

We used an AI tool for audio transcription of guest interviews when writing this newsletter. By now, we should be accustomed to these kinds of explanatory notes, as AI tools are becoming an integral part of journalists' everyday work. Are we using them to save time or improve content? Experts tell us that, **between time and quality, we should always choose quality** because it may be the only advantage journalists have in the race to create content.

In today's edition, we explore how a newsroom in Moldova is embracing AI tools and reflect on the ways artificial intelligence is transforming our industry. **It is time again to rethink our business model.** Where do we draw the line on involving AI in our work when it comes to ethics?



Valeria Batereanu
Editor-in-chief of #diez

"Without rules, discussions about AI remain in a gray area between what is and isn't allowed."

The #diez newsroom has been discussing artificial intelligence for a few years, albeit skeptically, admits Valeria Batereanu, the editor-in-chief of the youth media platform. "The skepticism comes from the fact that all the information we publish must be verified. Even though artificial intelligence is better in this respect now, it wasn't at the beginning, which made me approach it with doubt."

Over time, **the newsroom has also become concerned about the ethics of using AI tools** for everyday journalistic work. "Without internal rules about how artificial intelligence can be used, discussions about AI remain in a gray area between what is permissible and what is not. It was important for me to understand how we can use AI ethically."

The first rule, which has remained in place until now, is that **the newsroom does not publish AI-generated texts.** Although this rule is self-evident within the newsroom, it had to be written down and communicated to the network of external contributors. "By gathering experiences from other newsrooms, we have identified boundaries not to cross and ways to use AI that work for us. We also introduced these changes to our editorial policy, which we updated this year." One of these changes was to be transparent with the public. "We have a duty to inform our readers when a photo or sequence was generated with artificial intelligence. It's only fair to give credit where credit is due, because we can't take credit for work we didn't actually do. We have a responsibility to inform our readers of the source of the information we work with."

The journalist emphasizes that rules do not impose limits and that **there are many ways to explore creativity using AI.** "We don't prohibit staff members from exploring what else we can do with AI in the newsroom. For instance, I'm curious to see if I can use GPT Chat to properly punctuate a text. I experimented and sent the text to our proofreader for review. He informed me that the punctuation was not being used correctly, so I realized that we could not implement it in the newsroom yet."

The team explored customized AI tools to improve the user experience. "First, we examined the percentage of user retention on the site aimed to increase it by summarizing long articles generated with AI and transcribing them into audio versions. However, we still help these tools a lot. Our reporters proofread the summaries and our proofreader adds correct punctuation and edits the wording." There is also an element of audience interaction, the editor explains, because readers can activate the tools on articles where they are applied on the website.

In addition, the newsroom uses other tools to streamline the work process. For example, they generate images and subtitles for video reports. However, each tool comes with clear usage rules. "We sometimes write about sensitive subjects, and we often write about minors. To avoid exposing them, it helps to generate alternative images in these situations." The journalist says that data security is also a concern when using AI tools and believes that some sensitive topics should not be processed with artificial intelligence for now. "When working with a human story, I think about whether it's necessary to use AI and what the benefits would be. I wouldn't use AI to structure the story or provide explicit data on my character. I would use it for other kinds of tasks."

News managers shouldn't be afraid of artificial intelligence," says editor-in-chief of #diez. "Newsrooms need to identify what works for their teams and establish a set of rules. **They must be transparent with their readers and explain how they use AI for their stories.**"



Paul McNally
Founding Director of Develop AI

Five Key Questions and Answers About How AI Is Transforming Journalism

In what ways should we use artificial intelligence in our newsrooms?

The best way to use artificial intelligence in newsrooms is ethically. Although we may hear from managers that their journalists don't use AI, there will always be someone in the newsroom who uses certain tools. The problem is that, without discussion, it may not be clear to journalists how much they can use these tools and what the limits are. If this issue is not addressed, it could lead to freelancers using AI to create entire articles, and managers may not know how to detect or demonstrate this practice. **We can say that there is a sense of mistrust surrounding the use of AI in newsrooms.**

When discussing how we use AI, transparency and ethics must be addressed, even if the definition of ethics varies from newsroom to newsroom. When it comes to the roles AI can play, **I believe we should always choose to do things better rather than faster.** We are in a race where everyone is encouraged to create AI-generated content, even if it's just for their family. This is especially true since the idea that anyone can be a content creator has been around for almost 20 years in the public space.

As a journalist, you tend to be a gatekeeper of content. You went to college, learned how to do it, and got a job at a newspaper or magazine. You were part of the group of people creating culture. Now, of course, you live in a time when that's no longer the case. Anyone can create content, and perhaps they can even do it better than a journalist. **In this new context, journalists must carefully consider the value they can provide.**

In what ways does AI affect our business model?

We are witnessing the disintegration of Google's business model as users lose the habit of searching and clicking on sites for results. This model allowed newsrooms to monetize these clicks. However, most media outlets still think of their websites as destinations in and of themselves. We still have website traffic, so the change may not have happened yet, but newsrooms will start to feel this source of revenue dwindling soon.

It is not a new idea that journalists are preoccupied with platforms. If you are doing investigative journalism and publishing long pieces, the challenge of getting people to read your work is significant. However, the AI offer to users is different. Large newsrooms are already negotiating with AI companies to provide content, but small newsrooms won't have that bargaining power. Your audience will end up on these platforms anyway, and you won't be able to monetize it. The question is, where will your platform fit into this ecosystem?

The truth is that many newsrooms will not survive. However, those that do will produce better content for their audiences. There's no need to panic, but we do need to understand that AI is much more than a few tools we're going to adopt in our newsrooms.

People's contributions to journalists' content can serve as a model. However, the point is that users don't pay for the content they produce; rather, they pay for that content to remain accessible to everyone, as well as for the opportunity to contribute to the organization's greater value. We see that people can pay for Spotify or Netflix, but **these companies have conditioned audiences to pay little for a lot of content.** In other words, journalists can't compete with the entertainment industry on a level playing field. At the end of the month, **people see these payments as bills. When cutting costs, they eliminate what they consider extra.**

Can journalists still be responsible for cleaning up the news?

It made sense that journalists were developing fact-checking projects because they were using and developing their existing skills in content production. However, the idea that this became a separate activity did not work. Cleaning up the information space is a noble responsibility, but it is no longer possible because we can no longer debunk all the information in the public sphere. To understand the scope of this issue, consider Meta's announcement that it will promote content created using its AI tool in users' feeds. In other words, Meta wants us to use AI to communicate with our friends.

What we want is for people to take more responsibility for what they consume. Journalists can't do everything; it's time for audiences to be conscientious, too. AI vetting mechanisms are limited because artificial intelligence tools have become so advanced that it's difficult to distinguish an AI voice from a human one. The mission is noble, but it's no longer something we'll be able to accomplish alone. The challenge lies in not only telling stories but also distributing them to reach audiences.

To what extent should we be transparent about our use of artificial intelligence?

Many newsrooms say they don't want to mention the involvement of AI in their content because audiences won't understand the extent of AI use or what journalists are doing. Audiences may assume that all content is generated with the click of a button, which makes sense because those who have experience working with AI understand how it works.

However, it is a long-term educational process in which we must understand our audience's limitations. For instance, our followers might accept the use of AI for data processing but be skeptical of synthetic voices in a podcast. Journalists are concerned that they will be perceived as fake because AI is artificial. What we need to communicate is that, **even if an article has been generated entirely with AI, it is still true and trustworthy because a journalist verified and published it.**

How exposed is our data?

If we use premium tools then our data is much more secure. If we use free tools, then surely our data will be used for continuous training of these tools.

We're also told not to work with sensitive data, but any information can be considered sensitive when you're a journalist. There is an option to build your own AI tools in the newsroom for internal use without internet access, but this is not an option for small newsrooms. When using unreliable tools, you must ask yourself if saving time is worth the risk of exposing your data.



Opportunity!

The Swiss Cooperation Office in Moldova is announcing grants for small cultural projects targeting themes such as critical thinking, digital literacy, the social inclusion of marginalized groups, and artistic freedom and pluralism of ideas. Click [here](#) for details.



Get Help

If you are experiencing ongoing stress and anxiety, you can request a free and confidential consultation with a psychologist using [this chatbot](#) or by filling out [this form](#). You will be connected with a specialist within 48 hours.

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