Reuters

AI and the Future of News

Revolutionising production, editing and dissemination in journalism one prompt at a time

Introduction

From transforming newsroom efficiency to grappling with the ethics of automatic content creation, artificial intelligence is reshaping the media landscape at an unprecedented pace.

AI is transforming journalism, but it's journalists who remain at the heart of the industry. The technology is a tool that enhances the creative process, streamlining workflows, amplifying newsroom skills, and enabling new forms of storytelling. This is a brave new world, one where the media industry is working together to responsibly experiment with AI's capabilities.

By combining the strengths of human expertise and cutting-edge technology, Reuters, the BBC, Verdens Gang (VG) and the JournalismAI Project are keen to shape a future of news that remains innovative, diverse, and reliable. They all agree... This future isn't about replacing journalists with AI, it's focused on empowering them.

Key takeaways

AI boosts efficiency but still requires human oversight

AI is a powerful tool for automating repetitive tasks, such as processing press releases, generating content, and creating multimedia formats. However, human oversight remains essential to ensure accuracy, trustworthiness, and journalistic integrity.

Personalisation is a key advantage of AI

AI enables the creation of tailored news experiences, helping organisations deliver the right content to the right audience. Personalisation drives engagement and allows newsrooms to adapt to diverse audience preferences without significantly increasing resources.

Transparency and trust Are non-negotiable

To maintain audience trust, newsrooms must disclose the use of AI clearly and ensure ethical implementation. Transparency about how AI is used to create content is critical to counter public scepticism and misinformation.

AI is a complement, not a replacement

AI's greatest strength lies in enhancing workflows, enabling creativity, and improving audience engagement. However, it cannot replace the cornerstones of journalism - human judgement, empathy, or critical thinking.

We discuss all this on the Future of News webinar.

How AI is evolving and changing journalism

AI isn't perfect. Nor is our understanding of what it can do. And what it can't. It's important to consider that while there's enormous transformative potential here, there are also limitations. For example: AI models are only as good as the data they are trained on, which may introduce biases or limitations in scope. So yes, AI is already helping newsrooms produce news faster and more efficiently. But can it help journalists to be better journalists and to create superior work?

"You can do all those lovely things - transcription, translation... You can create podcasts automatically using AI... But when I talk to journalists," says Professor Charlie Beckett, Director, JournalismAI at the London School of Economics and Political Science, "they say: 'Oh, I use [AI] to think of different ways to do a story'... 'I try to think of different voices that I can include in my story'... 'I try to re-version and reformat what I'm doing'... I think that's the interesting bit."

Audiences consume news in many different ways and, as Jane Barrett, Head of AI strategy at Reuters explains, the media landscape is increasingly fragmented. "You'd need to have an absolutely massive newsroom to be able to cope with all the different ways in which different people want to consume one story," she says. "And this is where I think [AI] is really exciting, because you can see the potential for help with that and [it] might come up with formats and things we haven't even thought of, or just make them better."

Of course, just because you can use AI to help with the creative side of news, it doesn't mean you should. "There's a bit of a discussion to be had," maintains Nathalie Malinarich, Executive News Editor, Digital Development at the BBC. "When you use AI as an inspiration, how do you explain that to the audience? You might be over-cooking it if you're saying: 'this was produced by AI.'"

Jane Barrett
Head of AI strategy, Reuters

> **We will be transparent. If anything is primarily or solely done by AI, we'll tell you... Our Editor in Chief and our Standards Editor put out a note back last year, reminding us that we wanted to lean into generative AI under our trust principles.**

Jane Barrett agrees. "We will be transparent. If anything is primarily or solely done by AI, we'll tell you... Our Editor in Chief and our Standards Editor put out a note back last year, reminding us that we wanted to lean into generative AI under our trust principles." But where do organisations draw the line with AI involvement in editorial and production processes? "I do lots of maths in Excel," she adds. "But I don't say 'I did my maths on Excel'. At what point does it become really relevant that it was done by AI?"

Ethics, governance and trust around AI content

Ethics is perhaps the next big discussion around the deployment and use of AI in the newsroom. Professor Charlie Beckett is keen to sound a warning. "I can see that [AI] can make journalism much more efficient and effective. But I can also see that it's going to make you think: what is the human value that we add? What is the reporting, the witnessing, the empathy that we add to our journalism?


Charlie Beckett
Director, JournalismAI at the London School of Economics and Political Science

> **" AI is going to be incredibly effective at helping us do this and supplementing our work... But the business model in the future is going to be reporting on real people by real people.**

"Because you will not suddenly get an amazing scoop because of AI. You will have to do that as an individual journalist. You are not going to build up great relationships with an audience because of AI. It will help you to do it, but in the end, it'll be you doing it. It'll be you as a human being. And so, there's a return to reality here. We're going to return to the human. AI is going to be incredibly effective at helping us do this and supplementing our work... But the business model in the future is going to be reporting on real people by real people."

Here's another consideration: Is today's audience ready for a new age of AI-assisted news? Will they accept it? "There's a lot of governance at the BBC around AI," says Nathalie Malinarich. "There's a lot of concern about trust and what the use of AI might mean for the public trusting us. So we jump through quite a lot of hoops, and there's also always a human in the loop."

As Jane Barrett at Reuters points out, this is an unprecedented time of change. Building trust in AI among audiences is critical. Jane Barrett notes that, in research from the Reuters Institute, audiences said that if something was labelled as AI-produced, they were less likely to trust it. True or not, Barrett believes that AI still has some convincing to do. "Societally, we're all trying to get used to what we can trust and what we can't. [At Reuters], we are in the business of trust. So, we cannot be, we can't be behind the curve on this. We have to be absolutely leading."
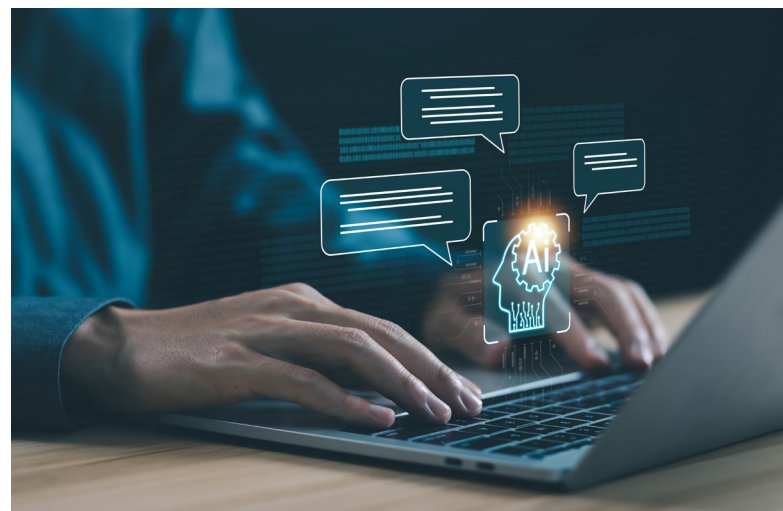
The Reuters approach to AI development

Reuters has a forward-thinking approach to AI adoption, keen to seek answers to the question: 'How can we increase the value and the engagement and the use of news across the industry?' As a result, Reuters is developing its suite of AI tools and processes to enhance core journalistic and production workflows.

One of these areas is press release processing. New press releases, says Jane Barrett, will go "through GPT-4o - we're looking at other different models - and then it will return to us what the [media] alert should be... And it highlights snippets in the press release, so journalists can quickly check. This helps us to think about how we have AI in the loop, but with a human still very much in control."

> **We're now looking at how we can take some of those tools we've been deploying for our own newsroom and make them available to our clients.**

Like the BBC, Reuters is keen to deploy AI in the right way, with the right guardrails in place. We need to make sure that "we are not losing our trust, our accuracy, the speed and everything that people come to expect from Reuters," adds Barrett. "Our sandbox [has] five major LLMs... We get it through Microsoft Azure, so we know that our data is safe and that we can play without worrying that our data is going back to help train LLMs or that it might leak out. This is particularly important for the pre-published content we want to work with."

Video production is another area that Reuters is planning to tackle with the power of AI, launching a tool to help its video teams process and script videos faster. "We're choosing to put the R&D work and the extra investment [into] the things that really impact a lot of people," Barrett says. "We're now looking at how we can take some of those tools we've been deploying for our own newsroom and make them available to our clients."

How other news organisations are using AI

AI isn't a new technology in the newsroom. "We started back in 2018 when AI was not very sexy." explains Professor Charlie Beckett. "That [changed] completely when we got ChatGPT." Suddenly everybody could use AI, he points out, and that democratisation has led us to "a typical kind of media hype tech cycle, [where] everyone thinks [AI] is either going to kill us all or is going to solve all our problems."

Many of those problems revolve around improving speed and efficiency in the newsroom, especially across multiple channels, as well as enabling journalists to cope with increasing information overload. As Marcus Husby, Director of Editorial AI at Norwegian media group Verdens Gang (VG), explains, new AI tools are appearing all the time.

"We test new tools and release them in the newsroom quickly in our internal sandbox that every journalist and every employee in VG [can access]," he says. "When we see they work well, we look at ways to integrate them into journalists' writing tools and CMS."

As a consequence, VG has almost 30 newsroom AI tools that are actively in use every day. As Husby reveals, these tools are "helping journalists proofing news articles… generating drafts from press releases and creating Tiktok and TV scripts." At VG, Husby says, we are using AI to "create better products and to run our newsroom smarter and better."

Nathalie Malinarich
Executive News Editor,
Digital Development, BBC

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The BBC's Nathalie Malinarich reveals that the corporation has been using AI for years. She agrees that the biggest win is a dramatic increase in efficiency, but adds that "there are also exciting opportunities, particularly around formats and being able to tell stories in different ways. You'd need an army of people to be able to do five versions of the same story for different audiences [without AI]."

Like VG, the BBC is experimenting with AI tools in a safe and secure sandbox environment. "Our sandbox is a mirror of our CMS, and so we play in that. We're just in a pilot stage, and a lot of it is [focused] around reversioning - taking raw copy from people who aren't across BBC style and turning it into BBC style with an LLM that's been trained on our own articles." The BBC also ran a pilot with the World Service, trialling some translation and transcription tools to cater for the 40+ languages it supports.

Summary

AI is reshaping journalism, and the future of news, by enhancing workflows, increasing efficiency, and enabling new storytelling formats. Journalists remain at the core, however, using AI as a tool to amplify creativity. There's no putting the genie back in the bottle. So leading media organisations like Reuters, BBC, and VG are experimenting with AI responsibly, ensuring a future where the technology supports, rather than replaces, human expertise and insight.

Key advantages of AI in the newsroom

Efficiency and speed - AI can automate tasks such as summarising press releases, editing, and transcription.

Content personalisation - AI enables the creation of tailored news experiences for different audience segments, e.g. creating multiple versions of the same story.

Reversioning and multilingual content creation - AI automates reversioning and translation, saving time and effort.

Video and multimedia production - AI automates aspects of video creation and scripting

Idea generation and creativity - AI assists in generating fresh perspectives and formats.

Standardisation and style - AI tools help align content with organisational standards.

AI technologies used by each organisation:

Reuters

- AI for processing press releases with GPT-4o, highlighting key snippets for journalists.
- Video scripting tools for faster production.
- AI sandbox containing five major LLMs for experimentation and prompt training.
- Internal AI bot for teaching prompt writing to staff.

BBC

- AI for reversioning content into BBC style, trained on their style guide (internal trial).
- AI tools for summarisation and headline generation (internal trial).
- Translation and transcription tools, piloted with BBC World Service content.

VG

- AI tool for improving the readability of articles by tweaking repetitive language, defining complex terms, and proposing headlines.
- AI video tool, which turns plain text articles into videos by extracting images and videos.
- AI-powered chatbot for election coverage, summarising data from thousands of VG articles.

Further Resources

Watch the full Future of News webinar
BBC Guidance: The use of Artificial Intelligence
Reuters and AI
JournalismAI
Verdens Gang