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Artificial Intelligence in Journalism

How do we enable the benefits and manage the harms of artificial intelligence in journalism?

CNTI's Assessment:

Developments in AI carry new legal and ethical challenges for how news organizations use AI in production and distribution as well as how AI systems use news content to learn. For newsrooms, the use of generative AI tools offers benefits for productivity and innovation. At the same time, it risks inaccuracies, ethical issues, destabilizing media work and undermining public trust. It also creates potential copyright abuse of journalists' original work. To address these challenges, legislation will need to offer clear definitions of AI categories and specific disclosures for each. It must also grapple with the repercussions of AI-generated content for (1) copyright or terms-of-service violations and (2) people's civil liberties that, in practice, will likely be hard to identify and enforce through policy. At the same time, publishers and technology companies will be responsible for establishing transparent, ethical guidelines for, and education on, these practices. Forward-thinking collaboration among policymakers, publishers, technology developers and academics is critical.

Find the full issue primer, current legislation, events, and changemakers online
https://go.innovating.news/9mQhAi

The Issue

Early forms of artificial intelligence (prior to the development of generative AI) have been used for years to both create and distribute online news and information. As newsrooms experiment with new and innovative uses of generative AI, some of their practices have been criticized for errors and a lack of transparency. News publishers themselves are claiming terms-of-service violations by those using news content to build and train new AI tools, while also grappling with the potential of generative AI tools to further shift search engine traffic away from news content.

These developments introduce novel legal and ethical challenges for journalists, creators, policymakers and social media platforms. This includes how publishers use AI in news production and distribution, how AI systems draw from news content and how AI policy around the world will shape both.

What Makes it Complex

I. In considering legislation, it is unclear how to determine which AI news practices would fall within legal parameters, how to categorize those that do and how news practices differ from other AI uses.

II. The quantity and type of data collected by generative AI programs introduce new privacy and copyright concerns.

III. Establishing transparency and disclosure standards for AI practices requires a coordinated approach between legal and organizational policies.

IV. The use of generative AI tools to create news stories presents a series of challenges around providing fact-based information to the public; the question of how that factors into legal or organizational policies remains uncertain.

V. There are inherent biases in generative AI tools that content generators and policymakers need to be aware of and guard against.

State of Research

Much of the existing research on AI in journalism has been theoretical. Even when the work is evidence-based, it is often more qualitative than qualitative, which allows us to answer some important questions, but makes a representative assessment of the situation difficult. Theoretical work has focused on the changing role of AI in journalism practice, the central role of platform companies in shaping AI and newsroom conditions, and the implications for AI dependence on journalism's value and its ability to fulfill its democratic aims.

It would be valuable for future work to prioritize evidence-based research on how AI reshapes the news people get to see – both directly from publishers and indirectly through platforms. AI research focused outside of the U.S. and economically developed countries would offer a fuller understanding of how technological changes affect news practices globally.

57%
of companies based in emerging economies reported AI adoption in 2021 *(McKinsey, 2021)*

67%
of media leaders in 53 countries say they use AI for recommendations to some extent *(Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2023)*

Notable studies

[Artificial intelligence and journalism: An agenda for journalism research in Africa](#) - African Journalism Studies (2022)

> *CNTI's Takeaway:* Future research should examine how AI technologies and algorithms developed in the Global North have been integrated into Global South newsrooms, how this changes the news production process and what role government agencies will have in its oversight.

State of Legislation

The latest wave of AI innovation has, in most countries, far outpaced governmental oversight or regulation. Regulatory responses to emerging technologies like AI have ranged from direct regulation to soft law (e.g. guidelines) to industry self-regulation, and they vary by country. Some governments, such as Russia and China, directly or indirectly facilitate – and thus often control – the development of AI in their countries. Others attempt to facilitate innovation by involving various stakeholders. Some actively seek to regulate AI technology and protect citizens against its risks.

Beyond differing values of democratic principles, these differences reflect a lack of agreement over what values should underpin AI legislation or ethics frameworks and make global consensus over its regulation challenging. That said, legislation in one country can have important effects elsewhere. It is important that those proposing policy and other solutions recognize global differences and consider the full range of their potential impacts without compromising an independent press, an open internet and free expression.

Notable legislation

Brazil: In September 2021, Brazil's Chamber of Deputies approved the Marco Legal da Inteligência Artificial to regulate the development of AI technologies and promote research on AI ethics and accountability. In May 2023, a bill was proposed to regulate AI use based on recommendations made by a working group created in 2022. The stated aim of this legislation is to protect citizens' fundamental rights and, like the EU's AI Act, introduces a risk-based regulatory model for AI systems.

The Center for News, Technology & Innovation (CNTI), an independent global policy research center, seeks to encourage independent, sustainable media, maintain an open internet and foster informed public policy conversations.