

Journalism for the 21st Century
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JOURNALISTS LOST IN THE CLICKSTREAM?
The challenge of re-imagining journalism for a digital era

Journalism is perceived to be in crisis in many countries. The exercise of free expression by professional journalists, particularly in news media, has helped provide transparency and accountability in governance and given a public platform for diverse views, but this 'journalism of civic value' is now under serious threat.

News journalism for the most part no longer pays: consumers can get it for free on the internet and web advertisers pay a fraction of print and broadcasting rates for web readers who they see as transient. The result - a reduction in original and reliable news gathering as news organisations cut back on their journalist staff and close newspaper titles. One prediction is that two thirds of jobs in the news industry will be gone within 5 years.

Other problematic trends include:

- pressure to stay at the desk and rely on secondary sources only
- the demands of the 24 hour news cycle
- a commercial drive to the lowest common denominator
- greater intrusiveness into privacy
- declining levels of trust in journalists.

Current responses to the crisis in journalism, such as the introduction of charges for web services by some media groups or the 'magazin-ification' of existing newspapers are arguably palliative at best. There is a widespread consensus that the existing business model is bust leading to an urgent search for alternatives.

Solutions might include:

- a digital kitemark for quality media
- trust or charitable / philanthropic status for media organisations
- hyperlocal news hubs and other moves to harness citizen reporting with professional journalism
- micro-payments
- economic measures such as tax breaks for investment into socially responsible journalism.