
Special issue

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The revolution driven by artificial intelligence continues: a journey through the media landscape

Abstract

The second part of this special issue aims to continue to contribute to the debate on the impact, possibilities and challenges that artificial intelligence is bringing to the mass media, media groups and audiences. This new issue draws together five constructive academic articles that address the innovations in this steadily expanding field from different theoretical and methodological perspectives. Specifically, it provides an overview of the integration of automated tools in film editing, explores the regulatory frameworks and policies related to deepfakes in five American states, reflects on the ethics of artificial intelligence, examines how these tools have transformed production routines in the publishing industry and investigates artificial intelligence-generated television presenters in southern Asia. We invite our readers, whether academics or professionals, to join us on this journey of discovery, challenges and, ultimately, opportunity.

1. Introduction

Since the publication of our first editorial, which established the way in which generative artificial intelligence has begun to significantly influence the mass media, we have witnessed the integration and adaptation of this tool in various production industries like publishing and film, where there are lofty goals for the future. Beyond cinema, however, lies reality, and artificial intelligence is a tangible reality with a notable presence in the field of communication, proving correct the predictions of Sánchez García *et al.* (2023) that applying this technology to the mass media would produce an irreversible technological change.

The first part of this special issue demonstrated not only that bots and algorithms have reconfigured the media landscape and redefined journalistic forms of production, distribution and use (Gran, Booth & Bucher, 2020), but also how the lessons learned have underscored the need to apply a critical eye to the role of technology. At this time, academic debates are

ongoing, requiring further research and explanations, contextualization and the dissemination of the unpredictable challenges, possibilities and impact of artificial intelligence for the practice of journalism. The inherent advantages and uncertainties cannot be minimized, but must be analysed from a multifaceted perspective, since technology on its own is neither a panacea nor a pernicious destroyer of the media. Rather, it is a tool whose value and effect will be determined by how we choose to use it.

Based on the experience gained to date, we present the second special issue of this monograph which, like the first, contributes fresh insights to the ongoing debate around the concerns affecting media companies, clients, media groups and audiences. Specifically, this new issue comprises five insightful academic articles that apply a variety of epistemological approaches and methodological perspectives to provide an excellent sample of the latest advances in this ever-expanding discipline. These pieces, of course, make it possible to plan ahead for the future, thanks to a detailed overview of what is taking place today in the communications industry and what can be expected for tomorrow. The objective is none other than to contribute to the academic literature, contextualize the subject, put it on a sound footing, identify unresolved issues and propose new avenues for research.

We greatly appreciate the work and commitment of the ten contributing authors and once again encourage academics and professionals to participate in this continuing discussion. Collaboration between different disciplines with varying perspectives will be crucial to fully exploit the opportunities that this technological tool offers the communications industry, while simultaneously guaranteeing that it is implemented responsibly and ethically.

The second part of this special issue opens with an article that offers an overview of the integration of automation tools in film editing, a field that has evolved towards using semi-automated or totally automated techniques. In their study, Jorge Caballero and Carles Sora Domenjó, from Pompeu Fabra University and the Technical University of Catalunya, respectively, analyse semi-structured interviews that they conducted with professional film editors in Spain to show that applications of artificial intelligence have become a key part of editing fiction and non-fiction projects, especially with regard to organizing, classifying and manipulating material.

The impact of artificial intelligence on operational efficiency and the ability to produce content at scale is irrefutable. However, these benefits also raise difficult questions about authenticity and the potential manipulation of information, especially when a variety of applications are emerging on the market that make it possible to create and falsify video images, audios and text whose appearance is so realistic and authentic that it is difficult to detect the manipulation. These products, referred to in the academic literature as deepfakes or, more specifically, “AI-synthesized fakes” (Nightingale & Farid, 2022), have changed the rules of the game by making it easy to create hoaxes and damage the reputation of individuals and institutions.

In this issue, João Paulo Meneses, from the University of Maia in Portugal, assesses this distressing situation using a longitudinal study in which he reviews the different regulatory frameworks and policies related to deepfakes in the American states of Texas, Hawaii, Washington, Louisiana and Minnesota. The aim of this approach is to resolve some of the unknowns related to how artificial intelligence may shake up the content industry.

From an ethical perspective, three researchers from the University of Santiago de Compostela, Tania Forja Peña, Berta García Orosa and Xosé López García, continue to delve into the debate around how artificial intelligence should be used to reinforce –and not erode– the pillars of journalism. In this respect, they advocate external regulation to preserve the values, ethical principles and good practices of journalistic work that have taken root over time, as proposed by Esser and Neuberger (2019), given that many working professionals see this technology as a threat that foments disinformation and creates a loss of trust. At this time, the European Union and European Parliament Member States have overcome their differences

and mounted operations to consistently regulate the uses of artificial intelligence (Roe & Perkins, 2023).

The publishing industry is a bit more optimistic, as it has used automated systems to develop new strategies and business plans. This was the conclusion reached by Olena Ryzhko, Tetiana Krainikova, Svitlana Vodolazka and Kateryna Sokolova from the University of Kyiv after they researched the use of intelligent tools in the production routines and editorial processes of some Ukrainian publishers. They also offer pertinent recommendations that give the industry a fundamental role with regard to planning for the future.

Currently, no one questions the fact that the unstoppable expansion of artificial intelligence is profoundly influencing various aspects of daily life. In this respect, Asia has assumed a leading position in incorporating these technologies into the mass media. One example is explored in the article that closes this issue by Rizwan Bashir Baloch, Abul Hassan and Ali Ab Ul Hassan from the University of Lahore. In this work, the authors analyse the semiotics of the representation of nationality, religious connotations, gender implications and political evaluations of AI-generated television presenters on the television channel Discover Pakistan. They provide, of course, yet another example of the future of television, which once again raises the old debate about the intersection between technology and creativity.

As we conclude this second part of the special issue, our objective is to encourage a rigorous and critical exploration of how artificial intelligence can serve the mass media and, by extension, society. We invite our readers, both academics and professionals, to join us on this journey of discovery, challenges and, ultimately, opportunity. Going forward, each contribution and each debate will bring us one step closer to understanding and shaping the future of journalism in an increasingly digitalized and automated world. The journey is complex and the road ahead challenging, but the reward for undertaking it wisely and with forethought will be great, not only for our profession, but for society as a whole.

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