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

Welcome to the seventh edition of Trends in Newsrooms, offering summary and analysis of another fascinating year in the news industry: providing both challenges but also extensive opportunities.

As news becomes accessible on an ever-increasing number of devices, the traditional role of an editor, which has, of course, been to edit a newspaper, is continuously changing. Editors in the future will inevitably have to be very much directed more towards multimedia and the rest of the digital world. This in turn means that editors must be very focused on innovation and on the business side of the media.

How to make money online continues to be a pressing question for all involved in news, and applications for smartphones and tablets only complicate matters. 2010 – 2011 has seen more than one major English-language publication and many smaller papers introduce a paid online content strategy. The different initiatives have underlined how many options are available to publishers and how complex their choices are. As yet, however, there has been no fundamental change in the way people read news online.

Tablet computers, though still undoubtedly niche devices, have established themselves firmly on the scene and have had a significant impact on news organisations. Many publications have released apps for one or more tablets – some stand out for their impressive innovation but news organisations still have some way to go in making best use of what these devices have to offer.

New methods of distributing news will always have an impact on newsroom organisation. And although the major rethink in terms of print-online integration has already taken place, there is continuous change and adaptation.

Social media strategy has been high on the agenda for many newsrooms. In the past we have been developing our media for our readers and users, today and in the future we must do it with our readers and users. Advances in terms of communicating with readers have been tremendous, and editors should seek to make the best use of these. Twitter was the big hit of 2009–10 while, Facebook has moved to centre stage in 2010–11.

Ethical questions in connection with journalistic sources and methods have also been at the forefront of debate in recently. WikiLeaks sparked massive debate about the use of documents obtained indirectly through a source, and led to discussions about the very definition of journalism.

The phone-hacking scandal has left one paper closed, and sparked international outcry. Will it lead to greater regulation?

Trends in Newsrooms hopes to offer you information and inspiration on all of these issues and more.

Please follow us on www.editorsweblog.org for up to date information on all the latest media trends.

As part of the World Editors Forum you can share ideas, experiences and research on how to face the challenges of the future. All over the world, editors are pursuing editorial excellence in the face of the emergence of new media, new technologies, changing readership lifestyles and squeezed budgets. You can learn, teach and debate either in real time on our blog (www.editorsweblog.org) or in person at the annual World Editors Forum.

WEF focuses on:

- Integrated newsrooms: strategies for merging print and online activities
- Multimedia training: the new skills your journalists need to know
- Newsroom architecture: maximizing efficiency through innovative newsroom layout
- Multimedia Storytelling: effectively combining all platforms for a comprehensive story
- Newsroom management: guiding your journalists through to the digital age
- Citizen Journalism: when anyone can publish, what does it mean for your newsroom?
- User-Generated Content: how to invite your readers into your newsroom
- Social media: building relationships with your community of readers
- Mobile: relevant content for readers any time, any where
- Tablets, ePaper and eReader: writing stories differently for digital content
- Ethics: new libel and copyright concerns in the digital age
- Design: the fusion of web and print templates

WEF members receive free access to publications including:

- Trends in Newsrooms, investigating the latest best practices in editorial excellence
- Access to World Press Trends data and analysis on the global newspaper industry

Members qualify for discounts on the annual World Editors Forum and WAN-IFRA events throughout the year.

For more **information about WEF**, please contact Emma Heald at **emma.heald@wan-ifra.org** or visit www.wan-ifra.org/wef.

For more **information about membership**, please contact Birke Becker at **birke.becker@wan-ifra.org**.

An editor can also join WEF as part of their company membership with the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers. For more on WAN-IFRA memberships, please see: **www.wan-ifra.org/membership**.

The evolving newsroom 1

In the past decade or so, the newspaper newsroom has undergone several shifts – from print-only, to adding online, to fully integrating print and online, to adding new publishing platforms such as mobile phones and tablets. The basic re-think of the traditional newsroom has probably now been completed. At least in theory, most newspaper publishers today can see the wisdom of integrating their print and digital platforms and staffs. However, we are now likely at the beginning of a new stage of development for the newsroom in which pioneers such as the US-based Journal Register Company (JRC) are upending the traditional thinking and workflows that have been based on the print product to a new mindset that not only puts "digital first" but also "print last." In fact, as this report was being completed it was announced that JRC together with Media News Group were to be managed by a new company literally called Digital First Media Inc. JRC CEO John Paton has been named to lead Digital First Media as well as both JRC and Media News Group. Paton is now well-known for taking JRC from bankruptcy in 2009 to $41 million profit in 2010. In this chapter, we share his keynote presentation from this summer's WAN-IFRA Newsroom Summit conference in Zurich.

Ringier's new, integrated newsroom in Zurich for its four Blick products: Blick, Sonntags Blick, Blick am Abend and the Blick.ch website (Photo courtesy of Ringier).

Ringier brings its Blick titles together

On March 7, 2010, Ringier, one of Europe's largest publishers, began operations in its new, integrated newsroom in Zurich for its four Blick products: Blick, Sonntags Blick, Blick am Abend and the Blick.ch website.

Ralph Grosse-Bley, editor-in-chief of Ringier, said 15 months of preparation and 13 million Swiss francs (approximately 10.7 million euros) were spent to bring the titles together and meet five key objectives: to modernise and adapt, to bring print and online closer together, to upgrade the quality of journalism, to slim down workflows and to improve economic efficiency.

The central challenge of the project was how to bring all the titles together and make the most of the synergies among them while at the same time keeping the identity of each of the titles.

It was extremely important for management to represent the projects in a convincing way to the rest of the staff, Grosse-Bley said, but still, many employees did not seem to believe that the project would actually be implemented until the day that the crane went up.

All the resources of the four titles have now been pooled into a newsroom on two floors, with 190 editorial staff and 70 in publishing. "The Bridge," literally built as a bridge between two buildings, is where the four editors-in-chief and some of their key staff sit. The chief editors don't have offices, just desks, and they are available to their employees, with no need to make an appointment, Grosse-Bley said. This physical closeness of the editors-in-chief is very important, he stressed, as you always have an idea of what your colleagues are doing. The path to make decisions is consequently also much shorter.

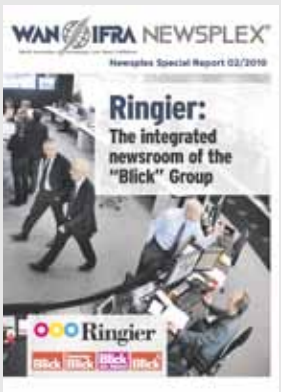
There are three important meetings every day, at 8.00, 10.00 and 14.00, and all discussions take place at the big table in the centre of the newsroom. Editors can ring bells to call more meetings during the day.

By summer 2011, a little more than a year after the launch, the key objectives had largely been met. "The workflows are leaner, the work processes have been optimised and the coordination between the four newspaper titles now produced in the newsroom has been improved," said Grosse-Bley. "In the past, the individual newspaper titles had totally stand-alone and independent newsroom structures. Although the newspapers have retained their journalistic independence and continue to address different target audiences, the processing of the news stories in the newsroom is now much more efficient and better coordinated. We can utilise many synergies, and use authors in a new cross-newspaper way," Grosse-Bley said. "We no longer process the news in parallel in the morning (eliminating work duplication) and can run news items in a way that is story-focused. That means we take a central decision on which aspect of the story should be published when and on which channel."

According to Grosse-Bley, the negative points of the change have been that journalists are being asked to do more work and everyone is working longer hours than before. It is more difficult for individual employees to identify with titles. Journalists must be able to work for both print and online and for multiple titles, as do those who do design and layout. There are still battles over resources, Grosse-Bley said, with constant discussions over who has the right to have more people working for them. The positive impacts of the integration have been greater story diversity across the titles as well as better story coordination. Pooling resources has given the publications more know-how across platforms and the potential for more powerful coverage of major events, with more manpower assigned to individual stories. It has also reinforced the group's ability to produce smartphone and tablet applications, and led to more TV footage.

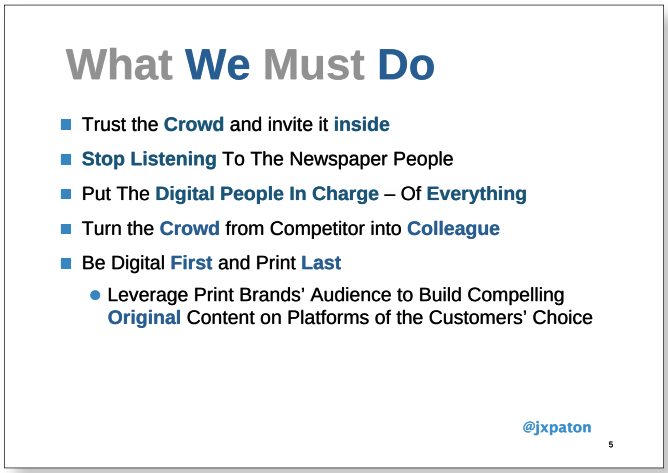
In addition, costs have been reduced by 15 percent per year. Overall, the success confirms that this project was the right way forward, Grosse-Bley said. However, the company also well understands that it cannot claim "mission accomplished." "We are constantly carrying out fine-tuning and optimisation," Grosse-Bley says. "Such a newsroom project is never simply finished. For example, we have successively integrated several colleagues into the normal newsroom process who previously worked specifically for the Sunday edition. The magazine of SonntagsBlick has also been integrated more effectively. In addition, we have raised staffing levels slightly at nearly all editorial desks."

During the newsroom's second year, Grosse-Bley said, "the process of fine-tuning will continue. For example, the CMS has not yet been harmonised and the image workflow can and should be optimised further."



For further reading

WAN-IFRA Newsplex has published a Special Report relating to the newsroom project at Ringier in Switzerland, which worked with Newsplex. The report is available in printed form in English and German. If you are interested in a copy, contact Kerstin Oestreicher [kerstin.oestreicher@wan-ifra.org].



John Paton: How the crowd saved our company

Perhaps the most incredible example of a newspaper company turning around in recent years has been the Journal Register Company (JRC) in the United States, which went from filing for bankruptcy in early 2009 to a profit of $41 million for 2010. The company's CEO, John Paton, has led JRC into a new era where the mission is "Digital first, Print last." On September 7, 2011, Paton announced on his blog at http://jxpaton.wordpress.com that a new company called Digital First Media Inc had been formed to manage Journal Register Company and also Media News Group. With this annoucement, Paton was named as Chief Executive Officer of Digital First Media as well as CEO of both JRC and Media News Group. In June 2011, Paton was the keynote speaker of WAN-IFRA's Newsroom Summit Conference in Zurich where he gave the following presentation, which is loaded with his profound insights into both JRC's turnaround and the newspaper industry at large.

As career journalists and managers, we have entered a new era where what we know and what we traditionally do has finally found its value in the marketplace and that value is about zero. Our traditional journalism models and our journalistic efforts are inefficient and up against the Crowd – armed with mobile devices and internet connections – incomplete. Our response to date as an industry has been as equally inefficient and in many cases emotional. The French philosopher Roland Barthes argues that when culture becomes nature we are in the presence of myth. In our blustering for self-justification we have created a myth of our value. Without ever establishing its economic value, we have argued our value as journalists and journalism itself is self-evident and unassailable. Well, the walls have been scaled and the fortress sacked. Fortunately, we are left with solid foundations from which to re-build.

At the Journal Register Company, we have some thoughts about how we can re-build to create true value. While we have had many successes over the last 17 months, as you will see in a moment, let me be clear this is all a work in progress. Any attempt at re-building starts with an accurate assessment of what's wrong. If you haven't seen this quote already or read Clay Shirky's seminal essay, I urge you to read it as soon as possible. Its key message is clear:

- You don't transform from broken.
- You don't tinker or tweak
- You start again anew and build from the ground up.

For those in our industry who still believe we can continue with the same business models, I ask you to examine the evidence to the contrary.

- U.S. newspaper advertising is now at 1985 levels – before inflation adjustment.
- From 1985 to 2005, the average growth rate was 2.7 percent per year.
- Take out the high-low and it is still low single-digit growth.

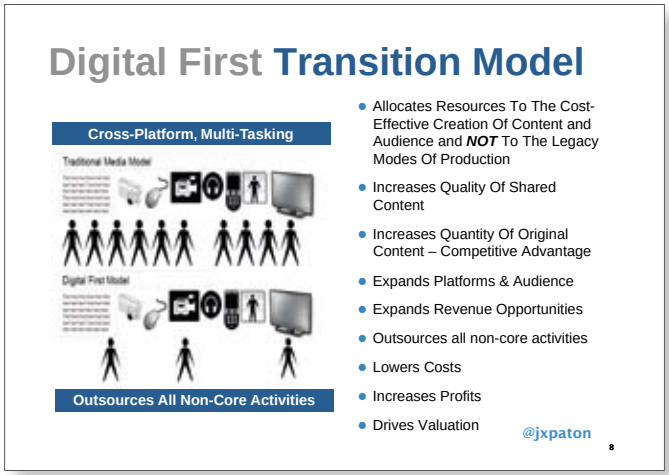
And those were the good old days. From the US industry's advertising peak in 2005 until now it is less than half of what it was. And at the average growth rate of 2.7 percent it will take about another quarter of a century to get back to where it was – in 1985. But that is not going to happen. The growth in marketing/advertising dollars will no longer be in traditional media in the longer term. The damage from the last six years along with overleveraged capital structures has left the US newspaper industry in ruins. And finally, as if more evidence was needed, in the United States our key customers have abandoned us. Now, more Americans get their news via the web and this year more advertising dollars will be spent on the web than in newspapers.

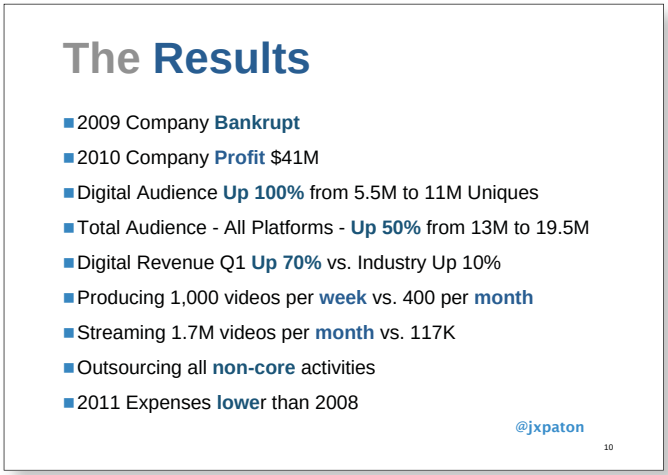
The customers have spoken. Traditional journalism is dead. The Crowd collectively knows more about any subject, city or event we choose to cover than we do. Armed with the same tools – and in many cases – equal access to information and the search capabilities to provide history and context, the Crowd can do what we do. I think any economist would argue that when supply increases and the criteria we as journalists have ascribed to creating value – access to information/sources; research capabilities and context and distribution – is available to almost anyone, then value plummets. Raised on a staple diet of "he said last night" journalism, coverage by the Crowd – via social media – is instant, increasingly contextual and in many cases more complete than a traditional media company could ever achieve.

With our core mission gone, how do we add value? What's the role of the journalist in this mix? Look at the recent coverage by The New York Times' Brian Stelter of the tornado in Joplin, Missouri. He was – via Twitter – a reporting machine but that work did not appear as a "story." At the evermore progressive Postmedia – Canada's largest newspaper company – reporters on the campaign trail during the recent federal election did just that – report. They filed directly to the web and via social media while editors back in the newsrooms crafted the live feed into traditional stories.

Our craft has been and continues to be profoundly changed. The fact that our industry – with few notable exceptions – does not understand that and continues to plow on by slashing editorial, research, marketing and even sales resources to meet profit expectations is simply stupid. Newspapers get the investors they deserve. With newspaper management bankrupt of ideas they seek to please investors by slashing costs and driving short-term gains. Investors, being no fools and recognizing newspaper managers have no plans to truly transform their business, are simply doing their jobs when they keep management focused on producing short-term gains.

Investors don't buy into myth. They buy into math. If you want investors to take a long-term view on our industry or our companies then you better give them a long-term plan that works. Give them a plan they will back. And I would add it should be a plan built on the editorial floor where the core of our business lies. The basic component of our survival and re-building can be found in the elements of our destruction. The Crowd which has become our competitor is filling the web – the disintermediator of our industry – with news. As a result, the web is a very crowded





place for news. A filter is desired. It is even necessary. Original and compelling journalism are key to standing out and it is the power of our brands, our reputation, that can spotlight – filter – for our audience where they should look for journalism they can trust. Vint Cerf – called by some the Father of the Internet – and Google's Chief Evangelist is very direct about this: "People's trust in journalism has always been about branding."

So, what must we do? First, if you have competitor so much bigger than you are such as the Crowd then you better make peace with it and partner. Understand the Crowd's value and add your value to theirs and turn the Crowd from a competitor into a colleague.

And if you listen to nothing else I have to say this morning then please listen to this: "Stop listening to Newspaper people." We are well into our second decade of figuring out the web and by any measurement we have failed. We newspaper people are no good at it. If you want to get good at it then stop listening to the Newspaper people and start listening to the rest of the world – the customers and advertisers who have already told you what they think and have moved on. And, I would point out, as we have done at JRC – put the Digital people in charge. Of everything. Find new voices and let them push you around.

In our case, we have invited the Crowd into our newsrooms – more on that in a moment – and have established an Advisory Board of leading Digital thinkers: Jeff Jarvis, Jay Rosen, Emily Bell and Betsy Morgan, former CEO of Huffington Post.

Be Digital First and Print Last. Stop focusing on the Print. It is in any newspaper's DNA. It is not like you are going to forget to put out the newspaper. Focus on the future. That future is not Print. It's Digital. Create a New Business Model: A business model that lets you transition into the growing digital markets of audience and revenue. We know we can still add value to the journalistic process and we know our brands and their audience have value. What we don't know is exactly what the future will be like and this is where many newspaper companies falter.

Arguments about news' sustainability as an economic model or future of the adjacency of advertising to news have nearly paralysed our industry from taking what I would describe as sensible steps into driving new products on new platforms with the resulting new audiences that advertisers want. In conference after conference, the handwringing of not being able to articulate an endgame has become stultifying. Unlike Print, our Digital competitors are not trying to solve for an endgame and therefore have the courage to experiment and build. As I will discuss in a moment, at JRC we are doing just that successfully and preparing a sustainable, investable transition model to take on the challenge of the future.

This transition has to be self-funding and that means reducing Legacy media costs. You have to slay the production god and the legacy costs that go with that old model. Two-thirds of a newspaper's costs are infrastructure – stuff you don't want to do – and NOT in what you DO want to do such as create compelling content and effective sales. Harness both the Cloud and the Crowd to drive down those costs. At Journal

Register Company we are getting out of anything that does not fall into our core competencies of content creation and the selling of our audience to advertisers. Get rid of the bricks and iron. Focus on core competencies. And if it is not core then:

- Reduce it or stop it.
- Outsource it or sell it.

There are now companies who do most of this much better than any newspaper company does because those ARE the core competencies of the outsource companies. You will need the expenses you save from those cuts to fund the new products and platforms you will need. News now breaks Digitally both in its origin and creation by the audience using social media and spreads virally. To be in the news business now means you must run your business as Digital First. And that means Print Last. Print Last because that is how this new world works. Print is a SLOW medium and digital is FAST. Atoms will never beat bits. Each platform has its own advantages. Each platform has an audience. And each platform has a certain speed – Fast or Slow. The quality of the journalism will be key. Lousy journalism on multiple platforms is just lousy journalism in multiple ways.

Our Digital First transition strategy is centered on the cost- effective creation of content and sales and not the legacy modes of production. It is a strategy that differentiates and prioritizes the allocation of resources – human and financial to the new realities of our business. We can't afford to allocate the new resources without reducing the old. Adding a new person or expense for every new Digital function is just putting more water into a sinking boat. You have to multi-task. And, again, you have to train your people to do so. If they can't learn you have to let them go and hire those who can. If done right, you will have a business model that:

- Increases the quality and quantity of original content on the platforms of the consumers' choice
- Involves the Crowd
- Expands Audience
- Expands Revenue Opportunities
- Lowers Costs
- And Increases Profits

In a world where the Crowd knows so much more than we do – we have to experiment. While we encourage all of our employees to do that, we actually pay some of them to do just that – experiment. We call it our ideaLab. The ideaLab is a select employee group – we asked them to apply online via my blog (and they did in the hundreds) – who are paid to experiment. We supply them the tools (Droids, Smartphones, iPhones, iPads, Netbooks, etc); the time (25 percent off with pay) plus some extra pay as an incentive. There are no rules. They have come up with Customer Relationship Management Tools; Ad Tracking and Publishing systems all using free web-based tools. Others have developed training programs for fellow employees to help them navigate this transition. Others are concentrating on journalism itself.

Our Ben Franklin Project is another experiment. On July 4th – Independence Day – last year and across all of our 18 dailies, we:

- Assigned
- Reported
- Edited
- Produced: Web & Print Products

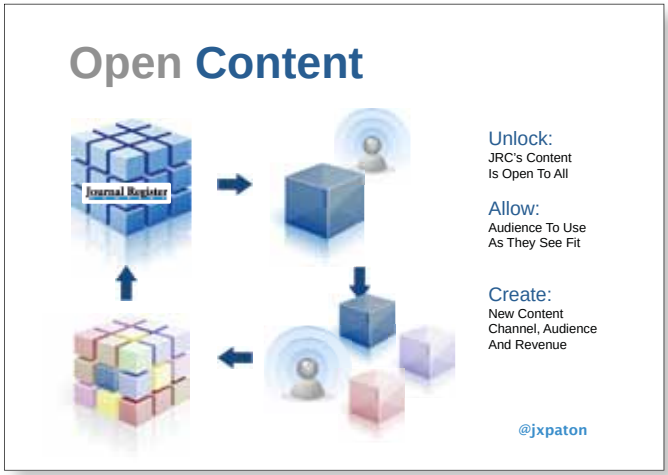
... using only free web-based tools.

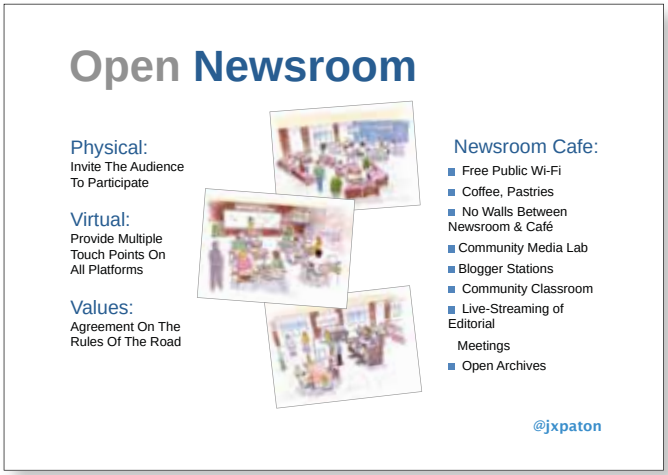
We are changing our culture at JRC and are starting to play offense rather than defense. With lousy I.T, and tools – but eager employees – this transition is happening. We have built sales support systems using an iPhone and free Google tools. We have successfully printed pages on a press using only free web tools. Our Capital Expenditures have been reduced by more than half from $25M to $12M. Why pay for what you can do for free?

But more importantly, we have harnessed the power of our employees and the Crowd. We are learning more about what the Crowd wants because we are asking and involving them in the process. And because of their input we expect to be producing more of what the Crowd does consider of value. We share all of the learned information and tools publicly. In the case of the Ben Franklin Project you can go the Ben Franklin site and you will find a link to our Ben Franklin In A Box Kit. Click on it and try your own experiment. And share the results.

As I said at the beginning of my remarks, while we are not getting all of this right we are getting some of it right at these results show. We have gone from bankrupt to a profitable company. We have doubled our Digital audience and are growing our Digital revenue at 7x the industry standard in the US. In fact, in about one-third of our divisions – with Print down mid single-digit percentage points – we are up year over year these past few months because of digital ad growth. Compare that to an industry in the U.S. where advertising was down about 10 percent in Q1.

And all of this was done with fewer costs than in 2008, but not fewer editorial and sales resources I might add. I believe strongly that this kind of financial performance is the direct result of our openness to partnering with the Crowd to improve our products and by linking/outsourcing and restructuring our cost structure to one that is flexible and effective. And, more importantly, is the result of the appropriate allocation of resources to building our future rather than protecting our past. For this success to continue, the walls have to come down. Paywalls, if you





have them, should come down. And any walls between you and the communities you serve through your journalism need to come down as well. Going forward, I think it is clear that smart, original content, tagged with advertising will gain value by being shared through networks. Jeff Jarvis at CUNY in New York is doing important work around this very concept. He says this very clearly: "In the future content will go to the audience rather than the other way around."

Shared Content Equals Influence - and Influence in the new eco system equals Engagement. And Engagement equals Value to those advertisers and others trying to reach that Engaged Audience. Good journalism today that does not link is not of equal value to good journalism that does. Walls stop links and walls stop networks and destroy value. Shared content has to be of the highest quality whether created, curated or aggregated. And you must invest in a process that provides more of the only competitive advantage we have left – the mass creation of compelling, original content.

At the Journal Register Company, we believe our Project Thunderdome is the Open Source Content Machine to power the combination of value-creating, shared and original content. Thunderdome allows our Company to partner with the Crowd, improve the quality of our shared content while reducing production costs and letting us re-invest in the creation of more, local, original content – our competitive advantage. Jon Cooper [VP of Digital Content] along with Jim Brady [Editor-in-Chief] and Steve Buttry [Head of Community Engagement] are on an aggressive timeline to launch Thunderdome in the next six months. The long-term future of our Company depends upon it.

Key to all of our efforts is to open up our newsrooms and our newsgathering processes to increase audience engagement and to enhance the value of our content. Instead of paywalls, we see greater value creation in the open sharing of our content. Our approach is to treat content like an API – available to any who want it. At our open-to-the-public newsroom in Torrington, Connecticut, we have gone one-step further in including the Crowd in our news content creation efforts. Community members are invited to sit in on news meetings, participate in our Community Media Lab – we now have 20 such labs across our Company – and to work at blogger stations set up in the newsroom itself. A bit like democracy – it can sometimes be ugly to watch – but it is also exhilarating and is driving meaningful change. In Torrington that small daily now has nearly 6x more digital customers than print and it is profitable again. We will be rolling out its open-concept to all of our daily newspapers.

I am proud to say that the Journal Register Company – once the poster child for what ails the US newspaper industry – is now a company with a plan and a plan for the future that is working. Like all business plans in times of great upheaval, our plan isn't without flaws and it isn't unaffected by the economy, but it is a better built foundation from which to grow. And it is a plan worth investing in.

Reorganisation and content evolution at USA Today

USA Today started the process of "disassembling its universal desk and a five-year effort at newsroom integration," in October 2010, Poynter's Rick Edmonds reported after discussion with publisher Dave Hunke. This effort will be replaced with "editing hubs by platform."

Staff are now organised around 15 distinct content areas and each will have its own top editor and a dedicated general manager to develop advertising and revenue opportunities, Hunke told Edmonds. The paper has about 400 staff on the content side, and the content teams vary in size from five to 20 people. Several managing editor jobs have been eliminated. Newsroom flow charts dated October 21–22, released by The Gannett Blog, showed that USA Today had just five reporters covering Congress, but 27 covering entertainment news.

The document showing the distribution of staff shows that as well as the five staff allocated to Congress/Politics, there were another six assigned to White House/Legal, another four to Federal and five to Economy/Jobs. This total number covering political issues is still less than the 27 focused on entertainment however, which accounted for by far the largest group.

Another table entitled Content Distribution/Programming shows the managers who are in charge of print publications, the website, production, mobile platforms and reader advocacy and the editors within each section. These staff are clearly divided by platform. Sports is now a separate business unit. The changes were intended to allow the paper to expand its mobile and tablet products and fully take advantage of these new platforms. The idea will be that offerings are "designed and edited to match the unique characteristics and markets" in both categories rather than just moving material from print and the website.

Hunke told Edmonds that part of the reason for this change was the feeling that the paper's print edition should focus on an older, general news audience, but that as tablet buyers so far seem to skew ten to 15 years younger than the typical print reader, a different approach was needed. He clarified that he did expect the print newspaper to continue to provide the biggest share of revenues for some time.

The company is finding that consumption habits and times of use vary by device, Editor John Hillkirk told a WAN-IFRA study tour. For example, while USA Today's print readership peaks between 7 and 9 am, the website crests between noon and 2 pm, while the iPad is doing really well at night – between 7 and 10 pm.

USA Today now has about 27 blogs, a number of which are almost constantly posting. Entertainment has been especially popular with readers as has video with the website getting about 100,000 views a day with its videos.

USA Today's strategy to fight back against threats from the Internet includes expanding its coverage of advertising-friendly topics and designing content specifically for smartphones and tablets, reported the AP. Advertising-friendly content in practice means lots of travel tips, gadget reviews, sports features, financial advice and lifestyle recommendations, the AP explained. Hunke has been advised by the paper's VP of business development, 30-year-old Rudd Davis, who convinced him that the newsroom should emphasize topics that specifically attract digital readers, the AP added.

In November, USA Today launched a website called Your Life, in a first attempt to fill this content need. The paper will launch further websites devoted to personal finance, technology and diversions, the AP specified.

Hunke believes that its formula for presenting content – compact stories surrounded by charts, illustrations and photos – is well suited for iPad and other tablet screens. The paper is available on a wide range of devices, and USA Today was one of the first papers to launch a version of its Android app specifically for the Motorola Xoom tablet, which launched in late February, running Android's first tablet-optimised OS, called Honeycomb.

Kommersant CEO on diversifying media portfolio in Russia

To hear Damian Kudriavstev describe Kommersant Publishing House's journey from a print-centric publisher to a prominent multimedia provider in Russia, he makes it all sound so logical, almost simple. But as any publisher knows, the work on such a transformation is never done and never easy. Since October of 2006, when he took over as CEO, Kudriavstev has accelerated and diversified Kommersant's activities, starting with going full-colour with its flagship business daily newspaper, launching new magazines, websites and an FM radio station, and in September it will hit the airwaves with a new TV news channel. Interestingly, Kudriavstev says all these moves were not necessarily about finding a new audience – if that happens, great – but more about satisfying the needs of his loyal audience and readership and extending the Kommersant brand.

WAN-IFRA: Under your direction, Kommersant has diversified its activities into a number of areas, particularly online, TV, radio, etc. How did you pave this path to become a multimedia operation?

KUDRIAVTSEV: My background is more in Internet as I was part of one of the first ISPs (Internet Service Provider) in Russia. And I remember when we first started that company and people wanted to connect, the first question they asked was: "Why should I connect with you, do you offer good content – in Russian?" That was funny. So from that response, we decided to establish a true content company to go with our sister ISP. I mean back then people wanted to know that something was there if they were willing to pay for this connection. And even today, Russians are not really willing to pay for content, so it was very unpredictable back in 1996.

Enter Kommersant … they had a very strong position in traditional content, in print. The company had a good reputation, especially in the mid-'90s, as being very influential with its content. But by the mid-2000s, it was starting to be considered a bit old-fashioned.

And this is why the shareholders put me in the position to drive some innovation on that front.

So we started to change the content on the traditional platforms, not on digital at the outset. We moved the newspaper from purely black and white to more colour, which also changed and improved our relationship with advertisers.

A second step was to change our line of magazines because we had titles covering finance, politics, the Kommersant newspaper, but our audience doesn't have only interests for business and politics, they also like style and travel and the like. So we added some travel, shopping and glamour magazines for the same audience. Not to extend the audience necessarily, but to cover their other interests. They believed in Kommersant when it just covered politics and business, and now they believe in it for these other topics.

After that, we had a strategy meeting where I announced this new idea: that we will cover all of our audience's interests and needs. We will not focus primarily on new audiences but covering the needs of our audience. For example, politics in the newspaper, economics in magazines, glamour and life in another magazine.

But – and here is a third step – when they are in a car driving … in Moscow, we have terrible traffic. They, of course, are not reading our publications during this time, but we don't want them to forget about us, so we said, 'let's do radio.' By doing this, we are offering continuous publishing as radio is online all the time. And if we can do this well, then we can surely do an online news site. We had a website that featured articles from the newspaper, but we thought if we had a website where we could do news all the time, then we can convert our newspaper site to a continuous news site. So we created one… that was a fourth step.

And after this we started to realise that we produce so much content that is already multimedia, with audio, video, blogs, internet, which is interactive, we then said, 'why not create a TV channel?' We know we have the contacts, a lot of known people, topics to cover, a lot of visual talent and we have people who have many connections to newsmakers, so we just add news packages and move them to TV. That's a simplified explanation, but we will launch a news channel in September that will target the same audience we have been attracting for the last 20 years.

WAN-IFRA: But what were some of the issues you faced, or challenges others might face in trying to launch, for example, a radio station if you are newspaper publisher?

KUDRIAVTSEV: First of all, there is the issue of brand. Our brand was rooted in print for sure, but we want to, of course, extend our brand in all things we do. In radio, obviously, you cannot read articles, but the same emotion and intonation that is associated with those stories has to come across in the different media, but of course in different ways. And if you fail, people will leave you. The same goes in print. There was this great economics website in Russia that launched a newspaper, but people were disappointed in the newspaper and they ended up not visiting the website anymore. When we launched our radio station, we had to find the right people for that medium. When we hire people to work at the newspaper, we try to instill into them the Kommersant agenda, who we are, and it was equally important to do the same for radio.

Secondly, people who advertise on radio are much different from those who might advertise in print, using different agencies, ones we have never worked with in the past. So we had to educate, if you will, these companies about Kommersant. Most advertisers know that Kommersant is the most important newspaper in the country, but people in radio don't care about that. 'If you want my advertising, show me that you know how radio works!'

And the final thing is another monetary metric system… we know how to calculate and distribute newspapers, but in radio we need ratings and ratings is a completely different thing. With all that said, I think we have handled all these problems pretty well. We are already one year on radio and I think we are doing well, but not well enough. We are not earning much money yet, but we are already at break-even. So we are optimistic about the future there.

WAN-IFRA: How are the editorial teams organised? One for each medium? Integrated? And the same for advertising?

KUDRIAVTSEV: We have a separate division called Synergy, whose main task is to run between all the separate editorial teams to work on cross projects. I am not talking about cross promotion, I am talking about cross projects. So they use some staff from different divisions to produce some content for specific projects but they actually pay them additional money. Journalists must work for different divisions, but they are paid for that separate work. As for advertising, we sell for each medium but we have close links between them.

WAN-IFRA: How has your digital background helped in this diversification strategy?

KUDRIAVTSEV: I admit it has been a bit of a challenge for me because you print something that cannot be corrected, so tomorrow it is already done. But it was also a big challenge for our editorial team, for example, to write articles not just for tomorrow but on a continuous basis as I was pushing them hard to do so. But we didn't try to do this overnight, we did this over time. And I think today we have a mutual understanding of what we need to do.

WAN-IFRA: Today media companies face increasing pressure to enter new markets, some that require entry quite quickly. How does market research fit into this environment?

KUDRIAVTSEV: It's very important, but it's not decisively important. Nobody who did market research in 2006 would have told Mark Zuckerberg to do Facebook because MySpace and Friendster were already thriving on the market. Of course you need to do market research, but you need to have a belief and a vision, and to be in harmony with your own people and shareholders. Then you can launch. Typically in Russia, marketing is always one step behind. If you would have asked the people here in 1989 if they liked the Soviet Union, 75 percent would have said yes. In the '90s, it no longer existed. Before the free market came, it would have made no sense to do marketing about Roquefort cheese because nobody tried it. But if you truly believe that people will try it, there is a good chance it will be on the shelves. That means that marketing needs not only a vision, but also education, explanation and a huge advertising effort. … at least in this country.

Tablets: the ultimate news delivery platform? 2

As soon as Apple introduced the iPad in March 2010, news publishers everywhere quickly began developing applications (apps) for it. While seeing the news industry rapidly embrace a new technology and platform has been encouraging, it also seems that many publishers to date have largely gone the route of essentially just repacking their print products in the new platform rather than taking advantage of the many new possibilities that tablets offer. In the following chapter we take a look at some publishers who are trying to make the most of their apps, including News Corp's tablet only offering, The Daily. Not to be forgotten are apps aimed at smartphones and how this area continues to develop. Furthermore, we consider the wide variety of issues that have arisen with the advent of apps, such as third-party news aggregators, and what newspapers can learn from them. We also examine the topic of apps versus browsers.

Among newspaper publishers making the most innovative use of tablet applications are, from left, Germany's Bild, the UK's Daily Telegraph and Colombia's El Tiempo.

Newspaper apps: The best uses of the new medium

Many anticipated 2010 to be "the year of the tablet," but for news organisations the true revolution is in many ways still to come. The release of the iPad in April 2010 launched the race to get content on the tablet, and there have been some open-minded attempts to make the most of the new medium. But for many newspapers, 2010 was simply a matter of transferring content from print editions to tablets with little innovation in the process.

One result of this development is that there is a growing division among news apps: some news organisations have the will (and resources) to create and experiment with new forms of reporting, while some supply little more than glorified PDFs. Yet even at this early stage it is clear that although hanging onto old ways may work as a cheaper short-term solution, making the jump from print to digital easier for readers, the innovators are the ones shaping the future of news.

The best way to get a glimpse of what that future might look like is by trying different approaches to going digital. Offering something more than the same content in new, shiny frames is essential in attracting new readers in the long run. Presented here are some of the most interesting features currently found in newspaper apps.

Holding on to the readers

One of the most obvious ways of expanding beyond the limitations of print media is the use of video, and many newspaper apps have video content as part of them. Video is also a good way of keeping readers engaged with the app – but what about audio? NPR observed the internal usage data of their app and discovered that on average, users who stream its app's audio content make twice as many pageviews

per visit as those who only read the app's text content.

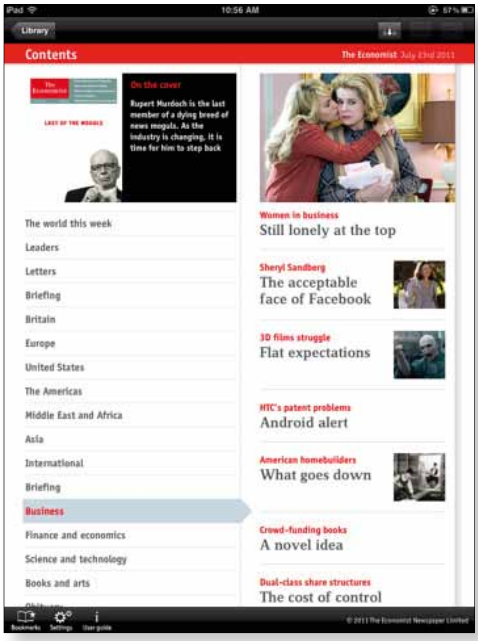
The NPR team concluded that audio content is an efficient way of engaging users, causing them to spend more time with an app – a useful discovery for news apps in general. Perhaps there are untapped ways of utilising audio content that news organisations should look into. A straightforward but effective way is found in The Economist's iPad app, which always includes the audio version of the whole issue.

Another way of keeping users interested in an app is by introducing regular updates with new features. This is the approach of Le Parisien, which plans to update its app with new functionalities every three months. The idea is to re-awaken user interest and also permit integration of technical developments such as different advertising formats. Le Parisien has tablet and smartphone apps for different platforms, all of which are updated when new features are introduced.

Some users have been put off by the relatively long download time of digital newspapers. Just a few minutes' delay can be too much for readers who are accustomed to instantaneous news access, either online or in print. Sometimes code-refining alone has decreased download time significantly, but many newspaper apps include the kind of multimedia content that takes a while to transfer.

Looking into ways of making new content accessible as soon as possible, WoodWing, a company that builds apps, came up with some solutions.

One of them is a progressive download function: the reader can immediately start reading the latest issue while the download continues in the background. If the reader jumps to a page that has not been downloaded yet, the app pauses the general download to retrieve that page. "An additional and soon to be released feature is background downloading, where the download process continues even when switching to a different application," said Stefan Horst from WoodWing. This feature has been made possible by an update that allows multitasking in iOS.



NPR and The Economist are each making interesting use of multimedia with their apps – especially in regard to audio. The Economist, for example, always includes an audio version of its entire issue.

The Sunday Times in the UK came up with another way to address the issue, giving the reader further control over the download. The newspaper's app makes it possible to download individual sections of the paper, allowing the reader to either download the whole issue or start with the section he or she likes to read first.

The questions of update frequency and aggregation

How often should a news app be updated for new content? The print newspaper cycle is typically based on releasing one "update," or new issue, a day, but for an app it would be possible to feature constant news updates. There are strong arguments for both approaches, with the issue boiling down to a simple question: should a newspaper app be regarded as a digital version of the newspaper, concentrating on analysis and a clear structure at the expense of immediate updates? Or should it be modelled after a continuously updated news website, offering the latest news all the time?

Interestingly, there seems to be a growing division between tablet and smartphone apps in this respect: many newspapers update content on their tablet apps once a day, while smartphone apps are more commonly modelled after a news website. This is mostly explained by the technical features that separate smartphones from tablets: they are all able to stay connected to the Internet at all times and feature smaller screens, better suitable for short bursts of reading.

But also on tablets, different approaches exist. The Daily Telegraph in the UK, for example, is one of many newspapers that have chosen to follow the print cycle. The newspaper, which relaunched its iPad app in May 2011, probably came to the decision partly because of the age of its digital readership (the average age of Telegraph iPad readers is 50, while its website users are 40 years old on average). The older generation of digital news consumers presumably adapt more easily to the tablet experience if its content is presented in a familiar form.

"The big decision we made was that fundamentally we want the iPad app to be a digital newspaper, as distinct from something that's updated every

What about the non-iPad devices?

Apple's rivals are working hard to undermine the company's lead in the tablet market, but chances are that iPad will be *the* tablet for some time for many people. According to StrategyEye's study into digital trends, about 60 million tablets are expected to ship in 2011, with the lion's share being iPads. The study estimated that Apple would hold between 65 and 80 percent of the market by the end of the year.

Despite Apple's seemingly unwavering lead, publishers should not rule out developing apps also for other platforms. Android, the most serious competitor of iOS, has seen many news apps already. With a steady wave of different Android smartphones appearing on the market, it is likely that it will achieve a firm long-term foothold. Moreover, as tablet sales are going up in general, the actual number of Apple's rivals could, potentially, be counted in millions, even if their market share remains low.

What might give a boost to Android is the release of Android 3.0, code-named Honeycomb, the first version of the operating system designed specifically for tablets. So far only one tablet that uses Android 3.0 is out (Motorola Xoom), and only one Honeycomb-specific newspaper app has been released, by USA Today.

RIM and Microsoft have also come out with mobile operating systems. The kind of impact they have in the smartphone market is yet unclear, but an eye should be kept on the development. Stig Nordqvist, WAN-IFRA's Executive Director of Emerging Digital Platforms and Business Development, pointed out that in the business world, RIM and its BlackBerry are important brands. It might be sensible for big business newspapers to look into publishing for the RIM Playbook, as this consumer segment could turn into an interesting niche group.

Even if the competitors are able to match Apple in terms of hardware and software, the work is not finished there. For Apple's dominance to be truly threatened, its competitors also need to develop a distribution service that is as user-friendly and effortless as iTunes.

five minutes," said Edward Roussel, The Daily Telegraph's digital editor, to the Financial Times. "It's a very different product to a live 24-7 website."

USA Today's iPad app represents the opposite approach, featuring a steady flow of updates around the clock. Many newspapers have chosen to update their apps several times a day but still provide a structured reading experience. The app of The New York Times, for example, refreshes itself periodically, always showing the time of the latest update.

Colombia's El Tiempo opted for a rather original solution: the newspaper releases two editions a day, and its

USA Today updates its tablet app throughout the day.

Smartphone – the not-to-be-forgotten little brother

While the tablets' relatively big screens allow for different kinds of approaches, smartphone news apps are rather uniform in comparison. Many simply provide an easy way to access the newspaper's website content. Similarly, most smartphone apps mainly feature up-to-date news instead of having different issues every day, for example.

It is clear that developing a single app to be used on both tablets and smartphones is an ill-conceived approach. The small screens and low-speed 3G network pose particular challenges, and apps should be built with them in mind.

As more and more people carry smartphones with them, and as buying apps is becoming increasingly common, it seems evident that the smartphone app market is still expanding and that more and more people use smartphones to read news. Perhaps a growing market will encourage app developers to take a more innovative approach in app design, which could lead to a greater differentiation between apps.

Among major newspaper publishers releasing smartphone specific apps in 2011 were The Times of India and USA Today.

The Times of India announced the launch of its app for Nokia smartphones in June, and the app is available for downloading from Nokia's Ovi Store. Apart from national, international, business, entertainment, health, sports and technology news, the app – updated 24x7 – covers more than 30 Indian cities and reviews of the latest movies. It also comes with photo galleries covering news, entertainment and fashion.

On touch phones, the app supports both portrait and landscape modes. Users can change the text size on article pages, and share articles via Facebook, Twitter, e-mail or SMS. With the launch of the Nokia app, The Times of India is now present on all the popular mobile platforms. The newspaper has also launched i-Phone, iPad, Android and BlackBerry apps, all of which have proved to be popular, the company says.

In May, USA Today announced the availability of its app for Windows Phone, which features a custom look and design for that platform. USA Today is now available on major platforms and devices including Windows Phone, iOS (iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch), Android (phones and tablets), Chrome Web Store, Google TV, Windows-based slate PCs and Intel's AppUp store for netbook PCs.

USA Today has a print circulation of more than 1.8 million daily, and its website, USAToday.com, reaches a combined 5.9 million readers daily. USA Today is a leader in mobile applications with more than 8 million downloads on mobile devices.

digital readers can choose to buy either its morning or evening edition. This makes it possible to publish a newsier edition in the morning while the evening edition may include longer, analytical articles. This is reminiscent of the way some newspapers used to have more than one print edition a day.

As in their print versions, the content in most newspaper apps is wholly or at least mostly original. Many newspapers are uneasy about the notion of aggregation. Some, however, have crossed over: The US-based Orange County Register, which launched an iPad app in April, reasoned that in order to appeal to the 35 and 45-year-olds it believed will form the bulk of its digital readers, the app needs to feature content tailored for that group especially. As the newspaper was unable to produce all that material by itself, it turned to outside sources: at the app's launch, about 90 percent of the app's content was generated in-house, with the outsiders' share expected to go up.

It is interesting to note that some mainstream newspapers, such as The New York Times and The Washington Post, have been involved in the development of aggregator services (news.me and Trove, respectively, and both in the creation of Ongo). It seems that some newspapers are experimenting with ways of serving different audiences: the less tech-savvy readers are more likely to go for the newspapers' digital versions, while heavy news consumers are willing to invest time and energy in choosing several sources to satisfy their hunger for news.

German bravery

In terms of presenting content in a fresh, tablet-native way, publishers would do well to have a look at what certain German newspapers are doing. The tabloid Bild's app imitates the playful appearance of the print version, bringing it alive with plenty of interactivity and encouraging the reader to try touching the screen at different points. The result succeeds in reproducing the tongue-in-cheek attitude of the print paper.

Die Zeit was one of the first publications to launch an iPad-optimised version of its website, Zeit Online, using HTML5. The iPad-site was just a first step, the paper said, and versions for additional devices will be developed when they become big enough in the German market. This is in addition to a paid app.

One of the changes is to put much larger touch spaces around text links. Another is to allow finger swipes through slide shows. "The overall design asks for a strict reduction down to a site's very essence for users to quickly find their way around," a blog posting said.

Wolfgang Blau, editor of Zeit Online, explained in an interview with Werben und Verkaufen magazine that there are

Accessibility offers tablets a market opportunity

The intuitive touch-based user interface of the iPad makes the device accessible for many people for whom using regular computers is difficult. Apps designed with accessibility in mind could open new doors for news consumption for many. Unfortunately, Poynter's Patrick Thornton noted, most apps leave room for improvement from the point of view of accessibility. Here are some of his findings:

- For the visually impaired, the possibility to enlarge font size would be important. Although iOS's pinch-to-zoom feature would be an intuitive way to change text size, it does not work on all apps. In many applications it is not possible to enlarge text at all.
- Although iOS comes with VoiceOver, a program that theoretically makes screen-reading possible on any application, the feature currently works poorly in most news apps.
- The need to rotate the iPad to access new content – which can be a frustrating feature also for the able-bodied – may be a usability issue for some users.

Some app developers have taken the initiative to improve the accessibility of their software. Although the feature is not aimed at the visually impaired in particular, The Economist's iPad app always includes the audio version of the whole issue. The app also has built-in text-zooming.

The Economist said it would perform a review to help identify accessibility issues for different types of impairment. The paper has already noticed that the carousel menu, used in its iPhone app, is an accessibility issue for the visually impaired.

Die Zeit was one of the first publications to launch an iPad-optimised version of its website, Zeit Online, using HTML5

some users who prefer apps, but there are also some who use the iPad for online surfing and like to use the browser, and "we want to make attractive offers to both user types." The advantages of the paid app include the digital edition of Die Zeit, other paid-for online content and other features which are not available on the website. The idea is that the app and the optimized site will complement one-another, Blau said: the app will link out to articles in the optimized site and the site will promote the app.
The optimized site was built in collaboration with Tokyo-based Information Architects. A posting on IA's site explained that the optimization was done in HTML5, and said "it has been a demanding design process to get to the point of simplicity where it's at right now."

"There's no rational reason to neglect the most obvious iPad news platform: The website," IA said, noting, as Blau did, that a strong browser presence can promote the app and that devel-

Apps: Free for a limited time

Several newspapers ventured into tablet publishing by first launching an app that offers a free-of-charge access to the newspaper's digital news service, with the plan to start charging at a later date. Although having to start to pay for something that used to be free is, of course, unpleasant, this model gives the readers the opportunity to get to know the digital content and familiarise themselves with the app's interface before making the decision whether or not to pay for it.

This was the model for, among others, The Washington Post, which launched its free iPad app in November 2010, and said that it would eventually change to a paid model, though as of summer 2011, the app was still available free of charge. Also, The Daily initially launched with a free trial period, but switched to a paid-for model soon after.

In May, The Daily Telegraph updated its iPad app, introducing a paid-for model for the previously free app. And when The New York Times introduced its digital subscriptions in March, it included its iPad app into the scheme, months after the app was launched as free. As of late July 2011, the first eight weeks of the digital subscription were still featuring a significant discount to entice readers to try it.

oping an HTML-based news app is cheaper, faster, and easy for the user.

Frankfurter Rundschau, one of the first German papers to create a dedicated native app, received a lot of initial praise for the original daily content and visual presentation of its tablet presence. Currently the app is one of the top revenue-earning German news apps, exemplifying that the brave, early adapters do not only face risks – they often are the ones to also reap the greatest rewards.

The newspaper is already looking into HTML to develop its tablet presence further. "One shouldn't ask how to bring a newspaper to the iPad, rather how should a great content product look like on the iPad," said Heiko Scherer, Project Manager at the Rundschau. Germany's Rheinische Post's Sunday magazine-style iPad app has also done well in the eyes of critics and the public.

In sum, there is no standout approach to publishing on tablets. Rather, the best practice depends on many factors. The best apps are most probably those that succeed in following the tone and style of the print publication while being able to embrace the possibilities of the digital medium. The iPad app of The Economist, for instance, departs from the print edition but still represents the brand's hallmarks. Compared to The Economist, Bild is a very different paper in general, and it is only logical that its digital version takes a completely different approach.

Taking the readership into account in the development of an app is critical: Wired's app, for example, features plenty of interactive, game-like elements, clearly targeted at the magazine's tech-oriented audience. A felt connection between a newspaper's app and the paper's identity is crucial.

Producing a facsimile of the print edition is a cheap, easy way to expand to tablets, making it a good option for newspapers wanting to take the leap but lacking in the resources of a major news organisation. But in the long run, more creative solutions are required. At this early stage, it is secondary whether the effort is a complete success from the get-go. What matters more is the willingness to innovate and courage to take steps into the unknown.

Germany's Frankfurter Rundschau was one of the first newspapers in the country to create a dedicated native app.

Launched in February 2011, The Daily is the world's "first iPad-only newspaper."

Breaking new ground – The Daily

In the world of iPad news apps, no other event comes close to generating the kind of hype that surrounded the launch of News Corporation's The Daily, touted as the "first iPad-only newspaper." The media field in particular is keenly following The Daily, as its success will set an important precedent for others thinking of venturing into this type of digital-only publishing. In terms of investment, Rupert Murdoch's corporation has pulled out all the stops: The Daily's development costs were reportedly $30 million, and more than 100 journalists work on the newspaper.

The effort shows particularly in The Daily's appearance. After being presented with the cover of the latest issue, the reader sees next the app's

While The Daily retains some features of print media, it also features a great deal of video content.

"carousel" menu, making it easy to flip through the issue. The app's developers have clearly understood that many of us like to skim through a magazine before settling down to read individual articles.

As a digital newspaper, The Daily is not bound by conventions familiar from its rivals in print. It features plenty of video, which helps in keeping the reader engaged, and animation often accompanies its articles. The app could, however, make even further use of digital possibilities: some animations, for example, seem to have been added more as an afterthought, instead of being an integral part of reporting. Interestingly, ads on the app are perhaps the best example of content that exploits the digital medium most successfully, which is maybe something newspapers can learn from.

The Daily also retains some features from its cousins in print media, probably as a way to give the reader a sense of familiarity. Reading The Daily is a fairly similar experience to reading a magazine, as navigation within the app is on the left-right axis and most pages are presented on the screen in their entirety. The overall feeling is very intuitive.

The developers have done their best to make sure that the reader never feels lost within the app. When reading, a bar shows the location of the open page within the issue, and the approach of dividing content into different, clearly marked sections is also helpful.

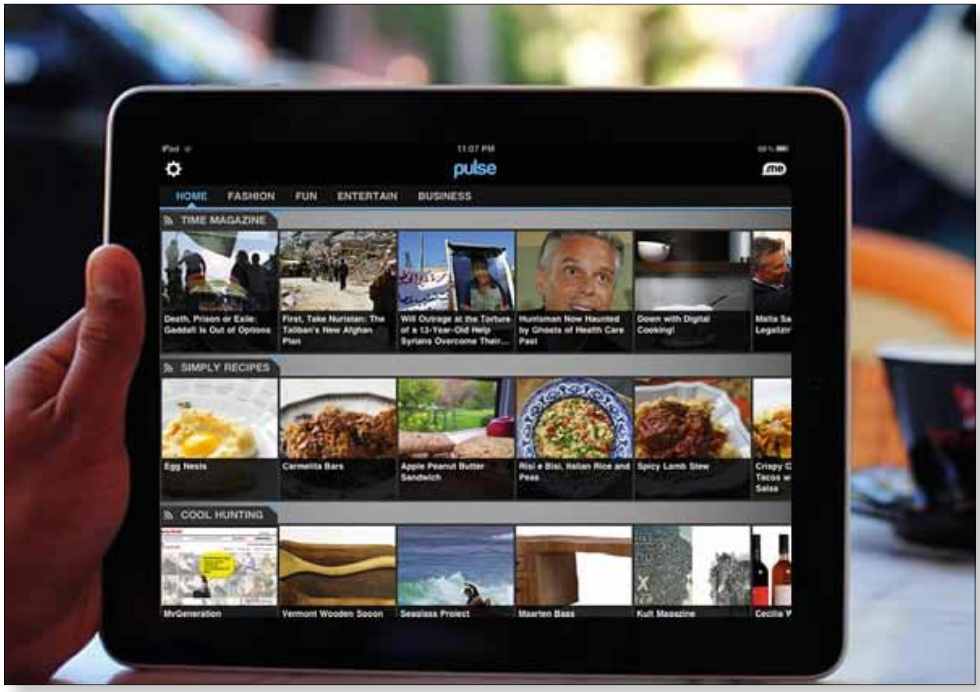
When coming back to an issue, the app can take the reader to the page where he or she left off. More over, the app remembers which pages have already been opened, presenting them greyed-out in an overview.

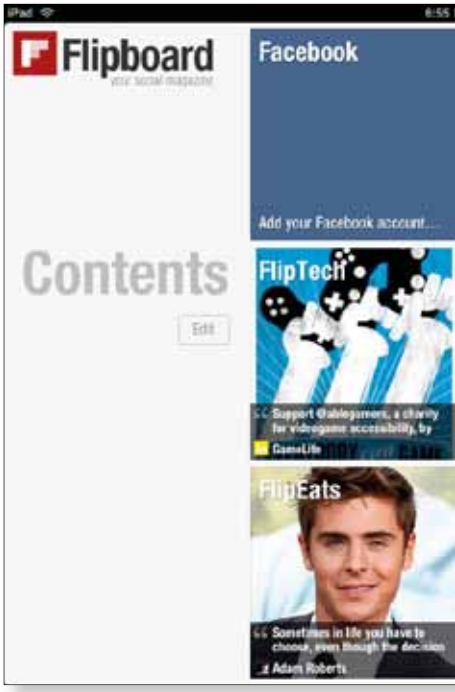
Although The Daily's look is pleasant, the styles of different sections within

the app differ notably from one another. This is most probably a conscious choice – after all, there is no need for a tablet news app to adhere to a single aesthetic principle – but in The Daily's case the result has a feel of slight visual inconsistency.

This feeling of discrepancy is only strengthened when observing the content. Many commentators have noted that The Daily has more a tabloid sensitivity than that of a newspaper, but this depends on sections: "news" and "business" seem much more newspaper-y than "gossip" and "apps & games," and also the sections' appearances reflect this. Overall, the reader easily gets an impression of multiple newspapers put into one. In late summer 2011, The Daily became available in the UK, but its content remained largely US-centred as of this writing.

News Corp has not released precise statistics but confirmed at the beginning of May that The Daily had been downloaded more than 800,000 times. With an attractive pricing ($0.99 a week, $39.99 a year), many iPad owners are sure to give it a try. But the crucial question is, how many of those early testers have been converted into subscribers?





Third-party news aggregators such as Pulse (left), Flipboard and Zite aim to attract users by offering them a personalised reading experience.

Third party news apps – know your enemy?

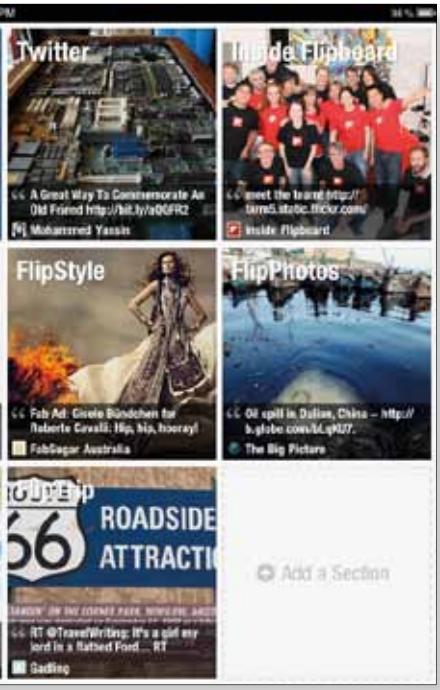
When Steve Jobs first presented the iPad to an expectant public on 2 March 2010, he chose to highlight its potential with an app called Pulse – a third-party news aggregator that combined stripped-down news delivery with an easy-on-the-eye interface. The public was delighted, but the news industry was less so, and The New York Times' response to the new format was a well publicised cease-and-desist order.

The reach and physical format of tablets has seen them touted as a game-changer for news and has led to the tablet app topping the to-do list for many newspapers' technical divisions. Yet from Day One the existence of third-party aggregators meant that many papers found their content already being shared on-screen before they had a chance to release their own application.

One year on and a lot has changed. Pulse has been muscled off centre stage by rivals Flipboard and Zite and while the tale of the tablet is still punctuated with cease-and-desist letters the news industry has moved on to counter the copyright threat with a new generation of reader apps from publishers themselves. So which apps are making headlines? How do they work, and how do they differ?

Anatomy of a news app

News aggregation is nothing new and most papers' websites have long promoted the process with RSS feeds that speed their content into reader applications such as Google Reader and Netvibes. So when Pulse and co. made



their début there was much comment that this was little more than the RSS feed rejuvenated for the tablet.

There is the key distinction, however, that an RSS feed on a website works in the expectation that the users themselves select the topics and sources they like, and are then presented with the headlines of each which, when clicked, lead back to the original source for the full story.

With the tablet readers, however, it soon became apparent that the idea was one of "curated" browsing with the apps themselves selecting the content to deliver. In certain reading modes this content was then displayed without the link back to the original, which was what goaded The New York Times into legal action.

It would be a mistake, however, to think of tablet news apps as being merely curated RSS feeds. From the start, the apps promised integration with social networks, initially in the form of content sharing but as new apps have joined the crowd it is clear that they are increasingly taking their cue, and sometimes their content, from Twitter and Facebook. Just as a Facebook feed filters news items on the basis of the individual's level of interaction with the source, so apps now look for recommended links from a user's social circles (and beyond) and prioritise the delivery of stories based on adaptive algorithms that learn from the way the user then interacts with the results.

Algorithms alone do not, however, make for compelling reading and so most aggregator apps have added a level of human intelligence to the mix in the form of "editor's picks" and "most read" content choices as well. The combined promise of which is that the reading experience delivered by a tablet app is not only better than that of typical browsing or RSS feeds but continues to improve based on observation of reading habits while maintaining freshness through the input of editors, friends, and friends-of-friends.

The players

Pulse, by Alphonso Labs, found fame thanks to Steve Jobs showcasing it as the first of its type, and it combined the RSS reader with the point and swipe approach of the now familiar Apple touch and swipe OS for phones and tablets. As well as feeds and featured sources such as CNN, it guided readers with content suggestions in the form of Top Ten lists by theme (celebrities, sport, etc.) and enabled sharing with social networks so readers could recommend to each other. Although the publicity of being first put Pulse on the map it now faces stiff competition from rivals and has subsequently been upstaged by Flipboard.

Flipboard distinguished itself in two key areas; interface and interaction with social networks. Firstly it noted that the smoothness and sophistication of the interface had played a huge

part in the popularity of the iPhone and subsequently the iPad and it set out to capitalize on that. Instead of austere e-mail style lists of headlines and intros culled from RSS feeds, Flipboard lays stories out on a grid pattern more in the manner of an eBook. Those pages then flip – a simple but aesthetically satisfying way of navigating that plays to the strength of the swipe interface on touch screens. It has also led to Flipboard's look and feel becoming pretty much the standard by which all other news apps are judged.

Flipboard integrated with Twitter, Facebook, and Flickr to aggregate friend feeds as news, a move that recognises the way readers increasingly receive their information. Having combined that feel with those feeds Flipboard billed itself as a "social magazine." Flipboard has since added recommended reads to the mix in the form of lists and made it easy to subscribe to blogs. It's a cocktail that has clearly impressed investors since the company secured US$ 50 million in venture capital and a US$ 200 million valuation that has drawn attention and envy in equal proportions.

Zite came on to the scene after Flipboard and Pulse and was quick to distinguish itself as the personalised magazine that automatically learns from users' likes and dislikes and takes that information to present an ever-improving selection of suggested reading. In late August, Zite was acquired by CNN, which announced that it would add the app to its list of digital products "as a separate, stand-alone business." CNN also said that it plans to use some of Zite's technology in its own applications and websites.

To do that it uses a combination of manual and automated tools. By default it will automatically learn from you simply by noting what you select to read and how long you spend with which content items. Then it automatically proposes more of the same or items from related topics. You can jump start that by syncing with Twitter or Google Reader to give the app a feel for your interests and Zite builds on that with smart suggestions and a range of manual tools such as "thumbs up" options so users can flag content they particularly enjoyed.

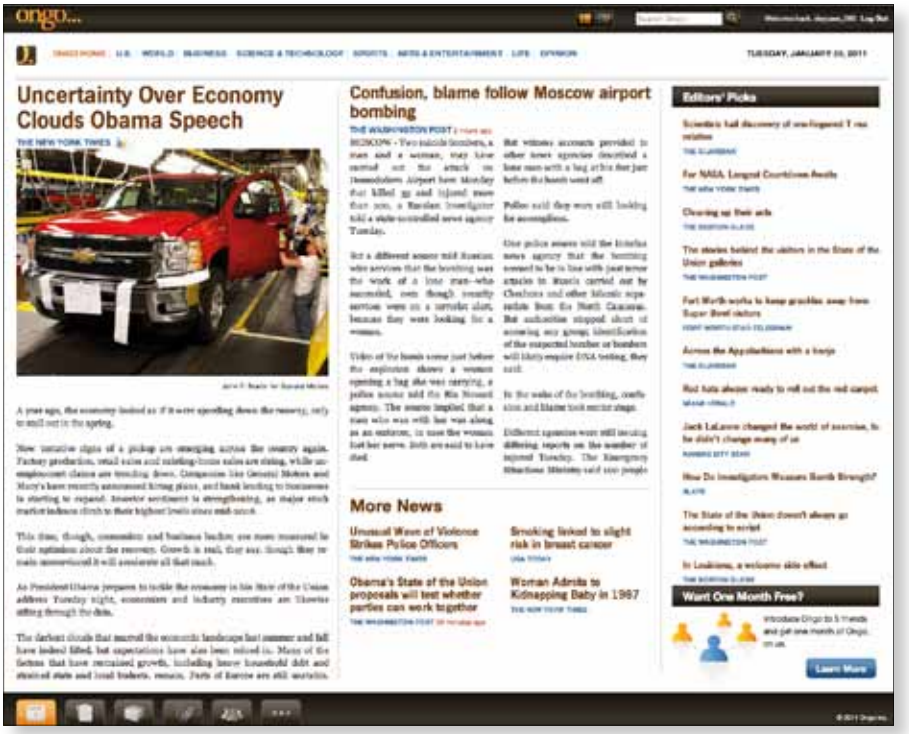
Newspaper publisher apps

Ongo is backed by The New York Times, The Washington Post and USA Today. It's strength is clearly its publishing roots, and it plays to that with a clean interface featuring top news filtered by a staff of human editors. A search facility makes it a curated front end to the content of its parent companies and its newspaper roots can also be detected in the fact that it offers subscription-based (but ad-free) access to the Guardian, Associated Press, Detroit Free Press, The Miami Herald, Slate, and a selection from the Financial Times in addition to its parent publications.

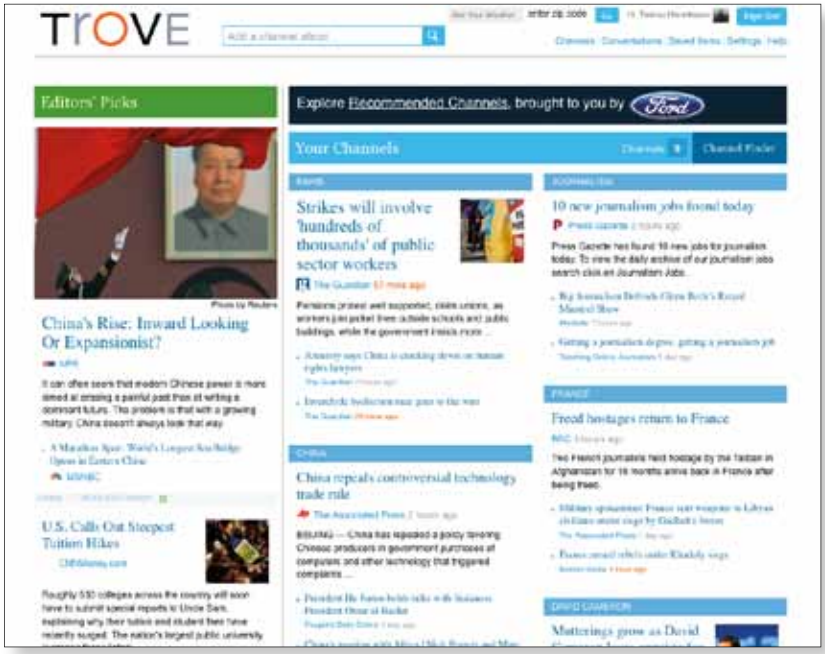
It also tackles a familiar problem for publishers in its attempts to bring quality to reader comments. Rather than risk the anonymous free-for-all of comments that frequently descend into mutual insults, Ongo aims to have quality commenting by allowing subscribers control who they converse with.

Ongo content can be shared with non-subscribers but a recommend-a-friend model means that if the non-subscriber signs up then the original subscriber is rewarded.

Trove, launched in April 2011 by The Washington Post, is a personalised, social news site and aggregator available as a free public beta at time of writing.



Launched in January 2011, Ongo received financing from USA Today, The New York Times and The Washington Post.



Trove seeks to give readers a personalised news experience with a social media component. News.me aims to filter news from Twitter while offering users an easy-to-read experience.

The service is intended to deliver more relevant news to the users by inviting them to paint a picture of their likes and dislikes by choosing between different stories. Trove combines that information with a daily selection from an editorial team and whilst its social media element is still to be refined, Trove is clearly heading that way from the start since it uses Facebook Connect to import user's interests from their profile to accelerate the personalisation.

News.me is the result of a collaboration between The New York Times and tech incubator Betaworks. Its principal distinction is that it aims to filter the news being talked about on Twitter by scanning the links being shared courtesy of Bit.ly, the URL shortening service. That means that News.me combines the immediacy and social nature of Twitter with the ease of reading offered by a tablet app. News.me compares its service to being able to read over the shoulder of others who have found something of interest. It's available as a subscription-only iPad app and promises to pay publishers based on how many times users read individual articles.

Issues and choices

The copyright issues of aggregation have never been satisfactorily resolved and the appearance of tablet apps does little to clear muddy waters.

Zite has been served cease-and-desist letters from The Washington Post, AP, Gannett, Getty Images, Time, Dow Jones amongst others, which has forced it to change its presentation of content from those publishers so that it is presented in its original format complete with links back to the original.

Flipboard's CEO Mike McCue has said "We want to build a business with publishers, not on the backs of publishers." Although the company relies on content created by others, it does strike up partnerships with its news providers. Even News.me charges for content from sources regardless of whether they have signed up but its answer to that issue is to promise rewards for publishers based on reading habits. Ongo steps neatly around the issue by featuring content from its parent companies, but that also brings up the old question of whether web users, accustomed to total freedom when harvesting information, will then be prepared to pay for "walled-garden" content, which is restricted to only a few publications.

The problem goes beyond the question of copyright and the principle of repurposing of RSS feeds since one of the principal strengths of all news reader apps is that they take the visually jumbled presentation of the web and strip out the clutter to leave a cleaner, more print-like format. In the process they

also strip out the advertising, which is a joy for readers tired of unwanted ads running across articles, but which raises further questions about revenue models and may influence a publisher's choice when it comes to signing up, or not, with any given news reader app.

Finally there is the question about whether the real issue is one of distinguishing between the different news reader apps or of choosing whether to go the app route at all. OnSwipe is an example of an HTML5 platform that makes publishers' content tablet-ready without the need to develop an app so that an existing website automatically takes on the touch and swipe interface when viewed with a tablet. While some high profile publishers have clearly expended significant effort in developing news apps, others will doubtless be keen to know if they can skip the entire app issue and go straight to an HTML5 solution.

Will web applications supersede native apps?

When Apple launched the iPad in March 2010, news organisations instantly recognised the device's potential and rushed to develop applications for it. Native apps, distributed on Apple's App Store, seemed to be the best way to go about it, although it meant that the apps could not be used on rival tablet devices and that Apple would get a share of all sales. Today, all major newspapers have released an iPad app.

Already a year ago, some questioned the approach of investing in native apps, advocating the use of web applications instead. Now, with HTML5 showing more and more promise, the reasons why web apps are an appealing approach to digital news publishing are becoming increasingly clear.

First, a web app is accessible on any device with an up-to-date Internet browser. If publishers choose the native app route and want to have a presence on all of the tablets on the market, they have to develop and maintain native apps for each of the operating systems used by device manufacturers. This is costly, and many publishers opt for creating apps only for the two most prominent ones, iOS (used in the iPad) and Android, some settling for just the iPad.

Second, publishing on the Internet

HTML5 in a nutshell

HTML5 is the fifth generation of HyperText Markup Language, the language used to create websites. The updated version adds several new features, allowing the creation of far more interactive and visually impressive web pages than the previous version, HTML4, which was standardised in 1997. So far, developers have had to use software such as Adobe's Flash or Microsoft's Silverlight to go beyond HTML's limitations, for example when creating web browser games.

With HTML5, video and audio content can be added to a webpage without complicated computer code. It also includes enhanced capabilities for complex graphics, offline access of websites and voice recognition. Offline functionality would make it possible to develop web apps that run without an Internet connection after downloading them, like native apps do. HTML5 will not be standardised before 2014, which is when the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), the standards organisation for the web, is expected to give a recommendation for the standard. Many features of HTML5 can be exploited before that, however, and all major web browsers already support many of HTML5's capabilities, with Google's Chrome leading the way. Users can expect to see more and more features supported in the future.

HTML5 has some important backers. Google's operating system for computers, also titled Chrome, will rely heavily on HTML5-powered web apps. Steve Jobs's public dismissal of Flash gave the implication that also Apple is fully behind HTML5. (However, because of its App Store, Apple is in no hurry to leave the native app era behind.) Also Dean Hachamovitch, the general manager for Microsoft's Internet Explorer, has described HTML5 as "the future of the web," and the browser's latest updates have increased its support significantly.

would allow publishers to avoid any centralised distribution systems such as the App Store. This way, they could avoid dealing with any costs imposed by intermediaries, the most famous – and most objected to – being the 30-percent slice Apple takes of all purchases on the App Store.

Third, there is the issue of the connected nature of the Internet. Many have argued that, as native apps are not essentially connected to the web once their content is downloaded, they don't follow the ideals of web publishing. In contrast, web apps' content is on the Internet, meaning that it could come up in a regular search on Google, driving potentially more traffic to the site. Some say that accessing content on a browser would also facilitate the use of social media.

The champions of web apps are counting on HTML5, the fifth generation of the markup language used in creating websites. Its new features are expected to allow for far more creative and visually impressive websites than before, bridging the gap between the web and native apps. In theory, future web apps could match native ones in terms of looks and usability.

So why not go the HTML5 way already? The problem is that HTML5's potential remains mostly unfulfilled at this stage. It is still a work in process, and web developers are presently becoming more adept with the language. Some have claimed that it will take years before HTML5 applications reach the kinds of standards publishers (and consumers) are used to with native apps.

Before web apps reach those expectations, it is doubtful that they pose a real threat to native apps. According to TigerSpike, an app developer, the average engagement time with their apps is 30 to 34 minutes, which is significantly more than how long readers stay on newspapers' websites on average. It seems that more and more news consumers are getting accustomed to the app experience and would, thus, be unlikely to accept a change to a lower standard – particularly if such apps wouldn't be free.

An HTML5 app that makes sense

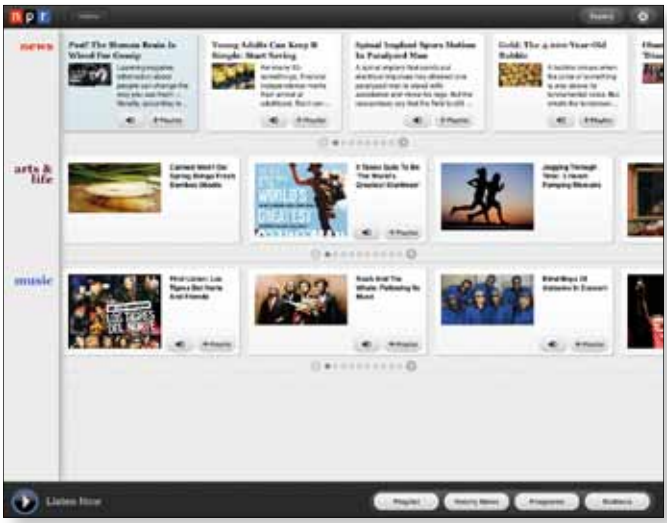
The Financial Times uses the HTML5 language to offer practically the same functionalities as a native application but via a web browser. With this new web application, the daily business newspaper is backing the Internet standards and freeing itself from a development linked to proprietary operating systems, mainly that of Apple, but also the commercial constraints of the App Store (especially access to the personal data of new subscribers).

iPad and iPhone users can download this application from the Safari browser via the web address http://app.ft.com. The development is well presented and the HTML5 web application very much resembles the iOS application. This new web application has been optimised mainly for the users of Apple tablets and smartphones, but can be adapted also to the new tablets on the market, whether they are based on Android such as Samsung Galaxy or Motorola Xoom or on the BlackBerry PlayBook operating system.

"This is our best app yet, and it is an important step in our strategy of providing multi-channel access to our global journalism quickly and simply," explained John Ridding, CEO of the Financial Times at the launch on 7 June. "The FT Web App offers our customers flexibility and freedom of choice with access to the Financial Times with a single login or subscription. In a world of increasingly digital complexity we want to keep our service simple, easy to use."

Further updates in the pipeline include FT Blogs, Special Reports and illustrative graphics; and a new "Clippings" service which will allow users to read articles later, either on their tablet or on their desktop PC once they get to work.

The New York Times' Skimmer uses a clean, uncluttered look to help readers navigate the news.



Not surprisingly, NPR's web app makes extensive use of audio.

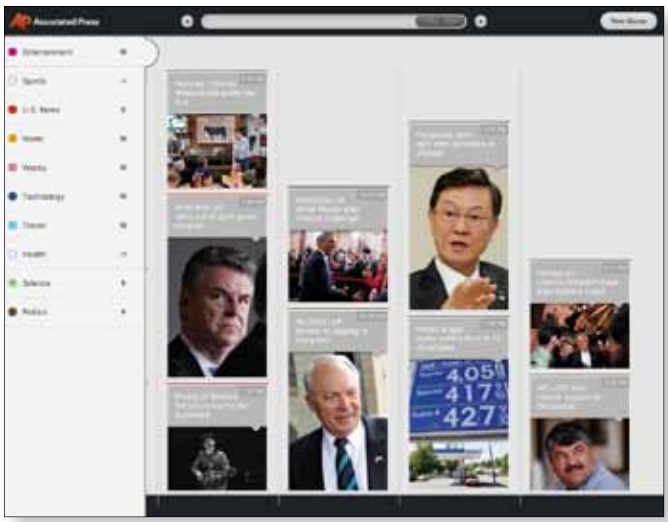
News publishers are naturally experimenting with HTML5, and although the results show a drastic change from traditional approaches to news websites, most fall short of providing the kind of experience seen in most advanced native apps. Next, the web apps that show most promise are presented. All of the following apps can be accessed both with tablet devices and regular computers.

Some of the most interesting web apps so far

When it comes to expanding into the digital landscape, probably no other newspaper's attempts are followed as closely as those of The New York Times. The paper launched its HTML5-based site Times Skimmer at the end of 2009, placing it in the vanguard of web app publishing. Skimmer's appearance is very modest – it features only a few animations to show page changes, for example – and its developers appear to have aimed to create a way of reading news that is above all simple and uncluttered. The site bears a resemblance to the newspaper's iPad app.

USA Today has modelled its web app, called Optimus, after its native app, available for iPad and Android devices. It has a pleasant appearance and a reasonably intuitive user interface but features fewer articles than Times Skimmer. Whereas the latter has numerous articles divided into several different sections, encouraging long reading sessions, the former seems to be designed to be an easy way for news-snacking.

NPR's web app takes after the radio network's iPad-dedicated application, featuring links to stories divided into separate rows. More content can be found by scrolling the rows horizontally. Audio, understandably, has an important role in the app, but visually it doesn't break new ground.



The Associated Press takes a timeline approach.

The Center of Public Integrity's "Looting the Seas" is aimed at making long-form content easy-to-read.

The Associated Press does not have a dedicated iPad app (though it does for the iPhone), meaning that its web app has been built from the ground up. Visually, AP Timeline Reader is the most ambitious web app of the ones examined here, featuring plenty of photographs and interface animation. The app's content is presented in a horizontal timeline, an original approach, but the way it is executed doesn't feel entirely intuitive on a computer.

The Center of Public Integrity's Looting the Seas is one of the most interesting attempts to use HTML5 in the context of long-form journalism so far. CPI's app has a pared-down, unassuming appearance, but its strengths lie elsewhere: the content is presented in a distraction-free manner, making it suitable for in-depth reading. Moreover, the app makes use of its existence in the web by linking to external sources, giving the reader the possibility to examine the original data. This is essential for a publication that professes journalistic or scientific accountability.

Another novel way of using the web app format is Fortune500+, described as a Fortune 500 dashboard and toolkit that provides company descriptions and ranks, among other content. Native versions of the app will be released later, but the magazine has faith in HTML5: "I think you'll see that more and more apps will go this way," said Daniel Roth, managing editor at Fortune.com.

What does the future hold?

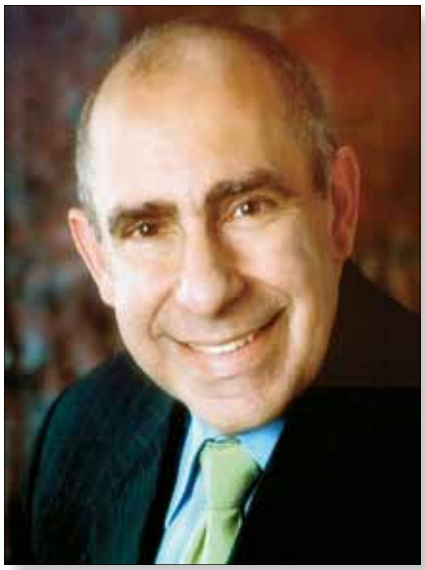
In sum, none of the examined web apps is as visually impressive as some of the most dashing native apps. It seems that developers use HTML5 at this point to create clear presentations, leaving the fireworks to native apps. It is revealing about the state of web publishing that there have been no attempts to convert more technically ambitious apps, such as The Daily, into web applications.

News publishers should keep an eye on the publishing tools that are being developed around HTML5. Several are in the works currently, and some of them are created to be free of use. OnSwipe, for example, aims to provide tools for publishing in different, customisable ways, while the company intends to create a kind of an ecosystem around its publishing tools.

Such a digital publication method could be an attractive option for smaller newspapers that don't have resources to embark on an app-development venture. A possible drawback would be a lack of originality in the app's appearance, but it could be that once the app craze quietens down, news consumers will put more emphasis on content than technical brilliance. In any case, it seems clear that not all apps need to have an original user interface.

Although the appeal of web apps is clear, it might be that technology is not yet ready for an all-web approach. Although there is a good chance that web apps will become the long-term solution, currently only native apps have the kind of visual finesse that can encourage readers to part with their money. But a change may already be in the air: Research released in May by Flurry, an app analytics company, showed that although single-platform apps are far more numerous, the number of multi-platform apps is growing nearly twice as fast as Android-only apps, and at nearly triple the rate of iOS-only apps. App developers seem to have caught on to what the future trend will be, once technology catches up with expectations.

Mario Garcia: Newspapers need to carve their niche on tablets



Renowned newspaper designer Mario Garcia was quick to get his hands on an iPad when the Apple tablet first hit the market. It didn't take long for him to realize that tablets can be a "game changer" for the industry. Garcia has earned his reputation as one of the leading newspaper designers in the world with numerous prestigious redesign projects, including The Wall Street Journal, The Miami Herald and Die Zeit. Naturally, his philosophy that the audience comes first has left its imprint on all the digital projects he's taken up. In this e-mail interview he shares his thoughts on the latest developments in tablet publishing.

WAN-IFRA: You have written a lot about the unique experience that must be found on tablets... How do you feel newspapers' efforts stack up thus far?

GARCIA: We are making progress, but it is slow progress; first, many newspaper publishers and editors do not see the tablet making money for them quickly, and that is a drawback, because in the case of the tablet one must be patient. There is no question in my mind that the tablets are, indeed, game changers for the industry. But the payoff is not going to come in a moment – more like three to five years. However, the tablet as a platform must be introduced as soon as possible by all titles. In terms of the news apps that we see, many are beginning to get away from the "let's copy the printed newspaper" model and creating real news apps with personality and where the platform is utilized to its potential. It will take time.

WAN-IFRA: Which newspapers have impressed you and why?

GARCIA: I like what Tages Anzeiger of Switzerland has just done with its new tablet edition. I like what many Scandinavian dailies are beginning to do, Da-

gens Nyheter of Sweden, for example. I read El País and The New York Times on the tablet all the time for their superb content, but they are NOT there yet in breaking away from the newspaper look and feel and offering more videos and pop-up moments. And, of course, Germany's Bild, that popular mass market daily, has some of the best pop-up moments of any newspaper in the tablet.

WAN-IFRA: What are some absolute musts for newspaper publishers to give their readers unique content on this platform?

GARCIA: You must create a unique, curated tablet edition; appoint a tablet editor; appoint a photo/video editor; and design not just for the brain and the eye, but also for the finger, which becomes a protagonist on this platform. Readers want things to happen in a non-linear format. They don't want to flip pages on the tablet – not all the time, anyway. The tablet must make the finger happy.

WAN-IFRA: What are the most common mistakes that newspapers make when transferring a printed product onto a tablet?

GARCIA: Transferring is the big mistake. Forget transferring! Pretend there is no printed product and that you are here to create a tablet-only newspaper. Then abandon the legacy syndrome that suffocates, and move on to create tablet experiences. Do not think that the tablet edition is an online edition either. The tablet is its own platform, able to give stories "longer legs."

WAN-IFRA: In your blog you mention the importance of "thinking like the audience." When newspapers are creating an app, what is the best way for them to know what their audience wants?

GARCIA: The tablet is a lean-back platform. Readers want to sort of disconnect (while connected) with the tablet. Give me the experience of the movies, a little TV, some radio, some newsweekly magazine reading experience à la Life of the '60s. Relax with the tablet.

WAN-IFRA: How can a newspaper go about building an interactive relationship with its users?

GARCIA: See if you can customize content (which Tages Anzeiger does nicely now). Create a tablet edition that talks to the reader, from one person to another. Create these "content suites" that are so personal that you wish to come there daily, at that time of the day when you take off your shoes and lie on the couch.

WAN-IFRA: One recent study estimated that about 8 percent of American adults own a tablet. Given that this is a fairly low percentage, how important do you think tablet apps are to newspapers?

GARCIA: They are going to be the platform of choice for obtaining information, no question. In that sense (see answer to first question), it is not a matter of IF a newspaper goes tablet, but WHEN and HOW. Every newspaper should have at least a 1.0 edition of the tablet as soon as possible.

The quest for the digital business model

3

For several years, many newspaper publishers – especially those in the United States and the UK – have been debating online subscription models in the quest to find the perfect digital business model. To charge, or not to charge for online content? What model should be adopted? How can we increase digital revenues without losing readers and advertisers?

2010 to 2011 has seen the first wave of English-language papers adopting some kind of paid digital content, but it is still far from the norm, and there are a multitude of models out there.

The two biggest papers to start charging are the Times of London (along with its sister Sunday paper) and The New York Times. Each has chosen a very different path, but both claim success in achieving their goals, and there is much to learn from each.

Some news organisations are getting their readers to pay, not just for the finished product but to fund the production of the story, giving the public a say in which issues are covered. And some are funding their journalism through foundations and grants, at no cost to the consumer.

Charging online will probably not work for everyone, and it seems unlikely that a general solution to the digital business model question is going to materialize any time soon: it may well be that each news organisation must find a unique solution that fits its publications.

Two industry giants, two very different approaches to digital reveune. The Times in the UK, left, opted for a "hard" paywall that requires users to pay in order to see any content. By contrast, The New York Times, at right, introduced a "freemium" model that allows users to read up to 20 stories each month at no charge, after reaching the monthly limit, they are then invited to sign up for a digital subscription.

Are paywalls paying off?

Rupert Murdoch is no stranger to trailblazing but even he might be surprised by the degree to which an entire industry appears to be looking to him to prove (or disprove) the feasibility of the paid-content model. While financial titles such as The Wall Street Journal and Financial Times have well-established paid-content formats, the conventional wisdom is that it is much harder to charge for general news and that it would take a determined drive from a fearless operator to start charging in the face of so much free competition. Two years ago Murdoch took on that mantle, announcing that "We intend to charge for all our news websites" and since that pronouncement no consideration of paid-content strategy is complete without an analysis of News International's progress.

With the news that most Australian newspapers are about to join the paywall parade, the industry is weighing up the details of how benchmark newspapers like The Times of London and The New York Times have fared since the introduction of paywalls and metered usage.

Times Two

The Times (of London)

When Murdoch declared his intention to charge for "all our news websites"

he immediately pointed to The Wall Street Journal's success as a potential model, saying that "WSJ.com is the world's most successful paid news site and we will be using our profitable experience there and the resulting unique skills throughout News Corp to increase our revenues from all our content."

Leaving aside the issues of charging for financial versus general news, this announcement left most commentators expecting a flexible payment model for The Times of London since the WSJ itself employed a mix of subscription and advertising-supported content. So when Murdoch instead announced a flat payment or no access format for the Times it was seen as a characteristically uncompromising move and one destined to divide the industry.

The flat payment model is unusual in its simplicity, in an market where most publications that do charge digitally have more complex and arguably more ambiguous systems. With The Times, readers know exactly what they are paying for. Another impetus behind The Times' decision was to focus on a smaller but more engaged audience, one with whom the paper could have a stronger relationship, through features such as live chats or even face-to-face meetings.

The Times paywall went up in June 2010 with a 2 pounds per week price (widely advertised as 8.67 pounds per month). The industry collectively held its breath to see what happened.

Since News International withdrew from the public reporting of monthly ABCe website traffic for Times Online and the Sun in March 2010 there were conflicting reports about the viewing figures for the site after the implementation of the paywall but commentators reported a dramatic fall in visitor levels; the Guardian reported a drop in the region of 90 percent.

As much as this sounds like a digital editor's nightmare, it was not beyond the scope envisaged by the paper's management. Indeed, Sunday Times's editor, John Witherow, had predicted that "perhaps more than 90 percent" of readers were likely to be lost once the paywall went up.

Four months later the paper claimed it had signed up 50,000 monthly digital-only subscribers across all formats – website, iPad, and e-readers. In February of 2011 News International released figures of progress to date which showed that figures had risen by 60 percent to 79,000, prompting News International's then CEO Rebekah Brooks to declare that; "We are delighted with these latest figures. Not only do they continue to demonstrate that ever larger numbers of people are willing to pay for quality journalism across a variety of digital formats, they also tell a great growth story for The Times which will be matched by The Sunday Times very soon. … Our industry is being redefined by technology and we will no longer measure the sales and success of our newspapers in print circulation terms alone. The combination of print and digital is a potent force for our great journalism and our commercial success."

In June 2011, one year after it started charging for online content, The Times announced that it had topped 100,000 digital subscribers. Print/digital and digital-only subscribers combined, the newspaper had more than 250,000 readers paying for its digital content. "Many doubted if our digital strategy would be successful, here is unequivocal proof it is moving in that direction," Brooks said.

Interestingly, the iPad app costs more than standard web access, at 9.99 pounds per month from iTunes, and yet for some time rated as the most popular news and magazine iPad application – seemingly proof that iPad users are prepared to pay more. Figures have also been released regarding the take up of the iPad app in the wake of a free trial project over the summer. According to the marketing company e-Dialog that worked on the project, 0.82 percent of iPad-owning Times trialists subscribed to the app. That sounds low but News International's forecast for the conversion rate was 0.2 percent.

At WAN-IFRA's Newsroom Summit in September 2010, New York Times Chairman and Publisher Arthur O. Sulzberger Jr. explained why his company would begin using a digital subscription model in 2011.

News International CMO Katie Vanneck-Smith has said the numbers received notable increases with marketing initiatives including the publishing of the Rich List of wealthy people (said to have attracted around 1,000 subscribers), and a deal with Groupon for discount rates which is said to have added another two per cent to the subscriber base. While it is still too early to see if such small numbers can yield the returns needed to support a quality newspaper, News International has revealed that consumers in the paid-for content environment engage more with the content and have a higher rate of both brand recall (21 percent higher) and message recall (18 percent higher) which bodes well as the paper looks to maximise return from a smaller target market.

The New York Times

Following what New York Times president and CEO Janet Robinson described as "extensive research," the paper introduced a metered paid online content model in March 2011, which hopes to bring in money from digital subscriptions but allows the paper to remain part of the global dialogue.

Publisher Arthur O. Sulzberger Jr. strenuously avoids the term "paywall," insisting the model is more "porous" not least since it allows access via links to articles sent by social network subscribers (without paying). "The world is moving to social, and you've got to be part of the discussion. That's what drove us," according to Sulzberger. "It is a powerful resource, and it's where we just have to be." After introducing digital subscriptions in Canada the NYT followed with a metered access to the NYTimes.com site by which users have free access to the first 20 articles (including slide shows, videos and other features) each month. If they exceed that, they arrive at a screen offering a subscription package with three options depending on the devices they want to view content on, with costs ranging from $15 to $35 per month. If they choose not to pay they will still be able to access articles via social networks.

In April 2011 the NYT announced that the approach had succeeded in drawing more than 100,000 digital subscriptions in the first month of paid content. By way of comparison, the WSJ.com took over a year to reach the 100,000 mark when it launched. This enthusiastic early response showed all signs

of continuing well into the summer. In late July 2011, when The New York Times Company released its second quarter results, its digital subscription numbers had increased substantially.

"Paid digital subscribers to the digital subscription packages totaled approximately 224,000 as of the end of the second quarter," the company reported. "In addition, paid digital subscribers to e-readers and replica editions totaled approximately 57,000, for a total paid digital subscribers of 281,000 as of the end of the second quarter. In addition to these paid digital subscribers, as of the end of the second quarter of 2011, The Times had approximately 100,000 highly engaged users sponsored by Ford Motor Company's luxury brand, Lincoln, who have free access to NYTimes.com and smartphone apps until the end of the year, and approximately 756,000 home-delivery subscribers with linked digital accounts, who receive free digital access. In total, The Times had paid and sponsored relationships with over 1 million digital users as of the end of the second quarter of 2011."

While the numbers are impressive, Janet L. Robinson, president and chief executive officer of The New York Times Company, noted that its success will be even more apparent in the near future. "The digital subscription model is a long-term effort, and its full impact on revenues will be more evident over the course of the year as we progress past the early stages of the plan. Our ability to further monetize our digital content will provide us with a significant new revenue stream in the second half of this year."

The long-anticipated move by the USA's most well-known paper has been watched with great interest by the rest of the industry. However, the paper's unique position means that, although others can learn from its experiences, no other publication can hope to replicate the NYT's moves and expect the same results.

US Publishers announce digital subscription efforts

Between late 2010 and early 2011, several smaller US publishers, such as the Columbia (Missouri) Daily Tribune and the Augusta (Georgia) Chronicle, began using models similar to the one The New York Times would adopt in the spring of 2011 where readers are allowed to freely access a fixed number of articles each month, and when they reach that limit, they are asked to subscribe. This method, which is also the one supported by Press+, a company founded by founder of CourtTV and American Lawyer magazine, Steve

THE TIMES

- The paid website costs 1 pound a day to access or 2 pounds a week: about 8.30 pounds a month
- The iPad app is 9.99 pounds a month
- The print paper is sold for 8.20 pounds a week or about 35 pounds a month.

The New York Times

- Unlimited access to the website + smartphone access is $3.75 per week, $15 per month
- Unlimited access to the website plus tablet app devices is $5 per week, $20 per month
- Full digital access is $8.75 per week, $35 per month.
- A print home delivery subscription outside New York is $14.80 a week, or about $63.40 a month

Brill, and former Wall Street Journal Publisher Gordon Crovitz, has proved far more popular with publishers than the absolute paywall that News International put up around the content of The Times, where a reader cannot access anything without having a digital subscription.

We've been encouraging publishers to use the "freemium model," Crovitz told a WAN-IFRA Study Tour group at Press+ headquarters in May 2011. If people hit the limit of free stories and don't subscribe, they are still likely to come back the next month, he says.
While many publishers give their print subscribers access to their digital products for free, Crovitz says he is against this and thinks that print subscribers should be charged something (even if it's a small amount) for access to the digital platform. Why? It gives value to web content. If publishers make it free with print, then people don't see a value in it. Crovitz also said Press+ is against requiring visitor registration. "It turns off the 50 percent of casual visitors who come to your site from search engines. If you make them register, they won't stay," he says.

Beginning in the late spring and continuing on through the summer of 2011, dozens of mainly smaller and medium-sized newspaper publishers all across the United States – literally from New England to Hawaii – began launching digital subscription models. Among these are 23 newspapers owned by MediaNews Group, which all began digital subscriptions on August 15, 2011.

Many publishers are using Press+, which for a start-up fee and a percentage of future revenues, allows newspaper publishers to quickly launch a digitial subscription model rather than creating their own technology from scratch as The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal each did.

An obvious reason for the sudden embracement of digital subscription models, especially in the United States, has been the ongoing evaporation of advertising revenues.

As of July 2011, combined print and online advertising reveneus had declined for 20 consecutive quarters, according to the Newspaper Association of America, and had fallen to about half ($5.9 billion) of what they had been when the decline began in the third quarter of 2006 ($11.7 billion). With ad revenues declining so severely and no end to this pattern in sight, many publishers are trying to increase their revenues wherever they can. That said, there are also many publishers who seemingly have no intention of trying to charge for online content.
As of this writing, in late summer 2011, it seems far too early to speculate on the success and failure of these efforts, or even talk much about lessons learned, but it is clear that many news publishers, especially those with circulations below 25,000 copies a day, have decided to act in favour of digital subscriptions.

Despite the seemingly positive start down the digital subscription path, in mid-August, Poynter's Jeff Sonderman sought to remind publishers of "the big picture – that paywalls alone will not be enough. Professional news reporting has never been a self-sustaining business," he wrote, adding: "It always has been subsidized by unrelated revenue streams such as classified ads or display ads sold at monopolistic premimums, and bundled with high-end travel and lifestyle sections that attracted bigger advertisiers than the Metro section could."

By the time we publish our next edition of Trends in Newsrooms, some clear best-practice case studies will almost certainly be available for publishers who are still considering which approach might work best for them.

Paid online content snapshots from around the world

Mexico

Reforma, one of Mexico's biggest newspapers, has been charging for online content since 2002. The newspaper lost more than 30 percent of traffic after the erection of the paywall, said Jorge Meléndez, the vice-president of Grupo Reforma, the publisher of Reforma and nine other newspapers, in an April 2011 interview with Knight Center for Journalism in Americas. The move, however, did stop minor declines in print circulation. Traffic numbers have since recovered, and 50,000 of the newspapers' 350,000 subscribers are online-only. Meléndez also said that the paper was studying ways of charging for its content for mobile devices.

Finland

Most Finnish newspapers put their content on the web for free and there have been few attempts to put a price tag on digital journalism. Keskisuomalainen, a daily newspaper serving Central Finland, gave up on the idea after trying charging for some of its online articles. Currently, Hämeen Sanomat is the only Finnish newspaper that charges for some of its online content. To access articles produced by the paper itself, along with a replica version of the paper and its digital archive, readers have to join the paid-for Etu24 section of the site. Pasi Kivioja, the head of editorial affairs and communications

Paid content is nothing new for Mexico's Reforma, one of the country's largest newspapers. They began charging for access in 2002.

Japan's Nihon Keizai Shimbun, also known as the Nikkei, started charging users for digital content last year.

The Australian has plans to begin charging for digital content later this year.

at the Finnish Newspapers Association, said to Helsingin Sanomat that Hämeen Sanomat has little to lose in the experiment, as its pageview figures are presumably quite modest to start with. According to him, the biggest Finnish newspapers get significant revenue through online advertising. For them, starting to charge for content would risk losing readers and, therefore, advertisers. In Kivioja's view, advertising, paid online games and other special content are the best ways to make money online.

Japan

As a newspaper market, Japan is a unique case: Japanese newspapers have extremely high circulation numbers, one of them being Yomiuri Shimbun, which, with a circulation of 14 million, is the highest in the world. (As a comparison, the New York Times is at over 800,000, while the circulation of the Times of London is at 500,000.)

Newspapers have a significant role in Japanese society: according to a survey conducted last year by the Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association, 52.6 percent of polltakers said that newspapers help them understand their communities. 50.2 percent called newspapers "indispensable." Subscriptions form a major part the picture, newspapers getting the vast majority of their revenue via print subscriptions.

Some Japanese newspapers are venturing into charging for their digital content. Last year, Nihon Keizai Shimbun, also known as the Nikkei, restricted the access to part of its online content to paid subscribers only. It announced that the monthly digital subscription would cost 4,000 yen (about 36 euros), while print subscribers would have to pay 1,000 yen for access to digital content. The Nikkei is not the only newspaper taking steps in this direction, but after the March earthquake and the ensuing tsunami, many newspapers took a step back and let readers access their content for free.

Australian market moves to paid content ...

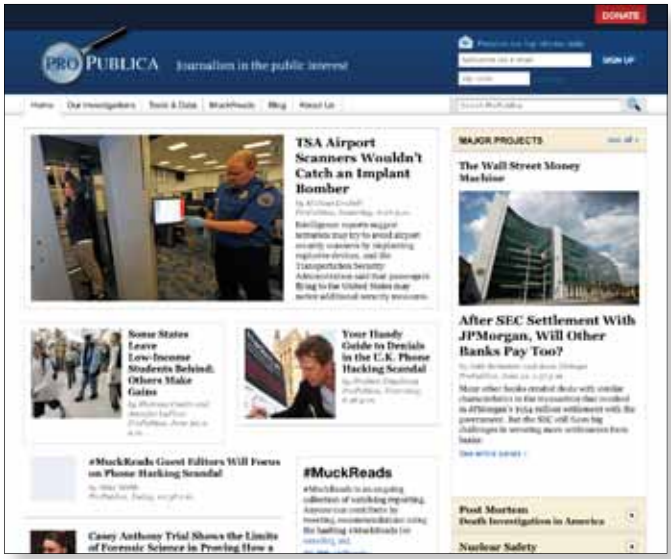
News Corporation's Australian division announced in June that it would be charging online for content from its newspaper stable including The Australian, The Herald Sun, and The Daily Telegraph. Fairfax Media, publishers of The Sydney Morning Herald, the Sun-Herald, and The Age has also announced it will be charging this year. Both groups have revealed they will be implementing tiered access models mixing some free content for registered users ("freemium") along with subscription-only packages. Full digital subscription to The Australian including iPad, web, and mobile will cost $2.95 per week (free to existing print subscribers).

... and Slovakia puts up country-wide paywall

Slovakia's adoption of the paywall concept has been particularly enthusiastic. Nine media organisations, including broadsheets Pravda and SME, along with business title Hospodarske noviny and sports paper Dennik Sport, have joined with IT magazines and websites to offer combined content for a single subscription fee of 2.90 euros per month. Within the joint charging model the individual papers are free to adopt different access schemes. For example, Dennik Sport allows some content to be accessed freely but only at off-peak times. Unusually, the newspapers will also be experimenting with the idea of charging users to comment on stories.

Piano Media, led by Tomáš Bella, the paywall's architect and former editor-in-chief of SME's website, will take 30 percent of the revenue, and explains that: "The upper limit for a system like this could be somewhere between 5 and 15 percent of the Internet population in any country, in a five- to seven-year time frame." In mid-August, three months after the paywall went up, Bella told Journalism.co.uk that the results had been promising and that the company expected to launch the model in a second country before the end of the year. This would be a small or medium-sized European nation, possibly one of the Scandinavian countries, he indicated. According to Bella, the company has also had interest from France and Australia. (Should it succeed, he has indicated that he would target similar countries with relatively small populations and high Internet penetration such as Denmark and Holland.)

Pravda.sk is among nine Slovakian media organisations that joined together to offer combined paid-for content for a monthly fee.



ProPublica, left, and the Connecticut Mirror, right, are two non-profit newsrooms that have launched in the US in recent years.

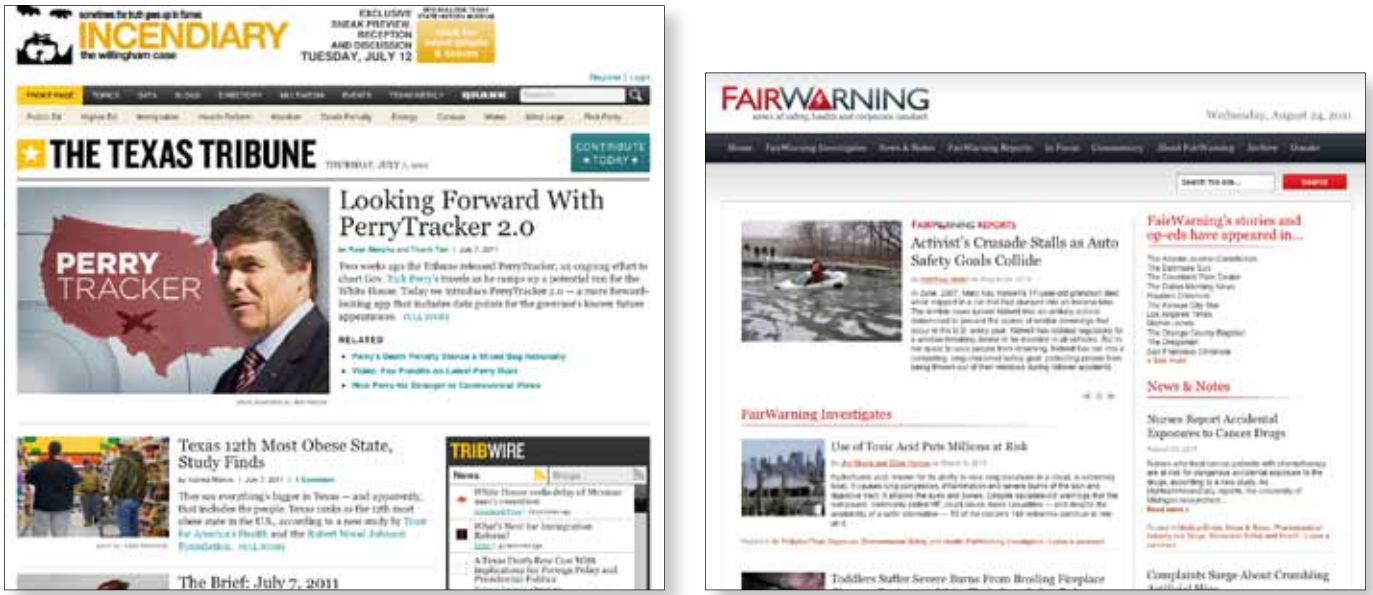
The non-profit model takes steps towards sustainability

Some non-profit newsrooms in the US have a nationwide agenda and often collaborate with major, national news organisations. The foremost one is ProPublica, but also the Center for Public Integrity (founded in 1989) and the Center for Investigative Reporting (in 1977) concentrate on national and international issues. Most non-profits, however, have a more local approach, and during the last couple of years many not-for-profit newsrooms that focus on local issues have begun operating.

One of those is the Connecticut Mirror, whose site went live in January 2010. It focuses principally on local level issues and aims to become an "indispensable source for news and information about the policies and decisions that will affect life in Connecticut for years to come." The Mirror has a staff of fewer than 10 people and is run by the Connecticut News Project, an independent non-profit news organisation. The site offers its stories to local news organisations and newspapers for no charge.

On its launch, the Mirror had raised $1.8 million in commitments from seven foundations and over a hundred private individuals, including grants from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven. James Cutie, the Mirror's chief executive officer, estimated that these resources would allow the site's operations to be sustainable for three years. He was confident that during that time, the Mirror would be able to develop a sustainable business model that is based on donations and sponsorships but wouldn't include advertising or paid content, he said to Knight Community News Network. In June 2011, Cutie said to Stateline that the site was closing in on sustainability, saying that the newsroom was at a budget of $800,000 a year, the aim being somewhere between $1.2 and $1.5 million.

Another non-profit newcomer is FairWarning, which was founded by two former Los Angeles Times reporters



Texas Tribune, left, offers a variety of specialty publications and has hosted dozens of events. FairWarning, right, is a new non-profit site founded by two former LA Times reporters.

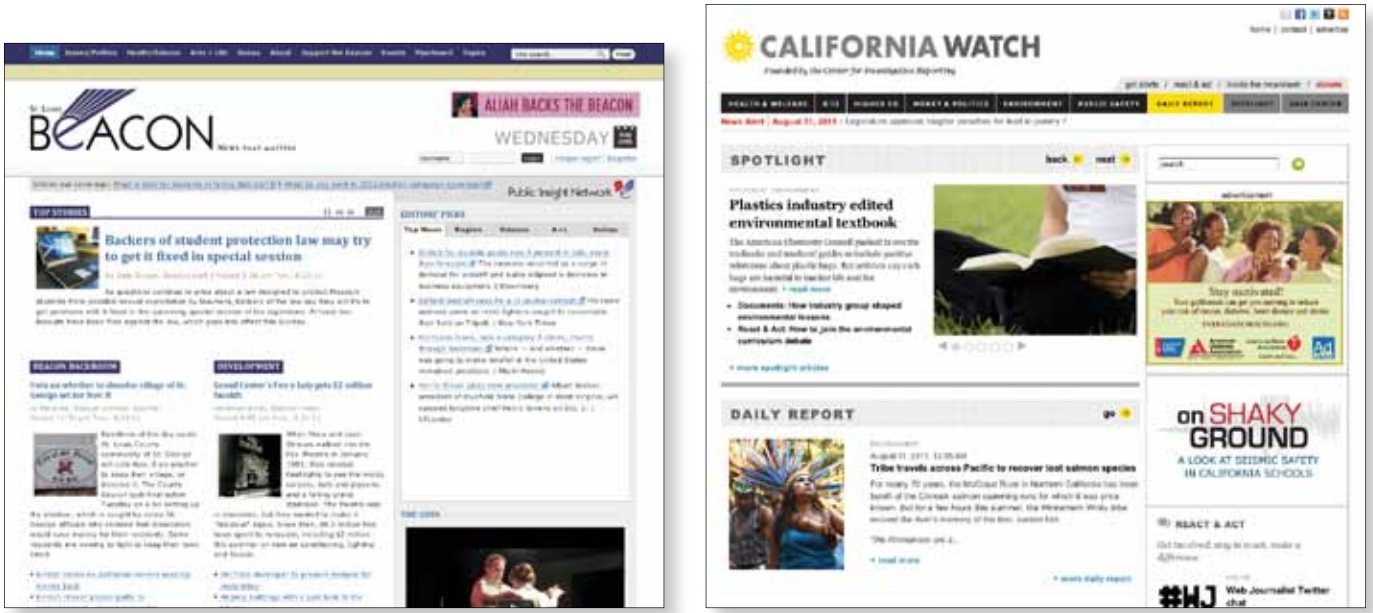
and which began publishing in March 2010. It is based in Sherman Oaks, California, and specialises in investigations that relate to safety, health and corporate conduct, seeking to cover areas that are of public interest but often overlooked by the mainstream media. For its first year, FairWarning secured $250,000 in donations. Among its major donors are the Ethics and Excellence Journalism Foundation and the Charles Evans Foundation.

On the whole, non-profits mostly rely on donations from foundations and other philanthropic organisations. But a growing number are experimenting with additional revenue models. While newspapers are facing tough times and are forced to make cuts in in-depth reporting, it is probable that more non-profits will appear to fill in that gap in investigative journalism. As their number is expected to grow in the near future, it is unlikely that all non-profits can rely on donors exclusively. It is therefore essential that they experiment with additional revenue sources in their quest for financial sustainability.

Expanding beyond foundation money

The Texas Tribune is one of the most active non-profits in looking into ways of expanding revenue sources. In terms of traffic and quality of journalism, the newsroom has had considerable success: its traffic has increased steadily since its inception at the end of 2009 (the site saw a daily record of 60,000 unique visits in May 2011), and the Tribune has won journalism awards and currently has a content partnership with The New York Times. Also in terms of achieving long-term sustainability, the Tribune has taken some significant steps.

Evan Smith, the Tribune's editor-in-chief, told Stateline that the newsroom expects to break even later this year. In addition to site sponsorships and corporate underwriting, the Tribune has created an elite membership circle of wealthy Texans that brings in



The St. Louis Beacon, left, is exploring ways to expand its funding beyond donations over the next few years, while California Watch, right, generates some of its revenue by selling stories to newspapers and television stations.

close to $250,000 a year in memberships. Moreover, the Tribune generates earned income from speciality publications and by organising happenings. It expects between $600,000 and $700,000 in revenue from public affairs events, which include weekly talks with lawmakers, a two-day "ideas festival" and a tour of college campuses with policymakers and journalists. At the end of June, The Tribune had already hosted more than 60 events, and in September it will put on a festival, presenting "debate, discussion and dialogue" on subjects that affect people in Texas. Such events are also a chance for the news outlet to engage with its audience, and permit it to create a forum for the members of the audience to connect with one another.

The St. Louis Beacon, an online-only publication that was founded in 2008, is also looking into ways of expanding its revenue base. The Beacon is mainly funded by donations, but it said earlier this year that it would concentrate on creating new revenue streams over the next four years in order to become less dependent on philanthropic funding while sustaining a robust and profitable news organisation. "By developing additional revenue sources, we can assure that the Beacon and our reporting will thrive without undue dependence on a few donors or foundations," said Nicole Hollway, the Beacon's general manager.

Most non-profits give their content away for free, but some have decided to put a price tag on their journalism. One of those is California Watch, an offshoot of the Center for Investigative Reporting, as one part of its business model is generating revenue by selling stories to newspapers and television stations. It makes an effort to localise each story and often lets its media partners know in advance what its reporters are working on. There are challenges, however: "The culture of journalism has not been a collaborative one; it's been a competitive one," said Louis Freedberg, a reporter who helped start California Watch, to Stateline.

Although distribution revenues form only a small part of the news outlet's overall income, the share is growing rapidly. Early this year, it launched the California Watch Media Network, of-

fering content as a package deal to a limited number of media companies. Robert Rosenthal, California Watch's executive director, expected that income from selling reporting would become even more significant after the site expands its video partnership with major broadcasters.

The New England Center for Investigative Reporting also charges for its stories. The non-profit was founded in 2009 and is funded by the Boston University as well as donations. In 2010, the Knight Foundation gave it a two-year, $400,000 grant to help create a national model for sustainable non-profit investigative journalism. "We are not counting on long-term foundations and donors to fund our center forever," said Joe Bergantino, a cofounder of the site, to American Journalism Review.

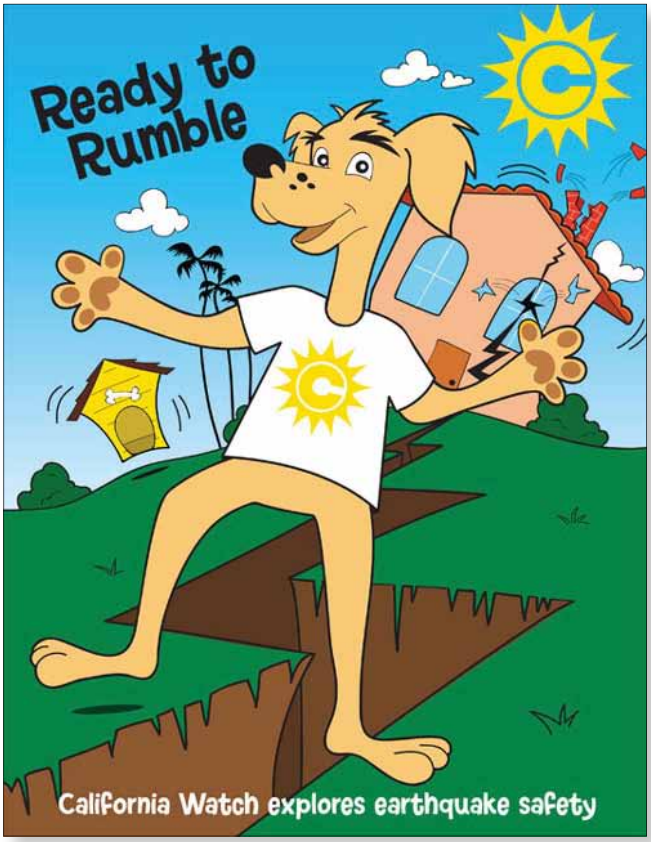
The Center's stories cost $500 and up, and it is also experimenting with other revenue sources. In summer 2010, it hosted one-week workshops in investigative reporting, costing $900 per participant. It also plans to provide watchdog training in partnership with Investigative Reporters and Editors. Moreover, the Center intends to use its journalists to do "research for hire" type of services for private clients. Bergantino noted that as non-profit news outlets grow in numbers, the competition for philanthropic money would intensify. His solution is "to think about these centers as small businesses. We have to think of many different ways to bring in dollars."

Two-way relationship with the community

For non-profit newsrooms, it is important that they are able to establish a close relationship with their communities and that those communities can see the value of local investigative journalism. This way, potential local donors recognise the effect non-profit journalism has in the community, which is essential in securing financial support from local sources. It isn't surprising, therefore, to see that more and more non-profits are investing in cultivating a closely engaged and loyal relationship with their local audiences.

One of the most active ones on this front is the St. Louis Beacon, which has received positive feedback for its frequently hosted meetups for community members. These meetings concentrate on the theme of diversity, which is also an integral subject matter in its coverage. Going out to meet its audience in this way is thus not only a way for the site to promote its content but also a possibility for it to stay informed on relevant issues. "We're engaging people — and helping them engage with each other — in a way that builds the kind of deep and continuing relationship we aim to develop with our community," said Margaret Freivogel, an edi-

The New England Center for Investigative Reporting is funded by Boston University and donations. It also received a two-year $400,000 grant in 2010 from the Knight Foundation to help create a national model for sustainable non-profit investigative journalism.



California Watch published a colouring book called "Ready to Rumble," which teaches children about earthquakes and how to prepare for them.

tor at the Beacon. The newsroom also collaborates with the Missouri History Museum, helping it reach a wider audience. "We're not just a virtual community; we're an actual community," Freivogel said.

In an effort to interact further with its readers and to boost investigative journalism in general, ProPublica launched MuckReads in June. This feature highlights investigative stories from around the Internet, based on Twitter users' suggestions. Users can share articles by including the hashtag #MuckReads in their tweets, with ProPublica presenting a selection of them on its website.

California Watch is also taking steps to reach out to its audience. As part of its "Open Newsroom" initiative, its reporters meet their readers at cafés to engage with them and to hear their article suggestions. After its journalists conducted a lengthy research on earthquake safety in Californian schools and published its findings in the series "On Shaky Ground," it decided to take the message also to the children who most probably would be the ones to be affected by a future earthquake. It published "Ready to Rumble," a colouring book that instructs children about earthquakes and how to prepare for them. To maximise the reach, it printed 36,000 copies in three languages. Moreover, California Watch organised trainings and other events for children and parents to discuss earthquake safety.

It is still too early to say whether nonprofits will be able to achieve the kind of financial viability they strive for or whether some of them will fall short. But attempts to expand their revenue streams from donations by means of selling content, organising events, printing speciality publications, and most importantly, engaging more intensely with their communities both locally and online, have been encouraging. For journalists, the process alone is invigorating. "In the old days – about four years ago – in many newsrooms you were on the survival curve," said California Watch's Louis Freedberg. "Now we're on an innovation curve. The end result might turn out to be the same, but it's a lot more energising being on the innovation curve."

ProPublica: Still the leader in non-profit investigative journalism

Richard Tofel is the general manager of ProPublica.

ProPublica's status as the top US non-profit investigative journalism newsroom grew even stronger in the past year. The newsroom also became a pioneer in online-only journalism: its web-only series that examined the role of some Wall Street bankers in the financial crisis won a 2011 Pulitzer Prize. It was the first time a Pulitzer Prize went to an Internet-only publication; ProPublica won a Pulitzer also in 2010, but the winning article appeared also in The New York Times.

ProPublica's stance is exceptionally strong in terms of its finances. Three-quarters of its budget is covered by a single source, a foundation set up by Herb Sandler, a former banker, and his wife, Marion. "That's a model we can only dream about," said Joe Bergantino of the New England Center for Investigative Reporting, another non-profit news outfit. The Sandler foundation provided the newsroom with $10 million at its launch in 2008. And thanks to the couple's connections, ProPublica has easy access to other rich individuals with philanthropic tendencies.

According to the American Journalism Review, ProPublica had in September 2010 $5.5 million committed into 2011 from donors other than the Sandler Foundation. In May 2011, Fox News reported that ProPublica had in 2010 received a two-year contribution of $125,000 each year from the Open Society Fondations. Most probably ProPublica's reputation as the most prominent non-profit newsroom, together with its two Pulitzer Prizes, makes it the most attractive non-profit for potential donors.

ProPublica specialises in extensive investigative reporting, conducted by its staff of 34 working journalists who sometimes collaborate with other reporters. It offers its stories to partner news outlets at no cost. Since the be-

ginning of 2011, ProPublica has accepted advertising on its website.

As for events, it staged a public conversation on "Long-Form Storytelling in a Short-Attention-Span World" in March, and the outfit will organise a series of events at the Tenement Museum in autumn. It isn't, however, mounting events on a for-profit basis at least for now, Richard Tofel, ProPublica's general manager, said.

So what kind of stories can non-profit investigative journalism produce that today's newspapers can't? "One story that I am confident would not run in a traditional newspaper is our article and related news app on the U.S. educational opportunity gap," Tofel said. "The Opportunity Gap" project, which used previously unreleased Department of Education data, didn't only result in an article but ProPublica also created a related web app that allows readers to delve into the database. Integration with Facebook makes it possible for readers to share data, and ProPublica also encouraged other newsrooms to use the database as the basis of their reporting. Thanks to this, a lot of stories on where local schools stand have appeared in other publications.

In May, Tofel discussed in the newsroom's podcast the future of investigative journalism. He saw two possible ways it could become sustainable in the future: one based on paid content and another funded by donations.

According to Tofel, a mistake was made 15 years ago when newspapers started to release articles for free on the Internet. Now, it may be too late to convince readers that they should pay. But Tofel pointed out that such developments have happened before. For example, some time ago it would have been hard to convince people to pay for TV programming in the US, but now many people pay for cable television. A similar change could happen with regard to investigative, long-form journalism, Tofel speculated. In this case, the much-criticised paywall model could end up being a possible scheme for future sustainability.

If the practice of paying for investigative reporting doesn't catch on, Tofel envisioned an alternative way to make the production of quality journalism sustainable. As investigative reporting is essential for democracy, it should be considered a "public good." In case long-form investigative journalism becomes untenable in the market, it needs to be supported in one way or the other.

Tofel pointed out that there are several cultural institutions that are considered as essential but require a mode of funding outside the market, such as art museums and the symphony. This could be the future of long-form journalism also.

Among the websites making use of crowd-funding are Spot.Us, left, which acts as a forum for citizens and journalists and Emphas.is, right, which specialises in photojournalism projects.

Crowd-funding: Putting the audience at the helm of news coverage

Crowd-funding isn't a completely new funding model even in the journalism field but the appearance of several new websites that experiment with crowd-funding suggests that it is becoming a less unusual way to launch journalistic projects. Such sites work as platforms where journalists can pitch project ideas, hoping that users chip in and that the funding goal that allows them to execute the project is reached. Finished projects are most commonly released as open source. What makes the model especially interesting is that it puts the public in the role of the gatekeeper, giving them the power to initiate or turn down projects. Furthermore, journalists are presumably eager to engage with their audience if they receive their funding from the public directly.

One of the most prominent crowd-funding sites in journalism is Spot.Us, founded in 2008 to pioneer "community powered reporting." The site, which is supported by the Knight Foundation and other funders, is a platform for both citizens and journalists: citizens can suggest story ideas they would like to see developed into full articles whereas journalists can pitch stories for which they require funding. One story that was funded through Spot.Us was published in The New York Times in late 2009, and more than half-dozen projects have won regional journalism awards. In April 2011, Spot.Us announced that more than 10,000 contributors had used the site.

Emphas.is, a newcomer in the crowd-funding field, focuses on photojournalism projects. Photojournalists make their pitches to Emphas.is, and if the website's reviewing committee gives a green light, they are opened for the public to fund with a funding deadline. If the target is not reached by the deadline, all contributions are returned to the backers. Where targets are met, the funds are transferred to the journalist, with 15 percent going to Emphas.is. The copyright of the finished project belongs to the photographer, and he or she is free to sell the pictures to agencies or other publications. After some teething issues, Emphas.is went live in March, and just over a week later it reported that its projects had received more than $20,000 in backing. In just a couple of months, several projects had been fully funded.

Australia's YouCommNews, left, and France's Jaimelinfo.fr, right, are two examples of community-funded journalism outside of the United States.

The recent cutbacks at news organisations have struck photojournalism particularly hard and a lot of photojournalists struggle to find enough commissions, making it a pertinent field to experiment with alternative funding models. On Emphas.is, an important incentive to fund assignments is the site's social dimension: all backers get an access to a "making-of" zone, where they can communicate with the photojournalist they have decided to support. Journalists commit to supplying their community with updates and information about the development of their project. These could include photography tips, travel anecdotes, stories about the people connected with the project, or the journalist's take on the issue covered.

There is no requirement with regard to the frequency of updates, but founder Karim Ben Khelifa noted that it would be in the journalists' interest to cultivate their community, as that is the best way to ensure funding for future pitches. The social element of the site creates a new kind of relationship between journalists and their audiences: working for a group of individuals rather than a faceless organisation means that reporters may well feel more of a sense of responsibility, especially if they do embark upon dialogues with their contributors.

In addition to Spot.Us and Emphas.is, other new crowd-funding programmes have also been launched elsewhere. In Melbourne, the Foundation for Public Interest Journalism, a division of the Institute for Social Research at Swinburne University, has set up a Spot.Us-modelled project called YouCommNews. "Anyone can pitch an idea on the site," Margaret Simons, chair of the foundation, said. "A professional journalist can, a publisher can, or a member of the public can." Audience members can fund stories they want to see developed into articles, written by a network of professional freelance journalists. So far, the initiative has resulted in only a couple of finished articles, but the site has potential.

Jaimelinfo.fr, a French crowd-funding website, was launched in March 2011. The news website Rue89 developed the site as a way to support existing news websites and news blogs. Any site or blog can register on Jaimelinfo.fr (under certain conditions), and it is possible to obtain funding for the development of a site as well as for specific projects. Another example of community-funded journalism is Spot Us Italia, which has the authorisation to use the Spot Us name but isn't directly linked to the US platform.

Could crowd-funding become a widely used way of supporting journalism? Ben Khelifa thinks it could: "I think we can show the media that there are other ways," he said. For a publication, having the possibility to buy the copyright of a finished story rather than funding the expenses of producing it is undoubtedly an attractive option. There are concerns, however: it could happen that the public, who lacks a professional editorial eye, neglects some pitches because of their lack of immediate appeal and not because of their unsuitability. Moreover, special interests may fund projects to try to influence the reporting process. Nevertheless, giving the public the chance to help journalism projects take off is an interesting experiment in democratising news and one we should expect to see attempted more often in the future.

Making the most of social media

4

Social media continues to grow at a massive rate and more and more journalists and newspapers are taking advantage of the opportunities that sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Google+ (which had 25+ million users within a month of its launch) and others offer them – both in terms of using them to communicate with their readers and as a means of increasing the reach of their content from having users share it.

The past year has proved to be instructional in seeing journalists, publishers and users get increasingly adept at making the most of social media, and this trend is well situated to grow further still in the near future. In fact, social media are likely to become the meeting point for communication exchange between journalists, publishers and their audiences.

At the moment, it seems most publishers are still finding their way towards what works best, but it is abundantly clear that the importance of social media cannot be underestimated and that it is well deserving of all efforts aimed at making the most of it.

Social media pay court – but should newsrooms be wary?

It has been the year in which Twitter has made the headlines in several ways. As events in Egypt and Tunisia ushered in the "Arab Spring," much of the first-hand reporting from professionals and citizen journalists alike came via Twitter. In the UK, it made nonsense of the "super-injunctions" that prevent newspapers from identifying certain individuals in lawsuits. In the process it also sparked heated debate about the nature of freedom of expression and whether the high courts or parliament had the final say about secrecy. In the United States, we saw the FBI turn to Twitter to announce news of the June arrest of James "Whitey" Bulger, who had been on the bureau's "10 Most Wanted" list for more than a decade, and in late June at the Vatican, 84-year-old Pope Benedict XVI joined the ranks of tweeters (using an iPad).

Perhaps most notably to date, in August, during and after the UK riots, some British police departments used social media websites such as Twitter, Facebook and Flickr, to help them try to find and arrest suspected looters, as well as naming those who were

The pope's first tweet.

charged on Twitter. Predictably, individual journalists have proved quick to appreciate the benefits of Twitter – it's an instant means of reporting to their following and boosting their personal brand. In addition, the asymmetric nature of the medium in which users can tune in to follow commentators has much in common with traditional broadcasting.

For newsrooms, however, Twitter is often seen as a rival to their own mainstream publication with controls required to ensure that individual journalists don't end up in the business of scooping their own papers. Despite its appeal to reporters, for the news organisation itself Twitter is in many ways less appealing than Facebook.

With around 200 million accounts (Twitter figures from March 2011) Twitter lags far behind the 800 million Facebook users (Facebook figures from September 2011) and publishers have noted the advantages of the way Facebook delivers a means of reading comment whilst seemingly in the company of friends and family. The network's reach has also proved extensive even in areas not traditionally seen as digitally savvy – a report from Spot On Public Relations found that with 15 million accounts in the Middle East, Facebook outnumbered the newspaper readers (under 14 million) of the region.

A report published in September by the Nielsen Company gave evidence of Facebook's status as an online hub for many people's Internet activities in the United States. The report found that social media in general account for 22.5 percent of the time Americans spend online, which compares with 9.8 percent for online games and 7.6 percent for email. Facebook towers high above other social media sites: in May, Americans spent 53.5 billion minutes on the website, followed by Blogger (723.8 million minutes), Tumblr (623.5 million minutes) and Twitter (565.2 million minutes).

It also did not go unnoticed that Facebook has now outstripped Google as the most visited website in the United States, nor that data from the Pew Research Center shows that for five of the top news websites, Facebook was either the second or third most popular referral source. The New York Times is getting 6 percent of its traffic from Facebook, and The Huffington Post receives a full 8 percent of traffic from the network.

Facebook estimates that 30 billion items of content are shared on the network per month, and because posts feature a character limit of 420 characters rather than 140 characters it is easier to give readers a clearer idea of what to expect from links to other content. So keen is Facebook to capitalise on its appeal for journalists that it has launched a journalist page with tips and advice, and a new journalism programme headed by Vadim Lavrusik who describes the network as a "newspaper of the people." It should be noted that Twitter and Facebook are not alone in generating significant referrals, and news sites would do well to also include other sites to their social media strategy. One of them is StumbleUpon, a service that helps users discover web pages based on their interests and other users' recommendations. Despite its 15-million user base paling next to those of Twitter and Facebook, the number is rising, and the site already claims to be one of the most significant drivers of online traffic. While the two biggest social networks are mostly used for sharing breaking news, the stories on StumbleUpon often discuss interesting, bizarre or otherwise untimely subjects. This makes it a complementary service to other traffic drivers, both from the readers' and publishers' point of view.

As part of its general courting of journalism, Facebook has recommended that all journalists move from Facebook personal "profiles" to the more professional "pages." In the past this has been a problem since there was no clear way to change from an individual profile to a professional page except by rebuilding from scratch. Now however there is a migration tool to ease the process and as owners of a page rather than a profile the news source then has the advantage of an unlimited audience size and free traffic analytics.

Since Facebook appears to facilitate reaching a large audience, encourag-

ing them to share, and even managing their commentaries, newsrooms have begun to ask if it might make the newspaper website redundant, to which critics reply by pointing out a number of potential pitfalls. While Facebook pages are accessed by Google, the structure of the information is nonetheless closer to a walled garden than an open website, making information potentially less visible.

Secondly, the move to migrate all journalists to the status of professional pages rather than profiles brings with it the dual spectres of charging and of ownership. Or as Scott Rosenberg, founding editor of Salon.com puts it; "Today Facebook is a private company that is almost certainly going to sell stock to the public before long. ...For the moment it appears to be trying hard to operate as a neutral and open public platform....That won't last forever. There are plenty of people waiting to cash in on Facebook's success, ...They will expect the company to fulfil its inevitable destiny and 'monetise' the hell out of all the relationship-building we're doing on its pages."

Even using Facebook updates raises the thorny issue of what happens if Facebook chooses to insert its own adverts into the update stream. In short, while Facebook provides a free, effective, and flexible platform for newsrooms it shouldn't be forgotten that it remains a third party platform and one that is likely to be reviewing its revenue model in the near future.

Twitter has certainly been provoked into action by Facebook's campaign for the hearts and minds of newsrooms, and its response in June 2011 was the launch of Twitter for Newsrooms – essentially highlighting the search tools available to Twitter users, and the benefits of the Tweetdeck client, which Twitter has acquired. Some news groups are clearly convinced by the push and Sky News, for example, is rolling out Tweetdeck for its newsroom in a bid to generalise the use of Twitter.

The launch of Facebook rival Google+ also comes as a timely reminder that no sensible strategy relies too much on any one third party tool – after all at one point both MySpace and Friendster would have been arguing their cases as major media influencers. By early August, in barely a month since its launch, Google+ had already managed to attract more than 25 million registered users.

It's a point that has been underlined in France where the media regulator, the Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel (CSA), has ruled that TV networks and radio stations can no longer sign off from a story by saying "follow us on Facebook/Twitter." While this was initially widely misreported as being an attack on social media, the point of the ruling is a reminder that Facebook and Twitter do not own social media but are commercial brands benefiting from it.

Facebook, Twitter, and Google+ are all proving an indispensable addition to the newsroom arsenal, something they are not shy about promoting, and so all should be seen as tools of the trade; though perhaps not to the point of excluding either each other or any newcomers to the contest.

New York Times journalist Nicholas Kristof has embraced social media to keep in touch with his fans.

The Guardian has several niche Facebook pages, including a media page and an environment page, while The New York Times main page is in the lead for total number of fans.

Finding Facebook's niche

Facebook is the social network of the moment for news organisations, having taken over from Twitter as top of the list of concerns for many. Twitter has proved itself an invaluable tool for journalists: useful in gathering information, promoting their work and gathering feedback. But Twitter, although boasting more than 200 million users, does not rival Facebook's more than 800 million members and remains a slightly more niche service.

Facebook also arguably offers the possibility of more sophisticated branding and interaction with users. As well as implementing Facebook Connect to allow users to "like" stories and share articles directly to Facebook, news organisations have created fan pages to build a presence in this social arena that they can use not only to promote their articles and thus increase traffic but also to engage with readers and build connections.

The New York Times, for example, has more than 1.6 million fans. That's 1.6 million Facebook users who have chosen to see New York Times updates come up in their "Newsfeed" and who might check the page to see what's going on. European publications with impressive numbers of followers include Italy's La Repubblica (458,000), Germany's Bild (440,000) and France's Le Monde (215,000).

Staying focused

A next step for many seems to be towards creating more niche pages, based on sections of the paper or even individual journalists, to focus on smaller but likely more engaged communities of readers. It signals an acceptance that not everybody is interested in all the content that the publication produces, but many are interested in specific parts.

Meg Pickard, head of digital engagement at the Guardian, said that while the main Guardian page appeals to those who like the Guardian brand, the section-specific pages attract people around specific issues. "It's important that we are in both places," she said.

The niche pages have only a fraction of the number of fans that the main page boasts (113,000), but are recent addi-

Meg Pickard is the Guardian's digital editor.

tions and may well grow into small but dedicated communities.

Media, technology, global development, law, data, society, and environment are among the paper's sections that have launched their own niche pages. "There is no mandate for sections to create a page," Pickard said. When editors want to launch one, she checks that they know how they want to use the page: where they want the conversation to take place and how much control they want to have over the content.

It is their page

Facebook is the users' space, Pickard stressed, rather than the comments section on the website which belongs to the Guardian, and this makes the conversation different. People often come to Facebook for social updates rather than to read news, and their reactions to articles might echo that. It also is necessary to remember that Facebook is a 24-hour operation and one that cannot be shut down.

The type of article that staff post is also a reflection of the idea that this is a social space, Pickard said. "We encourage people to publish non-commoditised news to Facebook, not news that you could get absolutely everywhere," she said. "So if you look at the sort of articles we put, they tend to be quirky, interesting, viral, something you might not have seen anywhere else. This tends to be the sort of thing that people want to like, repost or comment on, rather than breaking headlines, which work better on Twitter."

The pages might be run by the desk editors, or by the community coordinators who are attached to some teams. There will usually be someone on the central team of editors who is an 'admin' of the page so that anything that goes wrong can be dealt with quickly, but Pickard said that "we try to devolve as much responsibility as possible to the desk editors because they are the ones who know their communities best."

Keeping Facebook pages breathing

Both Pickard and The New York Times' former Social Media Editor Jennifer Preston made the same point about the importance of committing to updating a Facebook page, and understanding you cannot just create it then let it lie idle. "The last thing we want is to create them and walk away," Pickard said. "I warn [journalists] that it's like a puppy... you have to be prepared to commit," said Preston.

The Guardian has not yet gone even more specific and allowed readers to follow specific journalists on Facebook, as The New York Times and The Independent have, for example. New York Times journalists such as Nicholas Kristof, Roger Cohen, Gail Collins and David Carr have launched their own fan pages, where they publish links to their own stories, and might add other comments.

Kristof, a Times op-ed writer, used his page to provide updates and comments about his experiences in Egypt. This type of usage is likely to be more effective in engaging the community than simply posting links to articles, particularly when in such a volatile situation which has attracted worldwide attention.

The Independent has not created fan pages as such, but allows its readers to "like" specific columnists on the paper's website and then receive article updates. Digital Media Editor Jack Riley believes that "giving people content in categories which best represent the individual topics in which they're interested" is more useful to readers than general social media accounts, which he sees as too broad.

Online news and the now inevitable level of personalisation that accompanies it means that most people are becoming increasingly adept at getting the news they want to read about, and these subject-specific pages on Facebook are a further step in that direction. Will more and more publications use social media to go niche?

Twitter curation – taking the reins of a wild stream of information

Although the term "social media" has a wider sense than just Facebook and Twitter, the two social networks tower high above others in terms of user numbers and influence. Correspondingly, they are also the two most-used social networking sites by news outlets. But while journalists and news organisations are still experimenting with different ways to expand to Facebook – which is still seen more as a way to stay in touch with friends, not as a news platform – many of them already use Twitter routinely as part of their journalistic work and broadcasting.

For many individual journalists, Twitter has become one of several journalistic tools they use to connect with sources, search information about breaking stories, promote articles and maintain a professional network. As James Rainey, Media Columnist for the Los Angeles Times, noted in a Twitter-length post for a story on latimes.com blogs section about how the paper's journalists are using social media: "I get more links, more story ideas on Twitter than via email." Added Nathan Oliveraz-Giles, the paper's Tech Report: "I cover tech. Twitter's invaluable. I use it to communicate w/companies; spot trends & of course: to share work we do w/world."

Because of their role in helping to organise different kinds of protests the

world over, many people have come to associate social media and Twitter in particular with civil unrest. Some have suggested that because social networks have democratised the broadcasting of information, they can also be used as tools to promote democracy. This view was further strengthened thanks to the important role Twitter has played in the recent Arab uprisings, as demonstrators have been able to organise more effectively than before thanks to social media. But it was the extent of news coverage from the demonstrations, also made possible largely by social networking sites, that signalled a change for reporting: news organisations were faced with an unprecedented flood of material from the ground, produced and distributed by locals, who were able to bypass the state-controlled means of broadcasting. Twitter, in particular, had a prominent role in informing the world about the events.

The "Arab Spring" may be a unique event in history, but included in it are lessons for news reporting in general. Social media were used in novel ways in every form of coverage, from television news to online media. By using Twitter and "Promoted Tweets," paid-for messages that show up at the top of search results, to direct users to its live video stream, Al Jazeera's online traffic saw a 2,500 percent increase during the Egyptian revolution. This way, the television network used Twitter successfully to promote its traditional broadcasting activities. It also made more innovative use of the social network: for instance, the broadcaster sought to make contacts in the areas of potential unrest and used those contacts as sources to inform its reporting. The ubiquitous nature of social media made it possible to connect with people on the ground, despite attempts by governments to disrupt local media.

Curating your way through a torrent of tweets

Perhaps the most outstanding use of Twitter during the uprisings can be credited to Andy Carvin, NPR's senior strategist and the "man who tweets revolutions," as described by the Guardian. After uprisings started in Tunisia in December 2010, Carvin turned his Twitter account into a platform for broadcasting news from the Middle East protests, connecting with sources at the scene, and asking his followers' help in verifying information he was receiving. Twitter users offered help in abundance, identifying for example local dialects in videos and translating information, turning Carvin in the process into what Columbia Journalism Review called a "living, breathing, real-time verification system."

The fact that Carvin tweeted unconfirmed news and engaged actively with his followers to verify them distinguished his Twitter account from those of most news networks. His followers were included in the news-making process, which depended in many ways on them. Although he broke new ground in curation and crowdsourced verification, giving an exact term to describe

Andy Carvin's Twitter feed has become legendary as a result of his highly active curation of tweets during uprisings in the Arab World.

the work proves difficult: "It's somewhere between reporting and collaborative network journalism, and George Plimpton-like oral history, except that I'm doing it in real time in 140 characters," Carvin told the Guardian. "I know what I'm doing is a form of reporting. I just don't know what kind of reporting it is."

Carvin isn't alone in curating – gathering, selecting and broadcasting information – on Twitter, but the activity is becoming increasingly common as people struggle to find context and make sense of the deluge of information on the network. Experts such as Carvin, who have relevant contacts and background knowledge, have succeeded in vetting and relaying relevant information, and more and more people are turning to such hard-core Twitter users. Also, several tools have recently appeared to aid curation, such as Storify and Storyful, sites designed for creating narratives out of social media updates.

After testing by journalists from different media outlets, Storify opened to the public in April. The site won this year's Knight-Batten prize for innovation in journalism. "We have so many real-time streams now, we're all drowning," Burt Herman, a founder of Storify, told The New York Times. "So the idea of Storify is to pick out the most important pieces, amplify them and give them context." Carvin has also used Storify, for example, to put together reactions in social media to the shooting of the US Representative Gabrielle Giffords: "Given this was a real-time event literally unfolding moment by moment, I figured Storify was the way to capture the frenetic nature of a breaking news story," he said in an interview posted on the Storify. Although such sites use social media in general, Twitter is often an important source because of its wide adoption and because it is more commonly used for "news-y" content than other branches of social media.

In addition to Twitter mavens such as Carvin, news outlets have also used Twitter as means for transmitting constant updates in real time about major breaking news stories. The downside of this is that as messages on Twitter appear in a single column, a constant flow of updates may drown out other messages, which could be jarring for those followers that aren't interested in that particular issue. Thus, when Hurricane Irene hit New York in August, The New York Times opted for launching a separate Twitter profile, @NYTLive, dedicated to major events. This way, people were able to tune in if they were interested, and the paper's main Twitter page wasn't overloaded with hurricane updates.

Despite both individual journalists' and news outfits' efforts to step up the organisation of their tweeting activities,

some have argued that Twitter needs editors to choose the most relevant Tweets. But instead of going that direction, the company seems more interested in giving its users further control over the flow of updates they receive. For example, it added user lists to its features already in late 2009, which allows users to organise Twitter accounts they follow according to themes. Moreover, Twitter lists are public by default, meaning that users can subscribe to other users' curated lists. Individual journalists can use such features and sites such as Storify to a great effect, being able to vet a seemingly uncontrollable flood of information on Twitter for the most interesting updates in their beat and broadcasting that information to their followers in real time.

This would imply that it is the individual journalist that reigns on Twitter, outperforming his employer in reach and influence. Yet a February study by HP found that 72 percent of the most influential Twitter accounts were run by mainstream media organisations, meaning that traditional news outlets have a lot of weight also in the seemingly democratic social media sphere. It seems, then, that on Twitter both individuals and news outfits exist comfortably side-by-side, but the trend of individuals using the network to sift through and disseminate information is growing.

New to Twitter? Here are some tips

Want to join Twitter but not sure how exactly to go about it? Liz Heron, left, the social media editor at The New York Times, used Twitter to ask the following question: "What's the most important piece of advice you would give to a new-to-Twitter journalist?" Later, she used Storify to collect the most useful replies onto a single web page. Here are some of them.

"Spend some time "listening" before you even think about posting. Think of how much you read before you started writing." – *Mark Briggs (@markbriggs)*

"Follow potential sources and build relationships before you need them." – *Cara Keithley (@CaraKeithley)*

"Follow and ye shall be followed." – *Sasha Koren (@SashaK)*

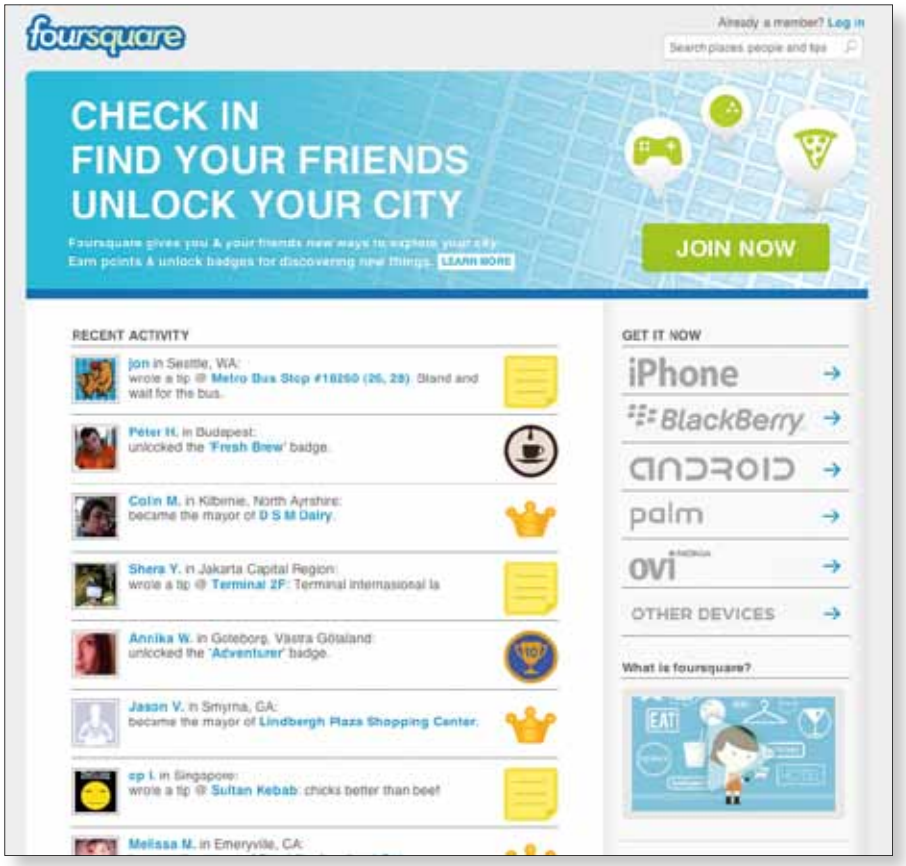
"Don't just tweet links to own stories – listen, talk to people, make Twitter feed an extension of your beat." – *Jessica Binsch (@j_nb)*

"Tweet your stories, but also put your personality out there, too. Tweet about things that have nothing to do with your job." – *Katherine Albers (@NDN_KAlbers)*

"Even if don't want to be personal, at the least be authentic." – *Ryan Osborn (@rozzy)*

"Tweets should be treated like filing stories: If you are reporting news in your tweet, make sure you are accurate." – *Lenny Neslin (@lsneslin)*

"Always reread before you hit send." – *Nicole A. Willis (@NicoleAWillis)*



Launched in 2009, Foursquare has more than 10 million users who share their physical location by checking in at locations with their mobile phones. More than 500,000 vendors have also joined the platform and often provide special deals to users who frequent them.

Foursquare – News tailored to your location

In the current social media environment, Facebook and Twitter tower high above other social networks. But Foursquare is on a rise that suggests that it has all the potential to move beyond the early-adopter market and become one of the major players. The company was founded in 2009 and already boasts a user base of more than 10 million – and the number is growing at a remarkably rapid pace, having doubled in only six months. Moreover, the service has seen a notable geographical expansion: Foursquare started in the US (the company is based in New York City), but currently half of its usage is coming from abroad. Outside the US, the app is particularly popular in Japan, South-East Asia and Brazil.

What distinguishes Foursquare from other social networks is that instead of using it to share what they are doing or thinking, its users share their current physical location by "checking in" at different locations with their mobile phones. In addition to the social dimension of location-sharing, the app features game-like elements in the form of badges that users earn by checking in; the user who has the most check-ins at a given spot becomes its "Mayor," for example. When registering their location, users can also leave tips, for instance to recommend a choice on a restaurant's menu. In early July, about 500,000 vendors – mainly cafés and restaurants – had joined the platform, and many have special deals

for Foursquare users who regularly check in at their premises.

Foursquare is currently focusing on such real-world transactions, having partnered for example with American Express: users can link their American Express card to their Foursquare account, which allows them to access discounts from selected shops by checking in at their location. At the end of July, Foursquare teamed up with Groupon, a consumer discount website. Thanks to the partnership, Groupon's daily and real-time deals will appear on Foursquare's app for purchase. Foursquare has also partnered with five other deal providers. Recognising the service's potential for brands, Foursquare updated its app to allow users to follow other people and companies without becoming friends on Foursquare, encouraging more firms to create profiles. "There are all sorts of triggers that we can start using that are going to help brands and merchants reach customers in new ways," Foursquare's co-founder Dennis Crowley told CNN.

Some newspapers have jumped on the bandwagon by offering specially tailored deals for Foursquare users. In April 2010, the Financial Times made an agreement with Foursquare that allows users who update their position near a major financial centre or business school, such as Harvard or the London School of Economics, to get free access to FT.com. The Kansas City Star teamed up with the company in a similar attempt: its readers can check in and get subscription offers when they buy a print copy of the newspaper at a newsstand or vending machine. In this scheme, the paper benefits from extra exposure as users checking in close to a vending location see the newspaper's rack in the app.

News about your surroundings

The rise of Foursquare coincides with a growing interest in hyperlocal news services in the news industry, and many news outlets are experimenting with the platform as a way to provide local area news to their readers. The first such major news organisations were Metro, a Canadian freesheet newspaper, and The New York Times. The latter experimented with Foursquare during the Vancouver Winter Olympic Games in February 2010 by placing its travel and entertainment writers' recommendations for restaurants, attractions, shopping and nightlife into the platform. Around the same time, Metro started adding location-specific content such as restaurant reviews on Foursquare, and users in selected Canadian cities are able to receive alerts when at these locations.

The Wall Street Journal has experimented with Foursquare probably more extensively than any other newspaper thus far. It started by creating three badges that users can unlock by roaming around New York. Soon after, the paper's website started using the "Add to Foursquare" button, which saves the places discussed in web articles on Foursquare, the idea being that users can create a kind of "To Do" list

The Wall Street Journal has been using Foursquare to offer tips ranging from food recommendations to information on locations of hurricane evacuation centres.

The New York Daily News provides its Foursquare followers with tips for different locations in New York that link to historical photos from the paper's archives.

of things they want to do in New York. Foursquare has since made the button available for all websites. The WSJ also uses the app's Tips function to publish location-based information, taking it in the direction of location-based news curation. "You get these tips because you're nearby," Zach Seward, the paper's outreach editor, told Nieman Journalism Lab. "So at least in theory, that's when you're most interested in knowing about them."

The WSJ's tips vary from food recommendations to more newsy facts, and in May 2010 it announced a bomb scare in Times Square on Foursquare. In late August 2011, when New York was bracing itself for Hurricane Irene, the newspaper used Foursquare's new tip lists feature to provide details of the locations of evacuation centres in the city. The list's followers were able to zoom in and out on an interactive map that showed the locations of the centres. About 150 people followed the the evacuation centres on Foursquare, which may be a modest number, but as such initiatives to engage with the audience are likely to become more common in the future, more people may well tune in to them.

Such topical ways of using Foursquare have been rarer, however, as news organisations have more commonly used Foursquare to place more entertaining and light-hearted news bites into the platform. For example, Foursquare followers of the New York Daily News get tips at different locations in New York that link to historical photos from the paper's archives, showing what the places used to look like. Followers of the UK's Eastern Daily Press receive restaurant reviews, mobile downloads and information where to buy the paper when checking in at locations around Norfolk. Early this year, Examiner.com starter to feature content on the platform. Suzie Austin, senior vice president of content and marketing at Examiner.com, told Mashable that there would be "reviews, recommendations, previews of concerts coming and it will tell you the best place to get a seat." Examiner.com has a presence in 233 communities around the US.

One of the most interesting experiments with Foursquare so far was carried out by the National Post, a Canadian paper, during the 2010 Toronto International Film Festival. Chris Boutet, the Post's senior producer for digital media, told Nieman Journalism Lab that the paper's goal was "to build an insider's guide to the Toronto Film Festival," highlighting particularly events and locations that weren't widely known. He noted that providing information that is tied to physical

Canadian daily National Post used Foursquare during the 2010 Toronto International Film Festival to create an "insider's guide."

places is something that newspapers are well suited for, thanks to their vast archives, and Foursquare makes distributing that information relatively simple. The Post has since continued to add content into Foursquare with the intention of growing the paper's audience and building a stronger user base. "We think [location-based information is] a growing area; we think more and more news organisations are going to clue into the value of it," Boutet said.

In April 2011, Nieman Journalism Lab looked into how the National Post and two other Canadian newspapers – the Edmonton Journal and the Vancouver Sun – use Foursquare. The papers' online editors said that the content they placed into Foursquare consisted mainly of opinions and reviews, such as restaurant reviews, travelogues and commentaries. Most of the articles were timeless in nature, or at least had to be relevant for a long period of time. Most commonly editors placed tips at venues where people gather in groups anyway, such as festivals and sports events. They eschewed news stories, particularly ones that involved violence, as they thought that it would be at odds with Foursquare's nature as a tool for exploration. None of the editors had made attempts to monetise Foursquare content as its main purpose was to increase user engagement with the newspaper.

There have also been some attempts to use Foursquare as a way to advance journalism (mainly as a way to look for on-the-scene human sources), but so far the service hasn't taken off as a reporter's tool to the same degree as for example Twitter has. But what Foursquare has understood – and what news organisations are only now starting to grasp – is that game mechanics are an effective way of nurturing user engagement and increasing readership loyalty.

As a channel to transmit news, Foursquare makes geo-targeted news distribution easy, and the possibility of sending content directly to users' smartphone screens is obviously appealing to news outlets. It is unlikely that newspapers have exhausted the possibilities the platform offers yet, and most probably there are more attempts to turn it into a news-broadcasting medium on the horizon. Foursquare's usefulness depends very much on the size of its user base, however, which at least for now is seeing an outstanding growth rate. As the app has a good chance of breaking into the mainstream, newspapers would do well by looking into it more carefully.

Newsrooms going social with help from dedicated editors

As newsrooms explore ways to make efficient use of social media, a new job has emerged in many news outlets to supervise the efforts. An increasing number of news organisations have hired social media editors to help them implement the use of new media as an integral part of their operations. Typically, the duties of a social media editor vary from running the publication's Twitter accounts to examining and helping in adopting the best ways to use social media at the news organisation. Just like the social networks they deal with, the position is evolving all the time.

The New York Times appointed Jennifer Preston as the social media editor in May 2009. Upon leaving the post more than a year later, she said that her role had in the beginning largely consisted of being a social media evangelist within the organisation, but that function had soon became redundant. People quickly became convinced that social media could provide valuable tools for a news organisation, at which stage she began concentrating on making sure that journalists had the tools and resources to make effective use of what social media has to offer.

On leaving the position, Preston told Poynter she saw the social media editor as more of a temporary role than a permanent one. When people in the newsroom start using social media regularly, it becomes less necessary.

Meg Pickard, the head of digital engagement at The Guardian, has also emphasised the need to educate people within the organisation about the possibilities that social media offer. Moreover, it is important to make sure that journalists have access to the best tools available and knowledge of how to use them. At the BBC Social Media Summit in May 2011, Pickard said that social media development at The Guardian concentrated on three areas in particular. Firstly, it is important to discuss technological products that are going to be used, deciding for example which tools are to be developed internally. Secondly, taking stock of the people and skills the organisation has and recognising possible gaps is essential. And lastly, news organisations have to approach social media from the point of view of editorial proposition, asking questions such as how does the use of social media reflect their values and how does it further their journalism.

The social media editor at USA Today, Michelle Kessler, defined her role as helping reporters and editors use social media to connect with readers and sources. "That includes everything from training to maintaining feeds to helping sign partnerships," she said to Social Media Today. The newspaper has a separate person managing the business side of new media. "We're quickly learning that we need to emphasize a few key social media initiatives, rather than trying to do everything," Kessler said. As an example of how USA Today engages with its readers, she said that they monitor every Twitter comment that mentions the news organisation, making it easier for readers to talk to them. "It's often easier to ping someone on Facebook, or make a connection on LinkedIn, than it is to chase someone down over the phone. Twitter can be an extremely efficient way to share news or ask a question to a large audience."

In early July, Reuters named Anthony De Rosa, the agency's product manager and technologist, as its new social media editor. De Rosa's role was to consist of integrating social networks, where news most often breaks first,

into the Reuters platform, and to assist journalists and editors use social media tools in their reporting. Reuters said that under De Rosa's direction, social media would increase website traffic and extend the agency's brand.

It is understandable that news outlets have woken up to the possibilities social media offer as their deft use has sometimes resulted in skyrocketing traffic numbers: Facebook developer Justin Osofsky wrote in December 2010 on the company's Developer Blog that the average media organisation has seen a greater than 100 percent increase in referral traffic from Facebook, noting that The Washington Post had had more than 280 percent increase year-over-year after integrating Facebook Platform. But it is clear that an entire organisation cannot make the jump to becoming a proficient user of social media without mapping out some kind of social media strategy. It is likely that such strategy is best developed and implemented with the help of a dedicated social media editor. And when the newsroom has undergone that cultural change successfully, social media will most probably become integrated into the jobs of journalists in general rather than being the responsibility of one person.

Social media and transparency at Swedish local paper Norran

Anette Novak, Editor-in-Chief of local Swedish paper Norran, believes that newspapers should be harnessing the power of social media. In 2009 she introduced a live chat function to her paper's website so that readers can talk to journalists in the newsroom, as long as it is manned. She says the change has not only proved popular, it's also "good for democracy."

WAN-IFRA: Today lots of people read the news in a different context: online, on their phones, on tablets. What does this mean for newspaper editors who want to build a community around their papers?

NOVAK: I personally believe that we will not be able to completely defend our position as information channels in the long run, knowing how much information giants like Google and Facebook have already collected from our readership. We must start building another type of relationship with our community and we have decided that if there's one position that none of the giants will ever take it's the "girl-next-door," the friendship, the nice neighbour. We changed our vision in 2009; the old one was that we should always be first with the latest news from the local scene. Now it says that Norran connects people and ideas and together we strengthen the region.

WAN-IFRA: "Building a community around a newspaper." Does this mean encouraging readers to communicate with each other as well as with the paper?

NOVAK: Absolutely. We want people

to find each other, to find opportunities, to create together. In a crowdsourcing era, in an era when the consumer and the individual have more power than ever before, that not only means giving them things to talk about but actually facilitating them to find these things themselves.

WAN-IFRA: What are the top three ways that newspapers benefit from interaction with their readers?

NOVAK: It's difficult to prioritise like that! I would say the relationship, of course. If you don't constantly talk to someone then you don't build a relationship. In the old days we used to sit here guessing what our readers wanted. We don't have to guess anymore, we can talk to them and ask them. It's a "quality-heightner." If you have a community of maybe 100,000 people, you listen to them and you take in all their knowledge and experiences, of course this will make coverage better. It's more fun also! We're living in a live era when people want interactivity. And this is live. This is talking to the newsroom when it's happening.

WAN-IFRA: At Norran, how has the newsroom live chat actually affected the way journalists work?

NOVAK: You have to change your time priorities. You have to have the social media platforms live in front of you all the time and you have to follow the flows and the feeds. And that takes time. But you gain somewhere else, for example when it comes to looking for case studies. We always want a human touch to add life to a story that is theoretical or difficult to explain. Newsrooms spend a lot of time looking for these people. When you use social media the way we do now it is easy to get suggestions. Social media is a very efficient journalistic tool, but of course, it demands flexibility.

WAN-IFRA: What sort of news generates the most responses from readers?

NOVAK: City planning, for instance. We had a project called the Future City in which we took all the maps indicating the city council's planned projects, breaking them down block by block so readers could see what the council wanted to change "on my block." We got an enormous reaction from that, and city hall was actually very pleased to get this kind of input from the tax payers.

We feel that this is very good for democracy. It's back to our basics, why we exist. Citizens should have a say in their future and their city, and we can do critical investigations into city hall and city council. But even better is to say, "look, this is what they're planning. What do you think about it?" and actually give them a voice when it's still possible to do something about it.

WAN-IFRA: As more and more people read news online it would be easy to think that journalism is becoming more global and regional publications are in danger. In your experience, is that the case?

NOVAK: It's a multifaceted question. We're absolutely becoming more global because people are more willing to move all over the place so they have friends and family everywhere. But I don't believe that you can say generally that a regional media house has a problem. It depends on how that media house acts. I think only so much mediocre reporting will be accepted in the future. You can't say "we can't cover this really well, but we'll do a little bit." Because there will always be niche digital products popping up that will do even better on the local level.

WAN-IFRA: In previous talks you've emphasised the idea that "transparency is the new objectivity." What does that mean in practice?

NOVAK: We want this region to do well and we want to be the motor in that development. And this is a step away from the more classical definition of journalism where a journalist should be neutral, objective, in order to keep credibility. I believe in this new era of digitalisation where all information sooner or later will be public and everybody knows that they can work parallel with us. As a representative of a local media house I would say that most local media houses have a bias for the region. So I say, let's be honest about it. That is today's credibility. Objectivity is dead, and the honesty – the transparancy – of saying how things are is the new way of saving credibility.

WAN-IFRA: Is it possible for a newspaper to be too interactive?

NOVAK: There could be a difficulty if you exclude the people who cannot be interactive. For instance, in our community almost half of the population are not online during the day. They work in healthcare or schools or the mining industry or forestry and they're not sitting in front of a screen. That means that if I say I'm only going to hear stories interactively that means I'm excluding half of the population. And that would be a democracy problem. This restructuring era is not either/or, it's both. Always keeping an eye on the fact that you don't have to do only this or only that. Now or never. The future is multifaceted – and a constantly moving target.

New ways of telling the story

5

The vast technological leaps made in the past decade have greatly increased the options journalists have for telling compelling stories through a variety of means – audio, video, interactive graphics and even making use of games to make story-telling less linear and hopefully more engaging.

In addition, advancements in technology have made possible large-scale, in-depth articles making extensive use of enormous amounts of data. And, now that more people almost everywhere are becoming increasingly active online, publishers are finding ways to mobilise them and get their input on various stories. While this has been more the exception than the norm so far, the possibilities are growing and likely to increase further in the near future.

A key concept for this chapter is learning to think beyond the traditional print story and make the most of what technology has to offer to better communicate with your audience.

Zanran is a search engine for semi-structured data, able to look up sources even if they are part of HTML pages or PDF reports, while Junar is an Argentinian search engine which can extract data from tables.

Crunching the numbers – tools and trends in data journalism

Data journalism is one of the buzz words of the industry and yet for something so widely talked-about it appears to be often poorly understood. Perhaps because it sounds so much a form of complex accountancy and so little like journalism as we understand it. Perhaps because the simple idea of sitting down in front of a spreadsheet rather than a word-processor is culturally alien to many journalists. Perhaps most of all because it is frequently presumed to be a dark art for specialists, rather than an extension of storytelling. It doesn't help that the idea of data journalism is often bandied around in the same discussion as the question of whether journalists in the future should also be programmers.

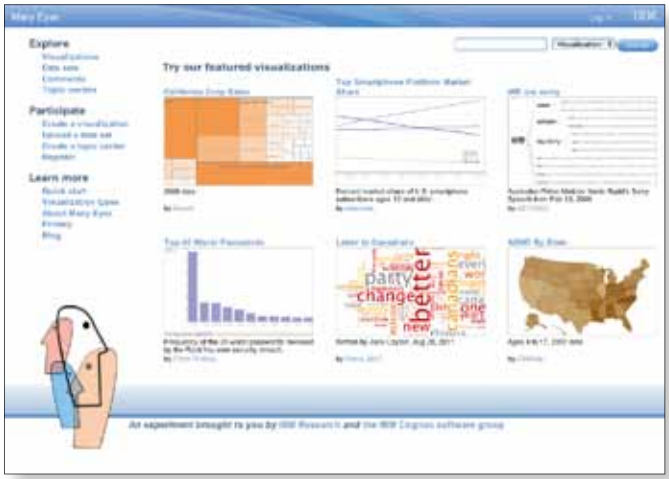
Even some of its most celebrated advocates seem to be confused about their role: Alan McLean, Assistant Editor of Interactive News, The New York Times, asks himself simply "Am I a reporter?" Seemingly unable to answer the question of what exactly he is, McLean is at least able to point to where he is and that is at the heart of the newsroom: "We sit in the newsroom – we're right in there, contributing ideas."

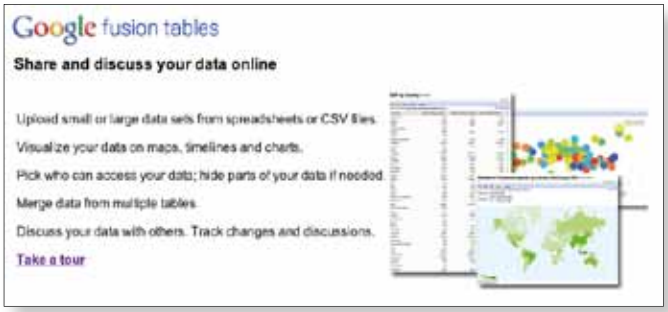
Essentially almost all data journalism is a response to the deluge of data now available. Whether it is public records, results of freedom of information (FOI) requests, or 90,000-line spreadsheets on WikiLeaks, journalists have never before had to deal with such comprehensive data sources. Since such raw data is unintelligible to the public that means journalists are increasingly required to make sense of it: "It's our job to provide context and pull out patterns," as McLean says.

The good news is that along with the growth in data sources there has also been a parallel development in tools to help non-specialists make sense of that data. There are tools out there to help journalists track, tame, and transform their data into a clearly understandable form. Increasingly that form is the infographic – a tribute to both to both the infographic's ability to present data clearly and the way that it lends itself to both print and shorter format platforms like web sites and tablets.

Finding data

One of the most common complaints of those engaged in data journalism is that data is rarely available in the pure form of numbers and is instead





IBM's ManyEyes, left, and Google's Fusion, above, are examples of online tools that help beginners build data visualisations, step by step.

"semi-structured" in the form of spreadsheets mixing words and numbers, or PDF documents, or HTML pages. Which is where tools like Zanran come in. Zanran is a search engine for semi-structured data that helps look up sources like tables even if they are part of HTML pages or PDF reports. In future, Word documents and presentations are expected to join the list of documents searchable by the likes of Zanran so that data which is currently hidden from researchers by its format can be tracked down without any specialist programming information.

Tracking data

Other trends include the growth of data dashboards that make it simple to track data and see, for example, if it has been updated or if statistical trends are beginning to emerge. Junar is an Argentinian search engine which can extract data from tables and with which you can then create a dashboard to monitor multiple data sites without having to revisit them all. Junar also creates shortened URLs to help Tweet, blog, or Facebook the results of those findings which is another pointer to the way that data journalism is going – not just sifting and prioritising, but sharing. In that respect data journalism is likely to grow hand-in-hand with the trend of crowd-sourcing since whether it is for finding, collating, sifting, or interpreting data the sheer volume of it makes it ever more likely that newspapers will find themselves working with their communities to get a grip on it all. It's a small step to see how that then fits in with the need to share the findings using social media.

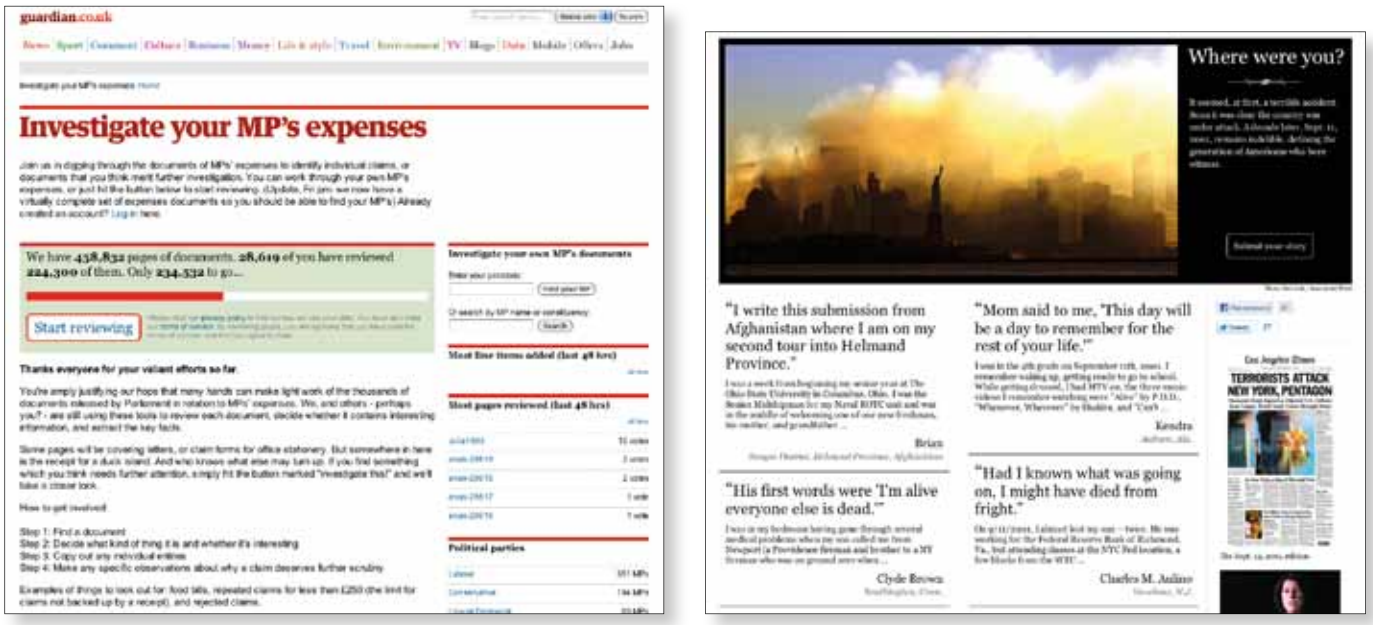
Displaying that data

Visualising data has become an art in itself and data visualisation is moving away from the limitations of pie and bar charts without losing the simplicity of the automated tools that create them. ManyEyes from IBM, Fusion from Google, and Tableau Public are all examples of the online tools (which are often free) that enable complete beginners to build step by step visualisations.

Having imported the data they want in table or spreadsheet form, the user simply chooses a visualisation or experiments with a number of alternative visualisations until they get the graphic form that is most useful for highlighting the key point that is being made. Don't believe everything the toolmakers tell us, however. These tools go a long way to simplifying previously complex tasks that once required coding, but they are not yet perfect and rarely as simple as their Step 1...2...3 demonstrations suggest. Nonetheless, these tools make it possible for relative newcomers to create data visualisations including time-lines or maps with data overlays that would once have required specialists.

The good news for publishers is that they pave the way for any journalist to become a data journalist. The bad news is likely to be the effort involved in encouraging journalists to think visually and embrace the tools that help find and make sense of the information they are confronted with.

Given that the data tsunami shows no sign of abating, however, it would be a rare newspaper, national or local, that won't be exploring data journalism further in the future.



The Guardian, left, created a site to ask readers to investigate politicians' expenses during the MPs' expenses scandal in the UK, while the Los Angeles Times, right, marked the anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks by asking its readers to share memories of the events.

Trends in crowd-sourcing

More than six years ago, Gannett, publisher of USA Today, announced it would be crowd-sourcing news gathering. One of the immediate results was the highly successful investigation of sewage and water fees in Florida by the Fort Myers News Press. Since then there have been notable crowd-sourcing successes, including the Guardian's use of the technique to sift through public domain records in order to investigate parliamentarians' abuse of expenses. What emerges from such examples is that there are a number of different areas of interest for crowd-sourcing in journalism: the first is crowd-sourcing as a means of tapping into communal feeling or knowledge. The second is to find sources of specific know-how, and the third is to employ the readership as an extension of a newspaper's staff. The fourth, which is still the rarest, is to engage the readership in the editorial decision-making process itself.

1) Where were you?

Tapping into the sentiment of a crowd is a logical extension of the journalist taking to the streets for a vox-pop, only with the benefit of the extended reach afforded by technology and in particular by the continuing growth of social networks.

That's the approach, for example, of the Los Angeles Times' "Where were you?" campaign as the paper sought to mark the anniversary of the terrorist attacks by asking its readership to share memories of the event. This is a perfect example of the web 2.0 move away from the op-ed approach with newspaper journalists trying to encapsulate a mood, and throwing open the doors to readers, concentrating instead on providing a platform for them to share feelings and memories. As well as accounts of the day the site also acts as a showcase for video and photos and is using Tumblr to broaden its reach.

2) Are you who we're looking for?

As well as providing a rich source of community sentiment, crowd-sourcing has proven to be a highly efficient way of finding specific sources or talents. A new breed of Twitter-friendly journalists has found that reaching out across social networks is a fast way of finding eye-witnesses or specialists. That was the model for Gannett's initial foray into crowd-sourcing with the Fort Myers News Press and it continues to reap rewards today. The Guardian, for example (a leading proponent of the technique) followed up the riots in England with an appeal for eyewitnesses in Tottenham not only to submit pictures or observations, but to actively build a more complete understanding of the events and those involved.

Reaching out to those most directly involved does not have to be news-driven; both the Guardian and The New York Times have recently crowd-sourced inquiries into school quality, encouraging teachers to post their own data and observations about institutions so as to create a map of results and show regional trends in educational quality.

3) Want a job?

Crowd-sourcing is also proving popular as a quick way to scale up the size of a newspaper's workforce. That was the case when the Guardian created a site to ask readers to investigate politicians' expenses and it continues to work when applied to the 24,000 pages of Sarah Palin's emails that were released into the public domain. What the Guardian has proved is that far from tiring of helping out its readership has instead gained something of a taste for the task, thereby enabling the newsroom to winnow otherwise daunting amounts of news grain.

The release of public records is often done in a format that suggests the authorities begrudge their publication – for example the Palin emails being released as printouts rather than in digital format – and the use of crowd-sourcing is an immediate way for a newspaper to redress that balance and call up an army of helpers. The key to engaging that army, however, seems to be a clear format within which to work and the Guardian has been highly praised for the way it enables its helpers with the online tools to help them classify and tag their findings. Small details have emerged such as the fact that the addition of mug shots of politicians greatly increased the motivation of researchers looking into the expenses scandal.

There is, however, the potential for controversy in crowd-sourced work projects because the success hinges very much on the sense that the involvement itself is the reward. If this is badly judged and seen instead as the title exploiting free labour on behalf of its readers then the result is ill-will which is voiced at the speed of the Net. That was the result of The Huffington Post's decision to crowd-source its logo which led to accusations that it was merely exploiting designers rather than paying for commercial work.

4) What should we do?

The fourth use of crowd-sourcing is proving to be that of editorial decision-making. Turning to the readership and asking them to pick lines of enquiry or subjects for coverage is a logical extension of the Web 2.0 ethos and yet examples remain relatively rare beyond simple readership surveys.

Some newspapers are inviting readers into the process of moulding the newspaper of the future in a way more ongoing, consistent, and interactive than a simple survey of opinion. Beta620 at The New York Times (the name comes from the building's address) is a "new home for experimental projects from Times developers — and a place for anyone to suggest and collaborate on new ideas and products." The paper doesn't promise to implement suggestions and freely concedes that some of the projects being discussed will never leave the drawing board, but promises that others will become full-fledged products, just as the Times Skimmer (an online snapshot view of top stories) did.

Encouraging participation in project development is a positive step, but it does stop short of true reader/publisher democratic equality. For that we have to look to a less conventional publisher than the Guardian or the NYT: WikiLeaks. WikiLeaks has not shied away from crowd-sourcing its decision-making process, as for example the choice of whether or not to release all the cables from "Cablegate" in searchable format.

WikiLeaks put that question out on Twitter to respond to the hashtags #WLVoteYes or #WLVoteNo. Whether WikiLeaks was right to make that move is questionable, but it is hard not to think that news has taken a notable step towards democracy in a year when democracy and social media have never been far from the headlines.

Bill Adair, Editor of PolitiFact: 'Readers love this kind of accountability journalism'

Bill Adair is Washington Bureau Chief for The St Petersburg Times and Editor of PolitiFact, a fact-checking website with a cheeky tone. Bill Adair speaks here about the importance of accountability journalism, the changing face of the media and how presenting the facts behind the news can be like "getting people to eat their vegetables."

PolitiFact is best known for its "truth-o-meter," a scale that rates the accuracy of statements made by politicians and lobbyists. At the top end, accurate assertions are labeled "true" while at the bottom people who tell barefaced lies are named and shamed: "pants on fire."

PolitiFact was launched in 2007 as part of the St Petersburg Times. It proved so popular that it now has several subsidiary state websites and is affiliated with nine other papers around the US. In the wake of its success a number of other US publications, including The Washington Post, have started fact-checking services. PolitiFact was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 2009.

WAN-IFRA: PolitiFact focuses on fact-checking statements made by key players in American politics. What do you think the most important shortcomings are in the way news stories are reported in the mainstream media – is it just lack of accuracy?

ADAIR: I would say two things. Firstly, I would say there is not enough accountability journalism, which is what PolitiFact tries to do. I think in the past we've let politicians get away with exaggerations and falsehoods because we assumed that our readers would do their own fact-checking. I think that's a flaw in journalistic thinking: I think it's important for us to give people the tools they need to make sense of their government and the political debate and so I think increasingly that means we have to tell them what's true and what's not.

I would say one other flaw is that there's too much emphasis on the politics, on who's up and who's down, who's winning and who's losing and not enough on the substance of what the things would really mean for voters. PolitiFact is really a creative way of covering issues and public policy. I think of it like getting people to eat their vegetables. They don't want to eat their vegetables but if you can make the vegetables tasty they will eat them.

WAN-IFRA: What does the expansion of news on social media mean for journalistic accuracy? Are more falsehoods circulated this way, or is it a way to monitor the press?

ADAIR: I think you have to use Twitter and Facebook properly. Obviously, as we've seen most recently with some of the reaction in the United States to the killings in Norway, people will jump to conclusions quickly and use whatever media they can and get things out there that may not be accurate. So I think we have to be wise about how we use these. But in a way, Twitter is no different than a breaking news report in radio or television. You have a limited amount of space or time and it's tempting to put things out there that aren't thoroughly reported.

WAN-IFRA: What are the most interesting reader responses that you've had to PolitiFact?

ADAIR: We get lots and lots of reader feedback. The biggest one lately has been readers overwhelmingly telling us they want us to change the truth-o-meter. The truth-o-meter has had, since we started, six levels and the level between half-true and false has been called barely true. And we have received thousands of emails from readers who support the idea that we floated that we should change it; instead of calling it "barely true" we're going to call it "mostly false."

WAN-IFRA: What's the difference for readers between those two terms?

ADAIR: The problem with "barely true" is that the statement is mostly not true but by putting the word "true" in it, many people felt it was misleading. And so we had many instances over the years, most recently one where one of our state PolitiFact sites ruled a statement "barely true" from the National Republican Congressional Committee and they issued a press release, the Republicans did, that says "PolitiFact finds the statement 'true.'" That wasn't what we found, we had said it was "barely true." So we turned around and we rated the new statement "pants on fire" and said "that's ridiculous."

Our readers are very smart and thoughtful and funny, and we get a lot of great ideas from them. I would say that probably one-fourth to one-third of the facts that we check are suggestions from our readers.

WAN-IFRA: With so many news sources (tv, print, radio, online papers, social media, news bloggers) any given news story can generate a massive range of responses. How can a journalist pick out the important facts?

ADAIR: You have to figure out what messages are really getting widespread distribution. If somebody makes a claim in one blog and it ends there, that's not the kind of thing we would fact-check. But if that blog post is tweeted repeatedly or posted on Facebook many times or used in emails that are copied and forwarded, then we're more likely to fact-check it.

Let me step back for a second and say I think the whole concept of media has changed dramatically. In the 1960s in any country there were a few television networks and probably some large newspapers and they were the filters that decided what information people needed to read or to hear. What's happened in the Internet age is that those filters, the legacy media, are not as important anymore because you may get information from your newspaper or your television network still, but you probably also get information from blogs and internet news sources and even emails that are forwarded to you by your crazy uncle who has various conspiracy theories. And so it's important for us as journalists, particularly as fact-checkers, to realise the filter is gone.

WAN-IFRA: What are your tips for journalists who want to look beyond the main terms of a story?

ADAIR: Probably the biggest one is to look to original sources. One of the things that we require at PolitiFact is that when our reporters are research-

ing an article, they will find the original voting record, will find the original speech that someone gave in congress, and the original report, rather than relying on news accounts of those things. And I think what I have seen in looking at a lot of journalism is that journalists have gotten accustomed to doing their work quickly and not digging as deeply as they should.

WAN-IFRA: You commented in an interview in the past (on CNN) that fact-checking "takes a commitment" and news organisations 'have to be willing to commit reporters and editors to journalism that takes longer'. Do you think news groups will make this commitment?

ADAIR: It depends on the will of the news organisation. I work with some newspapers in the United States that really impress me with their commitment to not just PolitiFact but to great journalism. The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is one paper that really puts an emphasis on great journalism. But there are other newspapers in the United States that are not willing to make that commitment and that's sad because I think what we have shown with PolitiFact is that readers love the truth-o-meter. Readers love this kind of accountability journalism.

WAN-IFRA: Your website has a more humorous tone than other fact-checking websites like factcheck.org. How has that gone down with readers?

ADAIR: Generally they really like it. When we started we wanted to have a website that was not too serious and that people would get a chuckle out of every now and then. Obviously we take the journalism seriously but we try to mix it up and present it in such a way that it's fun and accessible and I think that's really important. Too much political coverage is too dry and boring and it's why a lot of people would rather watch TMZ and get the latest Hollywood news. I think we have found the right balance with PolitiFact that is both substantive but also a little cheeky.

Wired's Cutthroat Capitalism game asks readers to imagine that they are pirate commanders trying to guide their ships through the Gulf of Aden, while USA TODAY's News quiz is a simpler example of incorporating gaming into news.

Gamification and newsgames – where news and videogames meet

It should not be a surprise to anyone that a great deal of the time people spend online involves gaming of some sort. The news industry has also noticed this, and as publishers are exploring different strategies of boosting interaction with their online readers, many are looking into ways of tapping into that gaming frenzy. Some criticise the idea of using game strategies as a sign of anxiety, claiming that newspapers are clutching for straws and willing to use any method available in engaging with their audiences. Others, however, point out that game mechanics can be used in ways that go beyond providing superficial incentives to engagement, permitting new ways of telling stories and addressing topical issues.

Although there is a lot of talk of "gamification" – using game mechanics in the field of news – in the media industry these days, the co-existence of journalism and games is nothing new. It is almost 100 years since crossword puzzles first started appearing in newspapers, becoming an authentic craze in the 1920s. Many newspapers have regular news quizzes to allow their readers to test their their knowledge of current events, and some papers also have daily news quizzes online. More lately, the Sudoku trend is another example of how games can be used as an inducement to pick up the paper, and similar strategies are also being applied on the web as many news websites feature sections for online games. Such sections, however, are external to the editorial and journalistic content. Now, more and more people promote the idea of using gaming features as part of reporting and as a way to increase audience participation.

But for the uninitiated, mixing games with news can seem paradoxical –

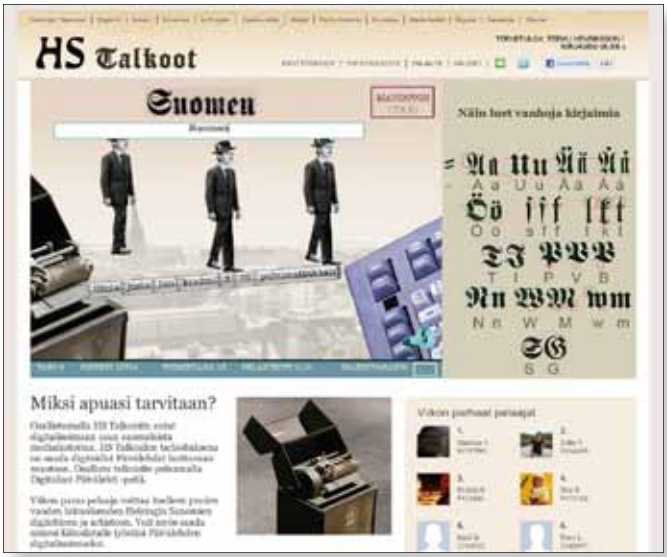
aren't newspapers supposed to be about serious real-world events and developments, while games are typically associated with entertainment? Ken Doctor, the author of Newsonomics, a handbook about journalism's digital future, approached this topic by making a careful distinction between the playable game and the dynamics beneath the surface: "The business of game dynamics – or gamification – is what happens under the hood," he wrote on Nieman Journalism Lab, noting that game dynamics in particular can be used for the benefit of news. Instead of being about time-wasting, they are a powerful and seductive drawing-in of human habit.

Doctor mentioned Redding Record Searchlight, a newspaper based in Redding, California, as one of the news publishers who are dipping their toes in gaming waters. The paper added some game-like elements to its website in August, intending to encourage audience participation and bring greater "insight" to the site, the paper's editor Silas Lyons explained. The new features are mostly prize- and recognition-based, and the site's users can earn points and badges in a number of ways, from viewing stories to commenting on them. Doctor said that the newspaper has had a significant role in the community, but like many papers, it hasn't succeeded in getting a similar position online. The new features appear to have given the website a push in that direction: Doctor reported that after a couple of weeks, registration was up 35 percent, and comments 19 percent. "If these trends hold up, they give us a very strong foundation on which to build," Lyons said.

The Huffington Post launched a similar type of initiative, called HuffPost Badges, already last year in an effort to make the site more interactive and social network friendly. The site awards logged-in users for different kinds of activity by granting them badges. Arianna Huffington explained in the feature's announcement that the badges focus on three key member activities, "connecting with others, engaging with our content, and moderating comments," the overall goal being to take the online community "to the next level."

Theoretically badges and other kinds of rewards make it easier to distinguish the users who have gained the trust of the online community, and there is an argument to be made about giving the community ways of indicating its most trustworthy and loyal members. But Doctor noted that making commenting more rewarding should be only a start in introducing gaming elements, as the real goal should be to involve readers in the creation and maintenance of online communities. As the readers' role has become more interactive than before in online news publishing, he stressed that there should be incentives to "new pro-news behaviours," such as crowd-sourcing, blog writing, data crunching, visualisations and web

The Redding Record Searchlight has added some game-like elements to its website: badges and points.



The Sun, left, offered readers incentives to start playing its bingo game, and the Helsingin Sanomat, right, used gaming strategies as a way to involve its readers in the digitisation process of its archives.

design participation. The best way to provide that incentive – points, badges, money, community standing or something else – is yet to emerge, but what is clear is that a publication should in some way show how it values its readers that contribute to the site.

Gaming can be used to activate readers also for other kinds of aims. Some UK newspapers have set up their own online gambling sites, presumably aiming to add a new component to their revenue strategy. The Sun, for example, was promoting its Bingo game in July and August by offering generous terms to help people get started with the game, and also the Daily Mirror offers online gambling services.

For a perhaps more praiseworthy example, one can take a look at Helsingin Sanomat, Finland's leading newspaper, which used gaming strategies as a way to involve its readers in the digitisation process of its archives. When digitising issues from the paper's early years, from 1889 to 1904 when it was called Päivälehti, Helsingin Sanomat used automatic text recognition to scan those parts of its archives. Such software, however, is unable to make out deteriorated parts of old texts, and to enter words manually would have been a huge effort.

Instead, the newspaper set up an online game to bring in its readers' help in the project. The game involved typing scanned words one by one quickly enough, and in addition to the pleasure coming from helping in recording an important part of Finnish media history, the best players were awarded with a 6-month access to Helsingin Sanomat's digital issue.

Game dynamics as part of journalism

Some have branded "gamification" as another buzzword that makes rounds in the news industry but falls short of providing solid long-term solutions. Such critics would say that although gaming strategies can be used as incentives to reader engagement, they have no real connection with journalism and remain thus external to a news organisation's primary mission. But together with the aforementioned developments, there are an increasing number of attempts to use game dynamics as a way to provide alternative ways of approaching and examining topical subjects. Dubbed "newsgames," the best of these give evidence of the medium's potential.

The Newsgames project is a research project at Georgia Institute of Technology which "seeks to understand the ways videogames can be used in the field of journalism."

"What lies at the intersection of journalism and videogames?" asks the Newsgames project, a research project at Georgia Institute of Technology. According to its website, Newsgames "seeks to understand the ways videogames can be used in the field of journalism, providing examples, theoretical approaches, speculative ideas, and practical advice about the past, present, and future of games and journalism." Ian Bogost, associate professor at the institute, said to PBS's Idea Lab that the project seeks to build a tool for generating newsgames quickly, making it possible to create games about breaking events. The project, called The Cartoonist, is executed in collaboration with Expressive Intelligence Studio at UC Santa Cruz and a winner of the 2010 Knight News Challenge. He described the project as an extension of editorial cartooning: "For over a century, editorial cartoons drew attention to issues of local importance and generated a sense of regional pride... they've always served a pivotal role in maintaining product loyalty and funnelling readers toward the rest of the paper." Newsgames hopes to reawaken this tradition by drawing from the accessibility and capability of arcade games while presenting an editorial opinion.

In Newsgames: Journalism at Play, a book published as part of the research project, Bogost and other authors examine the possibilities that videogames offer for delivering news and for examining complex real-life issues. The writers argue that despite the new possibilities that come with web publishing, news sites tend to repeat practices from older mediums by publishing written articles (newspapers), podcasts (radio) and video interviews (television). The book suggests that, like charts and infographics, games can be used as an alternative to the article in conveying information. Articles are particularly suitable for describing key events and the players behind them, while games can convey the complexity of topics such as the 2008 financial crisis by highlighting the multifaceted relationships between the parties involved. What is unique about games is that they can provide a simulation of how things happen by constructing models that people can interact with.

At the same time as games are gradually more used for journalistic aims, infographics are increasingly resembling games or feature game-like qualities, which is a consequence of the growing emphasis on data journalism. In Newsgames, the writers categorise games that aim to inform into different groups: some are about current events, illustrating the background of a topical issue, while others are editorial by nature, much like columns and editorial cartoons in traditional newspapers.

Other categories include reportage games, which aim to reproduce the goals and style of daily news coverage, and documentary games, used to provide a broader view on historical and current developments. In practice, many newsgames include elements from more than one category.

Although most newsgames seem to have been created by independent developers without any involvement from a major news organisation, media outlets should not forget the fact that gaming is so far a mostly untapped resource for communicating and interacting with the audience, and one that could be made use of much more strongly. And as that audience is becoming more and more gaming-literate and thus responsive to games, the potential of newsgames is also increasing.

While there has been a lot of buzz in the media industry about novel ways of reaching the audience, in practice there has been more talk than actual innovation. The examples so far demonstrate that games could be used for such purposes and at best can offer deeper insight than a traditional article could. It is likely that games will become one of the methods available for reporting, but how important newsgames will be remains to be seen. What is certain, though, is that they represent a new way of thinking about news and reporting, and with that in mind journalists and news organisations in general shouldn't ignore the possibilities that newsgames pose.

ProPublicia's Scott Klein: 'I hope newsrooms everywhere start taking this up'

Scott Klein is Editor of News Applications at ProPublica, the New York-based non-profit organisation dedicated to investigative journalism. He tells WAN-IFRA how "a whole new ocean of investigation has become possible" now new technology is available to journalists. Klein heads a team of programmers and journalists who create new software that allows users not just to read stories, but to interact with them and find out how national trends are relevant to their daily lives. Projects range from The Opportunity Gap, a database where users can compare how well states provide richer and poorer schools with the same access to advanced classes, to Dollars for Docs, a programme that readers can use to find whether their own doctor has been paid money by drug companies.

WAN-IFRA: Projects like The Opportunity Gap and Dollars for Docs are databases that contain a vast amount of information. What is the key to making this data accessible to users?

KLEIN: "Journalism is about helping people figure out how to live their lives," (not my quote, I don't remember who said it first!) News applications help people see what's relevant to them in a large, complex world. For The Opportunity Gap, what we really focused on was giving people the ability to find their own school, which is a very small part of the process, but it anchored the story into their life for them. They were able to pivot from their school to schools near them, and then also to rich and poor schools, the extremes in their state or in their district. So they were able to tell the story themselves using their own experience and their own situations.

WAN-IFRA: So is it crucial that the story within the news app is "anchored" with individual readers?

KLEIN: Absolutely. That is absolutely core to the news app. Amanda Cox who is a designer at the New York Times, an absolutely marvelous statistician and news graphics designer, says that graphics should tell a story. And I like to say that the news graphics tell a story, the news apps tell your story. You'll be able to come to a new understanding not just of a national trend, but of exactly how it relates to you.

WAN-IFRA: You said that creating a news app is like lots of other journalistic work. How do you strike a balance between creating a journalistic narrative and providing access to raw original sources?

KLEIN: We don't see what we present as really raw: everything that's in one of the news applications that we create has been analysed and cleaned. The real question is that how do we make it so that you're not overwhelmed with the volume of data that's available? This can be a struggle. Sometimes we're really good at it and sometimes we're not as good... It's about focus, and it's about traditional editing; "hey this whole column of numbers is not germane to what we're trying to tell, it will just confuse people, let's cut that whole thing out."

WAN-IFRA: How do you decide what sort of stories will make a good subject of a news application?

KLEIN: Well obviously the first thing is the availability of a large data set. And also a story where there is both a big national trend but that is made up of a lot of little local stories. We have had a tremendous amount of success doing things like that. One of the things we've found that's been fascinating and really gratifying is that when we do a big national story local news organisations will actually pick up their locality. For The Opportunity Gap, we had lots of local news outlets doing stories about access to education in their area.

WAN-IFRA: Were you inspired by other sites in your creation of these applications?

KLEIN: The New York Times is always a huge leader in this. But there've been lots and lots. One of the very finest pieces of "news-appery" was the LA Times's "mapping LA" project. They realised that there is no canonical neighbourhood map in LA that everybody agreed on and it ultimately made it very difficult for them to do neighbourhood stories: which neighbourhood has the best schools, which neighbourhood has the worst crime, because nobody really agreed on where x neighbourhood ended. So they crowd-sourced a map of LA and invited people to draw the boundaries of the various neighbourhoods of Los Angeles. The project ran for quite a while, and eventually a consensus was reached. Then the LA Times had in its possession a canonical map of the neighbourhoods in Los Angeles, and this generated stories. Now the LA Times can offer crime statistics for Los Angeles with angles like "what's your neighbourhood like?"

WAN-IFRA: Something that makes your applications stand out is their appearance. How important are graphics to the success of a news application?

KLEIN: They're absolutely crucial. Appearance is one thing but with each news application we think deeply about user behaviour that we expect; in other words, what information might they want from this, and how can we pave those paths really cleanly so that they can get to it first.

But also, what behaviour do we want? Do we want them to take this information and share it on Facebook? Do we want them to take some sort of action? We might really want them to go and look at a ranking of states. Or do we want them to look up their particular doctor, for Dollars For Docs? If so lets make the "search your doctor" the biggest, brightest thing on the page.

WAN-IFRA: The Opportunity Gap encourages users to share results and comments on Facebook and Twitter. Has this integration with social media been a success?

KLEIN: It is. I think that we took some of our cues from the New York Times's Oscars app. For a week or two before the Oscars you could make your own ballot, pick the things you think are going to win, then share it with your friends and start competitions with your friends on Facebook.

So we took that as our inspiration. We said, well, how can we apply that to a big national education story? So we let people find their school, find the schools in their state that are outliers or find schools in their state that are interesting to them. It's easy for them to collect them all into one page and just share that page on Facebook.

We didn't really have any number expectations and so I can't really quote you numbers. It was much more an experiment to see how we could do this both for this app and going forward.

WAN-IFRA: So you're still at the dipping-your-toe stage?

KLEIN: Absolutely. There's no doubt, we are in the infancy of news apps. We're kind of learning as we go, and consequently there's sort of a culture of sharing a bit with news apps. There are few enough of us that we all know each other, we're all kind of on the same mail lists, we see each other at the same conferences, we're all on Skype with each other!

WAN-IFRA: How big is that community?

KLEIN: Fewer than 50 people. We're very much at the beginning: I can see that probably doubling in the next year. I hope newsrooms everywhere start taking this up.

WAN-IFRA: Obviously it generates a lot of reader response.

KLEIN: Oh, they're huge. They are the most popular things on the ProPublica website. The search your doctor feature on Dollars For Doc is the single most popular feature on Propublica ever: bigger than any story, bigger than any other news app.

WAN-IFRA: Propublica was founded because 'the business crisis in publishing and – not unrelated – the revolution in publishing technology' was squeezing the resources of investigative journalists in the mainstream media. Do you believe that new technology can now be harnessed to preserve investigative journalism?

KLEIN: Oh absolutely. I think that news applications are very much an answer to that question, right? Everything we do in my department here at ProPublica is investigative and accountability-focused just as much as the long-form stories. Everything that we do is mission-focused. But it exploits technology that five years ago didn't exist. A whole new ocean of investigation has become possible because the tools you can use to scrutinise big powerful systems are becoming more and more sophisticated and at the same time cheaper and cheaper.

WAN-IFRA: Do you have any thoughts about what the next big innovation in news storytelling could be?

KLEIN: Something that we have not yet started thinking about is the story form itself. We still write stories and produce stories and the technology still understands stories in the same way that it did 50 years ago, 150 years ago. And the story is kind of a monolithic element. But to some extent the story needs to be broken up a bit more and treated both as a story in the traditional narrative sense but also as a collection of pieces of data.

For instance PolitiFact. They have a system where it's not just a big long news story, but they break it up. Who are we talking about? What are the comments they made that we're assessing? Were they true, were they not? What state is this associated with? And then they can do deep introspection into this. They can say, let me just see what are the facts in Florida. Let me see just the facts or non-facts said by President Obama. And there's an incredible amount of interesting stuff that can be unlocked if you start treating stories both as stories, because no one wants them to go away, but also as complex collections of data.

Ethical challenges for newsrooms 6

In recent years, a number of factors have raised important new questions regarding ethical issues for newsrooms. For example, how should newsrooms handle publishing reader comments on their articles? In addition, how should newsrooms report on material from whistleblower websites such as WikiLeaks? While these areas and others like them might present something of a gray area for newsroom managers, less gray are issues such as the recent phone-hacking scandal in the UK, which has to date forced the closure of one newspaper and seen the arrests of some 16 people and raised alarming concerns among the public at large about the news industry in general. In this chapter we also consider the role of ombudsmen and how they can help provide transparency between newsrooms and their readers.

From steady drip to uncontrolled fire-hose – WikiLeaks

The past year has seen the WikiLeaks story move away from its revelations and instead focus on the acrimonious breakdown of the organisation's relationship with its partners. For newspapers the unfolding developments provide a cautionary tale.

Launched in 2006 as an "uncensorable" Wikipedia for document leaking, WikiLeaks was effectively an anonymous drop-box for whistle-blowers and spent the first few years of its existence leaking a steady drip of revelations about subjects ranging from Scientology to Sarah Palin. However, in 2010 it took a new approach with partnerships, including The New York Times, Der Spiegel and the Guardian, in order to publish a cache of 75,000 documents about the war in Afghanistan.

"WikiLeaks revealed the truths about corrupt countries to their people who were denied that information as they do not have a free press," said Guardian Editor-in-Chief Alan Rusbridger of the partnership. "By linking with The New York Times, we were able, for example, to offer the people of Tunisia the First Amendment. WikiLeaks was about doing what the Guardian does well, but this time on a global scale. I hope that this continues to be our role going forward; to bring an extra-national dimension and stop repressive regimes from suppressing information."

The marriage of a whistle-blower with the editing of a newspaper and the protection of the First Amendment was certainly an eye-opener for the industry and promised a whole new approach to investigative journalism in the world of Web 2.0.

"We are developing an idea of a newspaper that is very different," observed Rusbridger. "Our approach recognises

The Guardian was among the publishers partnering with WikiLeaks to publish documents relating to the war in Afghanistan.

Germany's Der Spiegel, left, and Spain's El País were among the publishers that issued a joint statement condemning WikiLeaks for releasing unedited versions of 251,000 diplomatic cables.

the importance of putting a newspaper at the heart of the open eco-structure of information so that you can then harness different voices and link to an array of other sources. We are reaping the rewards for breaking out of the old mindset of journalism and understanding that we can harness, aggregate, curate and report, which is a distributive model of journalism that has a richness and diversity of content."

Relations were to sour dramatically after Wikileaks made an archive of classified US embassy cables available for The New York Times, the Guardian, Le Monde, El Pais and Der Spiegel, as Assange seemingly fell out with the newspapers. By September, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange was accusing the Guardian of having endangered sources by publishing a password that opened an encrypted file containing a quarter of a million secret US diplomatic cables. The Guardian retorted that the password supposedly only unlocked a single copy that was due to have been destroyed; the implication being that WikiLeaks was to blame for allowing copies of the document to continue to circulate: at least one was posted to the file-sharing site Pirate Bay. Assange replied by releasing all of the cables and threatening (not for the first time) to sue the newspaper.

This in turn prompted a joint statement by The New York Times, the Guardian, El Pais, Der Spiegel, and Le Monde condemning WikiLeaks for releasing the unedited versions of all 251,000 of the diplomatic cables. Their principle point was that by releasing them without editing this enabled the authors of the cables to be identified.

"We deplore the decision of WikiLeaks to publish the unredacted state department cables, which may put sources at risk," said the newspapers. "Our previous dealings with WikiLeaks were on the clear basis that we would only publish cables which had been subjected to a thorough joint editing and clearance process," the statement went on. "We will continue to defend our previous collaborative publishing endeavour. We cannot defend the needless publication of the complete data – indeed, we are united in condemning it." The statement added that "the decision to publish by Julian Assange was his, and his alone."

This raises a number of issues for all involved. Certainly the newspapers involved were taking a risk in partnering with a potential wild card like WikiLeaks, yet they felt that as long as they then retained editorial control over what was published this represented a logical extension of the long-established relationship between journalists and sources. As Rusbridger makes clear, some involved saw this as no less than the future of investigative journalism. Others, however, clearly felt that the relationship of journalist as both protec-

Al Jazeera, left, and The Wall Street Journal have each launched their own drop-box structures for whistle-blowers.

tor and mouthpiece of whistle-blowers would be better preserved if the news source itself had total control over the whistle-blowing structure. Some would argue that the falling out of WikiLeaks and the papers with its subsequent exposure of sources is proof positive of that argument. This prompted news sources to set up their own anonymous drop box structures so as to have total control over the process.

An example of that approach is the Al Jazeera Transparency Unit (AJTU) which launched in January 2011 as a secure place to deposit video, audio, and tips about corruption. According to Al Jazeera: "All submitted content is subjected to a rigorous vetting and authentication process that encompasses respect for individual privacy, contextualization, and fierce adherence to our trade craft commitment of "journalism of depth."

The AJTU also notes that "Al Jazeera has also gone to great lengths to protect the identities of our sources. Files will be uploaded and stored on our secure servers, and accessed only by journalists working for the Al Jazeera Transparency Unit."

Therein lies the problem. As the WikiLeaks fall-out has demonstrated, the real issue of anonymous leaks sites is not the ethical issue of their use, since as long as rigid journalistic ethics are still applied to their publication, the technology changes nothing from the traditional approach of anonymous sources. What does change, however is the notion of technology and security and with that responsibility for protecting sources.

The Wall Street Journal is another source that has launched its own whistle-blower site, SafeHouse, but that has already come under fire for failing to ensure secure protection for sources. SafeHouse encourages sources to use the Tor cloaking service, but a Tor researcher has accused the paper of being negligent and failing to ensure anonymity. The WSJ replied with a statement saying that; "our priority is to ensure that SafeHouse fulfils its mission as a secure location that provides sources with access to highly skilled, experienced journalists." That, however, may only fuel the fears of critics who note that the terms of use reserve the right to "disclose any information about you to law enforcement authorities or to a requesting third party." Some feel this can be interpreted to imply more concern about protecting the paper than the sources.

Ultimately the problem is that computer security is rarely a strong point of newspapers. The alternative, that of outsourcing the security aspect to specialists or third-party sources, is equally risky since the behaviour of those third parties may be unpredictable (as per WikiLeaks) and the outsourcing involves a lack of control.

Any news source tempted to create an online drop box should first ask themselves whether they have the means or strategy to build and maintain a system that can dependably resist interference by hackers, government agencies, grudge-driven individuals, or simple human error. This last year suggests that as long as any of these factors come into play, whistle-blowing sites will come under attack.

The final issue of News of the World was published on Sunday, July 10, 2011.

Unethical practices – the UK phone hacking scandal

There have been few, if any, occasions when ethical conduct within the press has been put into question as forcefully as has been the case after the phone hacking scandal in Britain started to be played out. The implications of the affair are extraordinarily sweeping, extending far beyond the press. As Roy Greenslade wrote in his Guardian blog in September: "What British-based story of recent times has led to the resignation of two senior officers from the nation's largest police force, the closure of the country's second-highest selling national newspaper, the resignation of two senior executives from the world's largest news organisation, the resignation of the prime minister's media aide, the early retirement of the chairwoman of the press regulator, a judicial inquiry, two police investigations, two overlapping Commons inquiries, and the arrest of 16 people?"

Trouble was brewing for a long time before the revelations that brought the issue into public consciousness. The first investigation into phone hacking followed the 2005 exposure that voicemail messages of members of the British Royal Family had been intercepted by the News of the World. That affair seemed resolved in 2007, after two convictions (of the newspaper's royal editor and a private investigator working for the paper), and the resignation of the News of the World's editor of the time, Andy Coulson.

But in January 2011, the Metropolitan Police announced that it was to begin a new investigation, dubbed Operation Weeting, into phone hacking, after receiving new information regarding the practice at the News of the World. By this time, the affair hadn't become a major public scandal, but some papers, most notably the Guardian, pursued the story determinedly, reporting regularly on new findings. Then a tipping point was reached: in July, it emerged that the News of the World had hired private investigators to access the voicemail of Milly Dowler, a 13-year girl who had disappeared in March 2002 and was subsequently found dead.

Previous phone hacking victims had been public figures, and the fact that the private investigators had deleted some messages, giving Dowler's family hope that she might still be alive, was enough to cause public outrage and ensure that an in-depth inquiry into the newspaper's practices was on its way. Acknowledging that the paper's reputation was irredeemably tarnished, News Corporation, owner of the News of the World, reacted quickly by announcing the closure of the paper, the market-leader among Sunday newspapers, after 168 years in print. Before the announcement, many advertisers had already pulled their advertisements in response to the revelations. The final issue appeared on Sunday July 10, 2011.

On July 19, Rupert and James Murdoch, two heads of News Corporation, together with Rebekah Brooks, a former News of the World editor, appeared in front of a parliamentary committee. At the hearing, the executives assured that they didn't have personal knowledge of illegal activities at the newspaper during the time phone hacking was said to have taken place.
Soon, several inquiries were set up to examine the full implications of the exposures. The British prime minister David Cameron announced that a public government inquiry would investigate the affair, naming Lord Justice Leveson as its chairman. The inquiry will look into phone hacking at the News of the World, the initial police inquiry and allegations of payments to police by the press. The Leveson inquiry, scheduled to begin in October, will hear participants give evidence on their experiences of alleged media intrusion. The so-called "core participants" list of the inquiry consists of 46 celebrities, politicians, other public figures and members of the public. One of the questions that the inquiry is expected to shed light on is how widespread phone hacking has been in the British press, together with examining whether News Corporation has engaged in cover-up in order to hide illegal activities, of which it has been accused.


Inside 14 pages of news and comment on the death of a 168-year-old paper

the guardian

The scandal that closed the News of the World

Coulson to be arrested today as Met steps up investigation

Hacks pay the price of hacking, but paper had lost its way


Stella Rimington
I always wanted to be a Bond girl

British Grand Prix
McLaren's latest comedy of errors

The Daily Telegraph

Hacking: the 'smoking gun' emails

John Lewis' public services to break state monopoly

Secret diary of a robber, aged 21... and very foolish

Teachers told to use force to restrain unruly pupils

The phone-hacking scandal in the UK exploded during summer 2011 and has resulted in numerous high-profile resignations and arrests.

Very soon, stories emerged that carried the implication that phone hacking was a more endemic practice among tabloids than had been previously thought. There have been allegations of unethical practice at the Sun, another News Corporation paper, but as of mid-September no condemning evidence had been presented. In August, the accusations extended to the Daily Mirror, causing Trinity Mirror, the paper's publisher, to start an internal review of its editorial procedures. The publisher has since assured that its executives or their staff hadn't been responsible for the interception of voicemail messages (the assurances, however, applied only to executives currently working for Trinity Mirror).

By mid-September, 16 people had been arrested as part of the Metropolitan Police Service's Operation Weeting, including two journalists with no connections to the News of the World, though one of them was later cleared of any wrongdoing. In spite of allegations of police officers having received illegal payments from journalists, the police hadn't yet arrested any officers.

The ramifications of the phone hacking affair on News Corporation have been immense. Amid a storm of negative publicity, the corporation withdrew its BSkyB takeover bid in July, soon after the closure of the News of the World. In the US, the FBI has launched an investigation into alleged hacking by News Corporation. Trouble may be looming also in Australia, where a former editor-in-chief of The Sunday Telegraph and The Daily Telegraph has claimed that Rupert Murdoch had told her to have someone followed. To the corporation's credit, it has stated that it is conducting an internal review of its practices.

In the aftermath of furore of this scale, it would be expected that the eventual consequences will extend well beyond the circle of News Corporation's papers, possibly affecting the British press in general. Predictably, many called into question the role of the Press Complaints Commission (PCC), the regulatory body of the self-regulated industry, claiming that it had failed at its task and should be replaced with a new system. Among the critics was Cameron, who described the PCC as inadequate. Similar comments have also been heard from within the press: for example Lionel Barber, the editor of the Financial Times, argued for the elimination of the PCC – not because it were unethical but because it had lost public confidence – in favour of a new body.

The PCC has instituted its own working group to examine the hacking affair and to draw together lessons from the outcomes of the police inquiries, together with reviewing the PCC's own previous actions as regards the issue. In August, the PCC sought to establish a set of protocols that would develop best practice across the industry by enquiring all editors about their editorial controls and activities. How and through what body the British press will be regulated in the future remains to be seen, but the pressure to replace the PCC appears to be growing. If the Leveson inquiry finds further proof of phone hacking among the British press, it would add considerable weight to the arguments that the PCC in its current form is powerless in maintaining ethical practices across the board.

Due to the enormous publicity of the case, the investigations will likely be thorough, bringing some kind of clarity regarding how ethically the British press has pursued stories, together with shedding light on the tangled web of connections that seems to be emerging between the press, politicians and law enforcement. As Greenslade put it, "The hacking scandal is a huge story with ramifications for the media, the police and the government – in other words, our democracy."

The Guardian in the UK, left, and Cleveland.com (the online presence of The Plain Dealer and Sun News), right, in the USA are among the news websites that encourage user comments.

No comment – trends in managing online comment sections

"Comment is Free" is the title of the Guardian's comments section, but as any newspaper with online commenting is well aware that all too easily translates into "Comment is a free-for-all." The speed with which anonymous comment descends into haranguing and hate means that it is often compared to a bar-room brawl, but on reflection, the antagonists in brawls are more likely to size up their adversaries before lunging into the fray.

To the critics of comments it is evident that the combination of anonymity and the immediacy of online reply means that reflection and balance are the first victims of open comment. The result of which is that many online newspapers have simply closed down comment boxes, or else removed the option after hard news stories or stories with a notably sensitive political agenda. Which seems reasonable; after all, even Wikipedia, that triumph of collaborative comment, is forced to lock off certain topics so they can't be edited by the general public. Some newspapers, such as the Minneapolis Star Tribune have reportedly implemented automatic no-comment policies for stories touching on suicide, race or sexuality.

Some would argue that commenting is rightly the realm of blogs while newspapers are in the business of delivering carefully researched articles written by professionals displaying both balance and a byline. There are good reasons, however, for not turning off all comment. The first is that there is a long tradition of anonymous whistle-blowing in newspapers and anonymous comment sections have undoubtedly thrown up details and opinions from individuals who have information but are not free to express themselves under their own names. The second is that the ethos of Web 2.0 means that

Pravda, left, and SME, right, are among the Slovakian media organisations that have joined together for a single subscription offer that charges users to comment on stories.

the conversations between readers are now part and parcel of the media scape.

Certainly that's the view of Cleveland.com Editor-in-Chief Denise Polverine: "I think you miss out on the full extent of the medium if you block out what readers have to say. Some news organizations feel their voice is the final voice on a subject, and that's not the case at Cleveland.com." This despite the fact that Cleveland.com, the online presence of Sun News and the Plain Dealer, has been the subject of lawsuit this past year over anonymous postings.

Thirdly, while advertisers are shy of placing adverts alongside heated argument, the number of page views that comments create is often a factor for publishers to consider when reaching for the "off" switch for comments.

Online comments existed long before newspapers took to the web and one answer to the problem is to take a leaf from the original online communities and improve the quality of comment by active moderation. Good moderators not only police the comment boards but actively promote good behaviour and help fuel debate. That means manpower, however, and as many newspapers will witness their journalists already feel they are being asked to do more and more in media without having to police their readership.

Another possibility is registration to establish "real" names (not always as simple as it sounds) or a tiered comments system whereby users earn the right to higher visibility through peer approval. Both of these require greater technical input for the systems concerned and thus more complexity, but they are being tried at The Huffington Post and at The Washington Post where Interactivity Editor Hal Straus says "we want to be able to establish user tiers, and display variations based on those tiers." The Wall Street Journal has a variation on this approach where it offers the ability to only see comments left by paid-for subscribers.

The most interesting developments during the past year, however, are the introduction of pay-to-comment approaches, third-party moderation, and the use of Facebook to manage identities.

Comment is not free

In Slovakia nine media organisations, including broadsheets Pravda and SME, have come together to form a single subscription offer – with the novel idea of charging users to comment on stories. Whether you still have barroom brawls when you have to pay to punch remains to be seen. Elsewhere local papers such as the Attleboro Sun-Chronicle of Massachusetts has implemented a 99 cent charge to register for the right to comment. This is not, as it might seem, a revenue-raiser but rather the minimum transaction for a credit card and it is the validation of the card, and with it the identity of the reader, that is expected to help guarantee better quality comments.

Alternatives to traditional anonymous website comments are offered by ICUC Moderation Services, left, which has a dedicated team that will pre-moderate all comments, and Facebook's Comments Box, right, which publishers can use as a plug-in, and has the benefit that Facebook is generally associated with real identities.

Moderate me

As noted earlier the big problem with moderation is manpower – it takes hours to monitor and moderate a lively online community and journalists are often unable, unwilling, or lacking in the skills required to do so. Which is where third-party moderation services come into the picture.

During the past year the Boston Globe joined NPR and the San Francisco Chronicle on the client list of a Canadian company called ICUC Moderation Services. The appeal is obvious – a dedicated team takes care of pre-moderating all comments which increases quality and significantly reduces the risk of legal action. There is a downside, however, since the newspapers involved have effectively renounced that direct contact with their own readership and since ICUC is better known for its corporate clients (such as Intel and Chevron), the approach lays itself open to accusations of cleansing or whitewashing comment boards.

When Facebook unveiled Comments Box, newspapers were quick to see the potential. Comments Box is a plug-in that lets users stay on the host site but use Facebook for commenting. It implies a real identity since most Facebook identities are effectively verified by their "friends" and uses Facebook's own proven algorithms for ordering comments by quality and relevance based on the satisfaction of other users when interacting.

A number of newspapers have implemented the plug-in but probably the most interesting is the LA Times which has trialled a dual system with Facebook comments running in parallel with a traditional anonymous comment system.

According to Jimmy Orr, Online Managing Editor at the LA Times, the improvement in the quality of discourse "was pretty stunning." As a bonus, Orr also points to referrals from Facebook jumping by 450 percent from the previous year. Considering the system is free this may means that a lot more papers will be looking to outsource their comments to Facebook.

It might seem to be the perfect solution in terms of taming those bar-room brawls, but before rushing to install the Comments plug-in it should be remembered that in doing so newspapers are also handing over their interaction with readers to a third party. Moreover, this third party has already drawn accusations of operating editorial censorship after the blocking of pages from sources as diverse as film critic Roger Ebert and anti-government demonstrators in the UK.

In the end, technology and third parties can clean up the mess of commenting, but newspapers face some difficult questions about whether they should be happy to have that mess swept away, or whether in the process they are distancing themselves from the very community they seek to connect with.

‘An independent agent for the public’

An ombudsman is an intermediary who generally serves between an institution and the public. Within the news landscape, he or she acts as a mediator between a news organisation and its readers, listeners and viewers. The ombudsman’s aim is to promote transparent and responsible journalism, safeguard and support the quality of journalism, its transparency and its accountability. The ombudsman’s daily job is to receive and investigate complaints from the public, and recommend a course of action to resolve issues that arise. He or she does this by directly answering complainants, writing internal memos for the news organisation staff or publishing a column in the paper. In this interview, Jeffrey Dvorkin, the Executive Director of the Organization of News Ombudsmen, explains the challenges facing those working as ombudsmen today.

WAN-IFRA: While the job varies from organisation to organisation, how would you define the news ombudsman’s role? Is there a general profile for the job?

DVORKIN: The first essential quality that the ombudsman needs to have is independence. He/she needs to absolutely define himself /herself as an independent agent for the public. This means that the ombudsman is free to choose the issues that he/she thinks are important to guarantee the standards and the ethical practices of the media organisation.

The second quality is that the ombudsman needs to be independent of management. So that whenever an ombudsman comes to a decision about something, he/she does not have any managerial authority to change things, it’s up to managers to do that. That is the beginning of the process.

WAN-IFRA: How can this independence be assured?

DVORKIN: I think that the critical element is that the ombudsman needs to have the support of management. And management has to be brave enough to take the criticism that the ombudsman would have. This is the difficult part because right now, because of the financial insecurity, a lot of media management believe that an ombudsman is not good for reputation. But in fact the opposite is true. We’ve done a couple of studies that show that having an ombudsman is actually good for the reputation of media organisations and that media organisations which have an ombudsman have more credibility rather than those that haven’t it.

We discovered that having an ombudsman is actually also good for business.

It attracts readers, listeners and viewers and allows media organisations to spend less money on legal costs because the ombudsman diminishes lawsuits. The Guardian discovered that after they hired their first ombudsman their legal costs went down by 30 percent in the first year. So it seems to us that this is a way in which media organisation can gain in every aspect.

WAN-IFRA: Are many news ombudsmen involved in the day-to-day workings and decision-makings of newsrooms, or do most of them work apart from the newsroom?

DVORKIN: It varies. In my experience the ombudsman needs to be a little bit apart because he/she is there to act as the agent of the public. It's increasingly difficult, however, because some media organisations are arguing that due to financial demands on them they can't have the ombudsman just sitting behind the desk waiting for letters and emails to arrive so it happens that ombudsmen are doing a little bit more in the day-to-day that they were used to. For example, handling letters to the editor of the newspaper, doing things that are still ombudsman-related but that are more involved in the production of the media product. We have to be realistic and understand that media organisations are struggling and ombudsmen need to be more adaptable about what their roles are. At the same time there is still the need of cooperation between the management and the role of the ombudsman. It's a balancing act.

WAN-IFRA: Do you know, or have an estimate for, how many news ombudsmen there are worldwide? Is the number of news ombudsmen growing?

DVORKIN: They are growing slowly. There is no question that between 2006 and 2008 a number of media organisations abandoned the idea of an ombudsman, but in 2008 we started growing again and interestingly we are growing more rapidly in Latin America. I think that it is because the idea of the ombudsman is closely related to the concept of democracy and then in those areas where a free and independent media is an essential aspect of democratic values there is more interest in ombudsmanship. There is a lot of more interest in ombudsmanship in former USSR, Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Middle East and Latin America. We are also growing a little bit in Africa as well. I think that the real problem is why North Americans and Europeans don't have more interest in this role.

Referring to this, one of the interesting aspects right now is the scandal involving the Murdochs. I think that one of the issues where ombudsmen would play a very important role in is giving media organisation more perspective. At a time when there is so much competition for audiences that the sense of ethical values is diminished and the pressure from shareholders for publicly traded media companies has become so deformed, ombudsmen are there to remind media organisations and the public that this competitive environment is really detrimental to both journalism and democracy.

WAN-IFRA: Talking about the phone-hacking scandal of the News of the World, how can we explain what happened? Which effects will it have on the UK self-regulation system of the press?

DVORKIN: It will be very interesting to see how the British Government will handle this. They called for a public inquiry to help to understand how media organisations are managed and how they are accountable to the public. We planned to present our perspective once the framework of the Commission is established. The tabloid culture in the UK has always been there and in my opinion it is part of the expression of the class divisions in British society. Those articles that are designed to shock and those provocative headlines of the News of the World, the Daily Mail or The Sun have always been aspects of this part of the British society. They've clearly gone too far. Now the consequences of these bad behaviours are that they have really shocked people in the UK and in the rest of the world

The tabloid sensibility is not confined to Great Britain, it exists in France, North America, Italy. A month from now will we just go back to business as usual or is this an opportunity for media organisations to take a close look at themselves and decide what is still acceptable and what must be changed?

This is an opportunity for all of us to figure out a way to do a better job of the kind of journalism that we are all engaged in. A variety of journalistic expression still needs to exist; the question is what are the standards we all need to follow and which is the best way to implementing those.

Regarding the press self-regulation system, it's very difficult to define how could it be revised. How do you make the Press Complaint Commission more effective? Can you impose rules? Can you demand that media organisations hire an ombudsman without appearing to be intruding on the independence of the media?

One of the best ways of doing this will be for the public to demand this as well. I think that what we need to do is engage with the public, with media owners and media organisations themselves to help them to understand the value of this kind of accountability because our democracy depends on.

WAN-IFRA: Is there a general code of conduct for news ombudsmen? And along these lines, is there a general set of guidelines the organisation has drawn up to help ombudsmen deal with different issues?

DVORKIN: There isn't really one set of guidelines. We found through ombudsmen who are very much involved in helping their media organisation to create ethics guides that there isn't one set of guidelines that fits for all of them. In the US there is something called the Society of Professional Journalists and they have a very broad but very useful set of ethical guidelines that frequently are adopted by media organisations. The ombudsman can be helpful in suggesting ethical guidelines to media organisations using those guidelines of the Society of Professional Journalists as a basic structure.

Also, there is no one set of guidelines for everyone because we do believe that media organisations have the right as well as the expectation to behave ethically and guidelines should not be imposed by outside.

WAN-IFRA: How is the huge growth of social media and its use by news organisations as a journalistic tool affecting the role of news ombudsmen? Do you recommend that publishers have a social media policy for their employees?

DVORKIN: The idea of social media is very important. However, there are two issues to consider. One is that some media organisations use the idea of social media as a replacement for ombudsman. A number of those think that they don't need an ombudsman because they have the Internet but the Internet is an un-mediated expression of public concern and the issues that are raised in social media are often not addressed by the media organisation. Social media must not become an excuse for media organisations to not be fully accountable to the public.

The second issue is that having a policy for journalists about expressing personal opinion is very important. Social media make it easier for journalists to express personal opinions, but it seems to me, both as an ombudsman and as a news manager, that it's very important that journalists do not express personal opinions on matters of public controversy. This tends to weaken the ability of the journalists to be perceived as fair reporters of an issue. At a time when there is a great confusion in the public mind about whether is journalism about the facts or about opinions, I think it's very important that media organisations, possibly with the help of an ombudsman, be there to remind the public what their standards are, what are the things they should be judged for. One of the things the public should judge media organisations by is whether journalists are expressing personal opinions around issues that they are supposed to be fair reporters about. That's why I think it's very important that media organisations adopt a fairly strict policy about not allowing their journalists to express personal opinions.

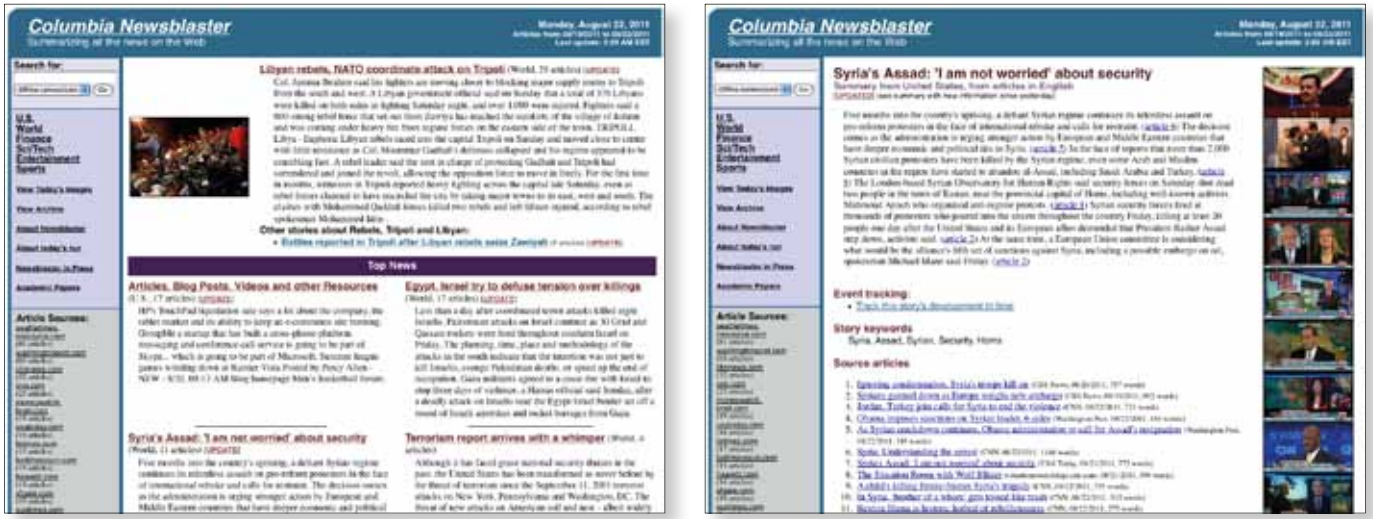
It's still very important for journalists to be able to express their conscious on certain issues. They can't be completely neutral, they have to draw on knowledge, they have opinions but their opinions should be used to inform their journalism and not to deform their journalism. Ombudsmen are absolutely perfectly placed to help journalists, the public and the media organisations come to a balance on these issues. The difficulties media organisations are facing right now is to balance the quantity of opinions, which struggle for air in the media landscape due to Facebook, Twitter and social media, with the same amount of understanding of the world, the perspective and proportionality that's necessary for journalism to properly serve the public.

Learning from the competition 7

In some respects, it might well feel like today's newsrooms are under siege; circulations are declining, staffs and budgets are being cut back and the competition seems to be popping up everywhere, especially online. What's more, sometimes the new competition is in the form of automated websites that aren't even using humans to write and publish articles.

All isn't necessarily lost, however, and there are things that traditional newspaper publishers can learn from these new competitors, such as about search engine optimisation in order to help improve traffic to their own websites. In addition, some of these new competitors might make useful partners and indeed, there are examples of mainstream publishers linking up with other content-producing websites.

What's perhaps most important is to realise who the new competitors are and then determine which course of action should be taken, whether it means doing something better, creating something new or establishing a new partnership.



Columbia Newsblaster is a fully automated news website that launched in September 2001. At left is the home-page, which features standard news headings and information. At right is an example of a story, the main text below the headline is generated by computer programmes after reviewing numerous original sources, which are listed and linked below the text.

Automated journalism – computers as reporters

Different kinds of computer software have been used for some time now to take control of the deluge of information on the Internet. Many news portals, for instance, use automated programs and elaborate algorithms to automatically crawl news sites and display a selection of stories according to their importance, sending readers to the original sources. The most notable such site is Google News, which launched in 2002 and which is run without any human involvement beyond adjustments to its aggregation algorithm. Although the site introduced a human-edited "Editors' Picks" section in August, that feature is edited by publishers themselves, not by Google News.

Other examples of websites that are run by an algorithm include Techmeme and its sister site Mediagazer, but these portals also feature editorial input from human editors. Moreover, news sites commonly use algorithms to keep track of story views and use that information to calculate stories' page positions for optimal traffic, the aim being to have the right content in the right place at

the right time. In short, automatic algorithms have been seen as tools that can help boost online traffic – not as tools that actually produce journalism.

But a story that made the rounds this past spring was a reminder of the potential, and possible threat, that computerised journalism could pose for human journalists in the future. After a piece on the George Washington University's athletics website in April had failed to highlight the fact that the pitcher of one of the baseball teams had played a perfect game, the creators of the Authoring Engine, a news-writing software, set out to prove that their programme could produce a better story. Indeed, the software, which creates articles based on game statistics, did highlight the pitcher's accomplishment in its copy.

Could this mean that there are further applications for automated software in the field of journalism? And more crucially, could software be used as a substitute for journalists? An overview on the developments in the field of automated journalism helps clarify the situation.

Newsblaster – a completely computerised news website

In September 2001, researchers at Columbia University in New York launched an academic project called Columbia Newsblaster that offers users a new kind of news website, one that is completely automated and provides brief summaries about major news stories that are entirely computer-generated.

Going to the website, the user sees a homepage that resembles other news websites, with stories ordered in a familiar way, i.e. with the major news story of the day at the top of the page, together with several more top stories and categories for US, World, Finance, Sci/Tech, Entertainment and Sports. The top five or so stories each have a headline and a summary of roughly 100–200 words. The other categories each just list headlines, but when clicked on, they open to show the summary and a list of the sources the computer used to "write" the summary.

"There are no human editors involved – everything you see on the main page is generated automatically…" stated the researchers behind the project in the "about" section of the website. "Every night, the system crawls a series of websites, downloads articles, groups them together into 'clusters' about the same topic, and summarises each cluster. The end result is a web page that gives you a sense of what the major stories of the day are, so you don't have to visit the pages of dozens of publications."

While this might sound a bit like Google News, the researchers note there is a key difference between the sites. "Google News does not do multidocument summarisation; it simply uses the articles' leading sentences. In addition, Newsblaster produces multiple summaries for an event, each reflecting the media from a particular country."

The researchers note that Newsblaster uses two summarisers. "One carefully selects sentences from among the articles and rearranges them to produce a coherent summary. The other looks for common information conveyed across all the articles and then reformulates new sentences expressing that information. After a summary is generated, it is then revised for greater fluency."

Perhaps obviously, the summarisations don't always read as smoothly as human-written articles, sometimes for example referring to information that isn't included in the summary. Occasionally the software produces a summary that includes sentences from unrelated articles. Mostly, however, the overall result is rather impressive, and as the reader is presented with the sources he or she can access the original material easily.

While Newsblaster does not use any human intervention, the research team says they are not out to replace human journalists. "Newsblaster collects, clusters, categorises, and summarises news, but it does not write news," they note. "It will always need human journalists for its raw content."

Interestingly, Newsblaster is not a product of Columbia's journalism school, which is one of the oldest in the world, but of the Natural Language Processing group at the university's Department of Computer Science. The researchers state that Newsblaster was "designed to demonstrate the group's technologies for multidocument summarisation, clustering, and text categorisation, among others."

This background explains why the experiment is impressive principally from a linguistics point of view, as automatic creation of summaries that are based on numerous texts is a remarkable achievement. In fact, Newsblaster doesn't attempt to become an authentic news production outfit as it relies on

sources for its content. But could automatisation be taken even further, to include the actual production of news?

Journalism done by computers

Despite advances in the development of artificial intelligence, we are still far from creating chipset minds that could overtake journalists altogether. But by using statistics, some programmes can now automatically generate stories that create a narrative based on the numbers fed to the software. One such program is the Authoring Engine, Narrative Science's software that takes data, the record of a baseball game for example, analyses it and constructs an article around it. The program employs statistical models to figure out what the "news" is in each game and uses a "decision tree" to decide what the narrative arc of the game should be. Moreover, it can generate stories from the point of view of either team.

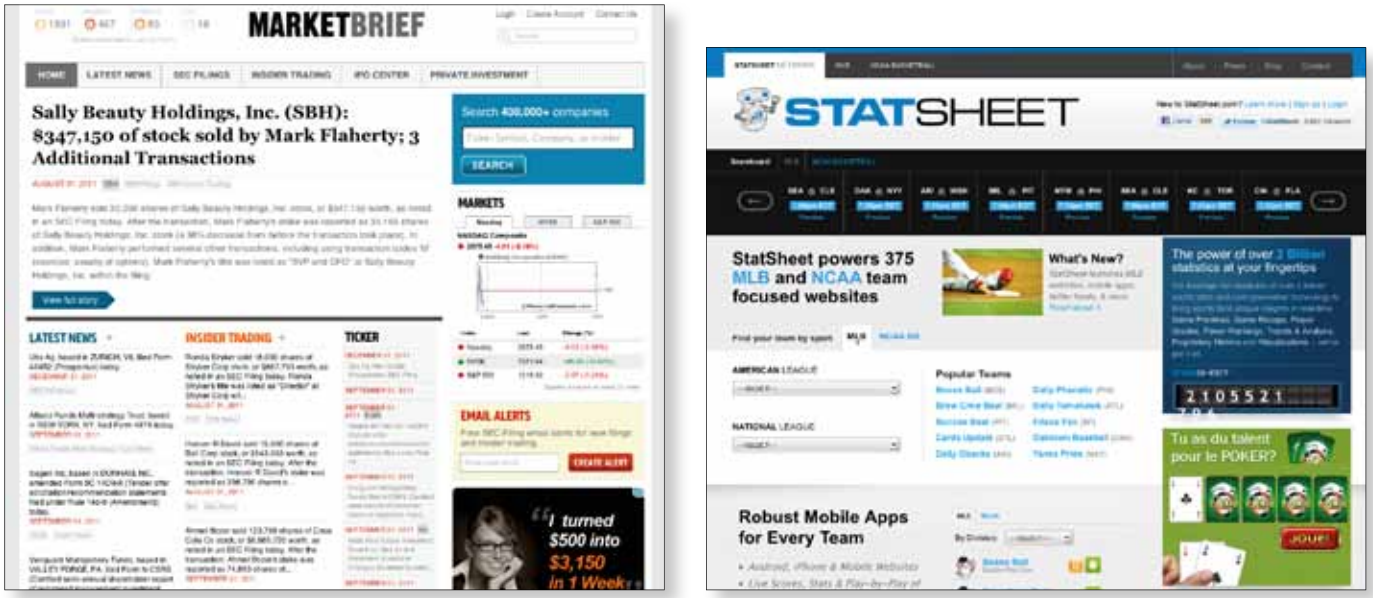
The Authoring Engine started as a research project called "Stats Monkey" at the Intelligent Information Laboratory at Northwestern University, and the company Narrative Science was founded to pursue the commercial side of the program. According to Narrative Science's Stuart Frankel, the Authoring Engine is in use in "a wide array of verticals including finance, real estate, sports and proprietary business reporting." He said the different content types they currently produce include real estate market summaries and sports previews, game recaps and in-game updates, which are generated in real-time.

For example Big Ten Network, a joint venture of the Big Ten Conference and Fox Networks, uses the Authoring Engine for some of its sports coverage. In August, Hanley Wood, a trade publisher, began using the program to produce reports for its site, builderonline.com, on local housing markets. Andrew Reid, president of Hanley Wood's digital media and market intelligence unit, said to The New York Times that the company pays Narrative Science less than $10 for each article of about 500 words. What is more, the price is likely to decline over time, but already the current cost is far less, by industry estimates, than the average cost per article of answer sites or news sites concentrating on local news, such as AOL's Patch.

Owen Youngman, from the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University, said that his team is often asked why they are trying to take work away from journalists. His answer is that rather than doing that, they are "trying to take away the rope work that stands in the way of doing thoughtful reporting." Why not have a machine write the boring stories so that reporters can concentrate on the interesting ones? The company's role in journalistic efforts is only a part of its activities, and for the future, Narrative Science is working with different kinds of companies that generate large amounts of data and have customers or employees who need to understand and interpret this data.

One field of journalism that relies heavily on numbers and statistics is finance reporting, which is why it isn't surprising that also securities market data is being used to produce computer-generated journalism. MarketBrief, a start-up based in Mountain View, California, says it produces over 1000 articles per day by extracting information from the US Securities and Exchange Commission documents and inserting that information into pre-defined phrases. The templates the system uses seem rather rigid, however, with the finished articles clearly resembling one another, but the software produces stories that highlight financial information faster than a human journalist could – MarketBrief says that it takes less than 20 seconds for its system to break a new financial story.

More and more companies selling automated algorithm services are making use of their software in various fields. One of them, StatSheet, launched in November 2010, was soon using its software to power 375 websites



MarketBrief, left, produces more than 1000 articles each day by combining US Securities and Exchange Commission information with pre-defined phrases. StatSheet, right, uses software that turns sports statistics and box scores into articles about baseball and basketball games.

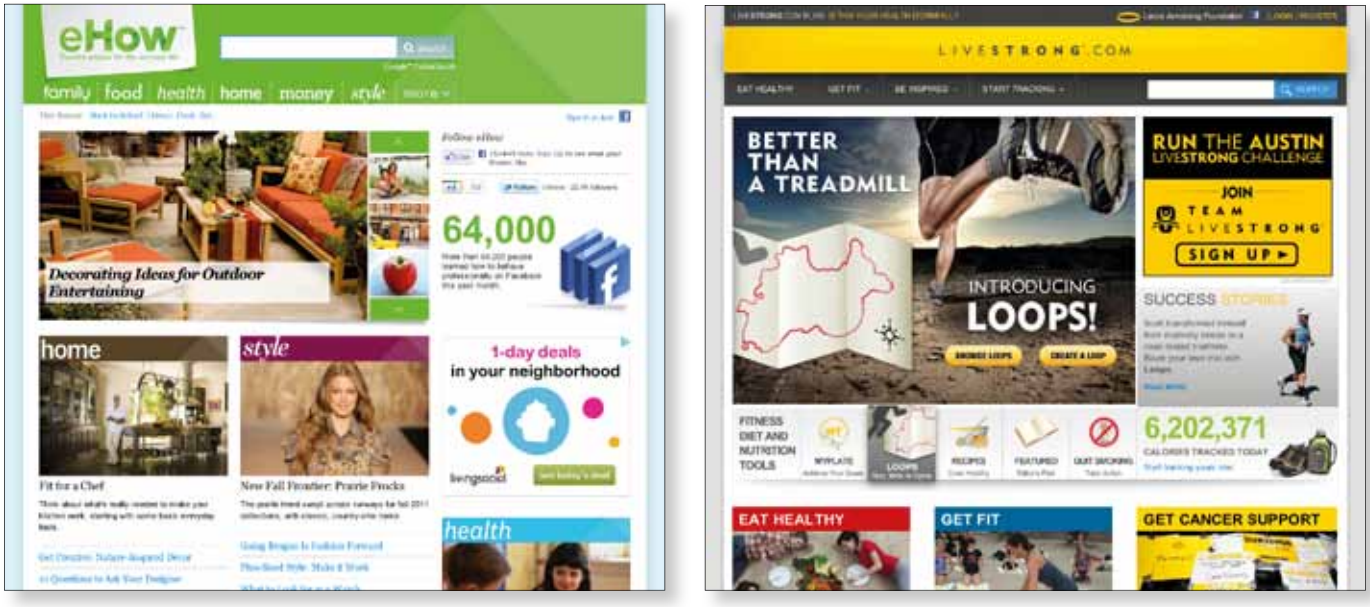
dedicated to different Major League Baseball and NCAA Basketball teams by taking statistics and box scores and creating an article about each game. The algorithm takes into account a team's record, the strength of its opponents and its momentum heading into each game.

In September 2011, the company changed its name to Automated Insights to reflect the fact that it was expanding beyond sports: "Our technology has worked extremely well with sports, but it is also well suited to verticals such as finance, real estate and weather, or even sales productivity and business intelligence applications," StatSheet founder Robbie Allen said in the announcement. Automated Insights will continue its sports offerings under the StatSheet brand.

"We do a lot of different computations that will result in a specific type of sentence," Allen told Poynter in December 2010. This illustrates an advantage that comes with using an automated data-based software to assess large quantities of information: with access to past statistics, a programme has the potential to draw out interesting facts or make long-term observations that a human journalist might overlook.

When handling vast archives of data, such as in the case of the most notable WikiLeaks releases, automated software could presumably do a lot of the heavy lifting by sifting through the material and highlighting the most interesting findings, which a human journalist could then use in his or her reporting. Moreover, in a time of dwindling newsroom resources, computerising some of the newsroom functions could be an attractive proposition, particularly in the case of stories that would otherwise go unreported.

In cases of data journalism, automated data analysis could prove to be a helpful tool to journalists. When presented with large archives of data, many newspapers have enlisted their readers to help in the vetting through different kinds of crowd-sourcing initiatives. It seems plausible that a dedicated computer programme could do some of this work more quickly and efficiently, and a professional journalist could then use its findings. Most likely, we will see more such cases of automated journalism being used to help in and inform traditional reporting in the near future.



EHow, left, and Livestrong are among the websites operated by Demand Media, owner of a content network.

What can be learned from content farms and search engine optimisation?

To say the least, content farms don't have the greatest reputation in the news industry. Based on what their detractors say, such websites are not only the embodiment of the "dark side" of online journalism – they are also a threat to its future. There certainly are aspects to so-called "content farming" that make the business model seem dubious: instead of focusing on the production of high-quality articles, content farms are accused of snooping on popular search queries and producing matching content, with little regard to quality, the overall intention being to attract as much web traffic as possible. Moreover, they are often criticised for paying their writers poorly. Thus, when the Financial Times wrote about "an uncomfortable paradox" in the relationship between content farms and search engines – saying that content farms "ride on the back of search engines" – many news professionals surely nodded in agreement. The Financial Times quoted Shelby Bonnie, CNET's co-founders, as saying that "people have made a business out of gaming [Google's] system."

To generate masses of web traffic, such sites need to appear high on search results. To get there, their critics say, content farms use unethical techniques such as producing many articles on one topic, trying to use existing brand recognition in other areas to improve ranking, and using keywords liberally.

And yet, despite such resentment towards the blatant use of search engine optimisation (SEO), the fact is that most online news organisations engage in some form of SEO. Thus, they may find themselves balancing on a thin line, avoiding the temptation of producing lesser-quality content that is just geared towards SEO while taking sufficient steps to ensure that their content is drawn to the attention of web searchers looking for such information.

Google hasn't made a secret of its distaste for obvious SEO, having tweaked its search algorithm several times during the past year in an attempt to push spam and low-quality con-

tent further down its search results. In 2010, Google launched two algorithm changes that focused on culling low-quality sites, and in late February Google rolled out further changes, as part of an update dubbed "Panda," that it said would affect 12 percent of English search queries "to a noticeable amount." Later Google launched Panda also in different languages.

Because many sites' traffic numbers depend on Google referrals (as do many people's income, by extension), it is understandable that the Panda update provoked a backlash from among those website owners whose sites were negatively affected, some saying that the effect on their website was undeserved. There were also voices arguing that Google was taking its role as an arbiter of content quality too far. Google, however, said the update succeeded in targeting low-quality websites: according to its data, there was a 84 percent overlap in sites that were negatively affected by Panda and sites that users had decided to block by using a Google Chrome extension. As the algorithm tweak had an effect on such a high percentage of content that users themselves had signalled they wanted to avoid, this gives validity to Google's efforts.

Demand Media, the owner of a content network comprising sites such as eHow.com, Livestrong.com and Cracked.com, initially downplayed the update's effect on its websites, but some web traffic analysts claimed that the company saw a significant drop in Google referrals. And it probably wasn't a coincidence that in early April, soon after "Panda" was put into operation, Examiner.com, another content network, said it would both step up its efforts to improve the quality of its articles and increase the pay for high-quality content. A month later, after seeing a notable drop in stock value, Demand Media made a similar announcement. It acknowledged that eHow had not succeeded in keeping the quality of articles up to the required standards, much of the content being inconsistent with editorial guidelines. The company said that it was to put a lot of the site's articles through a vetted editorial process and that its writers would be paid more in the future.

There has been a long-standing fear among journalists that content farms represent a threat to traditional, high-quality journalism, but Google's fight against them seems to have curbed those fears. The rationale was that as content farm contributors are generally paid a low price per article – which is why such sites have been called "robotic" and "sweatshops" – this would force payments down across the board. And if journalists would be paid less and less, the value of quality journalism would suffer and journalistic standards would go down as a consequence. But the fact that Google seemed to line up on the side of high-quality content surely came as a welcome development for news publishers.

Content farm owners, however, claim that they don't tread on news organisations' turf anyway. "News is a completely different space," said Peter Berger, CEO of Suite101. "News works

Suite101 has been online for more than 10 years and has published more than 500,000 introductory articles and information about some 3000 topics, such as business, health and pet care. The website claims 17 million monthly readers.

for a destination audience with a known brand, which is typically the opposite of search." Instead of threatening journalists' work, Berger suggested that the area that might well actually be threatened were non-fiction publishing, as people increasingly look to the web rather than books to find answers in this area. "Our site itself is very well optimised for SEO, but we don't believe in SEO tricks," he said, stressing that the site isn't a content farm. According to the website, its writers are encouraged to write for their readers, not for Google.

SEO – a friend, a foe, or a soon obsolete strategy?

To understand why SEO is a tempting practice for news outlets, one only needs to take a look at the rise of The Huffington Post: although SEO is only one factor out of many behind the website's phenomenal success (The Huffington Post has also been able to exploit social media more efficiently than many of its rivals, for example), many have singled it out as having had a hugely positive effect on The Huffington Post's tremendous increase in page views. In May 2011, the news site surpassed The New York Times with 36.6 million unique viewers.

At the same time, The Huffington Post is often cited as the prime example of what the problem with SEO is and how the excessive of SEO has a negative effect on content quality. As examples, such critics cite the website's emphasis on SEO friendly headlines and content that is obviously created as a response to Internet trends. Rich Skrenta, chief executive of the search engine Blekko, told The New York Post that SEO can turn into a "heroin drip" for publishers in general: "They had this really good content at the beginning, but they realise the more SEO they do, the more money they make, and the pressure really pushes down the quality on their sites."

Despite the damning responses the topic of SEO arouses from media people, more and more newsrooms take steps to include SEO as part of their operations. The reason for this stems from the nature of web publishing: in print, newspapers must try to sell the paper as a whole, but online, articles can attract traffic individually, which makes the case for "optimising" stories to appear higher in search results.

According to Drew Broomhall, head of search at The Times, if you rank success by sheer volume of traffic, then you should "write the same as everyone else but more of it and more frequently update." However, if you are looking to increase engagement on a specific subject you need more detailed keyword analysis and niche research. Another way to boost traffic is by staying ahead of the trends by predicting what people are going to be talking about in upcoming months and providing appropriate content. A lot of news is naturally unpredictable, but there are events that are year-in-year-out, or for which it is easy to prepare in advance, such as elections or festivals. As well as training their reporters to be aware of SEO techniques, many newspapers have hired in-house specialists who analyse traffic and look at how readers find content and what methods of optimisation work the best.

There are also third party services available to news outlets, and some newspapers have gone with buying Google keywords to promote articles on particular topics. But in addition to avoiding the "heroin drip" scenario as described by Skrenta, there are also other rea-

Five simple tips for better SEO (without dumbing down your content)

- The principles of SEO echo the principles of writing a good story: such as the idea that the first sentence should be a summary of the rest of the article, containing relevant concepts and keywords.
- Pay attention to titles: use specific names and concepts. It's better to be short and descriptive rather than lengthy.
- In page navigation, focusing on ease of use and simplicity helps both readers and Google in accessing the site.
- Link to older coverage: pages that contain links (or have been linked to) appear higher in search results.
- Content quality and freshness is key: as users share quality content, it builds the site's reputation both among users and with Google.

sons for not giving in to the temptation of "over-SEOing" content: "One piece of advice I give to SEO masters is, don't chase after Google's algorithm, chase after your best interpretation of what users want, because that's what Google's chasing after," Matt Cutts, a principal engineer at Google, told The New York Times. Or, to put it in another way, the content should come first, and SEO after.

But is it possible that SEO is only a passing phenomenon in the digitisation of news, a process that has taken both news and its readers online? Richard Tofel, general manager of ProPublica, argued so in a piece published by Nieman Journalism Lab. According to Tofel, overblown use of SEO, "the dark art of online publishing," is a result of search engines' inefficiencies, and as Google and other search providers develop their services in order to take their users more efficiently to the content they look for, SEO's importance is to go down as a consequence. Furthermore, Tofel sees SEO as an inefficiency, "a transaction cost rather than a value-creator," and according to him basic economics teach us that inefficiencies tend to be ironed out.

Whether or not Tofel is right about the future of SEO, the current situation in web publishing would suggest that news organisations could learn a thing or two from content farms about making content easily discoverable. In fact, doing that in a way that doesn't threaten the pledge to high quality could be the real "dark art" of online publishing.

About.com, left, and Mahalo, right, regularly churn out thousands of articles on popular topics.

Will Google's Panda eat the content farm?

Content farms are a well established part of the online information business with market leader Demand Media publishing some 7,000 articles a day to an audience of 50 million unique visitors per day just on its number one site eHow.com.

That should come as neither as a surprise nor a threat for the newspaper business despite, Demand Media's ever-growing figures since this is a business model based on short pieces of how-to information. Leaving aside general competition for attention, it is hard to see how it can be construed as a rival for quality news organisations.

Yet Demand Media also supplies articles for the likes of USA Today's travel section and the Atlanta Journal Constitution.

While Demand Media dominates the market there are dozens of other players including Associated Content (owned by Yahoo!), About.com, Mahalo, the Writers' Network, and eZinarticles which between them also produce thousands of pieces of content per day and represent a publishing machine that has been compared to a journalistic sweatshop churning out low-grade copy at very high speeds in response to user demand. In the case of Demand Media, that user demand takes the form of an automated algorithm generated from search engine activity leading to accusations of a robotic, near-mindless word factory.

Panda joins the party

It would seem that Google is also mindful of the downside of content farms and this year the most notable development has been the modification of the Google search engine to include an algorithm named Panda, which is claimed to weed out that low-quality copy in favour of more considered and better-researched work.

Google doesn't detail the workings of its algorithms since that would then make them easier to sidestep but the promise was a means of distinguishing between quality copy and mass produced search-engine fodder. Which would have to be good news for those in the business of producing quality news and features.

Losers

On its roll-out in the US the impact of Panda appeared immediately and all eyes were on Demand Media. According to Experian Hitwise statistics 0.57 percent of all outbound Google traffic went to sites Demand Media sites in January but that dropped to 0.34 percent by the end of April when Panda came into play – an overall loss of 40 percent in traffic.

Demand Media, however, is big enough to adapt and its response has been to emphasise quality copy with the result that some of its properties such as the TypeF fashion site are thriving. In May, shortly after the impact of Panda became clear it announced that would move into longer articles and is encouraging feature writers rather than short how-to items.

"The feature writer role is designed to bring highly experienced writers into our studio to develop lifestyle features around topical ideas, with compelling story lines and original quotes from known industry experts," said Jeremy Reed, senior vice president of editorial at Demand Media. "With this role, we wanted to give our studio writers the freedom to have their own voice and be creative while meeting the editorial needs of our largest online properties."

The real victim of the Panda attack seem to have been lower profile sites such as Suite101. Vancouver-based Suite101 has always claimed that it is not a content farm with CEO Peter Berger describing it as "a service for writers and contributors," with "writers as the core of our company" and much touted quality standards. So it came as something of a shock to the company when Panda resulted in what Wired magazine reported as a 94 percent drop in keyword traffic. Panda has certainly changed the game for content farms but it may prove to be the smaller, more niche players that suffer the worse. In France, for example, sites 1001actus.com and infos-du-net.com were amongst the top losers.

Winners

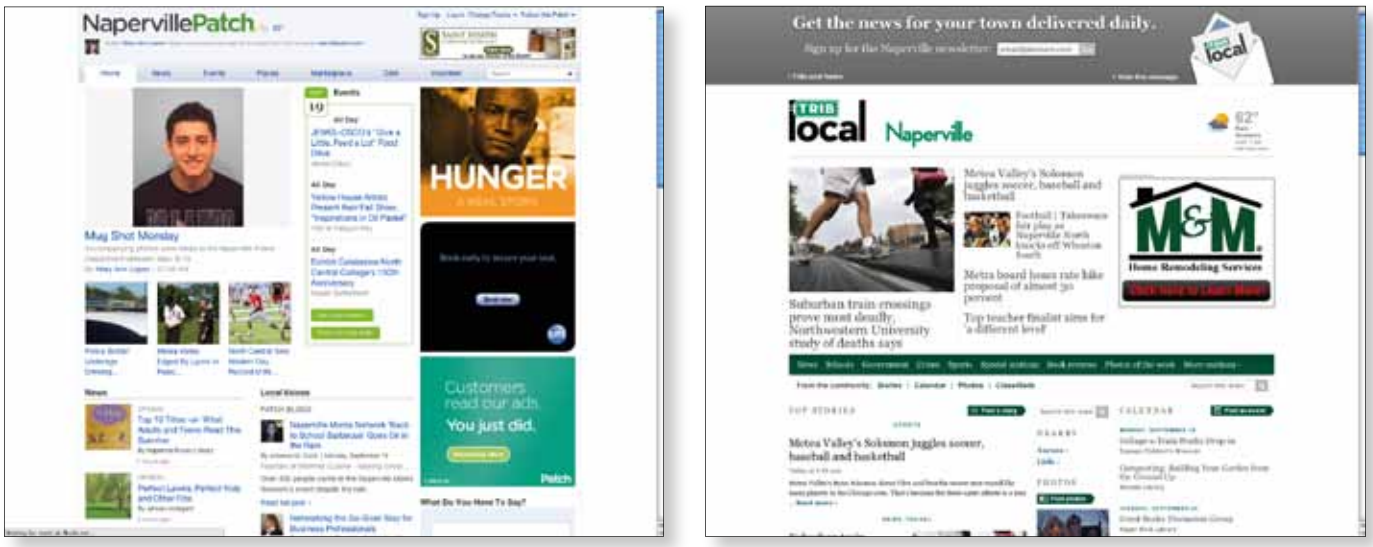
Not that most newspapers would care about any content farm be they large or small. Google search results are a zero-sum game so wherever a loser is kicked off the first page of results there must be by definition a winner that rises in the rankings. For newspapers the winners were every bit as satisfying as the news of the losses for content farms. The secrecy shrouding Google's algorithms means it is hard to highlight their workings but it does appear that pages which hold readers' interest for a long time have profited. In the UK, for example, when Panda was rolled out such properties as Associated Newspapers' This is Money finance website, and the Mirror Group Newspapers' mirror.co.uk rose up the rankings. In Germany it was Stern and Spiegel that won. Which would appear to confirm that Panda is the publisher's friend.

Downside

Panda would appear to be a triumph for quality content and thus good news for newspapers but the development does throw up certain questions. Since time on-site now seems to be taken into account when the engine judges authority it is also noticeable that sites like Facebook and Wordpress are growing in stature – meaning that UGC continues to grow in strength. Likewise Wikipedia (not that it needed any help in the rankings) and controversially YouTube (owned by Google) benefited from the new algorithm. Panda continues to be revised and refined, having already had a number of tweaks in the States where it was first implemented and so is worth keeping an eye on as it may yet skew the relative popularity and ranking of information sites.

The downside, however, would appear to be the ever-growing power of Google which is now explicitly deciding what is and is not good-quality content. Matt Cutts works for Google's Search Quality group, and is regarded as the enforcer of Google's Webmaster Guidelines. In an interview with Wired, the US technology title asked him if his attitude to down-rated sites was: "Sorry, but we've figured out what a low-quality site is, and that's you." To which Cutts replied "In some sense when people come to Google, that's exactly what they're asking for – our editorial judgement."

So while the culling of content farms is seemingly a triumph for higher quality it is definitely worth noting that it also establishes Google as the de facto judge of what higher quality is.



AOL's Patch, left, has more than 860 websites in communities across the US. In some areas, such as Chicago, Patch is competing directly with hyper-local websites like those of Tribune Company's TribLocal, right, which launched in 2007 and today has 88 websites covering Chicago suburbs. Patch and TribLocal are going head-to-head in dozens of communities near Chicago, such as Naperville, shown here.

Patch – From 30 websites to more than 860 in just 18 months

Under its current CEO, Tim Armstrong, AOL has made a huge push to evolve into a content company. Among the main examples of this in the past year is AOL's announcement on 7 February 2011 that it was buying The Huffington Post for US$ 315 million, and that Arianna Huffington was to become president and editor-in-chief of the new Huffington Post Media Group, where she is in charge of all AOL's editorial content, including Patch, the company's hyper-local network of news websites in the United States.

What's perhaps most striking about Patch is the sheer speed with which it has taken off. In January 2010, there were only 30 Patch sites. The number jumped to 100 in mid-August. And then the growth really exploded: Patch announced its 500th site on 8 December and then just a week later AOL said it had added another 100 sites. As of this writing (September 2011), there are at least 861 Patch websites in 22 states and Washington, D.C. Patch has also stated its intention to include "towns around the world."

Unlike many traditional media companies, AOL spent millions of dollars in 2010 hiring journalists – hundreds of them. And this hiring spree has continued throughout 2011. As of September 2011, Patch was seeking to fill more than 20 editorial-related jobs across the United States with 40 more openings relating to ad sales. In addition, this past summer the Patch blog reported that it had hired 43 paid summer editorial interns from some 568 applicants from universities and colleges across the United States.

Furthermore, AOL is planning a late 2011 launch of a Spanish-language version to be called Patch Latino.

In addition to its news content and local and national advertising, Patch aims to provide information that members will use in their everyday lives, says Patch's Editor-in-Chief, Brian Farnham. "We really look at this as a platform that digitises small communities in every aspect," he said. "We literally go over the town and create a directory of everything."

In early August 2011, Farnham announced on the Patch blog that Patch has published more than 1 million articles across its websites and was posting a new story on average every 12 seconds.

TribLocal nearly triples in size

However, it's worth noting that some traditional newspaper publishers have undertaken similar large-scale, hyperlocal approaches to their communities and some were actively pursuing this angle long before AOL introduced Patch. Perhaps most notable is TribLocal, which was launched in early 2007 by the Chicago-based Tribune Company and focusses on individual suburban Chicago communities. By September 2008, TribLocal had grown to include 36 websites and was "reverse publishing" six weekly print newspapers that had a combined circulation of 105,000. Flash forward to today, and Tribune is now running 88 TribLocal websites and publishing 21 related weekly print newspapers, which have a total circulation of 395,200. TribLocal content is also featured daily on the Chicago Tribune's homepage.

In explaining TribLocal's success, Managing Editor Kyle Leonard says: "We have tried many innovative strategies while also listening to our customers to find out what they want in a local website. We have never been afraid to try new things, and we have stayed focussed on our local mission. ... Local advertising is really on the upswing. This is can be attributed to the website's and weekly newspaper's extremely local focus as well as the Tribune Company embracing digital efforts and TribLocal. We are offering solutions to advertisers who previously did not find value on the web but now that they have a truly local option, we are seeing more of them take advantage of the opportunity."

More than 50 of Patch websites are now going head-to-head with TribLocal online in approximately 50 communities in the Chicago area.

"Patch is certainly a competitor," says Leonard, "but we can see them going through many of the growing pains a local website must endure as it begins operations. The advantage we have is the value the Chicago Tribune name has in terms of high-quality journalism, trust and market positioning."

Eric Newton: 'The only thing that journalists can do wrong is to fail to change'

Eric Newton is a quiet but significant force in media. He is Senior Advisor to the President at the Knight Foundation, the US-based funding body that supports innovative, quality journalism. At a time when (to put it mildly) cash is scarce among journalistic projects, Newton has developed $300 million of funding since joining the Knight Foundation in 2001.But this money is not all given out as straightforward grants. For the past five years the Knight Foundation has hosted the annual Knight News Challenge, an open competition in which applicants with fresh ideas compete for a chunk of $5 million available to the best, newest and most community-orientated projects from "anyone, anywhere in the world." Winners have ranged from fairly small organisations, to journalists working for the Associated Press or The New York Times. Newton has also been on the receiving end of honours. While he was managing editor of the Oakland Tribune, the paper won 150 journalism awards, including a Pulitzer Prize.

WAN-IFRA: The Knight Foundation hosts the annual Knight News Challenge, a competition that rewards the best innovations in news. What are the three most exciting projects you've seen in recent years?

NEWTON: One is called DocumentCloud, which is software that allows you to take raw documents, scan them in and then be able to look at them, not just as pdfs, but actually be able to search them, annotate them, easily publish them on the web. This allows journalists to write a story and then to link to the underlying raw documents. We think that this will increase the credibility of journalism because people will be able to see if quotations have been put in the correct context and so on.

Another one I might mention is hNews, which has been developed by the Media Standards Trust. The MST believes that we need to develop a common technological standard that allows news organisations to provide information about the stories that they're publishing. You can call it metatagging or footnotes. When the electronic story files are distributed, other information is connected to those files: who the author was (in case the file is unsigned), the date of publication, and the code of ethics of the news organisation. Because the computers read the metadata, it would allow people to search in much more sophisticated ways through news. Right now it's being tested by the Associated Press at least 600 news organisations are using it.

A firm that's got a lot of attention is Spot.us, which promotes an entirely different relationship between a community and the news. People who participate in the Spot.us website look at the stories that are being proposed by freelancers, then donate small amounts of money to the stories they would like to see produced. The community using the website gives money to Spot.us, which then aggregates it and gives it to the freelancers, and then follows up when the story's been done.

WAN-IFRA: The face of journalism is changing so fast; how can news organisations keep up and understand which innovations are relevant to them?

NEWTON: For hundreds of years news organisations have developed very intricate systems for deciding which news is most relevant to them. So clearly they could develop the capacity to determine which innovations are most relevant to them. But they haven't yet. Within news organisations there really need to be a lot more people with digital expertise. There are folks who have the exact same abilities in the world of technology that traditional news people have in the world of news. And most of them are not employed at news organisations. Until more are, news organisations won't have the capacity to know the difference between the really innovative things and the others.

WAN-IFRA: As the format of news changes so quickly, how can journalists make sure that their readers or their users aren't left behind and still find the new technology accessible?

NEWTON: Quite the opposite is occurring at the moment. The world is far ahead of the news community. Even in developing countries the introduction of the cell phone has leapfrogged over 100 years of the failed development of landline phones and suddenly you have a world with 5 billion cell phones. The problem is not journalists worrying about whether or not people have the means to communicate. Humans have unprecedented means of communication. The issue is, what are they communicating and has the news community adapted to an entirely new age of digital communication?

WAN-IFRA: Could the development of technology for digital media have a positive application for print, or are the two always in competition?

NEWTON: Print is not news, it's a delivery mechanism. These things are not in competition as far as people are concerned, they're only in competition as far as businesses are concerned.

Consider milk. In the US people would bring milk to the door but when refrigeration was invented this was no longer necessary. And nobody said, "Oh my God! We're putting the milkman out of business! Milkmen are in competition with refrigerators!" Nobody thought of it that way, they just wanted to have a lot of fresh milk. That's what's happening with news. As far as people are concerned it's all one seam-

less world in which news comes in 50 different ways. If a business chooses to collect things once and distribute them in every way that customers want, obviously there's no competition between the forms because it's all one company. If a company insists on delivering news in only one way then that company may feel as though it has competition. But that's because that company has made a choice.

WAN-IFRA: In such a fast-changing world, do you think print will continue to be important?

NEWTON: There will always be printed material, just as there will always be hand-written material. When the printing press came, people didn't stop writing things out by hand, they merely stopped only writing things out by hand.

Does it make economic sense for the daily news to be bought to the doorstep in print when it can be much more economically and conveniently delivered in many other ways?

No it doesn't. And so eventually in the United States, probably by the year 2040, the daily, printed newspaper won't be bought to people's doorsteps any more. You still could get printed newspapers on Sunday. There might be printed newspapers on different days of the week. It's just that there's a particular animal in the ecosystem called the day subscription, home-delivered, printed daily newspaper that's being driven out of media-rich ecosystems.

WAN-IFRA: The Knight Foundation emphasises the importance of community engagement. How can news organisations interact with a community across different platforms?

NEWTON: In a very basic way, news organisations need to be far more transparent; using technology like DocumentCloud to show people the underlying documents and research that you've used. Transparency is actually a major part of engagement because it establishes a dynamic of mutual respect.

Another form of engagement is conversation. Rather than the news being a one-way, industrial-age stream that's sent to people, news is now a two-way relationship. People have a right to reply to what you're talking about doing.

Then one of the most difficult forms of engagement is collaboration. In collaboration you have new ways of interacting and allowing people not just to comment on news but actually have a say in the news production process. So, for example, Spot.us allows you to have a say in what freelance stories are done.

People now have the communication tools to produce news on their own, any time they want. And so you're either going to engage with that or you're going to ignore it. And if you engage with it, then you can be part of the future of news and if you ignore it then you cannot be part of the future of news.

WAN-IFRA: You've stated in previous interviews that it's important to remember that the same technologies or innovations aren't relevant everywhere. How can news organisations gauge the needs of their communities?

NEWTON: That's an important point. We now use the term media ecosystems – it's how news and information flow through different communities. One of the things we know for sure is that, just like biological ecosystems, media ecosystems are very different from place to place. So the first thing is to know your territory. News and information is complex; it flows around the media ecosystem in ways determined by what people consume and how they like to consume it. You must speak to people. Too many news products are designed by journalists saying "here's what we want to give to people." That's the old way. Now we have to ask people, "what is it that you want?"

WAN-IFRA: How will journalists need to change the way they work in the future?

NEWTON: Everything about journalism has changed: who a journalist is, what a story is, what medium is appropriate and how to manage the two-way relationship with the community. So the only thing that journalists can do wrong is to fail to change.

In the future journalists will find themselves still applying their professional values, but they'll be doing it in different ways. Rather than just a few sources on a story journalists might have 40 or 50 sources on a story. Rather than a story being defined as a certain number of paragraphs of formulated writing, a story could be an interactive database. Rather than a story being produced in only one medium, a journalist might produce a story in seven or eight different ways. But doing something differently is not the same as doing something different. Their fundamental values will still be the same.