

Journalism education for the 21st century

Roundtable Report

Topic - “Journalism education in the era of social networks and artificial intelligence: digital technologies and ethical values”

Host institution - South Ural State University (Chelyabinsk, Russia)

Date -15.10.2021

Moderators: Nico Drok and Nadia Vissers

Five introductory speeches:

- **Teaching professional values in the era of social networks and artificial intelligence** – Maarit Jaakkola, University of Gothenburg (Sweden)
- **The influence of Artificial Intelligence on journalism education in a digital society**– Kamilla Nigmatullina, Saint Petersburg State University (Russia)
- **Digital storytelling** – Ludmila Makarova, National Research Lobachevsky State University of Nizhny Novgorod, (Russia)
- **Immersive journalism** – Yael de Haan, University of Applied Science Utrecht (Netherlands)
- **Journalism and the challenges of the digital divide** – Anna Gladkova, Lomonosov Moscow State University (Russia).

Round table discussion:

Comments by:

- **Maria Anikina**, associate professor, candidate of philological sciences, Lomonosov Moscow State University;
- **Bela Lebedeva**, senior lecturer, St. Petersburg State University (Saint-Petersburg);
- **Ksenia Strugovets**, journalist, producer of OTV information programs (Chelyabinsk);
- **Olga Mayakova**, journalist, manager of corporate media, “Trubnik” Radio station (Chelyabinsk)

Summary of discussion

Social platforms and AI are potential threats for Journalism, so we need to take core values seriously in Journalism education, it's the pedagogical challenge and we need to start experimenting with the answers. At its worst, automation could threaten jobs and journalism identity by taking over work, usually done by humans. At its best it could lead to a renewal of journalism by taking over routine and time-consuming tasks, freeing up journalists focus on producing content with high added value.

Platformization brings many challenges for Journalism – and it is getting more important to distinguish between journalistic and non-journalistic content. It is essential for Journalism education to apply core values for creating practices of producing, publishing, sharing and engaging and apply core values for creating practices of reporting on and with AI. Immersive journalism projects often focus on the technology, but what is really matters is the story and interaction.

Journalism schools and departments are aware of the need of integrating relevant trends in the media field into educational practice and digital storytelling is an important direction for development of the modern media and includes digital technologies, visualization of information, infographics. A list of new competences was suggested, such as Knowledge of AI applications in the professional field, the ability to promote content, taking into account the specifics of algorithms, or the ability to determine the need to use AI in a specific professional action.

It is clear that technology is not everything, it is something to help us, a very important tool, something that changes the looks, the outside of Journalism profession, but it does not affect the core of it. Among the main topics raised at the Round table were the importance of cooperation, of engagement, of relating to audiences, of telling a good story and attract people. We need to remember how important journalistic values are; they are the fundament that lies beneath everything. One of the main challenges always is to have to decide how much of the new technology to put into new curriculum, knowing that in in 10 years' time various new technologies will be there and at the same time knowing that if add something to your curriculum, you also need to take out something else.

In order to be able to act as a citizen in the information society and be both digitally and socially included, individuals need a certain level of digital capital. For policy makers as well as for scholars and journalism educators it is important to monitor the level of digital capital within different population groups in different parts of the country, as well as to think about what specific measures can be taken to increase the level of digital capital among citizens.

In this context, an important role belongs to media education and digital literacy programs, enabling people to increase their digital capital level and fully use the benefits of online realm: civic engagement, social and political activism, communication in online space, self-representation and self- actualization, the use of digital services and much more.



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Further comments:

It is very important to pay attention not only to theoretical understanding of the processes and concepts and what is media and Journalism education today is, but also to add some practical implications of it, it will be very useful to develop curricula by adding more practical components to the studies, it can be the form of seminars, some sort of internships, regular meetings with journalists, with professionals, and the second thing - it is very important to approach digital literacy and media education as a complex, as a continued phenomenon, it is very important to study it at the very early age, so we can speak about special courses or classes or programs for kids, adolescence etc, and going on to programs to elderly people.

Teaching immersive journalism is not common, it's only starting now and you see the immersive storytelling more common at other educational programs like media design, but not in Journalism, but we see that the newsrooms in western countries, they ask for this skills, they have vacancies for example of UX designers, who can make this immersive stories, but they also ask about the designers, who has the journalistic background, this combination forces us to start this programs in combination of putting this two disciplines together. And the results of our survey tell us that it's not about technological skills, but about how to set up a story in the relationship: journalist – the user.

Renewing the curriculum is important, but what works for fact-checking, might not work for flash journalism, for web-documentary or for Data journalism, so we need to be careful and to research first. When we decide to implement new courses, a good strategy is to make it optional at first and find out if it works. Learning from that experience it can be implemented more broadly into curricula.