, explained how state actors and media must embrace a “holistic” approach, which should include prevention, safeguarding journalists under threat, ending impunity, and support for journalists who survive or witness an attack. He described the attacks as “a watershed that highlights that the safety of journalists is not necessarily limited to countries in conflict.”

Defending media freedom through the barrel of a gun

In France, the media has experienced extreme security measures since the attack. Machine gun-toting riot squad officers and police vans are still a common sight outside media houses – a measure taken as part of France’s anti-terrorism alert system, known as Plan Vigipirate.

“We have been one of the most protected media houses since January 7,” Yves Bigot, Director General (DG) of international Francophone television channel TV5 Monde, told a UNESCO debate. He also has an emergency button on his desk that can alert the authorities and instantly secure the facilities if there is a threat. And threats against TV5 Monde have increased since January, according to Bigot. “We have three police officers and vehicles around the clock, plus a specialised officer who searches vehicles and people.”

But how long can the state afford this level of security – both in terms of cost and the implications for liberty? Bigot said police guards will remain in front of media houses for as long as the French
authorities keep the country under maximum alert.

Days after Bigot’s appearance at UNESCO, France’s TV5 Monde was subjected to a cyber attack that took down the network’s 11 concurrent broadcasts simultaneously. The three hour blackout also involved the hacking of TV5 Monde’s website and social media accounts. The attackers claimed to belong to ISIS. In response, the French government said it would “call an urgent meeting of French media groups to assess their vulnerability to hacking,” according to The Guardian.

Increasing risks facing foreign correspondents

For journalists in the field, safety protocols can be more complex, Bigot said. TV5 Monde keeps in close contact with France’s Foreign Ministry, as well as with those of Switzerland and Belgium, to stay abreast of any threats abroad.

Journalists are also instructed to avoid cell phones — as they can be used by hostile actors to identify their whereabouts — and use trackers to enable the central office to locate them at any point.

“As soon as they reach an area that is not highly protected, they turn their trackers on — like a pager — so that we can specifically locate the journalist at any time in the field,” Bigot said. “When we see that it is stable for too long, we worry.”

But foreign correspondents also face a new threat: the risk of their interpreters and fixers being “turned” by ISIS or other terrorist groups. “They are ... nationals of the country in the field, they are absolutely essential in the Middle East and central Africa, (but) they can be turned by Daesh (ISIS). They are bought for financial reasons and can turn on our journalists,” Bigot said. “They have the means of changing the lives of these fixers and can also be turned for ideological reasons and can be turned very quickly. ‘We will sleep in this hotel. We are currently in this vehicle on this road’ — it can be information like this given to these groups.”

According to Bigot, betrayal by fixers has resulted in the abduction of journalists, and the random nature of the threat makes it very difficult to combat.

The toll is still much higher for local journalists

While foreign correspondents working for major Western media outlets still face threats in the field, they have access to more support and training than freelancers living pitch-by-pitch, or local journalists in conflict zones. “It’s the responsibility of the employer to protect journalists. But freelancers don’t have access to this protection,” said IFJ’s Zaarour.

In response, IFJ has overhauled the traditional model of Western trainers flying in to assist local reporters with safety and security training. “You cannot train all of the journalists in conflict areas,” Zaarour said, “It’s impossible.”

IFJ now relies on “train-the-trainer” schemes, with international trainers helping to develop the skills of locally based trainers achieving greater impact, with the added advantage of local context and nuance.
“Je suis Charlie”

Just 30 minutes after news of the Charlie Hebdo attack broke, three short words became known around the globe. “Je suis Charlie” (I am Charlie) went viral as the solidarity slogan for the freedom of expression campaign that followed the attacks. The same rallying cry seemingly bound France together as officials, citizens, and the media projected an image of unity.

But behind the headlines, the reaction was more divided. The counter-slogan “Je ne suis pas Charlie” spoke for those ill at ease with the magazine’s content and who believe freedom of expression has necessary limitations and associated responsibilities. Critics of the “Je suis Charlie” movement highlighted the alienating impact of the magazine on diverse Muslim communities in France. Others disregarded the show of solidarity completely, lamenting the dangers of such division.

UK-based author and professor Kenan Malik said while the display of broad solidarity was impressive, it came 20 years too late. “Had journalists and artists and political activists taken a more robust view on free speech over the past 20 years, then we may never have come to this. Instead, they have helped create a new culture of self-censorship,” Malik told the World Editors Forum.

Still, the perception that the media has united in unprecedented solidarity in the face of such an attack largely prevails. “These journalists represent freedom of the press and, moreover, the spirit of liberty itself. On this day of mourning, we stand firm in our commitment to never give in to threats, nor terror,” a statement from the heads of many French media houses read. “We will not let silence take hold. We will stay vigilant in our fight against all forms of prejudice.”

The French press has also collectively raised funds to ensure continuation of the publication, which had faced imminent bankruptcy. Just a day after the attack, it raised half a million euros, which was supplemented by 500,000 euros in donations from the Press and Pluralism Fund, set up by French newspaper publishers, and the Digital Press Innovation Fund financed by Google.

“It was an obligation as citizens to support them to do their jobs because our values were under attack,” Ludovic Blecher, the Director of the Digital Press Innovation Fund said. “The question was not to support what they were saying, but just to allow them to say what they want.”

Security vs. liberty: a dangerous barter

How can a government safeguard its citizens from terrorism while still protecting civil liberties? Is it an oxymoron to think we can be both safe and free? Or can a government strike harmony to ensure it respects individual liberties while protecting our collective security?

“This is the big question for the first half of the 21st century – security versus freedom,” said Bigot, responding to a question on whether France should adopt the equivalent of the United States’ Patriot Act. “To what extent should we curb this freedom, which until now we thought was absolute? This is not a question we had to ask very often in the past, so it’s not an easy one,” Bigot said.

In March 2015, two months after the Charlie Hebdo attack, the French government introduced a new law giving French spy agencies more powers to bug and track potential terrorists, while blocking access to sites deemed to defend terrorism. Authorities will also be able to force internet providers to monitor suspicious behaviour – without needing the green light of a judge.

“What is really worrying is that there is absolutely no mention of
journalist protection whatsoever,” Antoine Héry, the Head of European Union and Balkans Desk at Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF) said. The organisation is pushing for a clear journalists’ exception because of concerns that the bill could ultimately have a chilling effect on how journalists are able to cover stories related to terrorism and the confidentiality of sources, which has limited protection under a 2010 French law.

“This is just absolute nonsense in a democracy to have journalists that can’t work on terrorism related topics without fearing to be spied on by the government,” Héry said.

The bill passed unopposed through the lower house of the French parliament as this report went to print.

Press freedom: an absolute right?

One of the major shortfalls of the “I am – or I am not – Charlie” binary is the semblance of a rigid “them” versus “us” dichotomy.

Writing for The Guardian, Nasrine Malik said, “It is impossible to reduce the Charlie Hebdo tragedy to anything as simple as two cultures clashing over the sanctity of a Prophet.”

On the surface, Malik says it’s understandable to view the perpetrators as “barbaric and silencing” while the victims “enlightened and freedom-loving.” However, she warns that a far more complex truth of racial and religious tension clouds this over-simplification.

As the initial steadfast support for Charlie Hebdo diminishes, a debate has resurfaced: Should we, as a global community, appease individual sensitivities, or allow for unfettered free speech in all its forms? And what are the implications for journalists and editorial decision makers?

Independent journalism relies on press freedom to function and it has a responsibility to “afflict the powerful.” Therein lies the power of satire. However, ridiculing minorities and inciting hatred against them is a different matter.

Mehdi Hasan in the New Statesman wrote that everyone has a line where freedom of expression stops – it’s just a matter of where it’s drawn.

Ari Goldman, a teacher on reporting religion at Columbia University believes religious sensibilities should be respected. “We let other sensibilities govern our media coverage,” Goldman told the World Editors Forum. “We worry about people’s culinary, fashion, political, environmental and sexual sensitivities. Religion is central to the lives of many of our readers, listeners and viewers. We have to be sensitive to what they think and feel.”

However, Kenan Malik believes the line should only be drawn at the point of direct incitement to violence, while the trajectory during the past couple of decades has moved in favour of appeasing cultural sensitivities. “Over the past quarter century we created a culture where many, including liberals, have come to believe that it is morally wrong to offend other cultures, other religions, other people,” he said. “It has been a fundamental shift in our attitudes towards freedom of expression. Far from challenging that, the Charlie Hebdo killings are likely to entrench such attitudes further.”

Malik warned that this could have far-reaching implications. When a culture of censorship forms around

“The question was not to support what they were saying, but just to allow them to say what they want.”

-LUDOVIC BLECHER, DIRECTOR OF THE DIGITAL PRESS INNOVATION FUND.
the fear of offence, it’s the minority communities – including Muslims – who suffer most. The way forward, Malik says, is to ensure that all people are “equally sheltered by liberties” – not deprived of them.

However, in the case of marginalised Muslim communities in the West, persistently negative, narrow media portrayals that frequently conflate crime and terrorism with race and religion can cause alienation and, in some cases, contribute to the proliferation of hate crimes.

Co-author Julie Posetti – a WAN-IFRA Research Fellow and University of Wollongong journalism academic – has researched the impact of media coverage of Muslim women post-September 11. She commented on the Charlie Hebdo massacre for international media during the crisis, highlighting the difficulty of navigating these issues. She also critiqued similarly problematic reporting of last year’s Sydney siege, in which two hostages were killed during a standoff with a Muslim gunman. “It is vitally important to avoid stereotyping Muslims and focusing blame on diverse Muslim communities. Previous research I have undertaken on the impacts of media stereotyping of Muslim women in post-September 11 Australia, for example, revealed that such coverage increases the fear experienced by Muslim women, especially those who are identifiably Muslim, because of their religious dress,” she said.

“This can cause them to withdraw – both physically and as participants in public debate. There is also evidence that inflammatory media coverage of Muslims gives ‘licence’ to acts of violence and abuse directed at innocent members of the Muslim community, such as the message that circulated on social media from ‘Take Back Australia’ urging people to head en masse to Lakemba (in Sydney’s south) which has one of Australia’s biggest mosques.”

The other point to note is that France’s vehement defence of the “right to blaspheme” is not universally accepted as a corollary to press freedom. In many countries – especially within emerging democracies – greater emphasis is placed editorially on reflecting multicultural harmony.

And freedom of expression rights extend to allowing editors and journalists to choose not to publish an image, cartoon or report that is deemed too insensitive or inflammatory in comparison to its editorial value. In this context, WAN-IFRA declined to re-publish the Charlie Hebdo cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad in the aftermath of the attacks. And, similarly, we have chosen not to illustrate this chapter with those images, although we respect and defend the right of other editors and publishers to do so.

In parallel, there is a practical risk assessment to be conducted by editors: what is the risk to your staff of publishing an item with the sole purpose of causing offence? And can the costs associated with such a decision – both human and financial – be justified from editorial, ethical and business management perspectives?

The media’s single vision

More than 4,000 kilometres from Paris another major story was unfolding at the time of the Charlie Hebdo atrocities. Boko Haram militants had overtaken the Nigerian town of Baga, burning buildings and indiscriminately killing local residents. Initial reports said some 2,000 people were killed over several days and thousands more displaced by violence.
Yet, the global media gave it paltry coverage in comparison. Even in Nigeria itself, the media gave more space to the Paris massacre, and former President Goodluck Jonathan condemned the attack on *Charlie Hebdo* while making no mention of Baga.

Nigerian editor-in-chief of the *Daily Trust*, Mannir Dan-Ali says the discrepancy might be an issue of access. The attack on *Charlie Hebdo* occurred in a cosmopolitan city, while Baga is largely inaccessible, even to the four journalists Dan-Ali has based in Borno state.

“It depends on what the media agenda is and what is easily accessible. Look at Chibok, coverage came much later than the actual abduction of the girls,” Dan-Ali said, adding that the international media was only hooked when the hashtag #bringbackourgirls raced around the world.

**Lessons from eyewitnesses**

In the aftermath of the *Charlie Hebdo* terrorist attacks, “to publish or not to publish” quickly became a common question posed in newsrooms worldwide. Outlets had to decide whether they would republish *Charlie Hebdo* content, including cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad. But this wasn’t the only ethical dilemma posed by the drama unfolding in Paris.

Engineer Jordi Mir was alone in his Paris apartment when he saw the two gunned approach wounded police officer Ahmed Merabet as they made their escape from the magazine’s premises. He recorded the whole scene as one of the brothers approached the officer and asked, “You want to kill us?” Merabet replied, “No, it’s OK, boss,” trying to calm the situation – but he was shot in the head seconds later.

TIPS TO SUPPORT CULTURALLY SENSITIVE, INDEPENDENT REPORTING OF MUSLIMS

**By Julie Posetti**

- Never shy away from reporting stories that reflect badly on individual Muslims, or a particular group of terrorists or criminals.
- Apply the public interest test (does the public need to know?) and the impact test (what are the potential impacts of your chosen angle and framing of the story on minorities and marginalised communities?)
- Recognise that entire Muslim communities are not to blame for the actions of terrorist groups, nor should they be held accountable for such actions
- Recognise that there is not one homogenous Muslim community but many diverse communities within any society
- Avoid the temptation to illustrate stories about terrorism and crime involving Muslims with generic pictures of praying Muslims, or women wearing traditional religious dress – not all Muslims are prayerful; many Muslim women do not wear hijabs or burqas.
- Identify and develop sources from a range of religious and cultural groups within Muslim communities
- Pay particular attention to cultivating Muslim women sources – don’t ask men to speak on behalf of women
- Spend time with, and within, Muslim communities and make a deliberate attempt to engage with online communities of Muslims
- Talk with Muslim sources, don’t just talk at minority communities
- Consider the lessons of “peace journalism” and “activist journalism” which advocate a “journalism for social justice” approach

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**Trends in Newsrooms**
Mir captured the entire exchange on video. In a panic, and what he described – in an exclusive interview with the Associated Press – as a “stupid reflex” honed by years on social media, he posted it on Facebook. Fifteen minutes later, Mir scrambled to take it down. But it was too late. “A friend of a friend” had already seen it and posted it on YouTube. Soon it was being broadcast by a number of news organisations. Some new organisations pixelated Merabet being killed, or ended the video. However, others like Malachy Browne, Managing Editor and Europe Anchor of First Look Media’s new social media venture Reported.ly, found the footage “gratuitously violent” and chose not to publish.

Still, it could be easily located online and seen on numerous media outlets – a reality that caused great distress for Mir – who had never granted any news site permission to republish it – and for officer Merabet’s family who had to witness his death, over and over again.

“Eyewitnesses are placed under great pressure when they are often alone and still experiencing a traumatic event,” Jenni Sargent, Director of Eyewitness Media Hub, said. “They are expected to make difficult decisions on the spot and often they will change their mind hours or days later when it is too late.”

Browne said he tries to engage with eyewitnesses as much as possible. “When I’m looking at pictures and trying to engage with people in northern Nigeria or living in an authoritarian state and they are posting incriminating information or pictures that could put them at risk, I will ask them questions about how their information can be used,” he said.

As Sargent stressed, resources and training must be directed to address the ethics and legality of using content from a smartphone-equipped citizen in the moment of horror.

What have we learned?

Ultimately, the January attacks brought home to a Western audience the fragile nature of freedom of expression – a fact that millions of others elsewhere around the world are forced to confront on a daily basis. Journalists are inevitably in the front line of the struggle to defend the collective rights of society when they cover corruption, accountability and failings in the rule of law.

When they become targets of those in power – state or non-state actors, criminals and violent extremists – it is a warning to the whole of society.

But while we defend our collective right to media freedom, work on improving safety training for journalists and reinforce newsroom security, we also have a responsibility to critically reflect on our editorial values and ethics, while considering the potentially damaging impacts of problematic reporting on marginalised communities.
THOUGHT LEADER Q&A

MANNIR DAN-ALI
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
DAILY TRUST

By Alexandra Waldhorn

“FIRST AND FOREMOST, WE TELL THEM THAT NO STORY IS WORTH THEIR LIVES AND NO STORY IS WORTH PUTTING THEMSELVES IN HARM’S WAY UNNECESSARILY.”
The ongoing Boko Haram insurgency, delayed elections and the ultimate victory of opposition candidate Muhammad Buhari; called for intense scrutiny of national politics and society, placing Nigerian newsrooms under strain.

However, one major story was virtually absent from the headlines. A Boko Haram attack at the beginning of January razed the town of Baga. Hundreds died and many more fled – but the media completely underplayed the story.

**How did the attacks on *Charlie Hebdo* garner wall-to-wall coverage worldwide while Baga was forgotten?**

*Dan-Ali:* Maybe it’s the nature of the media and the shape it takes in terms of having high level of saturation on one issue, while almost ignoring another issue. It might be also because the [Charlie Hebdo] attack happened in a cosmopolitan place in Paris while Baga happened in a remote location that has very little access. Much of what we know about Baga is pieced together from the accounts from eyewitnesses who escaped. Journalists haven’t been able to visit that town, so that also poses limits on how much you can cover. But it depends on what the media agenda is and what is maybe easily accessible.
When did your newsroom first learn of the Baga attack?

Dan-Ali: The Daily Trust is the only newspaper in Nigeria that still has a big presence close to where all these instances are happening in Maiduguri, the capital of the northeastern state of Borno. We have a printing press there that we had to unfortunately shut down in the few weeks after the Baga incident because of movement restrictions. The advantage of being the one media that has a number of reporters in that region means that we’re most likely to have the most up-to-date and accurate information coming from different sources. We learned of it [the Baga attack] a day after it happened, when displaced people started trickling into Maiduguri and we were able to piece together what happened there from different accounts, which were kind of reluctantly corroborated by the military authorities, who haven’t been cooperating very much with the media.

What safety precautions are taken for the four journalists you have located in this region? Are there any specific editorial guidelines in place for the reporters based there?

Dan-Ali: First and foremost, we tell them that no story is worth their lives and no story is worth putting themselves in harm’s way unnecessarily. We had a number of trainings in order to have them cope with the reporting in such a conflict-ridden area and then we also tell them to be extra careful because by the nature of what we do, neither Boko Haram, nor the military or security authorities are ever happy with us. The threats come from all sides – the military and Boko Haram because we are probably the first newspaper to report on Boko Haram, even in its infancy in the early days, way before they first came to public consciousness. We had a reporter who understood them fairly well and had some lines open to them. So because of that we were able to see it coming but the authorities who understood them fairly well had some lines open to them. But of course of that we were able to see it coming but the authorities didn’t take our reports seriously enough to maybe have acted much earlier, which could have prevented the deaths of more than fifteen thousand people. We had been there early with the story. And we are still there today.

Outside of Nigeria, a lot of headlines became focused on why the West forgot the Baga attack with less emphasis on why attacks are still being waged six years on, and what the government is doing. With how much vigor is this being addressed within the Nigerian media, and would you like to see more of it in the international press?

Dan-Ali: I don’t think the media has paid consistent close attention to this particular insurgency inside Nigeria. The first time it actually caught the international imagination was after the abduction of the Chibok girls – that is, after the hashtag [#bringbackourgirls] and all of the buzz about it began to get noticed, with Michelle Obama and all the others identifying with the hashtag. Then the media descended on Nigeria and some were going into Chibok and tried to tell the story. But of course with the nature of the attention span of the media most have moved on. But for us who are here, who are in Nigeria, we have kept on the story. For example we started a campaign that has caught on with some other newspapers. Every day we have a tally of the number of days since the Chibok incident happened. So we are still on the story and are keeping it alive with our Nigerian audience, even when the international media may have moved on.

What are the main challenges for newsrooms trying to cover Boko Haram in Nigeria?

Dan-Ali: The biggest is certainly the hostility of the military and security services towards the media, and especially critical media that raises questions. Recently, there was a protest right outside against the way we have been covering the crisis, and that we are not patriotic in the way we have covered the story. What they mean is that we should only be saying they have done wonderfully and "unlike the international media that could perhaps charter a plane to take them to places by helicopter, the Nigerian media doesn’t have those kinds of resources to do that kind of thing. But given the circumstances we have been trying to do our best."
that there are no setbacks. Even when we reported that the foot soldiers weren’t kitted enough, and that they do not have the adequate weapons or arms to counter Boko Haram, military authorities dismissed that. Even when we said there was an incident when the soldiers nearly mutinied – they shot at their own commander – they vehemently denied it until several months later when the military came to court martial some of these soldiers. And so far, more than 100 Nigerian soldiers have been court martialled and some of them have been sentenced to death over their participation in those mutinous acts. So the military has been hostile. We thought that by embedding journalists they could tell the story better than the occasional statements issued by the military’s head commander. This is the major problem, and then in other areas there is the limitation of funds. Unlike the international media that could perhaps charter a plane to take them to places by helicopter, the Nigerian media doesn’t have those kinds of resources to do that kind of thing. But given the circumstances we have been trying to do our best.

Has the military’s pressure prevented you from following certain stories?

Dan-Ali: No it hasn’t. But we are sure that all sides are covered in our stories. We’ve bent over backwards to hear their side of the story but that does not prevent us from following stories. They have realised that if they do not talk to us it will be reflected in our story, that we made countless efforts to get their own side of the story. They just simply refuse to talk to us. It hasn’t stopped us. The only thing it has made us do is be double sure of all that we say so we don’t give them any room to accuse us of any wrongdoing.

This year’s presidential elections were postponed by six weeks after Goodluck Jonathan said security could be undermined with the ongoing insurgency. Critics said it was a political strategy for him to hold power. What questions were journalists asking during this time?

Dan-Ali: The main question is questioning the official reason being given. In Nigeria there are 774 local councils and out of this Boko Haram is affecting mainly 14 councils. So people were saying how could that be an excuse and after all, this doesn’t just come out overnight. Boko Haram has been there for several years and the authorities have simply ignored the problem. That is why it has grown so big. There was a time when all these insurgents were in just one little corner of Maiduguri. The matter was not addressed and when they dispersed into the forest, they were not dealt with. But now it has escalated and they have started occupying lands and hoisting their flag like ISIS, nothing was done. So how come, the media was asking, that just on the eve of an election when indications were suggesting that if the election was held at that period the ruling party may have lost it. How come you are just coming to postpone the election?

Do you have any advice for newsrooms following stories where security concerns can become co-opted by politics or used to justify a political platform?

Dan-Ali: I think the best advice is for them to do their job as it should be done, which is to question everything, be skeptical of official reasons and positions. If you do that you will be able to arrive at something that is closer to the truth.
LISTEN UP: THE AUDIO RENAISSANCE NEEDS YOUR ATTENTION

By Julie Posetti & Siobhan McHugh

“...WHILE THE AUDIO REVIVAL DIDN’T COMMENCE WITH SERIAL, IT IS THE AUDIO STORYTELLING DISRUPTER OF THE CENTURY.”
They’re calling it the “Serial effect.” Serial is the phenomenally successful spin-off of This American Life, on US National Public Radio (NPR): a “docu-tainment” podcast that’s spawned nearly 80 million downloads. That’s right, the latest trend in storytelling is not driven by super-innovative technology. It requires no expensive accessories and it’s widely accessible. It’s called LISTENING.

The Serial-podcasting phenomenon

Podcasting, which began a decade ago, liberated radio from the tyranny of the timetable. It has transformed the notoriously ephemeral audio medium into a thriving ecology.

And while the audio revival didn’t commence with Serial, it is the audio storytelling disrupter of the century. The 12-part series blended suspense-style narrative techniques borrowed from TV drama with the intimate power of radio journalism. The result was a serialised story that kept listeners glued to their headphones while making audio hip again.

The work of Sarah Koenig and Julie Snyder, Serial investigated the murder of Baltimore high school student Hae Min Lee in 1999. The teenager’s ex-boyfriend, Adnan Syed, was convicted for the murder. He is still serving a life sentence, on a flimsy conviction, in a US prison. However, the success of Serial inspired Syed’s supporters in the legal community to produce a follow-up podcast series that launched in April. It’s called Undisclosed: The State v. Adnan Syed, and it “examines and explores the case in greater detail, from an investigatory perspective instead of a narrative one,” The New York Times reported.

Serial became the world’s most popular podcast after securing the title of the fastest podcast to reach 5 million downloads. It offered an in-depth, tantalisingly drawn rendition of “slow journalism,” proving that quickfire sound grabs and the cacophony of high-speed voices populating social media channels and TV news demand an antidote.

In the US, the resurgence in audio’s popularity was kickstarted by two cult shows: This American Life, an hour-long weekly program that delivers three-act personal narratives via its sharp host, Ira Glass; and Radiolab, a show “about curiosity” characterised by micro-produced, fast-paced stories loosely related to science, culture and philosophy. Glass was an editorial advisor on Serial and This American Life recorded audience growth of 25 percent on the back of the Serial wave.

This American Life podcasts attracted huge transnational audiences even pre-Serial: but downloads increased significantly after Serial and they now sit close to 2 million per episode. As Glass told The Hollywood Reporter, “Serial totally changed the way all of us are seeing possibilities for podcasts.” One important change is the realisation of a potential business model. This American Life’s podcast ad sales have increased significantly according to Glass, and other podcasters are exploring a combination of ads, subscription and micropayments for value-added content such as archive materials. In the broader podcast world, where sports, comedy, and talk rate highly, US podcast media advisers such as Rob Greenlee, CEO of Spreaker.com, and Todd Cochrane, CEO of RawVoice, suggest that 5,000 downloads per episode is a minimum required to effectively monetise a podcast.

Audio storytelling: a global trend

The raw power of the human voice, the intimacy and conversationality of audio storytelling enthral listeners. From Copenhagen to Chicago, people are gathering in droves for communal audio storytelling events, held in theatres, churches, parks and ironically, cinemas, where foreign language audio is “screened” with English subtitles. From The Moth in New York, to Now Hear This in Sydney, people are meeting to share their “emotional histories” in front of a microphone and an audience, with their voices typically their only prop.

There may be a podcasting revolution underway but live radio is still alive and kicking. There are 33,000 radio stations around the world, about 2 billion radio sets in use, or one radio for every 3 people. That translates to 242 million radio listeners in the US. In the UK, even with podcasting, real time listening is endemic: over 90 percent of the population tune into a radio station at least once a week, a figure that is actually rising. In Vietnam, radio reaches over 99 percent of the population, in Kenya 95 percent, while in India, 300 new commercial radio stations compete with the state broadcaster.
What can radio journalism teach us?

Audio storytelling has its roots in oral history – the tradition of sharing cultural meaning by relaying stories about lived experience. The scope of contemporary audio storytelling can range from news reporting and investigative journalism, to intensely personal narratives and poetic or impressionistic treatments of ideas and issues. These audio stories “colour in” and extend beyond the news agenda, the best examples providing a sort of aural literary journalism whose psychological, philosophical, cultural and political insights transcend national boundaries and connect listeners from around the world.

It’s partly about the temporal nature of sound – unable to jump ahead as in text, or freeze-frame as in film, the listener develops a pact of intimacy with the sound or speaker as the audio unfolds in real time, without visual distractions.

So how can non-radio journalists exploit the power of audio?

Firstly, remember its unique qualities and listen to some great works.

1. Audio conveys EMOTION far better than print. It captures intangible aspects of a story such as a speaker’s mood – their sadness/happiness can be felt. Audio also adds authenticity, as when US broadcaster Studs Terkel interviewed one of the so-called Hiroshima Maidens who survived the atomic blast. It opens his 1961 documentary Born to Live. And who could forget one of the first live to air radio news reports as the Hindenberg blimp crashed to earth ablaze? “Oh, the humanity!” cried Herbert Morrison in 1937.

2. Don’t forget audio conveys non-verbal meaning, which can

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**ESSENTIAL AUDIO PRODUCTION TIPS**

By Siobhan McHugh

THINK THROUGH YOUR EARS: Seek out “talent” (i.e. interviewees) who can communicate well, or whose voice will add colour via accent, slang and tone. SOUND also tells a story. Pick that up separately, as “scenes” and mix in. For example, a story on schooling refugee children could have an interview with a teacher, some of the children (with permission), plus fly-on-the-wall sound of a class in progress or playtime. Try Howsound or Transom for more tips on craft.

OPTIMISE SOUND QUALITY: Know your recorder and what it can do. WEAR HEADPHONES, so you can monitor levels, background noise, etc. If it’s too noisy, intervene – move away from a generator, close a window, go indoors from traffic, turn off a television running in the background.

RECORDING AND EDITING: Inexpensive digital recorders and accessible editing software such as Garage Band (free), Audacity (free) and Hindenburg have made it easier than ever before to craft audio stories – experiment with equipment and editing programmes.

TRY RECORDING SPONTANEOUS NARRATION ON LOCATION, describing what you see. You can always dump it if it misfires, but when it works, it adds immediacy, atmosphere and context.

MINIMISE PRODUCTION PROBLEMS DURING INTERVIEWS: If the interviewee stumbles on an important bit, ask them to repeat it or rephrase as a “grab” (or sound bite). This is not manipulation, as they have already articulated the idea, and it will greatly facilitate editing. Don’t talk over the interviewee, unless you really need to pull someone up. Don’t be afraid of silence. In one context it can speak volumes; in another it may bring forth deep reflection.

PRODUCTION: Log (rather than transcribe) the audio, EVALUATING content and noting its useability (good quality sound, pithy etc). When scripting your report, use conversational, not formal, language – in English, use contractions, “we’re,” “won’t,” etc. When mixing, carefully weigh the blending of music and ambient sound with pace and placement of speech cuts. See sites such as Transom.org and Howsound where top producers reveal their secrets.

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So how can non-radio journalists exploit the power of audio?

Firstly, remember its unique qualities and listen to some great works.

1. Audio conveys EMOTION far better than print. It captures intangible aspects of a story such as a speaker’s mood – their sadness/happiness can be felt. Audio also adds authenticity, as when US broadcaster Studs Terkel interviewed one of the so-called Hiroshima Maidens who survived the atomic blast. It opens his 1961 documentary Born to Live. And who could forget one of the first live to air radio news reports as the Hindenberg blimp crashed to earth ablaze? “Oh, the humanity!” cried Herbert Morrison in 1937.

2. Don’t forget audio conveys non-verbal meaning, which can

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**ESSENTIAL AUDIO PRODUCTION TIPS**

By Siobhan McHugh

THINK THROUGH YOUR EARS: Seek out “talent” (i.e. interviewees) who can communicate well, or whose voice will add colour via accent, slang and tone. SOUND also tells a story. Pick that up separately, as “scenes” and mix in. For example, a story on schooling refugee children could have an interview with a teacher, some of the children (with permission), plus fly-on-the-wall sound of a class in progress or playtime. Try Howsound or Transom for more tips on craft.

OPTIMISE SOUND QUALITY: Know your recorder and what it can do. WEAR HEADPHONES, so you can monitor levels, background noise, etc. If it’s too noisy, intervene – move away from a generator, close a window, go indoors from traffic, turn off a television running in the background.

RECORDING AND EDITING: Inexpensive digital recorders and accessible editing software such as Garage Band (free), Audacity (free) and Hindenburg have made it easier than ever before to craft audio stories – experiment with equipment and editing programmes.

TRY RECORDING SPONTANEOUS NARRATION ON LOCATION, describing what you see. You can always dump it if it misfires, but when it works, it adds immediacy, atmosphere and context.

MINIMISE PRODUCTION PROBLEMS DURING INTERVIEWS: If the interviewee stumbles on an important bit, ask them to repeat it or rephrase as a “grab” (or sound bite). This is not manipulation, as they have already articulated the idea, and it will greatly facilitate editing. Don’t talk over the interviewee, unless you really need to pull someone up. Don’t be afraid of silence. In one context it can speak volumes; in another it may bring forth deep reflection.

PRODUCTION: Log (rather than transcribe) the audio, EVALUATING content and noting its useability (good quality sound, pithy etc). When scripting your report, use conversational, not formal, language – in English, use contractions, “we’re,” “won’t,” etc. When mixing, carefully weigh the blending of music and ambient sound with pace and placement of speech cuts. See sites such as Transom.org and Howsound where top producers reveal their secrets.
be just as significant as words: don’t edit out a pause, a gulp, a breath. You can listen to an Australian journalist describing how she comforted a dying American soldier who had been blown up by a mine in Vietnam. The combination of her intense emotion and gulping delivery convey the horror of war much more effectively than the same words delivered on the page – both formats were tried.

3. Audio is LESS INTRUSIVE than vision, and therefore lends itself to traumatic stories. It is far less invasive to record someone’s voice than to stick a camera in their face; it allows you to maintain empathy and connection, important considerations that will support an interviewee who has a difficult story to tell.

4. Audio DOES NOT JUDGE APPEARANCE: the fat, the thin, the old, the young, the beautiful, the ugly, people’s racial identifiers and disabilities, audio makes us more equal. This is hugely liberating for some interviewees, such as in the documentary about a young woman with anorexia, Will Kate Survive Kate?

5. Audio CREATES THE BEST PICTURES – sound is subjective, “a partnership between memory and imagination,” as UK broadcaster Seán Street puts it. An audio narrative invites each listener to co-create the story, rather than be the passive recipient of images on TV, or static words on paper or a screen.

6. WRITE FOR THE EAR: you’re telling stories and conducting interviews for the ear, not the eye. It’s a different approach. Tip: read your scripts and questions aloud as you write them.

Radio – the original social media

Radio is arguably the original social media – being the most immediate and responsive of traditional mediums. Talk radio listeners have long been in the habit of “speaking back” to presenters, journalists and producers live to air, and contributing to the shaping of their stories as callers, along with correcting their errors. For radio people, particularly those in community and public radio, engaging the audience and building communities of interest around content are standard modes that pre-date social media by decades.
So, ahead of starting your online radio show, or beginning a podcast series, you should think about borrowing audience engagement tips from radio-land (see adjacent guidelines).

You can also learn from NPR’s social media experimentation. The US public radio network tested audio content and social strategy to measure “virality.” What makes sound go viral? NPR found that a good headline counts, as do “sounds that make you go WHOA!,” and adding an image to a social media post helps it to get shared. Other triggers are “storytellers” – the interviewees and reporters whose narratives make us want to pull over our cars in peak hour traffic to listen – and the long tradition of audio explainers.

The next Serial moment?

In addition to Serial, the past year has delivered us “Alex Blumberg’s addictive Startup podcast about starting a podcasting business. The Radiotopia launch and successful Kickstarter campaign. And at NPR, a new podcast called Invisibilia and an infinite-playing app called NPR One,” Senior Digital News Specialist Eric Athas at NPR Digital Services wrote at Nieman Lab. Check out these programs, podcasts and apps for inspiration, and also explore what other public broadcasters are doing – in particular, listen to the BBC and Australia’s ABC – and to acclaimed independent outlets such as Falling Tree Radio in the UK.

As for the next Serial moment: according to podcast consultant Todd Cochrane, it will be when Android supports a one-click app to play podcasts. Android devices and iPhones have roughly equal shares of the US market (47 percent), but Android dominates worldwide. Yet in the US podcast market, the recent New Media Exposition in Las Vegas heard that the figures are heavily skewed to Apple uptake: Android gets 11 percent; Windows 26 percent; iOS 50 percent.

So, before you put all your digital storytelling eggs in the video basket, consider the accessible but rich traditions of audio journalism and give listening a chance. Don’t wait until you have the perfect formula: Helen Zaltzman, creator of the popular The Alusionist podcast now on Radiotopia, advises learning by doing.

**ESSENTIAL AUDIO INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES**

By Julie Posetti

SELECT INTERVIEWEES who are comfortable telling a story verbally. Someone who is utterly petrified of speaking about their views or experiences is unlikely to make good audio “talent.”

CHOOSE A QUIET LOCATION whenever possible when doing pre-recorded interviews, to avoid sound disruption that will risk making your interview impossible to edit. If you have a choice, interview a truck driver in her cabin and separately record the sound of trucks on the road to use as ATMOSPHERIC SOUND you can mix under the interview during editing.

HELP YOUR INTERVIEWEE RELAX by engaging in a warm-up conversation about something unconnected to the theme of the interview (otherwise, they will risk sounding like their answers are rehearsed) like the weather or their last holiday.

CONDUCT INTERVIEWS AS A CONVERSATION don’t just interview for quotes/grabs/sound bites. A good interview for podcasting is an INTERACTIVE conversation that has a beginning, middle and end. Plan your questions, but don’t read them or risk limiting the scope of the interview by sticking religiously to them.

THE INTERVIEWER’S MOST IMPORTANT TOOL IS HER EARS: Listen to your interviewees answers and ask follow-up questions that react to them, don’t just ask the next question on your list – conversations are flexible.
TIPS FOR BUILDING A RADIO-INSPIRED SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY FOR YOUR PODCAST OR LIVE AUDIO STREAM

By Julie Posetti

SPEAK TO YOUR AUDIENCE AND INVITE THEIR INPUT (memories, suggestions, expertise, feedback), don’t just “broadcast” your content via social media channels.

INVOLVE YOUR AUDIENCE AT THE PRODUCTION STAGE - don’t wait until it’s live, ask people for their suggestions, memories, experiences of themes as you produce your stories. Use Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Snapchat, WhatsApp, whatever social tools are at your disposal - but make your entreaties vocal where you can!

FREE ONLINE AUDIO SOCIAL SHARING TOOLS you should have at your disposal include Audioboom (formerly Audioboo), and Clammr (clammr.com), which allow you to present short bursts of audio; SoundCloud - the audio answer to YouTube; and the long term player, BlogTalkRadio, where a community of audio live-streamers and podcasters host and interact around their “radio” shows.

ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR CONTENT
Pay attention to what motivates callers to phone in to talk radio stations: For example, nostalgia themes work well, people feel inspired to share their memories.

USE ATMOSPHERIC SOUND TO PIQUE INTEREST: Listen to the sounds around you when you are conducting interviews. If you are attending a violent rally, it won’t do to just upload an audio interview conducted in a quiet room with an official source. You need to reflect the cacophony of sounds to your audience. Close your eyes - what can you hear? Note all the sounds. Which ones are worth recording to convey the atmosphere?

LIVE-TWEET YOUR SHOW/PODCAST
You may not be a talk radio station with a production team, but what’s stopping you from taking “tweet back” comments? You can retweet respondents and reply with value-added comments (including links to background documents)

FOLLOW-UP YOUR AUDIENCE FEEDBACK: Respond to contributors, tag interviewees, act on their constructive suggestions, embrace their expertise

REMEMBER THE PUBLIC RADIO ADAGE “Your audience always knows more than you do.”

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Photo: Angelique Lu
THOUGHT LEADER Q&A

MARIA RESSA
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF & CEO
RAPPLER.COM

By Julie Posetti

“What the West is struggling with, what Western journalists are struggling with, is trying to hold onto the old ideas of journalism that don’t have anything to do with the core of journalism.”
A former CNN Asia bureau chief and lead investigative reporter who focused on terrorism in Southeast Asia, Ressa headed the largest multiplatform news operation in the Philippines – ABS-CBN – before founding Rappler in 2012.

Rappler began as a Facebook page and Ressa’s goal is to fuse broadcast journalism, social media and mobile technology with a social change agenda.

Her key focus remains leveraging technology to aid business model evolution as Rappler expands into Indonesia.

Ressa: If you look at the way industries work, the groups that made money off of journalism have been tech companies. The news groups haven’t evolved their business models enough to take advantage of the network effects that technology provides. So that’s one of the things that I’m trying to understand now – how can a journalist, how can a media organisation adapt more of these technologies, the platforms that allow us to grow beyond a linear structure to more of a tech kind of organic growth.
What progress are you making in terms of grappling with that at Rappler?

Ressa: I looked at it this way when we set up Rappler in 2012: we wanted to keep the discipline of journalism but to take advantage of the technology that’s available that provides network effects that would allow us to actually do more. As traditional journalists we’re used to telling stories and then you throw that story out into the real world. You can inspire people, you can make people angry, but in the end technology allows you to do much more than just tell stories. You can actually move people to action, and one of the major disruptors is social media. When social media really scaled all of a sudden, news groups could grow 100 percent year-on-year in the Philippines that had more than 1,000 journalists, and if in the Philippines that had more than normal media rate. We’ve grown it using social media, and we’ve grown at a faster rate than normal media rate. We’ve grown 100 percent year-on-year in our first three years both in reach and revenue and that is something that would have been impossible in my old groups.

I handled the largest news group in the Philippines that had more than 1,000 journalists, and if you’ve got growth rates of 20 percent, you were so lucky. This new world, digital with technology, can actually allow us to do things like crowdsourcing. If you can harness those actions - it becomes big data - and if you can throw that right back into the mix, you can grow your community to move, and move them to act. That’s the powerful thing. And if you live in a country like the Philippines where institutions are weak, you can capture the zeitgeist of Filipinos and actually try to help build institutions bottom up. So it renews the purpose of journalism, I think, with greater power.

These ideas were quite revolutionary five years ago - you came to it early with a corporate response. As the rest of the world still seems to be trailing to an extent, how has your approach altered over the past three years, and heading towards 2016 how do you see it shifting?

Ressa: We started with social video and mobile as our first priority, and now social is part of our DNA. I think last year I spent a lot more time learning about technology and trying to understand platform thinking, trying to understand how to create a platform for journalists.

What the West is struggling with, what Western journalists are struggling with, is trying to hold onto the old ideas of journalism that don’t have anything to do with the core of journalism. What we tried to do is to get rid of the lens of the old world and try to put on the new glasses that technology offers us. If you look at it in that context, the role of the journalist remains the same. But the tools have changed.

Heading into the next year, how do you see your focus shifting?

Ressa: Another part of Rappler is called Move PH, which is our civic engagement arm. This is a group that started out with two people; now there are about six people, so it’s very small. Two people we hired used to work with NGOs. This is where the rubber hits the pavement for Rappler. If the stories that we create as journalists (are) the rock that you throw into the ocean that creates the ripples, those ripples are harvested by Move, and what Move tries to do is to actually work with communities who are trying to change their worlds.

We have four projects under Move PH, one is an anti-corruption campaign called #BudgetWatch, which is done in conjunction with the Office of Budget Management. We actually work with the group that is releasing the budget, because this is part of the open government programme. #BudgetWatch, tries to work with 19 civil society organisations to chase the money. If you follow the money, you can find where the leakage happens, where corruption happens. So, what we did is we tried to gamify it. We created a snakes and ladders game to show Filipinos what the budget process looks like, how we can keep track of it.

The second one is a disaster risk-reduction and climate mitigation project. Now that’s a mouthful, but we call it Project Agos. We live in a country where we have an average of 20 typhoons every year, and the government can’t do it alone. I want to help because we are the ones who are going to be at risk if we don’t help.

So, what we did is we built a platform that takes bottom-up civic engagement and social media – you can call for help on Twitter, on SMS or on this site. And then we closed a loop by partnering with the first responders from government, the Philippines police, the military, the local government units, and we give them logins on this platform where people are reporting through Twitter, through text and on this site. And then the first responders can respond directly to the people who need help. That’s entering its second year, and it’s now being embraced by the Office of Civil Defence; we actually have our volunteers working with them. Right now, for example, there’s a typhoon coming into the Philippine area of responsibility. The Office of Civil Defence called us, and we’re activating our volunteers who are working in the Office of Civil Defence, so that’s the second.

The third is #HungerProject and
this is working again with the government, the World Food Program, the Department of Social Welfare and Development. They have shown us that even as the GDP of the Philippines has increased, the incidence of hunger has stayed constant or has actually gotten worse. And so how do you make a story like this attractive to readers? As a traditional story, it’s boring, right? It’s a statistics story, but on the web, on your mobile you can do so much with it. So, again we gamified certain aspects of it: we do videos, we do infographics, it’s not the major hit driver on Rappler but there’s a community that gathers around it.

So that is Move PH. These things are about moving our society. In a world where climate change is global, in a world with very global problems, how far do you stand out of the fray? Can you stand out of the fray?

It is our job to be an enabler. You know, when an earthquake hits the Philippines, whether I’m a journalist or not, I will be affected, and that is, I suppose, embracing the fact that we are a part of humanity. It’s much easier when you’re a foreign correspondent – to fly in and fly out – I’ve done it. But in the end, does that lead to better reporting? I think there are other lines of ethics, and the discipline of journalism, those are the core we need to stick to, but those artificial lines between authority and authenticity, this new world demands authenticity. How do you do that with the discipline of journalism?

A lot of people talk about doing one-off projects, but this sounds like a sustained semi-permanent arm of your business model?

Ressa: You know why it’s necessary for us? I was in my late 40s when we started Rappler in 2012, and this is my 30th year as a journalist. There are only eight themes and the same problems keep cropping up, and I would like to see some change. I came of age in the ‘people power’ revolt in the Philippines, so I think part of the reason you’re seeing this in us is because of where we come from.

What does the future hold for Rappler? How big can it grow?

Ressa: At the end of last year we expanded. We opened a bureau in Jakarta, Indonesia, and that’s our second market because Indonesia is very similar to the Philippines. We have a young population: the Philippines has 100 million people; the median age is 23 years old. Indonesia has 250 million people and the median age is between 23 and 24 years old, also very young, and in Indonesia they’re very connected. Jakarta is the top Twitter city in the world, but the infrastructure is so poor.

There is so much potential for what you can do with social media, with technology and its network effects. It’s incredible in Indonesia, and Indonesia is pivotal: the world’s largest Muslim population, and December 2015 is when the ASEAN economic community kicks in.

And you know what? We’re small enough to take the risk. Why not? In the end, it’s only a positive if we can take some of the things we’ve learnt here. I’m hoping by doing this, by having a foothold in both the Philippines and Indonesia, that’s 60 percent of the population of ASEAN.
“UNLIKE MOST TECHNOLOGY TRENDS, WHICH TRAVEL FROM WEST TO EAST, THIS IS A TREND TRAVELLING FROM EAST TO WEST. AND SO I THINK IT’S QUITE POSSIBLE THAT WITHIN A YEAR OR TWO THIS USER BEHAVIOUR – WHICH IS SECOND-NATURE TO PEOPLE IN KOREA, JAPAN, SOUTH AMERICA – WILL TRAVEL WESTWARD AND BECOME SECOND-NATURE TO A LOT OF PEOPLE IN THE WEST AS WELL.”

- TRUSHAR BAROT, BBC’S MOBILE EDITOR
Just as newsrooms are settling into their social media workflows, the mobile-driven chat app trend is presenting new challenges likely to cause upheaval. All over again.

“Unlike most technology trends, which travel from West to East, this is a trend travelling from East to West,” says Trushar Barot, the BBC’s Mobile Editor. “And so I think it’s quite possible that within a year or two this user behaviour – which is sort of second-nature to people in Korea, Japan, South America – will travel westward and become second-nature to a lot of people in the West as well.”

Since receiving less than 1% of global web traffic in 2009, mobile’s share of traffic has boomed to 33.4% in 2015 – and about half of that growth has come in the past two years. In countries like Nigeria and India, over 70% of web traffic comes through mobile users.

In terms of active users of social media platforms, the mobile messaging apps Whatsapp, Facebook Messenger and WeChat each garner more users than Instagram, Twitter or Tumblr. In fact, five of the ten most used social platforms at the start of 2015 were chat apps.

The percentage of internet users on Whatsapp globally rose from 16% in 2013 to 24% in 2014. In countries like Malaysia, South Africa and Singapore, over 70% of mobile internet users are on Whatsapp. And in countries where it doesn’t do so well, like China, South Korea and Japan (where less than 4% of mobile internet users are on the app), it is usually because another chat app – WeChat, Kakao Talk, or Line – beat them to it.

For the world’s first-time internet users, it’s mobile-first

“In terms of [internet users],” says Barot, “If you’re looking at how many of them are getting connected to the internet for the first time in many parts of the world, it’s usually through people buying their first smartphone, and usually their first interaction with their friends and co-workers is through a chat app. So that becomes the de facto social network.”

Barot expects that the next billion people who are about to come online for the first time are likely to do it through chat platforms, rather than the more traditional platforms, which is why he believes they are so important for a global news organisation like the BBC to consider in their strategy.

“In some ways, it’s just a simple calculation that it’s the app that the most people already use on their mobile phones,” says Barot. “It’s the same thing [as] social media years ago, where we wanted to have a

“WE DO HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THAT THERE’S A NEW GENERATION OF CONSUMERS THAT ARE MORE INTERESTED IN NEWS BEING DELIVERED STRAIGHT TO THEIR MOBILE PHONES.”

- SANTIAGO TARDITI, INTERNATIONAL EDITOR AT FUSION.
presence on Twitter, because that’s where people were spending their time online.”

So it’s that well-worn mantra of “go where your audience is” that could pull newsrooms out of their Facebook and Twitter burrows into these younger social media spaces. But the new opportunities these chat apps offer in terms of sourcing news, telling it through creative and engaging means, and distributing it, might be enough of an inducement for change-fatigued newsrooms to experiment with these new platforms.

**How the BBC is using chat apps**

The BBC is one of the news organisations mapping these new frontiers, using chat apps such as Whatsapp, Line and WeChat (Japan and China’s leading chat apps, respectively) to connect with people during disasters, elections or pandemics.

To determine when to bring in chat apps as part of the BBC’s strategy, Barot uses a three-circle Venn diagram to determine if a chat app will be effective. The BBC Ebola project was one of the most recent where Barot integrated chat apps into reporting and engagement.

“The Ebola Whatsapp Project [team] have built up a subscriber base of about 20,000-odd people, primarily in West Africa, who are getting daily news from our team with public health information and content,” says Barot.

The service delivers simple text, highly visual and easy-to-understand content, and audio in English and French to its subscribers, but it has also been able to operate as a two-way communication service.

“A lot of those users have also been providing us with tremendous amounts of intelligence with stories, details we just wouldn’t have been able to get through any other means, particularly because in a lot of those countries there’s a lot of security and health protocols that our correspondents have to go through before they’re allowed to be on the ground,” says Barot.
“And equally we’ve found with other cases ... it’s been much easier for the people who are on these chat apps to send their messages or their content through these platforms than through any other means we can offer them,” says Barot. “So that’s become really useful getting that sort of audience newsgathering coming in as well.”

From global to local

This is what the Oxford Mail found after six months of experimenting with morning and afternoon updates through Whatsapp. The UK regional daily had a print circulation of about 12,700 at the beginning of 2014 – a 22.9% fall from the previous year – but their six months of Whatsapp bulletins won them more than 1200 subscribers to the app, with a conversion rate to the paper’s website four or five times greater than their daily email bulletin, and six or seven times greater than Twitter, according to the Guardian.

Alessio Balbi, the Head of Audience Development at Italy’s Gruppo Espresso and Repubblica.it, says chat apps are an opportunity for small newsrooms: “In this field, being a big player could actually be a limit, whereas if you address a local community chat apps are a powerful tool. For a big newsroom to handle something like 50,000 users is very challenging and consuming in terms of time and resources, and the return is limited. But if your audience is more contained and you get to turn a community of 1000, 2000 people, into loyal users – it’s a remarkable success.”

Experiment and learn

“One of the things we really learnt last year,” says Barot, “was just understanding how users behave on those chat platforms compared to social networks, and what lessons we could learn in terms of how we can devise plans that work specifically on those platforms.

“And the way we did that was through a lot of trial and error.”

Snapchat, the app best known for being used by young people to send their more sordid snaps to each other – which are then almost instantly wiped from digital memory – became more apparently useful to newsrooms when it launched its Discover feature in January.

The partnership with select media companies internationally, which each deliver a daily ‘edition’ to live on the app for 24 hours, has been received with huge interest.

In the Fusion newsroom, a joint venture of Univision and ABC (USA) has been created to reach a younger TV audience. International Editor Santiago Tarditi explains how a team of five people are experimenting with Snapchat to find new ways of engaging a crowd of young people who see Facebook as ‘their parent’s social media’.
“From a journalistic point of view [Snapchat Discover] gives you a lot of creative space and a lot of wriggle-room to experiment and try different features,” says Tarditi.

While Snapchat Discover currently only hosts Fusion outside the USA and UK (the base of the bulk of Fusion’s audience), Tarditi is enthusiastic about the early results. “We can’t disclose any numbers,” says Tarditi, “but I have to say it’s mind-blowing … and the figures have been very constant.”

However, three months after the launch of the Discover feature the buzz was fading, along with audience reach, with figures showing drops of up to 50% in unique views according to The Information.

A shift for TV broadcasting

If the app makes this feature open platform – or if another app dethrones Snapchat and includes a feature which does the same – then it could have massive impact on the news industry.

“I feel it’s kind of the way forward for the company, and for media as a whole,” says Tarditi.

“I think we’re still a long way from seeing TV become an underdog. It’s still our main platform and our main source of income in terms of ad expenditure. But we do have to understand that there’s a new generation of consumers that are more interested in news being delivered straight to their mobile phones.”

As these [social media] networks evolve,” says Tarditi, “So will the TV networks, and we’ll adapt to whatever features they offer, and at the same time grow with them.”

Some of this adaptation is already happening – in one very visible way in particular. Snapchat’s statistics reveal that portrait video ads get up to nine times more viewing completions than landscape ads on the app, and the Discover partners have been playing around with portrait video news too, as they adjust to the app.

“It’s almost forcing them to think in new ways about how their content can be consumed on a mobile phone,” says the BBC’s Trushar Barot, who asks if we are about to see the emergence of an acceptance of portrait style video display. “Suddenly you’re faced with having to create portrait video, which is a really alien thing to news broadcasters, where we’re all used to imagining video in 4:3 or 16:9 format.”

“And so editorially thinking, how are we going to work? It makes sense for somebody viewing it on a mobile phone because … if you’re forcing a user to flip their phone over horizontally then that’s a bad user experience,” says Barot.

However, Barot agrees that it is “a mistake to think that news on the big screen is dead”, and people will still want to see dramatic stories
BBC’s Trushar Barot uses three criteria to triangulate when chat apps can be implemented effectively.

Graphic: Jake Evans

A market within which the BBC generates a lot of interest

A big story happening in the region

A location where the app in question has a strong user-base

on a big screen. “Where I think the challenge is going to be, is how people first hear about a major story that’s emerging, and in that sense it’s very likely to be on their mobile phones,” says Barot.

“The battle for the home screen of mobile phones is going to be intense, and the strategy for how you win that battle is going to be really interesting.”

**Fusion’s Snapchat strategy**

For the digital-first Fusion network, the strategy has been to experiment with any new app that reaches the market – such as Vine, Meerkat and Periscope. Tarditi says the network has been trying to feed “snack components of content” to an audience always on the run and hungry for creative content.

“What we see is that people on Snapchat, and in general on the internet, have a very short attention span, so we really have to gain their interest in any way possible, and that’s with moving images, with sound, with animation, and so on,” says Tarditi. The Fusion team have even played around with stop-motion and clay animations, which can be as simple as a quick animation (in portrait-style) with a goofy sound effect. “We try to always keep it upbeat and light.”

One of Fusion’s attempts to gain interest was with their seven episode ‘Outpost’ series of mini-documentaries launched exclusively on the Snapchat platform. Each episode tells an off-the-beaten-path story from Latin America, and Tarditi says “they are one of the best performing pieces on Snapchat Discover”.

After its 24-hour lifespan on the app, the episodes then move into Fusion’s other spaces on the web and social media, with some of them making it to television. “What we’re trying to tell our audience,” says Tarditi, “Is: ‘Hey, check out Discover, because this is where things are going to be premiering, and this is where you’re going to be able to see them before anywhere else.”

It’s a bold move to launch content exclusively on a platform that has no sharing function and depends almost entirely on word-of-mouth, but Tarditi says they see “very positive engagement” with the stories and that people take conversations
to Twitter (where Fusion also have a Snapchat-specific @FusionSnaps account) or email when it is worth talking about.

**Be ready for constant change**

It can be overwhelming for journalists or a newsroom to try to adapt to the constant change and unfamiliarity of a swathe of new platforms, but Tarditi advises that “experimenting is the key.”

Barot agrees, saying newsrooms also have to understand the specific virtues and functionalities that different apps have.

“It can’t just be generic content that gets reposted from Facebook to Twitter to Whatsapp, you need to think much more carefully about what works on each platform,” says Barot. For the BBC this meant experimenting with emojis on Whatsapp during 2013’s Indian elections, which Barot says people treat as second nature in conversation with friends on Whatsapp, “so we started experimenting with using emojis for audience engagement on Whatsapp and it proved to be hugely popular with our subscribers.”

“These platforms are constantly evolving,” says Tarditi, “and new ones come up every day and old ones are changing every day. What I’m doing personally is that as soon as I hear that there’s a new app in town, I download it and start playing around with it, and get to understand the functionality of it, the possibilities of it.”

“In terms of Snapchat, we’ve been on the platform for a few months now, but every day we learn something new, we experiment with something new.”

**Using chat apps for crisis reporting and verification**

Chat apps don’t just bring chances to test new ways of reaching people, however. When student activist Joshua Wong Chi-Fung told protesters taking to the streets of Hong Kong last year to download the off-the-grid messaging app FireChat in case of an internet blackout, journalists saw the chance for a new method of sourcing news. The masses of people on the streets overwhelmed internet servers and rendered social media networks unusable, except for the chat room app FireChat, since it uses Bluetooth and person-to-person WiFi to create a “mesh” network of phones connected directly with each other. So the crowds of people strengthened that network, and it could operate even without an internet connection.

“What happened in Hong Kong, though, you had no idea who was who [since users can be anonymous] and every time there was misinformation it spread on the app,” says FireChat’s Chief Marketing Officer Christophe Daligault.

“One example was... someone was saying the army is coming, they’re loading assault rifles now with bullets, you guys need to run for your lives. It wasn’t true,” says Daligault. The FireChat team responded by bringing in journalists with verified accounts to sort information as it broke. Recently they partnered with Storyful, the news verification service, to try and filter authentic news through their chat rooms as it breaks.

**THREE INNOVATIVE WAYS PEOPLE ARE USING CHAT APPS**

**USA Today** Sports have been using Snapchat in earnest for some time. When they weren’t allowed to film for some of college basketball’s Final Four events, the Snapchat team instead took photos of key moments and added drawn on speech-bubble quotes to the pictures.

Alex Laughlin, who runs audience development at the National Journal, used Whatsapp as an internal communication system when she was working at a digital magazine. “It was our version of Slack,” she said in a Medium post. Now she uses Whatsapp to deliver newsletters – with content often made up from songs, images, text and links she asks users to send in. She measures metrics using Bitly links.

The University of Southern California’s Annenberg Media Center uses chat apps, including Snapchat, to create mini-broadcasts which “simulate the live coverage experience.” The executive producer of their student newsroom Fernando Hurtado told American Journalism Review they created content specifically for these social media platforms since “a lot of our viewers weren’t necessarily sitting down to watch our 6 p.m. newscast.”
The app is still chaotic, but the Storyful partnership will help the FireChat team to develop the app to work more effectively for journalists, and it could be a way towards a breaking news app which sifts out misinformation.

Even if journalists would rather rest on Twitter, they may be forced onto chat apps to find news. When Russian politician Alexei Navalny was arrested earlier this year after breaking house arrest to go to a protest, he told his 25,000 followers on FireChat that he had been arrested and urged them to carry on with their protests. The app sent out a push notification to each of Navalny’s followers, who instantly received the news, as traditional SMS, WhatsApp and similar chat apps have capacity to do.

For journalists trying to protect an anonymous source, they might not find much use in FireChat, since all chat rooms are public (though they are working on creating private chat rooms). But in places where internet access is limited or cut off, it could be a way for journalists to connect with people without actually being on the ground. In Hong Kong, verified journalists brought into the app were able to chat with protesters on the street “directly, without the risk of getting tear-gassed or coming up against a water cannon,” Daligault says.

Kinks in an evolving system

There are other challenges currently facing chat apps. Barot says signing up subscribers for WhatsApp is still a very tedious process, one which must be done manually person-by-person. Broadly the apps are not as media-friendly as Facebook or Twitter. And in Snapchat there is still the problem that there is no way to transport users outside of the app. So, there is the possibility that user-generated content could be lost inside these closed ecosystems, where it would usually turn up on Twitter – though Barot does not see this as a concern,

“But in terms of news distribution,” says Barot, “I think we’re still in the very early stages. My instinct is that [as] these companies begin to mature, they engineer their products to the point where a lot more functionality gets put in.”

“I think what this has taught us is that our content no longer has to be fed in the traditional way,” says Tarditi. “Platforms like Snapchat Discover allow for this way of feeding content – to be reshaped and formed again – in a way where content lives first on mobile and then migrates to other platforms.”

As social media channels continue to fragment and specialise, it might seem all too much for an app-weary journalist to learn and relearn these communication channels. But whether WhatsApp, Snapchat, or something else, it’s clear that journalists ought to be starting to experiment with chat apps to engage their audiences and help to grow them.

Federica Cherubini contributed to this chapter, as did Julie Posetti.

“My instinct is that [as] these companies begin to mature, they engineer their products to the point where a lot more functionality gets put in.”

- TRUSHAR BAROT, MOBILE EDITOR, BBC
“I THINK WE ALL NEED TO LEARN FROM EACH OTHER. THERE ARE THINGS THAT NEW MEDIA COMPANIES ARE TRYING THAT ARE REALLY EXCITING EXPERIMENTS AND TO WHICH OLDER MEDIA NEED TO ADAPT TO, AND THERE ARE THINGS AND PRACTICES THAT HAVE REALLY HELD UP AT OLDER LEGACY MEDIA COMPANIES FOR DECADES AND GENERATIONS.”
What made you decide to take the leap from a legacy media company like The New York Times to a new generation outlet like Upworthy?

*O’Leary:* I loved *The New York Times* and I loved my career there. And there’s a lot of room to do experimentation at *The New York Times*, but it is a much bigger company. There are between 1,200 and 1,300 people in the newsroom, and I was really proud and happy to be part of that newsroom. For me and my personal career and development, I was ready for more of a leadership challenge and at this stage of my career Upworthy made more sense for me because it’s a smaller company and so I can play a bigger role in setting strategic direction and to run an editorial team. You know, I love *The New York Times* but I probably wouldn’t be running the entire NYT editorial team at this stage of my career. It was certainly a remarkable opportunity to come join Upworthy and help shape it overall in a leadership position. It’s such a different way of working than when you are part of a large company where a lot of decisions are made by consensus.

What makes Upworthy’s culture more open to experimentation?

*O’Leary:* This also has to do with size. When you’ve got so many different people to change and experiment, but when you are a smaller company is simpler to be more agile, there are just fewer people you have to talk to.

There appears to be a trend developing involving smart young women making the jump from legacy media to start-ups. Is there a gender element to this migration? Is the glass ceiling easier to crack outside legacy media houses?

*O’Leary:* That’s really hard to say because I can only speak for
myself. I certainly felt that *The Times* for me had an incredible range of opportunities as a young woman who came into the newsroom with not a lot of traditional newspaper experience. I would say generally for anyone working at a start up gives you more than an opportunity to be a generalist, and put yourself in different areas and more ability to try new things. These are important things for someone who wants to grow their career but I don’t necessarily see a gender aspect to it.

**What can traditional publishers learn from on-line players and vice-versa?**

*O’Leary:* *The New York Times* website is 20 years old. I think it’s a mistake to say that there is old media and new media. There are incredibly new and innovative things that have been happening at *The New York Times* for well over a decade and a half and what we see right now is that there is a lot more mixing between staff of legacy media and new start-up media companies. *The Times* has hired people from Upworthy: they hired a really great young woman who was hired at *The Times* when I started at Upworthy.

So I don’t think there’s one set of lessons one type of media can learn, I think we all need to learn from each other. There are things that new media companies are trying that are really exciting experiments and to which older media need to adapt to, and there are things and practices that have really held up at older legacy media companies for decades and generations.

**What appeals to you about Upworthy as a media consumer? How does that influence your approach to the job?**

*O’Leary:* At Upworthy I feel they have always done a great job at recognising where readers are at and trying to reach people in the places they already spend time online. Upworthy has always been very excellent in knowing how to speak to an audience for example on Facebook. A lot of the time [I spent at *The New York Times*] thinking about journalism and media was to really think about how we now promote and distribute our journalism when so much is changed in the media ecosystem. So, Upworthy has a really interesting head start on thinking about journalism problems and the role of the readers in it and it’s exciting to work for them.

Let’s look more generally at the question of audience attention and audience engagement and development then.

*O’Leary:* The main thing about reaching your audience is just to pay attention to them. Find out where do they spend their time, think about your audience when you’re creating a story. I don’t think that should be any different at a place like *The New York Times* or Upworthy. No company in media can take their audience potential for granted anymore, and so at every point of the process from story conception to publishing to beyond, we really need to be taking into account the audience need, interests, behaviour and ability to spend time with us.

“THE MAIN THING ABOUT REACHING YOUR AUDIENCE IS JUST TO PAY ATTENTION TO THEM. FIND OUT WHERE DO THEY SPEND THEIR TIME, THINK ABOUT YOUR AUDIENCE WHEN YOU’RE CREATING A STORY. I DON’T THINK THAT SHOULD BE ANY DIFFERENT AT A PLACE LIKE *THE NEW YORK TIMES* OR UPWORTHY.”
TREND 7 - ANALYTICS’ EVOLUTION

THE KEY METRICS FOR GROWING AUDIENCES FROM THE NEWSROOM

By Federica Cherubini

“IF YOU HONESTLY THINK THAT USING PAGEVIEWS IS GOING TO CHANGE YOUR EDITORIAL STANDARDS, THEN YOU’LL NEED TO TOUGHEN UP YOUR EDITORIAL STANDARDS.”

- CHRIS MORAN, AUDIENCE EDITOR, THE GUARDIAN
The use of data and analytics to guide newsroom behaviour has evolved significantly during the past year.

Analytics are the instruments used to shed light on users’ behaviour and help newsrooms understand how their content travels, on and off-site. In 2014, the focus was on the search for a “gold metric” to help “read” audience behaviours. Large live-screens erected around newsrooms underlined the importance of pageviews, “attention minutes,” and time spent by people on content. And debates continued – on and offline – about the ethics of a metrics-driven newsroom.

Fast forward to 2015 and the processes have evolved considerably: pioneering newsrooms have now tasked a person or team with the responsibility of developing and growing audiences and integrating them into their editorial operations. Their focus is on joining the dots between the “how and when” of audience content consumption, to the newsroom’s workflows, and the role the numbers play in editorial decisions.

New roles have emerged with titles such as Audience Development Editor, Audience Engagement Editor and even Growth Editor.

Those news organisations making space for audience development teams on the editorial floor consider the challenge as no longer just to produce content but to make sure that their content gets to the audience. The Audience Development Editor or team, often strategically positioned alongside the social and engagement teams, look at what, how, and when the audience consume the content. They use a data-driven approach to maximise the reach of the journalism.

Even small newsrooms are now riding the analytics wave, according to The Guardian’s Audience Editor, Chris Moran, “Most news organisations have some kind of analytics, it may not be real-time but it has increasingly become common to have at least Google Analytics.”

The role of the audience development team

While approaches might differ slightly, the main task of the Audience Development Editor is to help the newsroom grow the audience and deepen reader engagement by using data and analytics to gain a stronger understanding of how people consume, share and discuss their content.

One of the best examples is at The Guardian. Executive Editor Digital Aron Pilhofer told MediaBriefing:

“Instead of doing things the way we do it now, which is some variation of publish and pray, we want to be a little more data driven about the way we do pretty much everything from structure of the newsroom to content itself. [...] The goal of this is to find ways of being a lot smarter about how we publish, when we publish, what we publish, the formats we publish, what tools we use. So we may want to do something creative online around a particular event, and looking at the audience we are trying to target, it might dictate a completely different strategy than it would an investigative piece.”

To do this, The Guardian's Chris Moran relies on Ophan, an in-house analytics platform developed during an internal hackday.

The Guardian's in-house analytics tool

Six years ago, Moran’s job as Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) editor was “mainly focused on search and the idea was that [The Guardian] wanted someone with editorial experience to instigate good practices in the newsroom, working within editorial to find the widest possible audience for our content,” he told the World Editors Forum. What emerged swiftly, though, was the difficulty of actually doing the job properly. Moran is, in his own words, “not a natural analyst” and he was finding that the data that was available at the time was really hard to understand. The process was also very slow. Then at an internal hackday, with director of architecture Graham Tackley, they tried to solve Moran’s problems and Ophan was born. Tackley, the “genius behind it” and Moran, as product manager, created a tool around the needs of the job: Ophan “grew in response to problems that we generally had [with getting a grasp on the data],” Moran said. “...what Graham and I managed to do is – by creating a tool we changed the culture of the newsroom.”

“Lots of people ask us why we bothered to build a tool in-house and why is it any different to Chartbeat? And they are good questions because actually if you look at Chartbeat and Parse.ly, they are both brilliant tools, which we are big fans of and we think they are incredibly clever, but I guess the key thing is we didn’t plan to build Ophan. It was purely organic, and really what happened is that I was finding it so useful that I realised it could be useful to everyone else [in the newsroom],” Moran explained.

Ophan is browser-based and it’s accessible – even on mobile - by all staff who are only required, when they first log in, to provide their Guardian email and password.
Ophan provides *Guardian* staff with different sets of data based on different metrics that break down by geographic areas, country or even city.

Through Ophan, any reporter can see how her/his article is performing with graphs showing minute-by-minute pageviews, referral traffic, whether it has been pushed through the paper’s social media account, where it is being read, alongside graphs about social shares and data linked to “attention time” – such as how long people stay on the page. Moran underlined how Ophan teaches them what works in different environments, and where to focus their attention and energies in terms of what to tweak.

“We try to make sure that all the metrics in there are either actionable or are really interesting to journalists and we want to find the easiest way for it to be understandable by journalists,” Moran added. Every morning, Moran writes a long, descriptive email to the entire newsroom about how they performed the day before.

He suggests that even small newsrooms can adopt this approach: “(Start by writing) an email every morning saying: yesterday was good because of this and that, and these are a couple of interesting things that happened. Tell people they did well, have an open conversation within the newsroom about failure. There is a massive fear in all organisations to say that [something] didn’t do well. There’s probably a reason why something didn’t do well, so let’s try to find out why and let’s change it. Promote a conversation and change the newsroom culture.”

We could say that what Moran, his team and Ophan do is a form of translation – translating numbers and data into bits that are easily understandable to everyone in the newsroom. “What we try to encourage is experimentation, we are never too afraid to try things and change them when we get feedback. (...) Ophan is a learning tool.”

*The Guardian* also has the equivalent of audience editor roles at its international outposts – *Guardian US* and *Guardian Australia*. Moran and his team oversee every piece of content before it’s published, they are in constant communications with the subeditors and they will offer some advice. “We choose to value subeditors’ expertise and that of the person who wrote the article, so we mainly offer advice on tweaking the headline for search, for example.”

**Growth and engagement at The New York Times**

Audience development is also pivotal in the newsroom of *The New York Times*. One of the conclusions of
the in-house Innovation Report leaked by BuzzFeed in May 2014 was that the paper should do more to ensure that its journalism reached a broader audience.

In response, Alex MacCallum – formerly an executive on the business side - joined the paper’s masthead. She was tasked with setting up a team “devoted to using search, social and other strategies to draw more people to our news articles and editorials,” a memo from The Times’s Executive Editor Dean Baquet, and its Editorial Page Editor Andrew Rosenthal announced in August 2014.

The Times’ audience team includes experts on newsroom analytics, SEO, social media and community. None of these roles is new but they were previously spread out amongst different departments, and they weren’t all linked to the newsroom. Now, they have been reorganised under MacCallum to provide a more organic approach to audience growth and engagement. The social team, for example, ran Twitter for the newsroom, but Facebook and YouTube were handled by marketing, and SEO was handled by the product team; analytics fell under the consumer insights team, as Digiday reported. Now everything falls under MacCallum’s team who last November announced that “To unify these many efforts, we have created the position of Growth Editor to work with desks on their strategies for audience development.”

The impact of analytics on newsroom workflows

So, how is the newsroom affected by the emergence of audience development teams and the increasingly predominant role played by analytics? Debate continues about whether reporters should have access to real-time information about how people are engaging with their content.

Focusing on audience growth is not about distributing big screens with numbers and graphs throughout the newsroom and then obsessing about performance. It has more to do with changing the newsroom culture to grow awareness that hitting the “publish” key is not the end of the game. As Chris Moran underlined, the goal is to make sure the great quality content The Guardian produces gets the widest possible reach.
Much criticism has been directed at the sort of metrics fixation that leads to clickbait, but Moran counters this: “We use pageviews and there is a lot of negativity around pageviews as metrics, which constantly astonishes me because we all know what it means, we know that you can write a piece of total crap and get lots and lots of views. There are a lot of people that say that if you use pageviews then you encourage clickbait, [but] I don’t accept or recognise that argument. I think that’s really weak. If you honestly think that using pageviews is going to change your editorial standards, then you’ll need to toughen up your editorial standards.”

The role of analytics in the newsroom and the way they can be used varies. Martin Ashplant, Digital Director at City AM, summarised it during Journalism.co.uk’s News: Rewired conference in London in February. “Analytics can provide immediate insight and make well-read stories do better, or in longer term trends they allow you to prove what works and what doesn’t, and they allow you to reward success.”

“At City AM reporters get an email telling them how many comments, hits, interactions their articles get,” Ashplant continued. “They’re given a score for their success, it’s crude, but it works for us.”

**Stijn Debrouwere and slow analytics**

But the point of analytics in the newsroom is not about the tools, it’s about the workflow, freelance analytics expert and a former Knight-Mozilla fellow, Stijn Debrouwere says.

“We are all familiar with the power of data. Data has the opportunity to teach us stuff we didn’t know before [but] one of the problems [it creates] is noise. With the real-time analytics you see an article taking off but what does that mean? Is there data there, or is it just noise?” Debrouwere asked during the same News:Rewired panel.

The degree of reactivity to analytics in the newsroom also varies. “Most newsrooms don’t have a full capability to react to data, they just look at the data but do nothing with them. You have to have a workflow around
analytics. We have a lot of tools, we think we have all we need and we stop asking the bigger questions, starting with ‘Why did it work?’”

The risk is placing too much focus on what is the best tool, or the right metric and losing the perspective of the bigger picture, which is really trying to understand the meaning behind the data. Debrouwere suggested a simple, low-tech, three-step workflow any newsroom should follow to gain valuable insights from data:

● First, the debrief. Lots of newsrooms have the daily email going to reporters with analytics, but the most common scenario is that they looked at the numbers and move on. How often do they actually try to figure out why that worked looking at the story through the numbers?

● Second, the audit. “Don’t just look at your numbers from last week or last month but from all of 2014.” He suggested looking through the content and figuring out how many articles have dead links or haven’t been promoted adequately.

● Third, the checklist. “If you do find out that you’re not promoting your articles on social media enough, if you do find out that you have no internal links in your articles, there is an easy way to fix it and it’s called a checklist,” he said.

After an attentive audit, newsrooms should be able to adjust their workflow and codify potential improvements to be sure you can actually improve, Debrouwere suggested. “It’s such a waste of time when you spend so much time working on an article and it ends up in a black hole.”

The evergreen metrics debate

The value of pageviews compared to “engaged time,” and to social media metrics is still being debated in mid-2015.

As Mathew Ingram wrote in Gigaom: “One of the great ironies of the online media business is that there are more ways to measure reader activity than there have probably ever been in the history of human communication — pageviews, unique visitors, time spent, clickthroughs, etc. — but no one can seem to agree on which measure accurately reflects the value that content creates. It’s like quantum mechanics: Our tools have never been better, but the thing we are trying to measure still slips from our grasp.”

Upworthy’s Editorial Director, Amy O’Leary, told the World Editors Forum: “I think that amongst the most sophisticated thinkers about data and audience development right now, no one believes that there is a single current metric that is effective to grow an audience. It’s a number of different factors. Is the content reaching the right group of people? Are they spending time with it? Do they find enough value in it to share it? There are a number of different metrics, and I don’t think anyone who’s really deeply working with audience data would think that paying attention to a single metric is the solution to the puzzle.”

Leading analytics player Chartbeat has expanded its mission exponentially beyond tracking Web traffic. Instead of simply monitoring journalism, Chartbeat wants to save it. CEO Tony Haile told Columbia Journalism Review that he explains the company’s singular mission to every new employee like this: “Twenty years from now, the journalist that wants to investigate the corrupt politician actually has the means to do so. As in: There is enough money to invest in that person to do that job.”

Can a metric – or even a combination of metrics – help find a sustainable business model to support professional journalism? The jury is still out.

“ANALYTICS IN THE NEWSROOM IS NOT ABOUT THE TOOLS, IT’S ABOUT THE WORKFLOW.”

- STIJN DEBROUWERE, ANALYTICS EXPERT
You have an English job title and you hold a relatively new and emerging role in newsrooms, especially in the Italian landscape. Tell us more about your job and your team.

Balbi: This job title, my role and generally this team were born as a development of our activity on social media. (A) few years ago we started to dedicate resources and attention to the distribution of the Gruppo Espresso content on social networks, particularly on Facebook. From being sort of disorganised and predominantly done on a voluntary base in the newsrooms, this role has evolved into a more structured one as social networks grew their importance until it became a proper, stand-alone job, separated from the traditional online journalist one. We have therefore created a small internal team tasked with distributing the content from Repubblica.it and all other publication titles of the group on social media. At first, it was mainly about selecting the most suitable articles to be shared on social and about finding the right away of promoting them online. It was about finding the right language, the right title and caption, the right picture to accompany the article, knowing how the Facebook algorithm works and what are the best times of the day to post.

The further step was to recognise that we weren’t just promoting content produced by others anymore, and we could play a more active role into advising the newsroom on what content, what trend was performing well online and how to improve the performance of the existing content. Because of our skills and knowledge, we are able to advise on changing a title or choosing another angle to tell a story, to make it fully perform on social media. This is how this team came into life, but we are still learning. From being a social media team, we’re somehow naturally growing into an audience development team.

Tell us about your team and who’s part of it.

Balbi: My team is very small, we tried to give ourselves a hub and spoke structure with a central unit that interacts with peripheral teams. My team – of journalists – is able to manage independently the most important Facebook pages of the main publications of the group. Other pages, where a specific knowledge is needed, for example
for the local editions or the sport desk, are managed by other colleagues, either locally or vertically. My team supervises and coordinates them all, everyone refers to us.

**What kind of interaction is there between your team and the newsrooms?**

**Balbi:** In each newsroom there is someone with an eye on the numbers - usually the head of a desk. We’re flexible in the way we interact with the newsrooms: for a real-time change, we might reach out to the journalist who wrote an article if it’s easier to just pick up the phone and call him/her. In other cases, we call the editor of the desk. ... Of course, we can’t assume that every journalist will have the same awareness in terms of being social and engagement friendly. We can’t expect to turn the entire newsroom into SEO experts, but the goal is for everyone to familiarise (themselves) with these topics – then there is my team that can have a deeper look.

**What’s the feedback been like from the newsrooms to data and numbers?**

**Balbi:** It’s a delicate balance; we have both optimism and hesitancy. I wouldn’t say it’s a conservative resistance towards innovation, it has to do more with the fact that they are already overwhelmed by other tasks and they juggle many platforms. There is a rising sensitivity about the importance of social media and engagement, maybe also due to a meta-media phenomenon that social has become a topic discussed by TV and newspapers, so the awareness grows also in the newsroom. It happens more and more often that editors would call us and ask for training and advice. An interesting example of a desk with which we’re currently working very well is the business and finance desk. Given how hard and highbrow the topic is, it’s not the easiest topic to communicate on social media. But their team is so willing to try to understand social that we established a virtuous circle with my team trying to come up with ideas to translate their issue into more social bits. We experiment a lot.

**Do you see a risk in having audience development and engagement driving content production? Don’t you risk favouring only content set to become viral?**

**Balbi:** There’s obviously a risk, yes. How I see it, though, is that the challenge is to master tools and platforms to make sure the quality of your journalists reaches the widest possible audience. There is a risk to stumble over malicious content, to have more clicks, to run after formats that are easy to share and give you an immediate feedback in terms of traffic. It’s not about distorting yourself and the value of your journalism but about knowing the medium you’re working in. When we embrace a new platform, we tend to reproduce the way of working we had on the previous one. It wouldn’t make sense to read newspaper articles aloud on TV, you have to adapt your language to the new medium. The same is true with social media, they have their rules and formats and just replicating models from the past wouldn’t work.

“The key point is not to alter your journalism but to make sure that you are adapting your content to the nature of the medium you’re using.”

“IT WOULDN’T MAKE SENSE TO READ NEWSPAPER ARTICLES ALOUD ON TV, YOU HAVE TO ADAPT YOUR LANGUAGE TO THE NEW MEDIUM. THE SAME IS TRUE WITH SOCIAL MEDIA, THEY HAVE THEIR RULES AND FORMATS AND JUST REPLICATING MODELS FROM THE PAST WOULDN’T WORK.”
“AS IS COMMON FOR TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES, THE ‘BETA’ CONCEPT HAS PERMEATED OUR WORK INITIATIVES. THIS MEANS THAT, SINCE 2014, THE ZERO HORA NEWSROOM BEGAN TO UNDERSTAND THAT ITS PROCESSES, ITS PRODUCTS, AND EVEN ITS STRUCTURE ARE IN A STATE OF ‘PERMANENT BETA.’”
During the past two years, Brazilian daily Zero Hora, the flagship paper of RBS Group, has made a number of big changes in the ways its newsroom and journalists work. Today, the paper is reaping the rewards of its efforts. We asked Executive Editor Marta Gleich what they’ve learned from the process and what their goals are in the year ahead.

Gleich: The first and most important for 2015, and always, is to produce quality journalism. During these troubling times for the communications industry, it is important to remember our purpose and our value to society. In this sense, we reorganised the newsroom so that we had more in-house content production, which is how we are different from other outlets.

Also, we expanded the organisation and planning of special and investigative reports, providing the journalist the necessary amount of time to produce this content, which provides relevance and credibility to the Zero Hora brand. We created a rigid process to monitor the progress of special or investigative reports.

We have a dedicated team for investigative journalism, which has the task of thinking, planning, and executing the reports with a high degree of impact among the readers.

This team encourages debate about infiltration techniques, databases, and the use of the Freedom of Information Act for the entire newsroom. It is worth noting that, for 2015, we planned investigative reports that will be done in collaboration with
Brazilian newspapers with large circulations in other state capitals, and also with the participation of local university journalism students.

The second major objective includes the entire digital area, with emphasis on mobile and video. The newsroom is making an effort to discover formats and content that generate an excellent mobile experience, even if there are limitations in relation to the publication platform.

We worked with the Product Development department to improve our website, mobile site, and apps, to ensure that the growing mobile public will be well served. To produce more and better videos, we restructured the image team, ensuring more importance for video production. Our objective is to produce 50 percent more video content than last year.

We defined four basic formats that guide reporters and photographers in defining the daily and special productions: candid videos from reporters and readers, produced on the street with a mobile phone, sent by readers, without editing; opinion videos and columnist commentaries, recorded in the newsroom environment, with simple editing; videos of daily reporting, that require a bit more elaborate editing and production; and finally, special videos with a digital documentary style.

Our digital audience grew 19 percent in 2014, and for 2015 our objective is to grow 40 percent in relation to 2014. We also are working to get the audience to remain for a longer period of time, read more material per visit and, of course, share our content on social networks.

The third objective of the year is geared toward productivity. With lean teams and the need to produce new formats such as video and content for various platforms, the newspapers need to be concerned about doing more with less.

We are measuring some things in the newsroom, such as the number of pages edited per editor, the number of texts published per reporter, and the number of videos produced per day.

The objective is not to make things bureaucratic or to create useless reports, but to ensure that we are producing the maximum amount of quality in-house content with the team we have.

How are you promoting innovation within your newsroom?

Gleich: As is common for technology companies, the ‘beta’ concept has permeated our work initiatives. This means that, since 2014, the ZH newsroom began to understand that its processes, its products, and even its structure are in a state of ‘permanent beta.’

In other words, we know we will never reach an ideal. Quite the opposite. We are constantly seeking points where we can improve.

This value was incorporated into the culture, with an important change in our way of thinking. Since the team understands that a new product can be launched and then be improved based on any feedback or, if necessary, even discontinued, the environment becomes freer for those who want to create new projects.

There is a greater tolerance for error – not when it comes to journalistic information, of course! Besides the cultivation of this spirit, the newsroom works closely with the other departments in the company, such as Commercial and Digital Product Development, with constant conversations about projects that benefit from the input of professionals with diverse perspectives.

“Our digital audience grew 19 percent in 2014... we are working to get the audience to remain for a longer period of time, read more material per visit and, of course, share our content on social networks.”

Trends in Newsrooms
How does Zero Hora help give readers a larger voice in your paper (both print and online)?

Gleich: Since 2013, with the unification of the editing offices responsible for the reader’s page in the print version, and through the interaction with readers on the social networks, we began to have a broader view of reader participation in our products.

In 2014, we changed the comment policy for our material in digital environments: they are now published without pre-moderation. We really believe that reader participation is fundamental to make a better product: comments frequently generate new topics, for example.

Our team not only has to share our content on social media, but they have to read the comments and interact constantly with those who follow us through these platforms. We encourage all of the reporters to do the same, because interacting with the readers is not a role that should be restricted to a single group of people. Thus, we instruct the reporters to also answer the comments in their material and to interact with readers. We also planned many activities where the content is formed exclusively from the opinion and participation of the readers, especially in the digital realm. This participation is reflected on paper, where this content is also often published.

What are some of the key issues facing Latin American news publishers today?

Gleich: Speaking in terms of freedom of the press in Latin America, you can only say there has been a sharp setback in the freedom of the press situation in some countries, especially Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia and Argentina.

In greater or lesser intensity, mostly using authoritarian legislation and regulation approved in the last few years, the governments have tried to weaken the professional communication system in order to affect its independence. Even in Brazil, where freedom of expression rules, the government plans to begin discussing new media regulation.

Another major challenge – and this is not only a problem in Latin America – is to find sustainable business models, with new sources of revenue and expenses that are under control, with high productivity levels.

But despite the challenges, there are great opportunities, from the growth of news consumption, the growth of the middle class in Brazil – an enormous group of people hungry for information and services – and a large contingent with smartphone access. Publishers that know how to create interesting digital products and new sources of revenue have a great opportunity.
“WHENEVER I LOOKED AT OUR REPORTING ON MARKETS, COMPANIES, GOVERNMENTS, VIRTUALLY ANY SUBJECT, THE VOICES ON THESE STORIES WERE OVERWHELMINGLY MEN. AS A REPORTER AND EDITOR, THIS DISTURBED ME, BECAUSE ALTHOUGH SOME OF THE MOST AUTHORITATIVE VOICES ON THE ISSUES BELONGED TO WOMEN, THEY WERE CONSPICUOUSLY ABSENT.”

MATTHEW WINKLER, BLOOMBERG NEWS
Leading from the top, forging alliances, flagging sexist practices, and providing training to help female journalists tackle 'cybermisogyny' are important steps being undertaken globally in an effort to achieve real progress in the struggle for gender equality and women's empowerment in newsrooms.

Women are still dramatically under-represented behind editors' desks, so the appointment of Katharine Viner as The Guardian’s first female Editor-in-Chief had women journalists across the globe fist-pumping in the direction of the glass ceiling.

Viner, who replaced Alan Rusbridger in May, is The Guardian’s 12th editor, and the first woman at the helm since the paper was established in 1821. She is also the only female editor of a 'quality' UK daily newspaper.

Her appointment followed the ascent of Minton Beddoes to the editorship of The Economist.

It was a case of two steps backward, two steps forward after the dismissal of Jill Abramson from The New York Times and the departure of Natalie Nougayrède from France’s Le Monde in close succession in 2014.

There are decades of research – industry and academic – that confirm the appallingly low presence of women in senior media management and editorial positions, and the poor, stereotypical representation of women in the news. For example, research conducted by the Who Makes the News project shows that women constitute a mere 24% of news sources. And a global study by the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF) shows that women make up only 36% of reporters and a quarter of media decision-makers. Other studies have revealed a growing gender gap in access to, and ownership of, online platforms. And in some countries, recent gains are being eroded. South African journalist and researcher Dr Glenda Daniels released a report late in 2014 on the State of the Newsroom in her country, which indicates a decline of approximately 9% in the number of women holding Editor-in-Chief positions on major South African titles since 2013.

We’ve been waiting 20 years for real change

It’s 20 years since an historic UN conference in Beijing saw 189 countries adopt the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a visionary roadmap for women’s rights and empowerment.

But the International Steering Committee of the recently formed Global Alliance on Media and Gender (GAMAG) has expressed concern that progress towards media that support gender equality and women’s rights objectives remains painfully slow. “We cannot talk about equality, good governance, freedom of expression and sustainability when women are effectively silenced in and through the media, and where new technologies are used to undermine the human rights of women and women journalists,” the Committee’s Chair Colleen Lowe Morna declared at the end of the Committee’s inaugural meeting in Geneva.

GAMAG, an initiative of UNESCO, is a network of 500 media organisations and civil society groups from around the world. It has declared 2015 the “year for action,” saying that the time for simply talking about gender inequality in and through the news media has passed.

How do we get past the depressing statistics?

“I think advocacy is very important, research is very important and making a noise about it – shouting about it – is very important,” Glenda Daniels told the 2014 International Newsroom Summit in Amsterdam. Prominent Filipino journalist, and Rappler CEO and Editor-in-Chief, Maria Ressa, said that forging alliances between women and across corporate media boundaries is essential. “Whether it is going to be in pay or editorial positions or benefits, we deserve equality. Collaboration, alliances and really talking to each other are key,” she said.

In an interview with the author, Ressa described Philippines news organisations as being a long way down the path of transformation. “The largest newspaper – Philippine Daily Inquirer – is headed by a woman. After I left the largest TV network, I handed leadership to another woman, the second largest television station is headed by a woman as well. In fact, our joke here at Rappler is we need gender equality for men! I don’t know what makes the Philippines different,” Ressa said. A matriarchal society and poor remuneration for journalists may be factors. “I think part of the reason women stick to the need to become journalists more than men have is because of the lower
income...because media doesn’t pay as well as banking, men who come up through the ranks leave at a certain point because they need to feed their families.”

The Bloomberg News recipe for newsroom gender transformation

The most boldly practical and effective strategy for achieving real change in newsrooms the World Editors Forum has encountered is Bloomberg’s. When Bloomberg News marked its 20th anniversary in 2010, the organisation was forced to face a disturbing reality: graphic gender imbalance. “Whenever I looked at our reporting on markets, companies, governments, virtually any subject, the voices on these stories were overwhelmingly men. As a reporter and editor, this disturbed me, because although some of the most authoritative voices on the issues belonged to women, they were conspicuous-ly absent,” the founding Editor-in-Chief Matthew Winkler told a UN panel on media and gender in New York ahead of International Women’s Day this year.

“This coincided with another disturbing trend – while we were certainly successful in recruiting very talented, bright women to our news organisation, the leadership of Bloomberg News was still overwhelmingly male,” Winkler said.

Winkler, now Bloomberg’s Editor-in-Chief Emeritus, had identified the two biggest impediments to gender equality in and through the news media in the 21st Century: the paucity of women at the helm and the ‘censorship’ of female sources.

Gender equality in the news and in news management is good business

“Five years ago we started looking at this entire issue, not just from an ideological imperative or a social imperative, both of which are valid. We decided to present this issue as an economic & business imperative, in the sense that if we want to be the most successful news organ-
isation, if we want to be competitive, then the only way we are going to succeed is if we address the gender imbalance: it’s an economic and business issue,” Winkler said.

Tackling the gender imbalance – both in the news and behind editors’ desks – requires “...a whole set of policies, prescriptions, targets, goals – like any good business does,” Winkler said.

The paucity of mothers at the top of the newsroom hierarchy was dealt with head on: “What we set out to do is make sure that right at the top of the news organisation there are women who have had families, who have been all over the world, whose reporting and editing is distinguished as anyone’s, and that they would be in a position to remind everyone else ‘You can do this too.’”

Françoise Champey Huston is head of the English channel at France 24.

Photo: Tim Anger Photography

Bloomberg News still has a long way to go, Winkler admits. But one of the measures of their early success, he said, is the fact that “most of the headcount at Bloomberg News” now reports to a woman - Senior Executive Editor Laura.
Zelenko, a former Bloomberg News Eastern Europe correspondent. Winkler made a point of highlighting her qualifications: “Her credentials as a leader are unimpeachable.”

He also pointed to another measurable outcome: the number of female team leaders at Bloomberg News has doubled in the past four years. “It took a lot of attention but it was worth it and the leadership now is balanced to the extent that a woman has most authority over what we cover every day.”

**Focusing on women in news also makes better journalism**

And there have been editorial pay-offs too, Winkler said. For example, the strategy of tracking women leaders in business led to Bloomberg News breaking the story about the appointment of the first woman automobile industry CEO in the world – General Motors’ Mary Barra. “It was an example of where I say paying attention to this gender issue has made us far more competitive than we otherwise would be. We even beat the hometown media in Detroit to the story.”

Winkler emphasised the fact that the Bloomberg News’ gender transformation project is still a work in progress – but one in which men and women are equal partners.

“We have a long way to go but by committing ourselves through policy, and framing the policy as an economic and business decision, this is going to make us a better company, a better news organisation, this becomes an issue that has to be embraced not just by women, but by men too because we all benefit from the result.”

 Asked by France 24’s Annette Young to explain the discrepancy between the number of female journalism school graduates and junior ranked reporters in newsrooms compared to women in news management, Winkler was clear about the cause of the problem: “The issue is insufficient leadership in the newsroom.” Young presents
The 51 Percent – a TV News show about women – out of Paris. Her response to Winkler’s Bloomberg News strategy for change: “If the management of a news organisation that operates in the traditional world of American corporate culture can do it, so can everybody else.” (See Matthew Winkler’s “Five point recipe for newsroom transformation” and the Q&A with Annette Young at the end of this chapter.)

The new threat to women in news: Cybermisogyny

While highlighting the potential of social media channels to act as conduits for women’s empowerment and solidarity, experts acknowledge the growing impact of “cybermisogyny” on women journalists.

A recent UK study of Twitter abuse targeting celebrities by Demos found that “Journalism is the only category where women received

It is still rare to find older women behind the anchor desk in TV news

Photo: Tim Anger Photography

THE BLOOMBERG NEWS STRATEGY FOR REAL NEWSROOM CHANGE

This is Editor-in-Chief Matthew Winkler’s recipe for newsroom transformation as deployed at Bloomberg News:

1. **Identify all the women who are influential newsmakers in every field:** “We set about in our news judgement trying to determine where are the stories that women might figure in – the stories that are potentially some of the bigger stories of our time.”

2. **Insist that there be a woman’s voice in every story:** “because if there isn’t a woman’s voice then we are clearly not only discriminating but we were hurting ourselves in our ability to compete.”

3. **Set targets every year for increasing women leaders in your newsrooms:** “If we started at 20%, the next year’s target would be 25%. And if we didn’t meet the target it was clear evidence of failure. It was a business proposition with us and we would suffer the consequences.”

4. **Assign mentors/coaches to women on their way up the newsroom management ladder:** “We set about finding the best coaches we could find who could mentor the women who were succeeding, so that when they walk in the door every day, they have an understanding of what’s expected of them and they also know that we’re going to make sure that they succeed.”

5. **Be flexible with the mothers in your newsroom** because when employees have families, “far too often the people most disadvantaged are women.” And recognise that the working day shouldn’t be about 9-5 or 8-6. “I don’t care what clock you punch or when you get to the office. All I care about is the quality of the work. It’s always about the story.”
more abuse than men, with female journalists and TV news presenters receiving roughly three times as much abuse as their male counterparts."

Cybermisogyny, expressed via online sexual harassment through to stalking and threat of violence, is a genuine psychological – and potentially physical – risk to safety of women journalists. It is also a threat to the active participation of women in civil society debate, fostered by news publishers, through online commenting platforms and their social media channels.

It can be an especially brutal experience when you’re writing about feminism, as Jezebel staff recently pointed out to Gawker executives, “It’s like playing whack-a-mole with a sociopathic Hydra...It’s impacting our ability to do our jobs,” they wrote in an email.

Australian journalist, journalism educator and feminist activist Jenna Price knows first hand what cybermisogyny feels like. The co-founder of the high-impact feminist Facebook group 'Destroy the Joint', she has received online threats to rape her, and her daughters, in response to her journalism and activism. “...once a week, some thug will suggest that what will fix my feminist mindset is a good raping,” she told Daily Life. “There is nothing more terrifying than opening your email to pictures of beheaded women, or women being beaten and sexually assaulted. I had sleepless nights,” she said.

Price told the World Editors Forum that her coping strategies have evolved over time. “I used to cry and endlessly overshare about trolling. That didn’t help. Then I went all stoic. That didn’t work either,” she said. “There are a few women journalists who have a secret support society where we can share our rage. Younger women tend to lose their cool and I find myself constantly private messaging people when I see things getting out of control. I urge them to take a bit of time out.”

Pulling back is one response to gendered abuse that is gaining momentum among women within online communities. The 2014 launch of a video platform built by women and aimed at women, in reaction to the very sexist and misogynistic comment threads pervading YouTube, highlights the appeal of safe spaces for women online. But this is not a realistic option for women journalists working within mainstream newsrooms, where engagement with broad audiences via popular social media channels is now essential.

So, if pulling back isn’t an option, what can be done? The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) has begun “social media defence” classes as an intervention, a strategy Jenna Price welcomed, saying media employers “...need to practice responsible corporate citizenship and ensure their staff have the social media skills AND the emotional support required...it needs policy, strategy and action.” (See “Nine recommendations for managing cybermisogyny” below).

However, if newsrooms themselves remain bastions of male domination, harassment and sexism, better management of the effects of cybermisogyny will not have a major impact on new moves to target women’s empowerment in, and through, the media.

NINE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MANAGING CYBERMISOGyny

1. Acknowledge the problem and take the impacts seriously
2. Provide specific training for women journalists to help them deal with cybermisogyny
3. Stimulate senior management awareness of the issues
4. Invest in community engagement management (including clear policies and guidelines for intervention, along with effective abuse reporting tools)
5. Devote editorial resources to coverage of these issues
6. Consider adding misogyny to comment moderation guideline definitions
7. Dedicate more staff to understanding and performing moderation
8. Employ more senior women moderators/community managers
9. Advocate the uptake of abuse reporting tools like the Women Action Media initiative by social media companies

Source: Slideshare presentation Navigating the Sexist Cesspit: Audience Engagement and Gender (by Julie Posetti) can be found at: http://bit.ly/1DTPiHs
Posetti: Many editors would argue that gender issues are boring and alienating – hence their frequent exclusion from the news agenda. Why do a news show for a mainstream audience about women?

Young: Simply because gender issues are important and apply to both men and women. Gender equality is equal rights for all. The challenge for us on the program is to ensure every viewer is engaged regardless of their gender. We apply the same principles of journalism as we would with any story running in any other program. Plus we look for stories that are counter-intuitive; that challenge people to rethink. We also address issues such as how women are in danger of being left behind in the digital revolution; how the gender pay gap continues well into retirement (with women, on average, living on 30 percent less than their male peers), or how the gender revolution is affecting boys’ performances in the classroom. Our tagline should be “making the unfamiliar, familiar.” Be it the woman metro driver in Dubai; the female sumo-wrestlers in Japan; the women-only Sharia Law Unit in Bande Aceh or the neo-feminist who runs the Crazy Horse strip club here in Paris.

What sort of reaction do you experience from the audience to your show’s unashamed promotion of women’s rights?

Young: Incredibly positive. By and large, everybody we speak to is extremely supportive and seems to thoroughly enjoy the program. In fact, the overwhelming comment is that our duration is too short (we agree!).

What about your colleagues – how do they respond to the show? Is there resentment, intolerance and scepticism? Or have you found support for the program’s attempt to showcase stories too often buried at the back of bulletins?

Young: I have to say that one of the most amazing and incredibly rewarding things about doing the show has been the support from...
our newsroom colleagues with people regularly coming forward to suggest story ideas, if not offering to do them themselves. And when I say people, I mean both men and women in equal numbers. The show has created a buzz of its own among newsroom staff with many discussions being prompted by our reports or interviews (particularly on gender pay gap and parental leave!). In addition, a number of stories commissioned by the show have been re-run in our news bulletins. There are a tiny few who still can’t understand why the need for the show. But they are truly in a minority.

From your vantage point, how can newsrooms better tackle the problem of gender imbalance at the top?

Young: Clearly, high-level management needs to do more about the issue. Senior managers need to target women in the newsroom that they think have the skills to be managers and encourage them to apply for jobs. We know, as women, we can be our own worst enemies. That we won’t stick our hands up for jobs unless we feel 100 percent comfortable in doing so, whereas our male peers will be far more forward, regardless of competence. Many of us also suffer from the “imposter syndrome” – we don’t believe we have the right to be doing the job in the first place. These are the sort of issues that senior management need to be aware of.

I’m not sure about quotas but I do believe in targets. Management should have a series of targets that the newsroom, at all levels, must reflect the diverse nature of their respective populations.

The other big hurdle in our profession is the sheer nature of what we do – in other words, it’s not family-friendly – especially 24-hour operations. That will take a bit of creative thinking on the part of management and human resources, I agree. Job-sharing is one possibility. But again, it takes commitment and everybody, both employers and employees, stand to benefit. And again, a reminder that parental leave is just that; for both parents, regardless of gender.

How can journalists tell better stories about gender and how can they convince editors to run them?

Young: The same rules should apply as they do to any story; is it of public interest? Does it deserve air-time; to be printed or posted online? But again, it’s about making your colleagues aware. And I am the greatest example of that. When my French colleague first suggested the idea of the program back in early 2013 and talked to me about it, I thought to myself “Yes, I’m a feminist but ...” Then, at her prompting, I started reading up and as a journalist, first and foremost, I realised with shame that so many issues affecting women simply don’t get the airtime that they so clearly deserve.

What’s your advice to women ultimately seeking to carve out a career at the top of the news business?

1. It’s ok to be nosy, pushy and bossy. Really it is. If a young man was exhibiting those qualities, he would be described as “highly curious,” “ambitious” and “showing leadership potential.”

2. Keep your eye on the goal; think of what you want to do the most in the industry and just go for it. Also think strategically and do seek out older women for advice. I believe as a senior journalist that’s it my duty to mentor younger people in the game. Given the competitive nature of journalism, it’s not viewed as obvious but for young women, I believe it’s particularly necessary.

3. Keep your sense of humour. Life is just way too short.
TREND 9 - INNOVATION IN SMALL NEWSROOMS

INSPIRATION FROM AROUND THE WORLD

By Brian Veseling

As we have seen in other chapters in this report, mobile, video and audio storytelling are becoming the norm for those working in what were, until recently, ‘traditional’ print newsrooms. Innovation and experimentation are now the order of the day.
In recent years, economic pressures and technological developments, combined with a wave of new competitors and audiences who want content on-demand across multiple platforms, have forced newsrooms everywhere to undertake unprecedented levels of change. As we have seen in other chapters in this report, mobile, video and audio storytelling are becoming the norm for those working in what were, until recently, “traditional” print newsrooms. Innovation and experimentation are now the order of the day.

Frequently, stories about innovation focus on developments from publishers such as The New York Times and The Guardian, and while these companies have an amazing record of achievements, there are many other news publishers around the world who are also undertaking efforts to inform and engage their audiences in new and intriguing ways.

Here we offer a selection of some of the enterprising efforts from smaller newsrooms that have come to our attention during the past year.

Virtual reality
The Des Moines Register, USA

In late 2014, The Des Moines Register, a Gannett-owned newspaper based in Des Moines, Iowa, with a daily print circulation of under 100,000, along with assistance from Gannett Digital, used virtual reality and 360-degree video in what the paper called “a first-of-its-kind explanatory journalism project.”

The story, titled “Harvest of Change,” ran over five days, used long-form reporting and images to introduce readers to four farm families and how their lives have been effected by far-reaching changes relating to demographics, technology, economics and the environment.

“Harvest of Change” was honoured with a “Best of Gannett” award for Innovation in February 2015, with judges noting, “This project explores emerging technology and unknown territory using the Oculus Rift platform. Virtual reality can be a tricky area journalistically, and careful steps were taken to make sure that images, sound and details represented reality. This work moves the needle of experimentation with new storytelling forms.”

See the story online at: http://www.desmoinesregister.com/pages/interactives/harvest-of-change/
Using rap to draw the young

VietnamPlus, Vietnam News Agency

Every two weeks, the Vietnam News Agency’s VietnamPlus produces a 4-minute video segment called RapNewsPlus, which features news presenters doing a “rap” round-up of the latest news stories using hiphop music in order to reach younger audiences. Le Quoc Minh, Editor-in-Chief VietnamPlus, said while there was some internal resistance to the project, it has been proved successful and popular with younger people – the first installment racked up 1 million views in just the first 48 hours it was online.

Late last year, the project won a WAN-IFRA World Young Reader Prize for Digital First.

While the thought of setting the news to hiphop music might not be to everyone's taste, Le Quoc Minh told participants at WAN-IFRA’s 10th Middle East Conference in April in Dubai that he doesn't mind. “We have some people ask ‘Why do you do this?’ They don’t like it. I say ‘Are you younger than 25?’ ‘No.’ ‘Then I don’t care: You are not my target audience.’ ”

See more at http://www.vietnamplus.vn/rapnewsplus.vnp.

Engaging User-Generated Content

Straits Times Communities, Singapore

Singapore-based Straits Times, the English-language flagship daily of Singapore Press Holdings, has created a series of three “Communities” sites focusing on Entertainment, Education and most recently, Travel, whereby readers can get their stories and photographs published alongside ST’s professional journalists. The site uses social media sign-ins (Facebook/Twitter/Google) for readers to submit their content to editors. The platform was honoured with the “Digital Publishing Innovation of the Year” award in August 2014 in the “Newspapers of the Year” contest by Australia-based The Newspaper Works. “Very smart in recognising the merit of inviting the audience to take part in the process of curating and delivering news,” noted one of the judges. “This is truly innovative, and represents a bold move toward a future in which user-generated content shares the stage with publisher-driven content.”

See the site: http://www.stcommunities.sg/education
In April 2015, De Morgen was among just four newspapers named World’s Best Designed by the Society for News Design. The Brussels-based, Flemish paper has a daily circulation of approximately 50,000, but it transmits a visual vibe that puts it in a league with much larger and better known dailies. “There is an energy that keeps running through this entire paper – there’s no tail off. The fronts are always a surprise, without an obvious template or formula. They are a delight,” the SND judges said in a statement announcing the winners.

Offering insight into what separates a World’s Best Designed paper from everyone else, the judges said, “The best papers we saw were the ones whose journalism transcended their formats. Whether we were looking at tabs, Berliners or broadsheets, it was the visual storytelling – the photography, the graphics, the art direction – that we reacted to. At the very best-designed papers, the designers and editors understand how to deftly go beyond the do-no-harm approach to design, helping support a clear editorial voice and amplifying the journalism, both visual and written.”

Using the paper to fight a health crisis

Mawbima, Sri Lanka

In 2014, Sri Lankan daily Mawbima used a combination of articles, house ads and the very ink of its newspaper to help drive home an urgent message to its readers about dengue fever, which is spread by mosquitoes and had become an epidemic in the country with more than 30,000 infected, a number of whom died. Through a campaign on World Health Day, literally with every letter of every word on its pages, Mawbima was stopping mosquitoes from biting and helping curb the spread of the disease.

Saranga Wijeyaratne, Director of Marketing for Ceylon Newspapers, which publishes Mawbima, explained that this effect was achieved by blending citronella essence, a natural mosquito repellent, with printing ink. This impressive example is a great illustration of the different departments of a newspaper coming together to create an innovative product – hosted by print – for the good of its readers.
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