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Collective Intelligence in Journalism:

The Impact of Crowdfunding on Journalism - Case Study of Spot.Us

The theory of collective intelligence is based on the notion of knowledge is the most accurate when it consists of inputs from a distributed population. Pierre Lévy (1997) describes collective intelligence as a form of universally distributed intelligence, constantly enhanced, coordinated in real time, and resulting in the effective mobilization of skills. (Lévy 1997, 13.)

Collective intelligence is harvested in various ways through crowdsourcing, in the form of an open call for anybody to contribute resources, whether knowledge, talent, or money. Crowdsourcing is becoming more common also in journalism, where crowdsourced tasks range from submitting photos to finding out facts and to writing full articles.

Crowdfunding is a type of crowdsourcing, and crowdfunding is used for example on platforms such as Spot.Us and Kickstarter, which enable journalists to publicly pitch their stories and get donations from the community. Crowdfunding is used also in other fields: for example SellaBand crowdfunds music and art projects.

The usage of collective intelligence is still a novelty in journalism, and very much in marginal. However, as the traditional media institutions and production models are unraveling, as well as the business models for journalism, collective intelligence in all its manifestations becomes more significant in the production, delivery and organization of journalism. Instead of big, self-sustained media houses, the future of journalism will be

about self-organized knowledge workers. This development is already occurring at large in the US, where journalists are working in heavily outsourced models such as the Patch and recently Yahoo-purchased Associated Content. Therefore, new systemic solutions for journalism, and research about them, are very much needed.

I have studied crowdfunding and crowdsourcing as manifestations of collective intelligence in journalism. In this case study, my research questions are the following: How does crowdfunding affect journalism? How does crowdfunding impact the role of a journalist, and the profession of a journalist? I used Spot.Us, a crowdfunding platform as a case study in order to respond to these questions. On Spot.Us, free lance journalists pitch their stories to the public in order to get funding for their stories. The public can donate for any story.

In my full paper, I will further analyze donor and reporter interviews and present conclusions about the impact of crowdfunding and collective intelligence on journalism, and the impact of the self-organization in knowledge work, particularly in journalism.

My findings will help the Knowledge Federation workshop take further steps to analyze the needs and find solutions in self-organization in knowledge work, especially in journalism. I'm a journalist by profession, and my insight into the industry will contribute to the discussions about the following topics: What kind of systemic solutions can more efficiently harness collective intelligence for journalism? How do journalists re-organize themselves as knowledge workers in the new post-conglomerate era in journalism? How can journalism use collective intelligence for the benefit of a society, and vice versa, how can society use collective intelligence for supporting high-quality journalism?

References:

Lévy, P. (1997). *Collective intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace*. Perseus Books, Cambridge, MA.

[Surowiecki, J.](#) (2004). *The Wisdom of Crowds: Why the Many Are Smarter Than the Few and How Collective Wisdom Shapes Business, Economies, Societies and Nations*. Doubleday, New York.

