



THE STATE OF **TECHNOLOGY** IN GLOBAL **NEWSROOMS**



2019

ABOUT

The 2019 State of Technology in Global Newsrooms is a benchmark study that builds on the 2017 report of the same name, conducted by the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ). ICFJ empowers an unparalleled global network of journalists to produce news coverage that leads to better governments, stronger economies, vibrant societies and healthier lives. Working at the nexus of journalism and technology, we support our network to increase the flows of reliable, trustworthy news – a cornerstone of healthy democracies. Since 1984, ICFJ has worked with more than 140,000 journalists and media managers from 180 countries.

ICFJ worked with Georgetown University's Communication, Culture, & Technology (CCT) program to administer and analyze the study. CCT is an interdisciplinary graduate program focusing on challenges posed by new communication technologies in a range of fields, including journalism, government, politics, arts, media, business, health, and medicine.

Diana Owen, Professor at CCT, conducted, analyzed, and wrote the study. Fatima Bahja and Sharon Moshavi of ICFJ provided assistance in the writing of the report.

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ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Astudestra Ajengrastri, ICFJ TruthBuzz Fellow — ICFJ

Felicitas Carrique, Director of Innovation — SembraMedia

David Clinch, Global News Editor — Storyful

Jon Cohen, VP, Survey Research — SurveyMonkey

Zoe Cullen, Assistant Professor of Business Administration — Harvard University

Yunus Erduran, Founder — Dokuz8

Ali Ghamloush, Editor-in-Chief — MBC

Mira Milosevic, Executive Director — Global Forum for Media Development

Hannah Ojo, ICFJ TruthBuzz Fellow — ICFJ

Shaheryar Popalzai, Consultant Digital Strategy — Dawn Media Group

Tali Rosen Shoham, Senior UX Researcher — Google

Alan Soon, Co-Founder and CEO — Splice Newsroom

H R Venkatesh, Director of Training and Research — Boom Live

Mackenzie Warren, Senior Director of News Strategy — USA Today

Jose Zamora, Senior VP, Strategic Communications — Univision News

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Around the world, journalists are increasingly turning to digital technology to help address daunting challenges such as the spread of misinformation and increasing attacks on reporters, according to ICFJ's 2019 survey of the State of Technology in Global Newsrooms.

The use of fact-checking and social media verification tools is on the rise, while many newsrooms are securing their communications to protect themselves and their sources. Journalists are also using a multitude of new techniques and platforms to better engage their audiences – and earn their trust.

The survey updates and expands upon ICFJ's pioneering 2017 study, which determined that journalists were struggling to keep pace with the digital revolution. Our 2019 survey reveals a marked increase in the adoption of digital technology by the media industry over just the past two years.

ICFJ, working with Georgetown University, conducted the study in 14 languages and received more than 4,100 responses from journalists and news managers in 149 countries. The responses are divided into eight regions of the world: East/Southeast Asia, Eurasia/former USSR, Europe, Latin America/Caribbean, Middle East/North Africa, North America, South Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa.

The study shows that traditional news outlets are transforming into hybrid newsrooms as they embrace digital platforms. Data journalism is clearly on the rise. And small outlets, most of them digital, now represent a majority of newsrooms.

That said, few new digital start-ups are emerging in seven of the eight global regions. Newsrooms still aren't investing in enough tech staff or in the appropriate training for their employees.

Traditional news outlets are transforming into hybrid newsrooms.

Women are playing a much stronger role in the newsroom than ever before.

But they are diversifying their revenue sources. Advertising is no longer the top revenue source for more than half of newsrooms. And while subscription/membership revenues are still low, most news managers expect them to increase at least fivefold in the near future.

On the personnel front, women are playing a much stronger role in the newsroom than ever before. Women account for half of the managerial positions in four regions: Eurasia/former USSR, North America, Europe, and Latin America. That said, on average, women are hired with fewer digital skills than their male counterparts.

As the global news landscape continues its relentless transformation, journalists and their newsrooms are stepping up. Of course, there's still a ways to go. But if the improvements of the last two years are any indication, the trend is positive, despite the formidable challenges facing the industry.

We discovered the following key trends:

I. THE CHALLENGES

Journalists are increasing their use of technology to respond to the pressing issues facing the news media today.

More than two-thirds of journalists and newsrooms secure their communications – a significant improvement over 2017. Less than half of journalists used cybersecurity techniques two years ago. The percentage of North American newsrooms that secure their communications has doubled, to 82%. Europe, at 92%, remains the leader. The preferred method of security: encrypted messaging apps. All other security measures are used by one-quarter or fewer of newsrooms.

More than half of journalists regularly use digital tools to fact-check information. Among the 16 technical skills we surveyed, digital fact-checking is the most common.

One-third of news organizations have dedicated fact-checkers on staff. Additionally, 44% of newsrooms and 37% of journalists have engaged in more fact-checking activities over the past year.

More than twice as many journalists use social media verification tools today as did two years ago. Only 11% of journalists used any kind of social media verification tools in 2017. Currently, one-quarter of journalists say they use the tools at least weekly, and more than one-third of news managers report the same.

Most news organizations are making efforts to tackle misinformation and build trust.

More news managers than journalists say misinformation is a major problem. Seventy-five percent of managers are concerned about the impact of misinformation on the industry, while less than half of journalists say it affects their day-to-day work.

News managers say they are featuring more public-interest stories and

citing more sources to increase audience trust. Over 60% of newsrooms are reporting more public-interest stories and citing more sources to gain trust. Nearly half of newsrooms are also better separating news stories from opinion pieces.

News organizations in North America and sub-Saharan Africa are the least worried about building audience trust. Concerns have grown in North America, where 37% of news managers view building trust as a major challenge, compared to 29% in 2017. Yet the region remains among the least concerned about this issue, ranking second to last ahead of sub-Saharan Africa (29%). In Eurasia/former USSR, where worries about misinformation (21%) were the lowest in 2017, concern has more than doubled to 48% in 2019.

II. THE ORGANIZATIONS

While newsrooms that use a hybrid of traditional and digital formats are on the rise, digital-only start-up growth is flat.

Hybrid newsrooms are growing as traditional newsrooms shrink. From 2017 to 2019, the number of hybrid newsrooms increased across all regions. Approximately half the newsrooms in six of eight global regions today are hybrid. Even in South Asia, where traditional outlets (those that rely on legacy formats) reigned just two years ago, hybrid newsrooms now dominate.

Surprisingly, digital-only newsroom growth is flat or down everywhere except in East/Southeast Asia, suggesting that fewer online start-ups are launching. In seven of eight regions, the percentage of digital-only newsrooms has either declined or remained flat since 2017. The biggest decline in digital-only newsrooms has been in North America (from 33% to 22% of newsrooms) and Eurasia/former USSR (down from 55% to 45% of newsrooms).

The only newsrooms that are expanding are small ones.

While most newsrooms continue to cut staff, nearly half of outlets with 25 or fewer employees have increased in size over the last two years. Most of those outlets are digital.

Most newsrooms are small. More than half of newsrooms have ten or fewer full-time employees. Digital-only organizations are the smallest, with 75% employing up to ten full-time staff.

Smaller newsrooms are twice as likely to report on local news as larger outlets. Twenty percent of small newsrooms cover local and hyperlocal events, compared to 10% of larger newsrooms (26+ employees). Globally, an average of 15% of newsrooms report exclusively on local news.

Reporting on government and politics dominates, but other beats are grabbing attention.

While government and politics is the dominant beat, about a third of all journalists now regularly cover education, the economy and health. More than half of journalists worldwide cover politics and government, making it the dominant news beat of the industry, followed by education (33%), economy (32%) and health (32%). North American journalists are the least likely to report on education and the economy. Journalists in Eurasia/former USSR are the least likely to cover politics.

Radio outlets are most likely to cover specialized beats. Forty-two percent cover education and 43% cover health, compared to 27% of websites that cover these topics.

Nearly one-third of journalists do some investigative reporting, though only 12% identify as investigative reporters. Journalists in print news organizations are slightly more likely to engage in investigative reporting than journalists in other newsrooms. South Asian journalists (33%) are the most likely to do investigative reporting and East/Southeast Asian journalists (17%) are the least likely.

III. THE PEOPLE

In four regions of the world, women are making significant headway in the newsroom.

Women hold half or more of newsroom management positions in four of the eight regions we surveyed: Eurasia/former USSR, North America, Europe and Latin America/Caribbean. On average, one-third of management jobs globally are held by women – but the regional differences are vast. The leaders: Eurasia/former USSR at 62%, followed by

North America at 56%, Europe at 51% and Latin America/Caribbean at 49%. The laggards: the Middle East/North Africa with 29% and South Asia, where women hold just 26% of management roles.

The majority of journalists in Europe and North America are women.

Women represent 56% of newsroom employees in North America and 51% in Europe. On average, women account for 40% of journalists in newsrooms worldwide. The regions with the fewest women are South Asia, where just 26% of journalists are women, followed by the Middle East/North Africa at 29%.

When they are hired, women are less likely to have digital experience than men. About one-quarter of women had no digital experience compared to 15% of men at the time they were hired. Forty-eight percent of women had experience with two or more tech skills compared to 55% of men.

Newsrooms aren't hiring more tech specialists.

Technical experts are still few and far between in newsrooms. Only 4% of newsroom employees are tech professionals such as product developers, an increase from 2% in 2017.

Newsroom managers and journalists are only slightly more likely to hold a degree in a tech-related field in 2019 than they were in 2017.

Compared to 5% two years ago, today 12% of newsroom managers and 8% of journalists hold a degree in a tech-related field.

More journalists are being hired with digital content creation skills, but few bring more advanced experience such as cybersecurity or analytics.

The percentage of journalists hired with experience using digital and video tools increased from 33% in 2017 to 43% in 2019. Yet in 2019, few still brought advanced digital experience. When hired, 19% had analytics skills and 7% brought cybersecurity skills.

Twenty-one percent of employees hold digital roles such as social media editor and digital content producer. This is almost flat compared to 2017. Core writing and reporting skills and associated positions continue to dominate in the digital era.

Newsrooms are having a tough time filling jobs while journalists are struggling to find employment.

Even as many newsrooms are laying off journalists, they can't find and keep top talent. Across the world, 55% of newsrooms find it difficult to recruit and retain journalists. The outlier: North America, where only 28% of newsrooms say this is a challenge.

Freelancing has become prevalent as more journalists lose their jobs. Nearly 40 percent of journalists have lost a position due to budget cuts or reorganization. At the same time, 70% report they have freelanced at some point in their career.

IV. THE TOOLS

Most journalists believe digital tools have transformed every aspect of their work, mostly for the better.

More than two-thirds of journalists and news managers believe digital tools have a positive impact on their work. Respondents overwhelmingly say that these services improve news quality and audience engagement. A slightly smaller majority believe that digital tools increase productivity.

Data-driven journalism has become much more common today than just two years ago. An increasing reliance on data marks the biggest change in the way journalists work. Data journalism is among their most regularly used digital skills.

Journalists' use of messaging apps to engage audiences has spiked – even surpassing Twitter. More than two-thirds of journalists (69%) engage their audiences at least weekly via instant messaging. This surpasses the 63% of journalists who use Twitter and other microblogs at least weekly.

Newsrooms worldwide rely on a greater mix of formats to distribute their content. Two-thirds of news organizations disseminate content in at least four formats, a significant increase from the 40% that did in 2017. Journalists covering hyperlocal news use the widest variety of tools and platforms to interact with audiences.

Journalists demand more advanced training than their newsrooms offer.

Journalists want more training in data journalism than any other area.

Seventy-nine percent of journalists want training on analyzing data, while only 35% of newsrooms provide it. More journalists than news managers also believe that data journalism has a positive impact on their work: On average, 65% of journalists believe that data journalism helps engage audiences, improve quality and raise productivity, compared to 55% of managers.

Journalists prefer intensive training rather than short-term initiatives.

Journalists (57%) overwhelmingly find hands-on, multi-day workshops most effective, while only 41% of newsrooms offer that kind of training. Journalists and managers basically agree on the appropriate level of online training: Seventeen percent of journalists and 22% of news managers like this format.

Journalists and their employers differ on the specialized training needed in the newsroom.

While newsrooms mostly offer training in video and audio production, journalists are eager for more training on topics such as cybersecurity, podcasting, fact-checking tools and promoting work on social media. The gap in demand and availability is largest in using and understanding AI (artificial intelligence); 42% of journalists want training in AI, and only 5% of newsrooms offer it.

V. THE BUSINESS

Newsroom managers aren't as obsessed with key metrics such as pageviews as they were two years ago.

Pageviews is still the most important metric for newsrooms, but reliance on it and most other metrics has declined.

In 2019, 59% of newsrooms consulted pageviews regularly – a steep decline from 73% in 2017. The use of almost every metric has decreased, with the exception of only one: reach (number of people exposed to a piece of content).

Business and editorial managers consult analytics less frequently than they did two years ago, while individual journalists use them more.

Forty-four percent of journalists use analytics at least once a day, compared to 29% two years ago. At the same time, senior editors' daily use of analytics has declined a steep 18 percentage points, from 64% to 46%. Business-side employees' use has decreased by 20 percentage points.

Newsrooms use analytics more to track performance of individual

journalists' articles. In 2017, one-third of newsrooms regularly kept tabs on how reporters' stories were performing. In 2019, that increased: 37% tracked the performance daily and 59% did so at least weekly.

Advertising is no longer the largest revenue source for a majority of newsrooms, as they diversify their funding sources.

Fifty-four percent of newsroom managers say that advertising is NOT their top revenue generator. They are also relying on philanthropic contributions/grants, government funding, sponsored content, print subscriptions, audience donations, and online subscriptions/memberships. Thirty-six percent of non-profit news managers identify digital display ads as an important revenue stream – the same percentage who named philanthropic contributions as a key funding source. Overall, we see a greater diversity of revenue sources among non-profits, including sponsored content (28%), paid services (24%), and government funding (20%).

More than one-quarter of news managers expect online subscriptions/membership to become a key revenue stream in the upcoming year.

Though only 4% of news organizations say it is currently their most important funding source, managers anticipate that this will grow dramatically. At 27%, online subscriptions/memberships are among the top anticipated revenue streams.

Forty percent of news managers believe that data journalism helps increase news revenue. In addition, 58% believe that social media helps to raise revenue, 56% say digital video and audio content does, and 53% say interactives/visuals do.