News Futures: (Re-)Designing Socio-technical Systems for News Production and Consumption

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Abstract

The news and information ecosystem is undergoing significant upheaval across processes of news production and consumption. For instance, AI integration in newsrooms and the rise of independent creators on digital platforms exemplify shifts in production and dissemination, while evolving audience behaviors of information-seeking show how consumption is changing. This workshop aims to convene researchers and designers in HCI and news to examine these socio-technical shifts across stakeholders, activities, and technologies, and explore how design can support newswork and public engagement with news. Participants will engage in collaborative activities to reflect on current challenges facing news producers and audiences, synthesize the state of research in news and HCI, and identify future research directions. By bringing together diverse perspectives, we aim to nuance our understanding of the evolving news ecosystem and design socio-technical systems that strengthen journalism's democratic function.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → **Human computer interaction (HCI)**; **Collaborative and social computing**.

Keywords

news, civic information, misinformation, computational journalism, algorithmic intermediaries

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1 Motivation

The socio-technical systems that underpin the production and consumption of the news are always in flux. From the advent of computer-assisted reporting in journalists' workflows in the 1960s to the internet reshaping information access in the 1990s, each technological change has brought new challenges and opportunities for journalism, reshaping its practices and often creating tensions with core values in the process. For the CHI community, these transitions present unique opportunities to design socio-technical systems that address the evolving needs of actors in the news and information ecosystem, including journalists, sources, audiences, and other stakeholders. More recently, platform economies have transformed news distribution, and generative AI appears poised to further reshape newswork. By grappling with the design opportunities and implications of such technologies—especially in light of a number of global elections in 2024–the CHI community can help to more intentionally shape the future of news, fostering informed engagement and striving to strengthen democratic participation.

On the production side, AI tools are reshaping the work practices of reporters, designers, and other actors through automation of routine tasks, AI-assisted ideation and editing, and shifts in professional roles [5, 9]. This opens up avenues for research and design inquiry: How can we design artifacts that integrate AI into journalistic workflows in ways that preserve editorial judgment and ethics, beyond simply automating particular tasks? And how do these artifacts reshape social and collaborative dynamics among reporters, citizen journalists, and audiences? In what ways do these novel artifacts and practices influence the exercise of journalistic values, e.g., accuracy, accountability [19]? How have journalists and editors at low-resourced news outlets considered the use of AI in their practice?

In terms of news consumption, online platforms have long been intermediaries between publishers and audiences. However, new digital spaces like Substack and TikTok enable individual journalists and creators to engage with their audiences directly, bypassing traditional institutions [2, 23]. Audiences, on the other hand, are showing concerning patterns of news avoidance, actively disengaging from news consumption [32]. Such shifts raise some important questions for HCI research as well: How do shifts in information flow on algorithmically-mediated platforms influence civic engagement and public discourse? How can we design socio-technical systems that address news avoidance while ensuring equitable, informed access to information?

Design and research practice in the domain face additional structural challenges, such as the closure of platform APIs and the increasing reliance on proprietary AI models in newswork [29], which limit access to data and tools critical for prototyping, design, and audits. These constraints highlight urgent research questions about power, participation, and transparency in journalism's socio-technical systems: How do structural limitations influence who can participate in designing media systems? When access to tools and data is restricted, does this further concentrate power in the hands of a few dominant actors, or can design interventions redistribute that power to journalists, researchers, and local communities? What design or research methods can be developed to engage with systems whose inner workings are obscured by intellectual property restrictions, especially when these systems have profound social impacts?

Given this range of fundamental changes, our workshop aims to convene researchers, designers, and practitioners to share ongoing efforts and collectively reflect on the design opportunities and implications for socio-technical systems for news. CHI is an apt space for these conversations, given its history of hosting relevant work exploring novel interfaces for news producers and consumers (e.g., [12, 22, 31, 34]), new journalistic workflows with technology (e.g., [2, 16, 33]), and power relationships in socio-technical systems (e.g., [35]).

The closest related workshop to the current topic was held at CHI2019 on the topic of "HCI for Accurate, Impartial, and Transparent Journalism" [1]. Since then, the broad introduction of generative AI catalyzes the need for another such workshop to bring together researchers and practitioners in the field. In the past year, the two lead workshop organizers have held informal HCI+news/journalism themed lunches at both CSCW 2023 and CHI 2024, which have been well-attended and show there is an interest from HCI and social computing researchers to create more community around these topics.

More concretely, our key objectives with the proposed workshop are to:

(1) **Convene** the interdisciplinary researchers and practitioners working in this domain for community-building and knowledge-sharing.
(2) **Map** out recent HCI and design research for the news and information ecosystem, by soliciting a wide range of work in the domain.
(3) **Identify** fruitful directions for future HCI research, that align with journalism's values and public interest goals, through collaborative activities.

We hope that contributions from this workshop will extend HCI's tradition of studying collaborative work environments into the evolving newsroom and deepen the CHI community's understanding of how to design socio-technical systems that promote informed citizenship in a democratic society.

2 Key Themes

Our workshop will focus on three key themes in soliciting submissions: (1) Design and implications of AI in newswork, (2) Credibility, trust and access in news dissemination, and (3) Power and value conflicts in research and design. Our group synthesized these themes based on our experiences working with newsrooms, journalists, local communities, and online content creators to understand their practices and the evolving nature of their work.

2.1 Design and Implications of AI in Newswork

Generative AI models promise a new design space to support knowledge work activities like brainstorming, writing, and summarization [18, 20]. In the news context, these models suggest new tools for sourcing and generating newsworthy information (e.g., [26, 28]), extending prior socio-technical systems like crowdsourcing and machine learning used for content generation and curation [10, 11, 17, 37]. However, as noted earlier, these models and tools are not without their challenges. The risk of bias, latent influence, and false claims of enhanced creativity [6, 8, 15] are important to consider as AI technologies become more integrated into journalistic workflows.

Thus with this theme we invite participants to explore the prototyping and design of AI systems in newswork, with a particular focus on generative AI given its distinct set of opportunities and risks. We also encourage submissions that investigate how these new tools might reshape newswork, i.e. impact work practices and collaborations of different actors [21], and the broader exercise of core journalistic principles like accuracy and accountability [19].

Key questions include:

- How do reporters make sense of and experiment with generative AI tools in news production?
- What are the ethical considerations and longer-term impacts of using AI in news workflows?
- What transparency mechanisms are necessary to support human decision-making when using AI tools in newswork?
- How do we systematically evaluate and govern human-AI collaborative systems for journalistic tasks?

2.2 Credibility, Trust, and Access in News Dissemination

The dynamics of news dissemination today are shaped not only by traditional media institutions but also by a diverse array of actors, including individual journalists [2], social media platforms [23], search engines [33], community forums [3], and community moderators [24]. Although these actors have been extensively studied,

their evolving platforms and practices continue to raise crucial questions about the credibility and trustworthiness of information that they disseminate. Concerns persist regarding how both human and algorithmic intermediaries amplify or marginalize voices, frame narratives, and contribute to misinformation. Emerging platforms (e.g., TikTok, Perplexity Search), and new actors (e.g., podcasters) bring similar questions to the fore.

At the same time, audiences face increasing difficulty in navigating these complex information landscapes. Questions of trust and equitable access to reliable news are becoming more pressing as new technologies – especially generative AI – disrupt traditional markers of credibility, potentially exacerbating the challenges of selective exposure and misinformation. This is exacerbated by issues such as news avoidance and the emergence of "news deserts" in local communities, where access to trustworthy information is scarce [13, 32]. Addressing these challenges requires designing socio-technical systems that not only mitigate misinformation but also foster deeper engagement with credible, diverse news sources.

Within this theme, we invite participants to explore how contemporary news dissemination systems are reshaping trust, credibility, and access. We especially encourage submissions focused on designing and evaluating socio-technical interventions that enhance these elements, such as mechanisms to reduce selective exposure [30], improve media literacy [4], and moderate online discussions [25]. Relevant questions include:

- How can peripheral actors like citizen reporters, content creators, moderators be supported in providing legitimate information to citizens?
- What mechanisms can be developed to assess and communicate the credibility of news sources, especially in the context of generative AI and algorithmic curation?
- How can we design systems that foster trust between news providers and communities?
- In what ways can socio-technical interventions help bridge news deserts, ensuring equitable access to credible, relevant information?

2.3 Power and Value Conflicts in Research and Design

In addition to the evolving actors and technologies, power dynamics significantly influence the design and research of socio-technical systems in journalism. News organizations often find themselves dependent on AI companies for the tools that power their workflows, which raises questions about autonomy and influence [29]. The increasing privatization of data, as well as the proprietary nature of many AI models, further exacerbates the uneven distribution of power, leaving journalists and researchers with limited access to the resources needed for prototyping, auditing, or critiquing these systems. Researchers and industry also find themselves entangled in academic spaces where we aim to critique algorithmic systems and their harms [36].

Conflicts also arise not only between institutions—such as news outlets and tech companies—but among different stakeholders within journalism itself, including reporters, editors, and diverse audiences. For instance, reporters must navigate tensions between adhering to journalistic values and catering to the platform-driven preferences of their audiences [7]. These value conflicts, along with broader power imbalances, shape both the nature of news and how it is delivered, requiring designers to navigate these challenges with care [27].

To address these tensions, we invite submissions that examine power dynamics, value conflicts, and resulting design implications at multiple levels—between news organizations and tech companies, within journalistic teams, or even between media producers and consumers. Questions to consider include:

- What are useful methods to surface power asymmetries or value conflicts when designing socio-technical systems for news?
- How can researchers and designers engage with proprietary systems while ensuring transparency and accountability?
- What strategies might help redistribute power from dominant tech actors to journalists, smaller news organizations, or communities?
- Who has the power and resources to study and design socio-technical systems for news? How does this shape the research questions that get addressed?

3 Organizers

We have gathered an experienced set of organizers that include junior and senior researchers in the field. The organizing panel spans two PhD students, one postdoctoral fellow, and five faculty in two countries (the United States and the United Kingdom).

(1) **Sachita Nishal** is a PhD Candidate in Communication Studies and Computer Science at Northwestern University. She engages in the design and mixed-methods evaluation of human-centered AI systems to support information gathering, sensemaking, and writing for journalists. Her work has focused on designing to support user agency, incorporate contexts-of-use, and center users' ethical and professional values in such systems.
(2) **Marianne Aubin Le Quéré** is an Information Science PhD Candidate at Cornell Tech. In her work, she uses text-as-data methods to understand how technological innovations impact digital news and civic information consumption. She has studied how local online groups may promote civic engagement, motivations for attention to online news, and personal informatics for conscientious news consumption.
(3) **Brian McInnis** is an Assistant Professor of Social Informatics in the School of Information at the University of Texas at Austin. His research investigates how technology influences public discussion about civic issues, through mixed-methods formative research, system design and evaluation, as well as platform and public policy analysis. Brian earned his PhD in Information Science from Cornell University and previously contributed to a range of public policy research at the RAND Corporation.
(4) **Bronwyn Jones** is a social science researcher and journalist who researches data and AI in news media, reports for BBC News, and explores responsible newsroom innovation with BBC Research and Development. She is a Translational Fellow on the Bridging Responsible AI Divides (BRAID) programme and a DCMS Policy Fellow, researching the risks

of generative AI for journalism and the public sphere. Her interests lie in understanding the implications of data-driven technologies for media and contributing to the design of public interest-driven socio-technical systems.

(5) **Kristen Vaccaro** is an Assistant Professor of Computer Science & Engineering at the University of California San Diego and a member of the Design Lab. Her research focuses on designing the user experience of machine learning systems in social computing contexts such as news feeds and content moderation. This work has been published in top human-computer interaction conferences, including CHI, CSCW, and UIST. She holds a PhD in Computer Science from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and previously worked at the MITRE Corporation.

(6) **Tanja Aitamurto** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Illinois Chicago and leads the Media/Democracy Lab. Her research focuses on the impact of new media technologies on human behavior and society, and how these technologies can be harnessed to promote diversity, inclusion, and digital democracy through journalism and media.

(7) **Mor Naaman** is the Don and Mibs Follett professor of Information Science at Cornell Tech, where he leads a research group looking at topics at the intersection of technology, media and democracy. The group applies multidisciplinary techniques — from machine learning to qualitative social science — to study our information ecosystem and its challenges, with a special focus on AI-mediated communication and its social impact. He is a recipient of a NSF Early Faculty CAREER Award, research awards and grants from numerous corporations including Microsoft, Meta and Google, and multiple best paper awards. Before Cornell, Mor was on the faculty at the Rutgers School of Communication and Information, led a research team at Yahoo! Research Berkeley, and received a Ph.D. in Computer Science from the Stanford University InfoLab.

(8) **Nicholas Diakopoulos** is a Professor in Communication Studies and Computer Science at Northwestern University, where he directs the Computational Journalism Lab (CJL). He co-founded the Computation + Journalism Symposium and authored the award-winning book *Automating the News: How Algorithms are Rewriting the Media* from Harvard University Press. He holds a PhD in Computer Science (HCI) from Georgia Tech, he was formerly a professor of journalism at the U. of Maryland, and he has also spent time working at the Washington Post.

4 Workshop Logistics

4.1 Plans to Publish Workshop Proceedings

We aim to engage the HCI and journalism communities by making the research presented at the workshop more accessible. To achieve this, we will (1) encourage participants to upload their submissions as ArXiv preprints, (2) publish a series of blog posts on Medium leading up to the workshop to highlight submissions from interested participants, and (3) synthesize themes from panels and discussion activities into a Medium blogpost, along with a Japanese translation. Section 4.4 offers detail on how each of these outcomes supports our broader objectives for the workshop.

4.2 Workshop Modality and Resources

We will plan for this workshop to be an in-person workshop only, conducted over the course of one day. We expect 15-25 participants, and 5-6 members of the organizing team to be present in person. A projector, a microphone, and wifi connections will be sufficient to support the workshop. We will bring in post-it notes and markers for in-person activities involving breakout groups, and create a Miro board for these activities as well. While hybrid workshops can be very successful and often enable broader participation, we feel that an in-person online workshop will allow the workshop to run more smoothly and best facilitate fruitful conversations between all participants.

Prior to the workshop, we will host a website with important information like a call for papers, submission and camera-ready deadlines, and other related information. Camera-ready submissions will be accessible online at least one week ahead of the workshop to allow participants the opportunity to engage with materials ahead of time. On the day of the workshop, we will keep in mind any participant accessibility needs to make the talks and sessions available to all. However, since this is an in-person workshop, we do not plan to record any of the talks.

4.3 Workshop Activities

We plan to host three types of activities at the workshop: 1) an interactive panel with senior researchers and news practitioners, 2) short, lighting talk-style presentations by workshop participants about their research, and 3) themed breakout groups aimed to inspire future research and collaborations.

The interactive panel will set the agenda for the workshop by raising key questions and concerns in the domain, centered on our key themes. We plan to engage the local journalism community, reserving a minimum of one place on the interactive panel for Japanese news media practitioners and engaging with their industry networks to share insights.

These discussions will provide a foundation for participants to present their own research throughout the day and later inform the group activity, where breakout groups will collaboratively synthesize insights and identify future research directions or design interventions.

For this group synthesis activity, participants will self-organize based on shared interests and collaborate using Miro boards. Each group will reflect on insights shared during the day, guided by open-ended prompts such as "What surprising findings emerged?, "What are open challenges and problems in the domain that research could address?", and "What patterns of consensus or tension were apparent?" Groups will use a provided template to map important stakeholder needs and value conflicts in today's socio-technical systems for the news, alongside identifying design challenges framed as "How might we..." questions [14] inspired by the discussions. The session will conclude with brief share-outs, where each group presents their synthesized insights and potential future research directions.

A proposed workshop schedule is included in Table 1.

Title	Description
9:00am - 9:20am	Introduction to the workshop and welcome
9:20am - 9:45am	Participant introductions
9:45am - 10:30am	Moderated interactive panel with senior researchers and newsroom practitioners around the state of news production and consumption
10:30am - 11:00am	Morning break
11:00am - 12:30pm	Participant talks, with Q&A
12:30pm - 2:00pm	Break for lunch
2:00pm - 3:00pm	Participant talks, with Q&A
3:00pm - 3:30pm	Afternoon break
3:30-4:15pm	Group-based reflection and synthesis activity
4:15pm - 4:45pm	Group share-outs & discussion
4:45pm - 5:00pm	Wrap-up
5pm - evening	Optional socializing

Table 1: Proposed Workshop Schedule

4.4 Objectives and Workshop Outcomes

The primary objective of this workshop is to foster a community of researchers and practitioners focused on news and journalism through an HCI or design lens. To this end, the workshop activities will enable this interdisciplinary community to come together, map ongoing research efforts, and collectively identify promising future directions. The workshop will also provide a dedicated space for participants to share early, ongoing, and incomplete work, facilitating meaningful feedback from peers in the domain.

In terms of concrete outcomes, we aim to achieve the following:

(1) To maintain a record of presented work, we will encourage participants to upload submissions to ArXiv with a dedicated report number.
(2) To extend the reach of the presented work to a wider audience (e.g., newsroom practitioners, cross-disciplinary collaborators), we will invite participants to contribute short blog posts about their workshop submissions for a Medium blog.
(3) To document our conversations and inspire future initiatives, we will share the results of the group synthesis activity as a Medium blog post. We also commit to translating this artifact into Japanese, for sharing with the national HCI, design, and news communities.
(4) To foster ongoing community-building, we plan to establish a dedicated HCI+news/journalism social space building on the attendees and energy of this workshop; we will decide whether to host this effort via a listserv, a Slack, or a Discord server.

Given the evolving conditions of news production and consumption, this workshop is both timely and essential. It addresses recent issues, while equipping participants to engage in collective sense-making and synthesis around them. Further, by working together, we hope to identify promising, new directions for HCI research that enables it to support the actors, activities, and values of news, and enhance civic engagement.

4.5 Call for Participation

We invite researchers, designers, and practitioners to participate in our in-person workshop at CHI 2025 in Yokohama, Japan. This workshop will convene interdisciplinary voices in HCI and news at a crucial moment to critically examine how news production and consumption is changing. In light of transformative events like worldwide elections in 2024 and emerging technologies like generative AI, our discussions will examine the reconfigurations of actors and activities in the news ecosystem, and how design can address these changes. Participants will engage in collaborative activities to reflect on current challenges facing news organizations and audiences, synthesize the state of research in news and HCI, and identify future research directions.

We encourage submissions addressing one or more of our three key themes relating to news systems: (1) Design and implications of AI, (2) Credibility, trust, and access, and (3) Power and value conflicts in research and design. Position papers, works-in-progress, and encore submissions of recent peer-reviewed work are welcome. Submissions should be 2-6 pages in the CHI Extended Abstract format, and will be evaluated based on their relevance, originality, quality, and potential to foster engaging discussions.

Please submit your papers via email by February 20, 2025. Accepted papers will be encouraged to publish on ArXiv. At least one author from each accepted submission must attend the workshop, and all participants must register for the workshop and at least one day of the conference. For more information, please visit our workshop website: https://sites.google.com/view/newsfutures/home.

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