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Journalism Education is the journal of the Association for Journalism Education a body representing educators in HE in the UK and Ireland. The aim of the journal is to promote and develop analysis and understanding of journalism education and of journalism, particularly when that is related to journalism education.

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Articles

All papers in the Articles section are peer reviewed and discuss the latest research in journalism and journalism education. These are intended to inform, educate and spark debate and discussion. Please join in this debate by going to www.journalism-education.org to have your say and find out what others think.

AI Disclosure in Academia: Analysing undergraduate and postgraduate AI usage in 2023-24 Assessments

By Emma Heywood and Jesse Armstrong, University of Sheffield

Abstract

This article presents an exploratory study conducted at the University of Sheffield, UK, during the 2023-24 academic year. The aim was to analyse undergraduate and postgraduate students' usage of generative AI technologies in assessments. Approximately 200 students were asked to annotate their essay assignments to describe their AI use, using a template designed for this purpose. Students were also asked to comment on the template. The findings showed that most students demonstrated a critical approach to AI use, often checking AI-generated information against other sources; AI was often, but not always, used as a supplementary tool rather than a primary source of content; students frequently mentioned the limitations of AI, such as generic or irrelevant information; and that many students emphasised their own role in adapting, verifying, and expanding on AI-generated content. Students reported that the template was easy to use and was useful in helping them reflect on how they were using AI and why.

Introduction

The launch of Chat GPT in November 2022 and the subsequent influx of generative AI technologies presented the 2023 academic year with many challenges.

Their many applications and uses in academia such as hypothesis and content generation, literature re-

views, paraphrasing, translating and summarising, editing, and proofreading, would prove both beneficial and problematic in assessing students' learning. Many predicted that it would impede the development of essential skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, imagination and research abilities (Kasneji et al. 2023; Sullivan et al. 2023).

The School of Journalism, Media and Communication at the University of Sheffield was not alone in its concerns. Approaches had to be implemented quickly which could assess students' use of AI without penalising them unfairly or driving the practice underground. Our experience with AI was limited, and we lacked clear guidelines for detecting or identifying its use. No one had significant experience of using AI nor did we know how to detect its use or even what we were looking for. We recognised that we, as academics, were using AI so how could we legitimately, and practically, ask students not to use it. We considered it would be more useful to find out how they were using it. It might also identify gaps in teaching.

We therefore devised a template for use by two cohorts, a Level 1 group and an MA group. Students would simply copy and paste their written work into the left hand column of a table, and use the remaining right hand column to state whether they used AI, how they used it and what the limitations were.

Literature review

On 30 November 2022, OpenAI released the large language model ChatGPT leading to a significant change in technology. Whilst there is no one definition of AI, Lim et al. (2023) have described it as 'technology that (i) leverages deep learning models to (ii) generate human-like content (e.g., images, words) in response to (iii) complex and varied prompts (e.g., languages, instructions, questions)'. ChatGT, like many other GenAI technologies, are trained to generate 'humanlike' text in response to prompts provided by the user. Its use in Higher Education (HE) has already been widely discussed, with scholars examining its benefits and how to use GenAI to produce lesson plans (van den Berg and du Plessis 2024), to promote critical thinking (Maya and Valdes 2024), to provide feedback (Farrokhnia et al. 2024), answering theory-based questions (AlAfnan et al. 2023) and for ideation. It has also been discussed in many disciplines, for example (Neumann et al. 2023) highlighted its benefits in engineering.

Yet this characteristic of being human-like immediately created fears and concerns in higher education regarding students' ability to use it to write essays, draft assessments and reply to exam questions (Michel-Villarreal et al. 2023). This fear was attached to institutions' inability to detect how AI had been used. Indeed, some institutions have resorted to outright bans on the use of AI (Schifano 2023), and a return to exam-based assessments (Lievens 2023). Bans, of course, would be futile and would just push the practice underground as students would quickly start evading restrictions using VPNs, leading to some to study cheating amongst students and their ingenuity in developing new and inventive methods (Kelum et al. 2023). Developing AI-proof assessments could also currently be considered aspirational.

Other institutions have examined the impact of AI-driven assessment tools on evaluating student performance (Lyanda et al. 2024) and also GenAI detection tools in assessments and formative e-assessments (Ardito 2024; Huang 2024). Further research has been conducted into educators' and students' perspectives on using GenAI (Alper 2024) and others are embracing AI and are working alongside students to recognise that its use is inevitable. Academics and students must learn, side by side, how to best use it and what its disadvantages are. Few however have discussed handing over responsibility to students and, put simply, trusting them. A division emerged between academics, on one hand, who considered their AI use to be fair, essential and justified, and students, on the other, who could not be trusted to identify cheating or plagiarism. This study challenges the latter perspective and has the following two main aims:

- To better understand how students of different levels and backgrounds used AI in the academic year 2023-24
- To trial a tool to identify students' use of AI which could be adapted for future use, if necessary.

Methodology

The methodology comprised two parts. The first part was a new template to enable students to identify and reflect on their AI use in assessments, and the second part was a questionnaire given to the same students to offer their opinions about the template.

Two cohorts of students were selected for this study. The first were first year (Level 1) undergraduate students taking a core academic module in semester 1, and the second was a group of MA students taking an optional module in semester 2. The numbers of students on each module was comparable (101 and 106

respectively). However, the overwhelming majority of students on the MA module were international students, mainly from China, although there were students from other ‘rest of world’ countries and approximately 10 domestic students. This optional module brought together students from four MA programmes within the School of Journalism, Media and Communication. The first year cohort comprised mostly home students. The two cohorts therefore had similarities as large numbers among both of them were new to higher education in the UK; the first years were just starting university, and the MA students were new to the UK with few, if any, having taken their undergraduate studies here. Academic writing in English and at HE level was therefore largely new to both cohorts.

Two different semesters were selected allowing for additional comparisons between levels of knowledge of AI which might increase over time. The first year module was in Semester 1 with the assessment deadline in January 2024, and the second module ran in Semester 2 with the assessment deadline in May 2024. In both cases, the assessments were essays of similar lengths (2500 words and 3000 words respectively).

Prior assessment of students’ digital or AI competences was not conducted. An introductory talk about the task (using the template to reflect on AI use in assessments) and to AI was given to both cohorts by the School’s learning technologist during their lectures and instructions were also posted on the VLE. Students were also directed to the University guidance on AI use. The task was not part of the assessment,

<p>Please use this column to write your essay. Please delete this placeholder text before you submit your work.</p> <p>To maintain a well-functioning and democratic society you need journalists and the media. They protect the society whilst also providing it with news, information and entertainment. One is helpless without the other, though there are a few differences between the two and their roles in society, which I am going to explore further by answering the question: <i>What functions do the media and journalists perform in our society and why is it important for scholars to study them?</i></p> <p>Journalism and media are two terms that are closely associated, but there are significant differences between the two. Journalism can be defined as a process of gathering, evaluating, producing and reporting news and information, though journalists have certain obligations and ethical principles to take into account when reporting on a news story (Sheridan Burns, 2013). The media refers to the various ways of communicating in society and when used in relation to journalism it relates to the channels of communication through which news, entertainment and important information are spread. This is also referred to as mass communication, because the information reaches out to a large audience. The process of mass communication and media are similar to journalism, because it also includes creating, receiving and sending information to a large number of people. News is considered to be a form of communication and with the help from media and mass communication, journalists are able to report information to a large number of people through different media channels (Stoltzfus, 2020).</p> <p>One of the most important functions that the media and journalists perform in our society today is that they serve the citizens in a democratic society. According to Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014) “The primary</p>	<p>Please use this column for your annotations. Please indicate how you used generative AI in your assignment. You may wish to include the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What prompts did you use? • What outputs did you generate? • How did you use/adapt/develop the outputs? • What were the limitations? <p>AI (name of AI tool) used to find definitions of terms. It directed me to some literature and I chose two references which were relevant.</p> <p>AI (name of AI tool) provided me with a</p>
<p>purpose of journalism is to provide citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing.” (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014) This definition suggests that journalism’s most important function is to act as the watchdog role in society, also referred to as the fourth estate. Specifically, that journalism’s primary function is to inform the audience about how candidates and governments perform and ensure that the people in power are held to account. It provides a line of communication between the people in society and the government. This communication goes both ways, because the people are being informed about what the government is doing, and the government learns what the public is thinking (Steel, 2009). Furthermore, they are especially important when it comes to democratic elections. Elections are not only about the process of voting, but also about voters engaging in public debate and having enough information about policies, parties and candidates to make the right choices for themselves. By doing this, <u>journalist</u> and the media help</p>	<p>structure for the essay but insufficient details. I had to refer to lecture notes and reading to add substance.</p>

it would not be graded, and this was made clear to the students.

Figure 1: An example of the template and what the students were expected to do if they used AI to produce their essay.

As the essays were anonymised, so were the comments or annotations. Five experienced markers were involved in marking the essays from the two cohorts. Marking standardisation meetings were held before and after the marking.

The advantage of this template was that we were able to implement it in an agile manner without the need for formal approval as it did not require changes to module or assessment descriptors. We were therefore able to respond to a new and challenging situation quickly and usefully.

The second part of the methodology consisted of an anonymised Google feedback form circulated to both cohorts after submitting their essays and before receiving their grades. The aim of the form was to determine whether the template was easy to use, whether it added time to their essay writing process, whether it encouraged them to use AI or not, and whether adding comments on AI use to the template make them reflect more on their AI usage.

Findings

Use of AI

197 students from the two cohorts submitted essays within the deadlines for marking. Approximately half of both cohorts used some form of AI when preparing or writing their essay. 53 percent of students said they used AI to help write their essays, 33 percent said they did not use AI, and 14 percent did not state whether they did or did not (left the column blank without comments).

More students in the MA cohort said they used AI to prepare or write their essay than on the Level 1 cohort (64 vs 40). This can be explained in part by the international composition of this cohort and that many used AI for translation or language purposes.

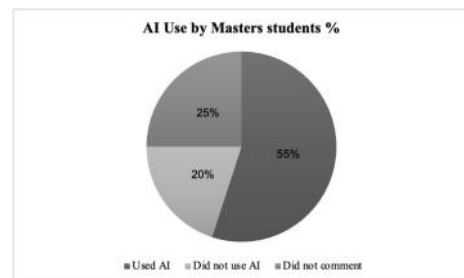
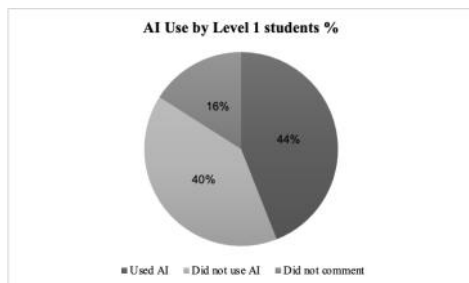


Figure 2: AI use by both cohorts

In the Level 1 cohort, 91 of 101 essays were submitted within the deadline for marking. 40 students said they used AI to help write their essays, 36 said they did not, and 14 left the column blank without comments.

In the MA cohort, 106 essays were submitted. 64 students said they used AI to help write their essays, 23 said they did not, and 29 did not state they didn't (left the column blank without comments).

A range of AI tools were used. The MA students quoted Google Translate, DeepL, Grammarly, ChatGPT, Perplexity AI, Claude, Bing, SciSpace, QuillBot, but rarely the university-recommended Google Gemini. ChatGPT was most frequently mentioned among the Level 1 students. The latter also cited Grammarly, Bard, Bing Chat, and Docsium, but again not Gemini. A further analysis could compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses of different tools.

Generative AI technology was used predominantly in certain topic areas and, for the purposes of this report, these are divided into language, writing and style; information gathering and content; essay structure and organisation; and limitations and concerns among students.

Language, writing, style

In the MA cohort, students used AI tools such as Google Translate and DeepL to translate parts of their essays or refine their language. Given that the anonymity of the responses prevented us from knowing whether respondents were home or international students, it could be assumed, rather than known, that this would be particularly useful for non-native English speakers to ensure they conveyed the right meaning. According to these students, AI was used to rephrase sentences, find synonyms, improve sentence structure and language variety and to suggest transitional phrases and paragraph starters.

“Due to my limitation of language, I used AI to translate part of the article into English, and then manually checked and proofread the inappropriate expression. Due to different language usage habits, there may be inappropriate expressions.” (MA student)

“I just use it to polish the language of the essay by using Google Translate, which I use to convert some of the words from my native language into English, just to make sure I conveyed the right meaning.” (MA student)

Tools, which had been widely used in previous years such as Grammarly, were commonly used to check for grammatical errors and improve overall writing quality. Some of the Level 1 students adapted AI-generated content to fit their own voice and context. In some cases, students were deterred from using language tools because of their limitations: ‘this tool can’t identify the real wrong words, so I didn’t use AI in the following paragraphs’ (Level 1 student) and,

“What I had originally written was very chunky, I used AI to reword the first sentence of this paragraph. It helped change the sentence structure and utilised synonyms to make it sound more professional, I reworded it again myself and ultimately settled on this final iteration.” (Level 1 student)

“I used Grammarly to check the wrong words and wrong grammar. Like: community to communities; provide to provided.” (MA student)

The Level 1 students, the majority of whom were home students, used AI for light touch checks of their English: “I asked Chat GPT to phrase ‘one may suggest’ differently so that my essay wasn’t repetitive and used a variety of advanced language” (Level 1 student) “I used google to find a new word for ‘argue’.” (Level 1 student).

The concept of referencing was new to the Level 1 students, unlike the MA students. Despite discussing referencing styles and approaches in seminars and also being directed to the university’s academic writing webpages, Level 1 students were daunted by this task, “I did use ChatGPT to guide me on my Harvard referencing. It allowed me to get the format correct and be consistent.” (Level 1 student); “I also used Chat GPT to prompt me in my referencing. So that I could remind myself of the referencing format.” (Level 1 student). Some students used AI to suggest cited works, but most relied on their own research.

Information Gathering and Content

From the comments, we were able to identify that students from both cohorts often used AI for idea generation, and to summarise complex theories or historical events. They generally found initial sources or examples using AI, and then researched them independently. They sought general overviews, starting points for their research, potential topics, or different perspectives on a subject. They also used AI to find case studies (students were required to select their own case studies for the MA essay), which students then researched further. Their searches ranged in depth from: “I have used AI to understand how the whole situation has developed, and the actual sources in this dissertation are links to the original information provided by AI.” (MA student), to: “In the outline part, the ideas from ChatGPT are borrowed, but the details are not.” (MA student), to “In this assignment, I used generative AI to generate ideas about which cases to include in my essay. The prompts I used included asking for suggestions of landmark cases related to a specific topic and requesting brief summaries and key points for each of the suggested cases.” (MA student).

Searches using AI tools for case studies and other topics revealed a lack of primary research by students and some frustration among them over the need either to conduct further research on their own or to compromise by using suggestions from AI that they weren’t happy with: “I used ChatGPT to generate a definition for media. However, the definition did not fit the context of this essay. Therefore I paraphrased the definition based on the one ChatGPT suggested.” (Level 1 student).

Many noted the importance of manually verifying information due to potential inaccuracies: “Chat GPT gave me an outline for the essay, but it lacked enough information. I had to use lecture notes and readings to provide more depth.” (MA student) and “I used AI to find relevant NGOs and radios in South Sudan. And I checked the existence of the organisations and the working of the website. Using AI to find relevant information is efficient, but it may fabricate information, so it must be checked manually.” (MA student).

Essay Structure and Organisation

Both cohorts used generative AI to help structure their essays or create outlines. “I used the generative AI to structure, organise and synthesise my content.” (MA student) and “I generate an essay outline through ChatGPT 3.5. The advantage of it is it can give a clear outline. The disadvantage is lack of depth of opinion and always use some useless and complicated words.” (Level 1 student) and “I entered the essay question into ChatGPT, where I was provided with a general structure for the essay. I used this as a starting point for my essay.” (Level 1 student). There are several examples of using AI to structure essays. One of the MA students stated:

“The AI generated a list of reasons explaining why radio is an effective tool for NGOs in conflict zones, including its wide reach, flexibility, and ability to engage communities. I divided the generated list into helpful and useless parts, and for the helpful parts I expanded on each point with specific examples and references from articles.” (MA student)

And a Level 1 student said,

“I used ChatGPT during the planning process of my essay. I asked it to help me brainstorm some essay ideas (for arguments and counter arguments) to help me construct a plan. It generated various essay topics titles, but did not give me any research information or structural points for writing the essay. These prompts allowed me to form a basis for the plan of my essay which I then went on to conduct research and shape a specific and in-detail essay plan.” (Level 1 student)

The inexperience and lack of confidence amongst Level 1 students emerged strongly with regard to starting their essays. Students often used AI-generated structures as a starting point, then modified them: “AI (ChatGPT) was only used in order to gain a structure for each paragraph, however it was my task to use lecture notes, academic articles and reading materials to shape those paragraphs.” (Level 1 student). Another Level 1 student said,

“I entered the theories I had already researched into the AI and received more information on them back, which I then used to make my essay more in-depth. The AI essay plan also provided me with prompts on what to include in certain paragraphs, at times when I was unsure of what to include next I revisited these prompts and was able to move forward with my essay.” (Level 1 student)

Some students, particularly those on the Level 1 course, whose inexperience in Higher Education appeared to trigger anxiety, also used AI to generate concluding paragraphs, which they then edited and combined with their own ideas: “I used AI to assist me with structuring a university style conclusion. I had never done one before and was unsure the best way to summarise my points, in an academic way.” (Level 1 student). Another said,

“I gave chatgpt a copy of my essay and asked it to generate a conclusion paragraph. It responded by creating 5 conclusions, which I cut, edited, and added to, combining them into one overall conclusion for the piece. A lot of the output was just repeats of what I had said prior, or general statements which lacked clarity.” (Level 1 student)

Limitations and Concerns

Whilst a large majority of students in both cohorts acknowledged that they had used AI for their essays, they also raised many of its limitations, including the potential for fabricated information, inconsistency in the relevance of AI-generated suggestions, and limited access to full academic papers: ‘I used SciSpace to find relevant papers on the role of radio and ngos in conflict zones. Many of the documents it finds are not open, and most need to be double-checked to make sure they can be cited. Sometimes it also generates false literature’ (MA student).

Many noted that AI-generated content was often too generic or lacked depth. ‘The content is too broad, the part that can be used is relatively small, it sometimes gives the wrong link, and it is not consistent with the content that I am looking for’ (MA student), and ‘I tried using ChatGPT again to help me easily explain some definitions but did not find it particularly helpful. The content was fairly generic and the phrasing did not make much sense’ (Level 1 student).

Students reported adapting and reshaping AI outputs to fit their specific needs and essay contexts. “Though AI helped provide a starting point I had to sort through the excess of words and information -

info was also fairly generic.” (Level 1 student). Their comments suggested that using AI did not ultimately save them time or provide them with the anticipated help: “It gave me some basic ideas to work with, which I then built upon by adding examples and references. But I had to use my own notes and readings to provide more depth.” (MA student) and ‘I had to use lecture notes and readings to provide more depth’ (MA student).

Another commented: “The AI that I used here is Chatgpt. It gave me some suggestions about the structure of the essay, but I did not think that’s very relevant to what I asked. So I did not completely use it. Instead, I read the marking criteria and asked my tutor of my structure. Then I decided to structure my essay in this way.” (MA student),

The Tool

The second aim of the study was to trial a tool to identify students’ use of AI which could be adapted for future use, if necessary.

In the first instance, the tool allowed us to identify students’ levels of skills in using AI and which prompts they would use, for example, “I did this by asking the question ‘give me an example of what a Harvard reference looks like’ and ‘Write in the style of ...’, I asked Chat GPT to ‘explain selectivity paradigm to me like I’m a ten year old’ so that I could better understand the theory and write it out in a more concise manner.” (Level 1 student). However, some said they had not used AI because “it didn’t seem worth the effort.” (Level 1 student).

As a tool, the template proved easy to use. Of those who responded to a feedback form circulated after submitting their essays and before receiving their grades, 73percent said they understood what they had to do, 23percent said they ‘kind of understood, but checked with friends’, and 4percent did not understand. We asked students whether they used AI and, if they did, did they add comments about how they used it? 57.7percent of respondents said they had provided comments on AI use in the template, and 42.3percent said they had not, which corresponds approximately to the figures we noted ourselves during the marking process and shown above.

We also asked whether adding comments on AI use added a lot of time to their essay writing time. 80.8 percent said it did not, 3.8 percent said it did, and 15.4 percent were unsure.

Using the template made students reflect on their use of AI. In response to the question ‘Did adding comments on AI use to the template make you reflect more on how you used AI?’ 46.2 percent of respondents said yes, 38.5 percent said no, and 15.4 percent said not really.

The tool was useful and did not significantly influence AI use. We asked, ‘Would you have used AI in any case, or do you think that the form encouraged or discouraged you from using it?’ 38.5 percent said they would not have used it in any case, 15.4 percent said they would have used it in any case, 34.6 percent said the form encouraged them to use AI, and 11.5 percent said it discouraged them from using AI.

Some international students questioned lecturers in class about which tools should be included on the form. They did not consider paraphrasing sentences using a tool to be as ‘serious’ as other uses of AI such as structuring essays or finding content. Certain tasks, such as paraphrasing, were essential for international students whose first language was not English and therefore should not be considered as relevant. However, as technology advances, the distinction between AI tools and generative AI will become increasingly blurred.

Discussion and conclusion

Overall, the students used AI tools primarily as aids for brainstorming, initial research, and structuring their work. There was a clear pattern of students using AI-generated content as a starting point, then expanding on it with their own research, knowledge from lectures, and critical thinking. The awareness of AI limitations and the need for verification and expansion of AI-generated content was evident throughout the comments. The university’s recommended AI tool was not consistently used, if at all.

A shift in research techniques emerged as students tended to use AI for initial searches rather than Google: “In this section, I used Bing to search for historical background and current situation in conflict-affected areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).” (MA student) and “I asked AI how journalists were involved in the Watergate scandal and used some of the information it gave me in this paragraph,” (Level 1 student). Given the hallucinations and generic information provided by AI tools, which was also acknowledged by students, it is concerning that their first source of information may be quick

but not sufficiently developed to be reliable. However, this study is a snapshot of the 2023-24 academic year, and technology will no doubt quickly overtake this finding. Indeed, given that the measurable performance of AI is doubling every 3.5 months (Dong et al., 2023), many of the frustrations mentioned by students will not be problematic within the next year, if not sooner.

The students displayed disappointment in the limitations of AI. They were frustrated by hallucinated content and citations and that many articles which are referred to only had abstracts, "I asked AI to refer me to some academic texts related to liberal pluralism and media. However, the texts I was directed to tended to be untraceable or irrelevant," (Level 1 student). Also, AI was not as advanced as the hype had suggested: "AI helped me to support my points here, but I had still had the responsibility to find a credible source to back that up and put the information into the essay clearly and concisely," (Level 1 student). Students clearly felt they had to still do some, if not all, the work themselves, or at least make the effort to check the suggestions put forward by AI. It was not clear whether this was a desire to produce good and accurate work by the students or the fear of being found out. Students also seemed to be using AI as a support to boost confidence and to overcome anxiety in a new context.

Markers also highlighted limitations in the use of AI by students and several implications of AI use arose from this study aside from the general, superficial and wordy sentences that permeated many essays. As one marker said, 'I feel that some of the essays which say they haven't used AI are better than the others. The English is better and less superficial.'

Markers questioned the impact of AI on the writing process. The study suggests that AI can save time and effort in certain tasks, but further work is now needed to explore the potential impact of AI on the overall writing process. For example, could AI lead to a decline in critical thinking skills or to a more homogenised style of writing?

Regarding ethical implications, many students raised the probability of AI-generated information being fabricated. Further analysis could explore other ethical concerns, such as plagiarism or the potential for AI to perpetuate bias. AI was used by some students to assess whether their essays effectively answered the given question. In doing so, it raised questions as to whether students understood the limit on AI use in relation to their work. One student, for example, asked AI for an essay structure, for contents, and then put the completed essay back through AI for checking. Effectively, the student was asking AI to write the essay, then mark its own work.

Following completion of the essay, I pasted the whole thing into ChatGPT with the essay question and asked it to assess whether I had answered the question. In its response its conclusion was this: "The essay is well-structured and detailed, offering a deep dive into the Ukrainian context while effectively addressing the role and impact of, and challenges to, NGOs and radio. It provides a solid comparative analysis within the Ukrainian timeline and evaluates historical and contemporary realities. Expanding the comparative analysis to include another conflict zone and balancing the discussion could further enhance the response. Overall, the essay successfully meets the requirements of the question and provides a thorough evaluation of the topic. (MA student)

Such a case could reasonably be considered a case of unfair means had the student not been asked, by the School, to provide this information for its own purposes. We had not indicated any possible penalty for honest disclosure. Had this been the case, considerably fewer students would have acknowledged using AI resulting in no data being gathered. It was noted that the MA students were more forthcoming than the Level 1 students. Detecting unfair means in cases such as these provides its own challenges as uploading students' work to an AI detector would breach University Data Protection policies given that there would be no record of how that data is then stored, used or shared. This would also contradict the university's guidance around AI detection. Whilst it is possible to paste a document into Google Gemini, the University recognised AI tool, and ask how likely it is that the document is AI generated, the answers it gives are far from definitive.

A further impact of AI use by students is that it could hinder curiosity and a desire to research, triggering a lack of independence and self-reliance supporting work by Kasneci et al. (2023) and Sullivan et al. (2023), who suggest that it would impede the development of essential skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, imagination and research abilities

"I used ChatGPT to generate general information about the Partygate incident. However, the information generated was too brief and might not be totally accurate. Therefore I did more research online and supplemented information with the article by Reuters. I used ChatGPT to rephrase and paraphrase the content of Hall (1997) as his original quote was from a video and is not suitable for direct quoting. I used ChatGPT to get a general idea of the BLM Movement. However, it was too long and had unnecessary information which is irrelevant to the essay." (Level 1 student)

“AI (Chat GPT) was used to explain the case of Watergate. It generated an output of simplified bullet points, to which I could easily understand so that in my own words, I could explain what happened in a concise way. This resulted in my example being clear and relevant to the context of the paragraph.” (Level 1 student)

Nonetheless, many students emphasised that they used AI as a starting point or supplementary tool, not as a replacement for their own research and writing. There was a clear emphasis on verifying AI-generated information and expanding on it with personal research and academic sources.

Whilst the study and its findings are interesting they are also limited as we do not know the extent to which the students’ responses reflect reality, or whether they told us what they considered would be sufficient. As stated above, such a study can only be a snapshot, and will be overtaken by the speed of technological developments. Detecting AI will be increasingly difficult as AI advances, but also detection tools will appear. Many suggestions are being discussed to replace coursework with face-to-face presentations, additional unfair means interviews, random checks, and even a return to exams. Perhaps AI should also be used to reveal gaps in our teaching? Rather than students turning to AI as a quick-fix when it comes to assessments, should we use that very tool in classrooms to promote learning? Could it be used to promote critical thinking by generating instant opposing views? Could we use AI generated material as a source for media literacy and classes on checking inaccurate information?

Whatever the next steps, this study has fulfilled its two aims. First, it found that, overall, students seem to be using AI as a complementary tool in their academic work, primarily for initial research, language refinement, and structural organisation. There is a clear awareness of its limitations and the need for critical evaluation of AI-generated content. However, the only information we can base this assumption on comes from the students themselves which is an obvious limitation. Second, by allowing students to reflect on their usage of AI, the use of our non-assessed tool enabled them to acknowledge they were using AI, which would always have been the case, and allowed them to feel they were being treated as adults and they responded accordingly.

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Journalism, education and AI: How Norwegian news media are adapting to AI and the implications for journalism educators

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of generative AI is transforming journalism, raising critical questions about the skills and competencies required for future journalists. This study explores how Norwegian editors perceive AI's role in newsrooms and its implications for journalism education. Findings reveal that AI is widely used for support tasks such as transcription, translation, and content personalization, but with caution to maintain journalistic integrity and public trust. While AI literacy is expected to become more relevant in hiring decisions, editors stress the need for a balance between practical and analytical training in journalism education. The study highlights the challenge for educational institutions to equip students with both AI proficiency and core human-centred journalistic competencies, ensuring their adaptability in a rapidly evolving media landscape.

Keywords

Journalism, Artificial Intelligence, Higher Education, Media Technology

Introduction

The evolution of media technologies and platforms has impacted the media industry for its entire existence. Today, we are witnessing a shift in how generative artificial intelligence (AI) can assist in text and image production. In certain domains, AI-based tools are taking over tasks traditionally carried out by journalists, and in a worldwide survey conducted late 2024, 87 percent of digital leaders of media houses expect generative AI to somewhat or fully transform newsrooms (Newman & Cherubini, 2025, p. 33).

However, minimal research has been conducted on the challenges posed by changes in this field for educational institutions responsible for training the journalists of the future. Whereas study programmes must prepare students for the prevailing job market at the time of completion, it is also essential to equip graduates with the ability to adapt to future developments in the industry and its framework conditions. Former US Secretary of Education Richard Riley stated in 1999 that a challenge for educational institutions is to prepare students for currently non-existing “jobs that will require workers to use technology that has not yet been invented to solve problems that we have not yet thought about” (McCain & Jukes, 2001, p. 80). Consequently, education must provide the students with sufficient skills training to make them attractive in today’s job market, as well as competencies that prove useful and relevant when they eventually face challenges very different from those encountered during their education (Berkeley, 2009). This dual focus is evident in numerous discussions concerning the relationship between practical and analytical approaches in professional education (Brurås, 2018; Nordkvelle et al., 2020).

Moreover, technological changes have always been part of the media industry, with the media profession historically being influenced by the advent of new technologies, platforms, and practices, while maintaining its commitment to the fundamental social mission of journalism. Editor-in-chief of Bloomberg News puts it this way:

“We often make the mistake of imagining that we are the first generation of journalists that technology has happened to. In fact, what has happened so far this century (and is about to happen again) is really just an old story being retold – of a new technology ushering in a period of madness and upheaval and then some sense.” (Micklethwait, 2025)

The news business, and thus journalism education, has had to respond to all these upheavals just as it must today with artificial intelligence requiring new adaptations. Based on the news industry’s own view of the different skills journalists will need in the future, the implications for educational institutions are discussed in this article.

Theoretical platform

The theoretical platform for this study includes three approaches. First, we outline existing research in the field of journalism and AI, then we look at the concept of AI literacy and the need for training for efficient use of AI technology. Finally, we briefly explain the concept of 21st century skills and how classical skills as well as personal and generic competence appear to be increasingly important factors in the overall competence of a professional journalist.

Journalism and AI

News automation has infiltrated many newsrooms and journalists have, therefore, had to deal with AI as a resource and an option. The British publisher Reach plc report using AI in about 25 percent of their output (Gupta, 2024), and Bloomberg News, producing about 5,000 stories every day, report using some form of automation in more than a third of their stories (Micklethwait, 2025). Thus, human journalists are no longer the sole producers of journalistic content. In their exploration of Korean journalists’ attitudes toward automated writing systems, Kim & Kim (2018) typically identified three distinct attitudes. The first was from a group of optimistic journalists who focused on the limitations of technology, concluding that journalism is beyond the capacity of a robot and, thus, there is nothing to fear. The second focused on the possible negative scenarios assuming that if robot journalism is accepted, human writers will be neglected by directors, journalistic quality will be compromised, and the social status of journalists will be degraded. The third attitude was identified among those with a more balanced view of the risks and bene-

fits involved arguing that robots may replace journalists for simple tasks, but will not significantly replace journalists in the newsrooms (Kim & Kim, 2018, pp. 350–351).

Instead of capitalizing on the efficiencies of news automation technology in terms of reduced numbers of journalists, media companies may focus on increasing the amount of news produced. According to Marconi (2020), Associated Press went from covering financial updates from 300 companies with human writers to covering 4,400 companies with AI and natural language generation (NLG). This was achieved through technology that allowed the production of repetitive text to be automated according to well-known patterns and structured data sets.

This leads to discussions about whether the gains in efficiency will lead to an increase in quality or quantity of journalistic content. Simon notes that the time freed up from routine tasks may allow journalists to do more in-depth reporting, but they may also be expected to “churn out more content” (Simon, 2024, p. 19).

Caswell and Fang describe AI implementation in newsrooms as a three-phase process. The first phase is *the efficiency phase*, where AI is applied to existing tasks within the existing workflows. Then comes *the transition phase*, during which new processes, products, and structures emerge. Finally comes what they label a new *AI-mediated information ecosystem*, in which workflows and products are relatively unfamiliar compared to the current system (Caswell & Fang, 2024, p. 8). So far, most newsrooms are in the first of these phases, according to the researchers.

Beckett, who led the global JournalismAI project at London School of Economics (supported by Google News Initiative), emphasizes that generative AI is a significant technology shift, but that it is no miracle, and although it has enormous potential benefits, it also comes with serious risks (Beckett, 2024). He points out that technology will continue to evolve and, thus, encourages journalists and editors to follow its development closely.

“But regardless of what happens, it is vital to pay attention to generative AI and to start the process right now of thinking through how it might change your working life and your business.” (Beckett, 2024)

Mathiesen uses the term “credibility capital” when discussing how media users relate to media content produced by sources known for their quality (Mathiesen, 2023, Chapter 3.5). This can be seen as a continuation of the well-known rhetorical concept of ethos, which includes the notion of how a message is perceived, based on factors such as who the sender is and the recipient’s experience with previous communication from that sender (Kjeldsen, 2006). Mathiesen’s starting point is the story of *The Book of Veles* by Jonas Bendiksen, a book is a conceptual work, mixing “faked” images of people, animals and places and AI generated text against a background of excerpts from a forged ancient text, the *Book of Veles* seen by the author as a defence of journalism and an attempt to wake up the industry to what is coming (Arnesen, 2021). Mathiesen is concerned about the potential reduction of such credibility capital when the sender is found to have engaged in deception, particularly when text and images are subsequently identified as having been AI generated.

Furthermore, Simon discusses the potential loss of confidence, quoting newsroom executives who have concluded that, while AI-based writing assistants may bring short-term efficiencies, these assistants may be outweighed by their potential for long-term reputational damage (Simon, 2024, p. 19). This concern about public trust is echoed in a report from the Reuters Institute, where 70 percent of leaders in digital media fear that AI use will reduce overall trust in news media (Newman, 2024, p. 33).

As research indicates, generative AI can potentially serve as an aid for journalists. However, it is emphasized that it is important to consider it as just one of many tools available. The practice of journalism involves much more than just producing text. As Simon asserts, building a network of trusted sources and convincing them to share their secrets falls outside the capabilities of AI. He also cites informants emphasizing that journalism is about finding and telling stories that have not been told before and are not already on the Internet (Simon, 2024, p. 21).

“No AI can convey the horrors of war by going into a war zone and talking to a mother of starving children; nor can it gain the trust of a whistleblower that leads to a story that uncovers massive corruption.” (Simon, 2024, p. 32)

Similarly, David Caswell of the BBC says that, even at its most sophisticated level of development, AI will remain incapable of addressing the most important stories crafted by journalists. This is due to the inherent complexity of such stories, the necessity for multidisciplinary expertise, and the absence of suitable training resources for AI to draw upon (Ruud, 2023, p. 23).

According to Birkemose (2025), AI as a tool where journalists make the final publishing decisions is an idea that is now under threat. As an example, he mentions the *Washington Post* and the *Financial Times*,

both of which have created chatbots trained on the company's own archival material and then made available to media users. Birkemose claims that the current "human in the loop" strategy can be discontinued now that AI hallucinations have become less common and the risk of errors is considered to be at an acceptable level, although risk cannot be eliminated completely (Jones, 2025). However, he questions how sustainable this is in the long run in terms of trust in the media, and how journalistic content can be differentiated from other texts if users encounter a robot even when searching for editor-controlled media (Birkemose, 2025).

A study on media use, trust in the media, and tolerance for error argues that trust in traditional media is grounded in the professionalism of journalists and their commitment to journalistic ideals. On the other hand, credibility for news disseminated via social media comes from the absence of filtering, the diversity of sources, and the fact that media users have curated their own news feed based on personal preferences and social network recommendations (Cheng et al., 2025, pp. 6–7). In a Norwegian study, Enli and Rosenberg (2018) found that populist politicians gain trust on social media due to the impression of authenticity they are able to cultivate there. If authenticity is a priority, Birkemose may have good reason to question whether AI robots can be trusted as suitable substitutes for human journalists.

Toward the end of 2024, AI-based search engines became available, meaning that news summaries based on a selection of sources can be made available to end users without them having to visit the media companies' websites. Media houses must then decide whether to make their content inaccessible to this type of technology and try to push users to their own platforms, or to seek collaboration with AI providers to facilitate the widest possible distribution of content. The news provider Politico is one of the early adopters of the latter strategy (Maher, 2024), and recently the Nordic company Schibsted Media announced they were moving in the same direction (Schibsted Media, 2025). OpenAI is one company that has signed agreements with news providers to use their content for AI-generated news summaries resulting in increased exposure and financial compensation for the providers and benefits for the platform in terms of reliable information vetted by journalists (Newman & Cherubini, 2025, p. 10). This development coincides with the sharp fall in traffic to news sites from social media platforms, making these platforms less relevant (Newman & Cherubini, 2025, p. 15). This serves as a reminder of the power that third-party platforms have over traditional media outlets when it comes to content distribution.

AI literacy and the need for training

A study conducted among business communications instructors concludes that professionals as well as students need AI literacy to communicate effectively (Cardon et al., 2023). According to Cardon et al., this term includes an understanding of the application of the tools, avoiding overreliance on AI, and taking responsibility for the content. It is underscored that AI must be considered as a tool, not a replacement for communication skills.

In a global survey of 105 news and media organizations nearly 43 percent of the respondents emphasized the importance of training journalists and other staff in AI literacy skills and technologies (Beckett & Yaseen, 2023, p. 51). Furthermore, the respondents argued for a holistic approach that goes beyond technical skills and includes ethical, legal, and business implications of AI use in the newsroom.

One element of AI literacy is the ability to create good prompts – those that enable the AI assistant to produce relevant texts. This includes giving precise instructions which customize the outputs when it comes to both content and genre (White et al., 2023).

In addition to knowing how to use the tools, journalists also need to understand the limitations of those tools and how to evaluate their results, Marconi states (Marconi, 2020, p. 78).

Classical skills and generic competence

Qadir discusses the use of AI within the context of engineering education and points out that the effectiveness of this technology underscores that classical skills are still relevant:

"Paradoxically, with advancing technology, classical human skills and liberal arts such as critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving become more rather than less important" (Qadir, 2023, p. 8).

He continues to emphasize the importance of analytical skills, and the ability to think critically, and spot errors and misinformation, as well as being able to identify the right tool for the right task.

In an interview, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman also emphasized the value of the classical human skills of critical and analytical thinking, creativity, and understanding the recipient's needs (Vinson III, 2024) – skills that can be linked to the concept of *21st Century Skills*. Trilling and Fadel (2009) categorize this concept into three primary areas. The first area consists of skills related to learning and innovation, including critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, collaboration, and creativity. The second consists of digital skills, encompassing the ability to understand and utilize information, utilize various media platforms, and demonstrate proficiency in ICT, and the third includes life management skills, such as flexibility, adaptability, initiative, self-discipline, productivity, cultural understanding etc. Given the increasing need for training for change, it is also important to consider whether these skills should be given more prominence in future journalism programmes.

In their discussion of the current educational landscape, Trilling and Fadel highlight the need for programmes to evolve in response to the changing dynamics of knowledge acquisition. In today's digital age, the vast volumes of information available online and their accessibility through a simple search make it challenging for students to retain all the knowledge they might need. Despite this, the authors maintain that:

“Knowing a field's core ideas, understanding its fundamental principles, and applying this knowledge to solve new problems and answer new questions are evergreen learning tasks that will never become outdated.” (Trilling & Fadel, 2009, p. 26)

Summary

We have examined three perspectives on the use of AI in journalism and the competencies required for the future of the field. As the research indicates, there is a need for a wide range of skills. Journalists must possess the necessary skills to perform their duties effectively. Concurrently, the need for adaptability skills that enable the utilization of new technologies and practices as they become available is also evident. The current state of uncertainty surrounding the future of journalism, intensified by the influence of artificial intelligence, underscores the need for well-developed skills in critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and the ability to understand user needs.

This body of existing knowledge is primarily based on academic reflections. However, there has been a lack of research on how the industry itself is adopting this technology and how they envision changing practices in newsrooms. This indicates a knowledge gap that this article aims to address. Our research question is as follows:

- How are Norwegian editor-controlled media adapting to AI?
- What human skills and competencies do media industry leaders predict will be in demand in the future?
- What implications does this have for educators, who must consider the changing skills that the industry will require in the future?

To address these questions, this article focuses on the current changes implied by the increased availability of technologies within the AI segment. In a wider context AI can be seen as a new wave of technological changes in journalism.

Editor-controlled news media play a crucial role in today's fragmented media landscape by safeguarding freedom of expression and ensuring the continued existence of a reliable, free, and independent press. Our empirical data is derived from a survey conducted among Norwegian editors, all of whom are members of The Association of Norwegian Editors, a unifying body for editors in the daily press, news agencies, and the news divisions of radio and television. In practice, these editors operate within fully integrated media organizations that publish content across multiple platforms.

Like other Nordic countries, Norway has traditionally seen high rates of news consumption with relatively egalitarian patterns as well as high levels of public trust in editor-controlled news media, often referred to as essential for “the media welfare state” (Syvertsen et al., 2014). This strong position has weakened over the last few years, especially among younger audiences, yet media outlets still receive trust and public attention (Medietilsynet, 2025).

Methodology

To address the research question, we have chosen a primarily quantitative approach, mapping the perceptions of Norwegian editors regarding the competence requirements of the media industry and their opinion on the ability of educational institutions to meet these needs. Responses for some of the topics include the respondents' own written comments.

The design of the questionnaire was inspired by previous studies of AI in a journalistic context (e.g. Newman, 2024; Simon, 2024), with the wording of some questions being reused. Additionally, we considered questions from a survey conducted among members of the Communication Association in Norway (Emanuelson & Hodøl, 2024), given the related nature of journalism and communication fields, which often recruit new employees from the same educational programmes.

We received valuable input through dialogue with the Association of Norwegian Editors, and feedback on a draft of the questionnaire from fellow journalism researchers also contributed significantly.

The survey was created via SurveyXact and distributed in late September and closed in mid-October 2024. Due to privacy regulations, email addresses of the members of the Association of Norwegian Editors were inaccessible. Instead, the survey was disseminated to the members (approx. 800) via email and newsletter by the association's secretariat, thus ensuring the respondents' anonymity. Since anonymity prevented individual follow-up of non-respondents, two general reminders were sent to all members until survey closure.

A total of 148 respondents provided feedback. Two did not consent to participate, and 21 aborted the survey after answering only a few questions. These have been excluded from the data set, leaving 125 respondents as the basis for analysis. It is important to note that not all respondents answered all the questions, as this was not a requirement. Some questions were presented to a limited number of respondents based on their answers to earlier questions. After conducting the survey, we noted that the respondents aligned closely with the population's demographic profile, for example in terms of age and gender.

Some of the respondents' own written comments were subjected to a simple thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), where groups of comments were identified using color codes. For example, we identified three distinct themes (theoretical/academic skills, practical skills, and personal qualities) when respondents were asked whether they "have any thoughts on which skills, attitudes, and areas of competence students should develop more of during their education".

A larger number of respondents would have been ideal to provide a more robust basis for data interpretation. However, we have received answers from what we consider a substantial portion of the population, and thus, we present some distributions and tendencies and use this as a foundation for the discussions. It is possible that the survey's focus on technology has generated the most interest among technologically interested respondents, potentially resulting in an overrepresentation of this group among respondents. This aspect necessitates caution when generalizing the observed trends.

Researching an area with such rapid development presents a challenge: the collected data must be regarded as a snapshot. However, we believe it provides a good picture of the situation at the time of collection (in October 2024). In conjunction with findings from other studies, we believe that the data material provides a solid foundation for discussing the implications of AI technology for journalism education.

Results

Before looking more closely at the use of AI in Norwegian editor-controlled media, changed future competence needs, and advice given by editors to educational institutions, we examine the various editorial qualities valued by Norwegian editors.

Editors agree that an editorial employee must be socially aware and critical. 88 percent consider social awareness highly important, with 82 percent stating that critical skills are highly important for journalists. If we include those who consider these two qualities somewhat important, the score is 100 percent. Other qualities such as being "curious" and "interested in people" also score highly. All editors believe it is highly important or somewhat important to "have a way with language".

On the question of qualities in terms of knowledge of artificial intelligence tools, only 19 percent find this highly important, but if we include those who find it somewhat important, the score increases to 84 percent. However, 15 percent do not think this is important at all. The tendency is the same when we look at being "technically competent". 19 percent think this is highly important, with the percentage increasing to 85 percent if we include those who think this is somewhat important. 13 percent believe this is not important.

Good language skills and, to some extent, personal qualities appear to be regarded as more important than competence in technology and artificial intelligence.

The attitude of Norwegian newsrooms towards the use of AI

89 percent of the editors believe AI-based tools are well suited to support journalistic work, with only 10 percent expressing that AI, to their knowledge, is not used in their business. These figures indicate that Norwegian media houses have used artificial intelligence in several of the 19 identified areas identified in our study, which fall into three main categories:

- AI behind the scenes, to support news gathering and the process of developing journalistic stories (the yellow bars in figure 1)
- AI to create observable content or partial content (the blue bars in figure 1)
- AI to deliver or adapt content to different user groups or platforms (the green bars in figure 1)

Organizing areas into these three categories is consistent with the recommendations of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (Collao, 2024, p. 16), and the practices of Thomson et. al (2025, p. 11).

Below is a list of some of the areas where some media companies have adopted artificial intelligence. Check the areas that are relevant to the business you are responsible for.

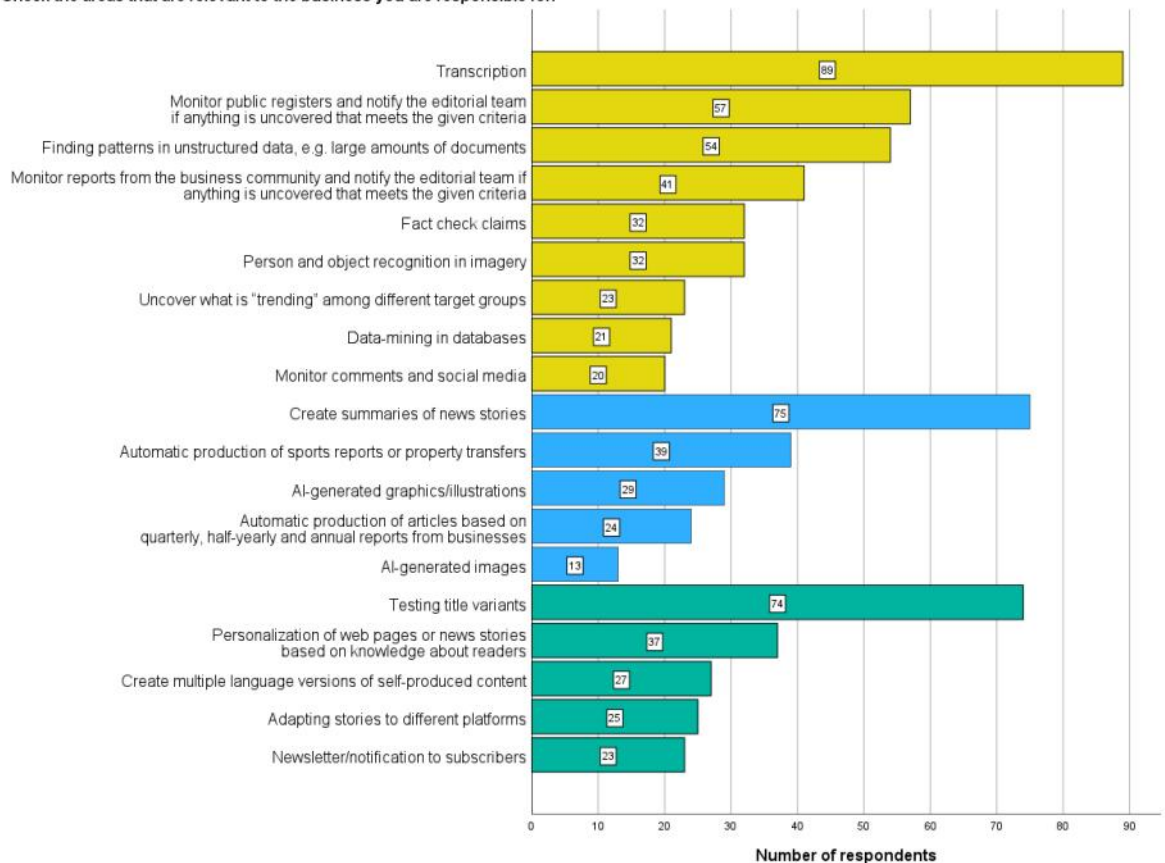


FIGURE 1: Areas in which Norwegian editor-controlled media reportedly use AI

Three specific uses for AI which stand out as particularly relevant are testing variants of titles, creating summaries of news stories, and transcription. In the case of the latter, AI can be used in the translation of articles from foreign partners and as an efficient way of transcribing interviews conducted, for example, on the journalist's smartphone. However, as some of the editors mention, valuable meaning from the interpersonal communication between the journalist and the source may be lost.

“AI is used with caution.” [...] “Always as an aid where the journalist is in control.”, Male respondent, mid-size media house (authors’ translation).

At the same time, they express that the use of AI will rise rapidly:

“Big changes will happen quickly every six months. My snapshot in the answers above may be out of date by the time you read this.”, Female respondent, large media house (authors’ translation).

Do you think the introduction of AI and generative AI will strengthen or weaken the public's general trust in news journalism?

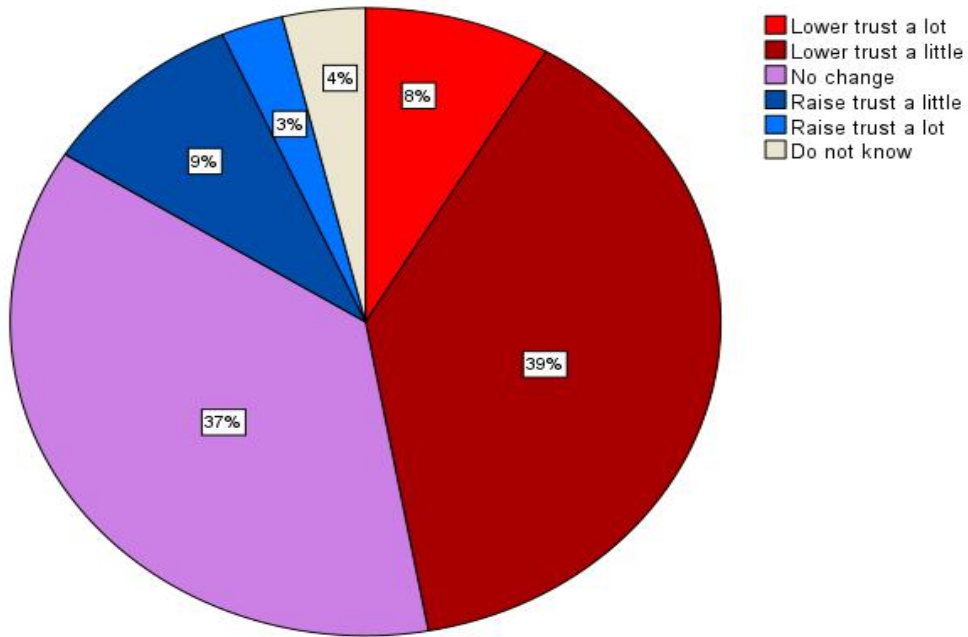


FIGURE 2: Possible impact of AI on public trust (N=106)

The data indicate that respondents are approximately evenly divided when asked about the possible impact of AI on “public trust”. 47 percent of respondents express concern about a potential weakening of trust, while 49 percent foresee no change or even a strengthening of trust.

“If we manage AI well, journalism will be strengthened by AI. More time for what you need humans to do, and less time for routine tasks.”, Male respondent, mid-size media house (authors’ translation).

On the other hand, 44 percent of the editors are concerned that AI will lead to economic cutbacks, layoffs, and downsizing. 35 percent disagree, in part or fully. 19 percent neither agree nor disagree. Concerns regarding this matter are particularly pronounced among small media outlets.

On the statement “I expect AI-based tools to free up time for journalists to work on investigative journalism in the future”, 8 out of 10 respondents state that AI-based tools can free up time, with this expectation being the highest in the largest editorial environments (96 percent).

How skills requirements will change in the future

Our presentation of a snapshot of AI use in Norwegian editor-controlled media in the fall of 2024, has shown that editors find AI well suited to support journalistic work. Editors are central to the media houses

when it comes to pointing the way forward. On the question of what kind of AI and generative AI will be important for their businesses in the future, two factors stand out as “highly important”: automation (e.g. tagging, object recognition, transcription, editing) and news gathering (e.g. monitoring or reviewing data or records). More than half of the editors rate these as “highly important” with the percentage rising to 90 percent when we include those believing they will be “somewhat important”.

To what extent will the following use of AI and generative AI be important for the business you lead in the time to come?

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important	Do not know / Have not thought about this
Automation (e.g. tagging/object recognition/transcription/editing)	50,9%	39,6%	6,6%	2,8%
Distribution (e.g. personalized content, news alerts, recommendations)	35,8%	48,1%	11,3%	4,7%
Content production under human supervision (e.g. titles, summaries)	39,6%	50,9%	7,5%	1,9%
Strengthen the business side (e.g. develop/change payment models)	22,6%	44,3%	17,0%	16,0%
Coding and product development	35,8%	36,8%	13,2%	14,2%
News gathering (e.g. monitoring/investigating data or registers)	54,7%	38,7%	3,8%	2,8%

TABLE 1: To what extent will the following use of AI and generative AI be important for the business you lead in the time to come? (N=106)

Editors are most interested in where AI can free up resources. This can also “finance” some of the media houses’ priorities, since the editors are planning to produce more content in the future. 73 percent plan to produce more video, and 71 percent indicate they will invest more in features that combine audio, video, images, and text. Close to half (45 percent) say they will produce more podcasts. Newsletters (27 percent) and traditional articles based on text and video (17 percent) are also reported to be on the rise among the companies represented. The numbers below show that total volumes are increasing and that little media content will see reduced priority in the future.

For each of the following is your company planning to produce more, the same or less in the year ahead (more frequency or more volume)?

	Produce more	The same	Produce less
Video	73%	25%	2%
Podcasts	45%	51%	4%
Newsletters	27%	66%	7%
Articles that combine audio, video, image and text	71%	26%	2%
Traditional text and image based articles	17%	67%	16%

TABLE 2: How editors view the changing volumes of content being produced for different production platforms (N=122)

What the media industry thinks journalism education should focus on

Respondents were asked to consider a statement concerning how well-prepared graduates are for what they will encounter in their careers. The responses indicate that editors are moderately satisfied, with 29 percent claiming that graduates with a journalism/communications degree are not adequately prepared for what they will encounter.

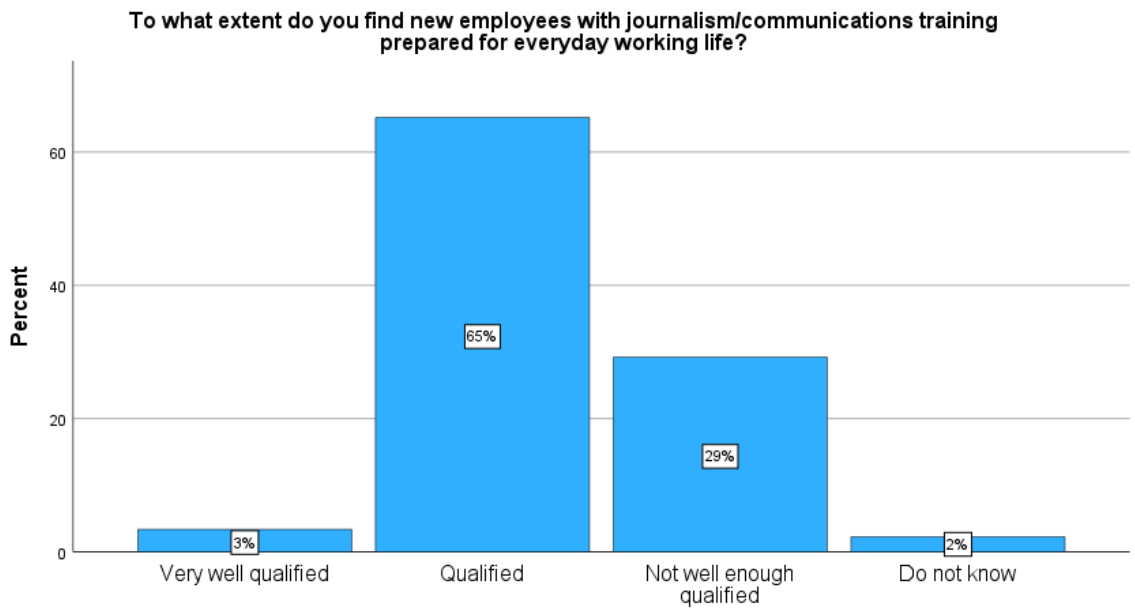


FIGURE 3: Are graduates prepared for working life? (N=89)

In higher education, universities must find the right balance between providing students with practical hands-on skills and theoretical and academic insights. On the question of graduates' practical versus theoretical skills, 46 percent of respondents believe that graduates have strong theoretical and analytical skills, but at the expense of practical skills.

Looking forward, 58 percent of the editors suggest that these two types of skills should be emphasized equally. 35 percent say that the greatest focus should be placed on practice, and only 6 percent prefer that universities place more emphasis on theoretical skills. The same pattern is observed in the editors' descriptions of what skills students need to improve during their studies. Most of the comments are related to practical skills:

"I think it would be beneficial to reinforce the understanding that in the future we will have to present news in different ways across different channels, including the need to master audio, image, video, and text." Male respondent, mid-size media house (authors' translation).

The second most frequently mentioned skills type is related to theoretical and academic insights:

"It is important that journalists are aware of the role we play in society and how important editor-controlled media are in a democracy." Male respondent, mid-size media house (authors' translation).

The skills mentioned last are personal skills:

"Have the courage to take up space, don't be afraid to be in the way." Female respondent, small media house (authors' translation).

When the respondents write about what practical skills students should improve, the vast majority mention classical skills and not AI. However, when asked whether AI expertise will be emphasized when hiring new employees, the editors are clear. 62 percent fully or partly agree that this will be emphasized. Again, there is a tendency for editors of large editorial environments to be slightly more likely to agree, but the differences are not significant.

Discussion

We now return to the main focus of the article, which is to identify the human skills and competencies that the media industry predicts will be needed in the future, when AI is expected to play a substantial role, and what that means to journalism training. As the survey results show, Norwegian editor-controlled

journalistic media in 2024 use AI for support behind the scenes, production of visual content, and distribution of content. We, therefore, frame our discussion around these three categories to begin with. Then, we go on to discuss the competencies that seem particularly necessary for journalists in order to complement the capabilities of AI. Finally, we look at the challenges that educational institutions face in meeting this demand for skills, and the signals that editors give concerning their satisfaction with the graduates they receive.

AI use in newsrooms

Our respondents explain that AI is used extensively, but with great caution. In particular, editors emphasize that AI is well suited for information monitoring, transcription, and translation. A comparison between these findings and those from other surveys (Beckett & Yaseen, 2023; Newman & Cherubini, 2025) may indicate that Norwegian editors prioritize responsibility and rarely engage in use that could jeopardize the company's reputation. This practice fits well with Caswell and Fang's (2024) first phase of implementation, which is to increase efficiency. The question remains, however, whether the technology's potential is being fully exploited.

When it comes to the production phase, our survey shows that AI is used here as well, but again, its use is not experimental to the extent that it challenges the nature of journalism. It is used to create summaries of articles, to test different title variations, and, to some extent, to produce articles based on structured data sets such as sports results, real estate transfers, etc.

This means that the daily routines for journalists have not changed much compared to the past, but media houses can increase the production volume somewhat, because parts of the routine work can be left to AI. This practice fits well with the third kind of attitude that Kim and Kim (2018) found in their study, where automation systems are used for simple tasks, but not such that journalists are replaced.

It can be argued that AI makes it easier for news producers to distribute relevant content to more user groups than before. Text-to-speech, multiple language versions, and a more personalized news stream are just a few examples of how audiences can be more diverse than before. Such thinking and practice will contribute to what Caswell and Fang refer to as moving beyond the efficiency phase and taking steps toward a new ecosystem.

The advent of AI has led to the emergence of a concept known as "liquid journalism," which posits that news articles can be adapted to the user's preferences in terms of perspective, genre, and form (Nash, 2025). However, Birkemose voices concerns regarding the willingness of users to financially support such a form of journalism that is curated by automated processes. He asserts that a significant portion of the value attributed to journalism derives from the editorial prioritization process (Birkemose, 2025).

And it is precisely this aspect of the value of journalistic products that is being challenged on several fronts with the introduction of AI. As Newman and Cherubini (2025) point out, the very business model of media companies is challenged when AI takes over from search engines and users no longer have to click on media companies' websites to consume news. However, the content itself still has value, and the question then becomes where the cash flow should go so that the money ultimately finds its way to those who provide that content.

Human competence

Our results show there is concern that increased use of AI will lead to a decrease in trust in news media. This is a trend we find in other surveys as well. In fact, the concern is even more pronounced in the Newman report, where 70 percent foresee generative AI leading to a decrease in trust (Newman, 2024, p. 33), compared to 47 percent of our respondents. It is reasonable to assume that this concern acts as a barrier to the implementation of AI for purposes other than those that are perceived as completely uncontroversial. Given Caswell and Fang's (2024) three phases, using AI to improve efficiency seems unproblematic, but taking the step to a new ecosystem will require more courage.

Respondents to our survey indicate that there may be fewer journalists employed in the future, while the volume of content produced is expected to increase. This means that it will be more important than ever to have a skilled, efficient workforce that is able to use the tools available at any given time. Understanding what the tools can and cannot do will then be critical. As one of our respondents put it when asked what AI tools new journalists should know or be familiar with:

“More important than specific tools is that they are curious to adopt new tools and models as they emerge.” Male respondent, small media house (authors’ translation).

Implications for journalism education

Our research indicates that editors anticipate an increase in production volume across various platforms, particularly in the areas of audio and video production. This aligns with the findings reported by Newman and Cherubini (2025, p. 15) that video is on the rise. For educational institutions, this signal is of relevance.

Regarding artificial intelligence skills, the signals are ambiguous. While some respondents spontaneously mention AI in free text fields when asked to identify priority skills, few prioritize it over other areas. Additionally, only a small minority of respondents perceive AI as a particularly crucial skill for new journalists to master. On the other hand, there are clear expressions that AI will have a central place in journalistic work in the future, with more than 6 out of 10 respondents indicating that competence in the use of AI will be emphasized when hiring new editorial staff.

Norway is a society where both media and political authorities have traditionally enjoyed a high level of public trust (Enli & Rosenberg, 2018; Medietilsynet, 2025, p. 9; Syvertsen et al., 2014, p. 5). Our respondents express a high degree of caution when it comes to risking the erosion of this trust. This hesitancy might be followed by a reluctance to adopt new technology with which they currently have limited experience. However, there are numerous indications that the use of AI in newsrooms will increase in the future. As newsrooms increasingly adopt AI, it becomes imperative for educational institutions to adapt their curriculum to equip students with the skills they will need for a future in this technology-driven landscape.

It is noteworthy that the editors have expressed a certain degree of concern regarding the competence of newly educated journalists, particularly with regard to their proficiency in tackling practical tasks. Prior studies have also identified a deficiency in, for example, writing skills among journalism graduates early in their careers. In light of the increasing use of AI, the relevance of this type of competence may be called into question.

In light of this survey’s findings, we argue that two key competencies will be particularly important for training journalists. First, professionals must be able to utilize AI constructively and effectively in areas where the technology demonstrates proficiency. This necessitates a combination of AI literacy as well as classical skills such as critical thinking and problem solving. Second, professionals must demonstrate excellence in domains where AI is of little or no help. This includes, for example, journalistic skills related to determining what is newsworthy and important, identifying good stories, building relationships with relevant sources, and conveying information with passion and empathy.

Conclusions

The editors in the survey articulate substantial expectations regarding the expertise of newly certified journalists. There is considerable demand for proficiency in a range of competencies, including practical skills, artificial intelligence, and journalistic expertise. These expectations impose significant challenges for both academic institutions and students. Most of the editors in this survey (92 percent) also state that they themselves need to learn more about how AI can be used in their organizations.

Editors’ reluctance to implement AI must be understood in light of the media’s dependence on public trust. As long as AI remains unfamiliar to large groups of users (Newman et al., 2024, p. 39), it may be reassuring to know that a human journalist has checked the text being published. However, it can be argued that the volume of AI-generated content will increase, making this “human in the loop” strategy difficult to maintain (Birkemose, 2025). It is also conceivable that audiences will gradually become more accustomed to this type of content and that, over time, there will be less need to tell them that the text has been subject to human review. We have previously noted research showing that, in social media, trust in content is based on factors other than journalistic professionalism (Enli & Rosenberg, 2018); a similar development is conceivable for AI-generated text.

However, Birkemose's argument that journalistic writing must somehow stand out from other content still holds, and the ethos of the media house seems to be an important factor in this regard. To use Mathisen's (2023) term, the credibility capital must be maintained.

There is a desire for the media to produce more content, but at the same time, editors are preparing for tough economic times. In a sense, the introduction of AI into journalism may be the solution to free up time for journalists to perform tasks that require human qualities that AI lacks. AI, on the other hand, can take over the tasks that many journalists find time-consuming, perhaps boring, and definitely less important for media outlets. In that sense, AI may end up preserving the audience's trust in the editor-controlled news media in a future where fewer journalists will be available, but more content is expected.

The challenge for journalism education is to train students well enough to understand the possibilities and limitations of technology and to use it appropriately, while at the same time adeptly applying human qualities where technology falls short. So far, AI has been implemented mostly as a tool to increase efficiency. For educational institutions, however, it is more important to consider AI technology as a helpful assistant in improving journalism that engages audiences as much as possible.

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Developing specialised online journalistic training in contentious policy issues, such as migration.

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Abstract:

Journalists have a critical function in democracies as knowledge brokers. As such, journalists need to have a comprehensive understanding of the policy areas they cover, to ensure that what they tell the public is factually correct, fair, and well informed. While this may be achieved in different ways, and the impact of hierarchies of influence on media content must be taken into account, this article argues that expanding access for journalists to apolitical, high quality, issue-specific, academic and practice informed, online training programmes has the potential to strongly support this objective. The article explores this through discussion of the Reporting on Migration online short course, created by The Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford and the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ), and supported by The Open University.

Keywords: migration, reporting, journalism, training, online learning.

Introduction

This article argues that journalists should aim to proactively develop their understanding of the policy areas they cover, something essential to their critical role in democracies as knowledge brokers (Gesuldo et al., 2020).

While this activity may take many forms, this article argues that expanding access for journalists to apolitical, high quality, issue-specific, academic and practice informed, online training programmes is one way to meet this objective. Further to this extrinsic benefit, there is an intrinsic one too: as Carpenter and Canver (2017) note, the development of subject specific technical expertise is also in a journalist's own interest, as this can be a symbol of status for a journalist.

However, one specific challenge is how to deliver training programmes in politically contentious spaces that are trusted by journalists with different policy positions/interests and appropriate for journalists working for publications across all sides of the debate. This article describes the recent work of the University of Oxford's Migration Observatory, The Open University, and the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) - the UK's professional journalism training and qualifications body - to address this challenge, via the development of a free online training programme for reporters providing them with a basic grounding in one of the most contentious of modern political issues: migration. The article discusses the overall context, approaches to and issues with current training, before focusing on the design and pedagogy of the Reporting on Migration course. Finally, the article identifies gaps in current research and data and makes recommendations for how to address this.

The Reporting on Migration course is available at: <https://www.nctj.com/cpd-courses/reporting-on-migration/>.

Understanding the context and need

The need for technical specialisation among journalists is often necessary for them to do their job well – a point made well by Donsbach (2014):

“Journalists also need deeper knowledge and understanding of the subjects they are covering; that is, subject competence. Only then will journalists be able to make sound judgments on the newsworthiness of events, only then can they ask critical questions to the actors, find the right experts, and only then can they resist infiltration of non-professional factors into their decision-making.”

This need may be particularly acute in reporting contested areas such as migration, an enduring topic for news reporting in the UK and worldwide, where motivated actors ranging from business organisations to think tanks and political parties to foreign governments, are regularly trying to push public debate and policy in one direction or another. The impact of this can be significant. As Bajomi-Lázár (2019: 620) notes in relation to Hungary and Poland, “the public debate about migration has been found to be of a highly emotional nature in Hungary and to some extent in Poland, with the positions of journalists and NGO representatives following the ideological cleavages dividing society”.

As this suggests, it's important in terms of audiences too. The deficit model of audiences passively receiving and automatically agreeing with media messages has of course long been debunked. Indeed, as outlined by the “hierarchy of influence” (Reese, 2024) approach, factors such as newsroom culture, editorial policies, and media ownership can have an impact on news content. However, media reporting is nonetheless a very important contributor to the shaping of policy and public debates (Allen, Blinder and McNeil: 2017). This is particularly important in an era of disinformation (inaccurate information that is knowingly disseminated as such with an intention to mislead, usually for political, strategic, or financial reasons – see Broda and Strömbäck (2024) for discussion). While disinformation is not new, a technology-driven shift in media models towards widespread public access to communication technology and monetised audience attention (Freelon and Wells, 2020), may lead media outlets (both legacy and new) to produce low-quality content (Chatterje-Doody and Crilley, 2019). These commercial and technological factors can lead, even if unwittingly, to well respected journalists and news outlets becoming transmitters of disinformation, particularly as time pressure make them vulnerable to external actors seeking legitimisation and amplification (Marwick and Lewis, 2017; Lukito et al, 2020). This in turn has the potential to impact audiences.

Migration is a complex, emotive and polarising topic and is easily misunderstood and misreported. There is no objectively correct way to decide how a country should manage its immigration system or even what the overall short-term or long-term purpose of the immigration policy should be (Haines, 2023). Part of the reason that there are no clear ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ ways to manage migration is that it is not a single monolithic process, and the concept of ‘the migrant’ is, in itself, complex and contested, and often mixed up with debates about class and ethnicity (see Anderson and Blinder, 2011). Migration encompasses the international transfer of multi-millionaire soccer players, or the relocation of billionaires from their countries of origin to tax-havens, just as much as the movement of low wage workers looking for better job opportunities or refugees and asylum seekers fleeing conflicts and disaster. Migration also creates social and economic trade-offs, and reasonable people may differ on whether, for example, increasing the number of low-waged migrant workers in a country is a reasonable or sustainable trade-off for having fewer vacancies in the social care sector and lower-cost care for elderly people (Sumption & Strain-Fajth, 2023).

But while this complexity provides considerable leeway for different people dealing with migration data and issues to draw very different conclusions about how the issue should be managed or the positivity or negativity of its impacts on society, it does not mean that any and all assertions about the impact of migration on economies or societies are equally valid, and herein lies a significant challenge for journalists – in a policy area beset by trade-offs and with no clear ‘best’ outcome, how do they differentiate spurious claims from sound ones?

Certain concepts – such as the idea that there are a fixed number of jobs in an economy and therefore that migrants ‘take jobs’ from the native population – may, on the surface, seem self-evident to a non-expert, and as such this concept has been commonly repeated in the media (for example, Daily Express Front pages on Feb 18th 2016 and July 9 2014 which stated “2 million EU migrants grab our jobs” and “Migrants do take our jobs” respectively). But sometimes seemingly obvious concepts don’t actually reflect the complexities of reality. This so-called ‘lump of labour fallacy’ is broadly discredited by economists (see Vargas Silva and Sumption, 2023) on the basis that economies are dynamic and the number of jobs available changes with the size and composition of the population. This is not to say that migration never has problematic economic consequences, or that there is never displacement, but simply that its impacts are complex, and failing to understand this can lead to inaccurate or misleading journalism. Of course, better individual journalistic understanding does *not* mean that journalists have total control over their reporting – as noted above, things like editorial policy and the political position of the owner may have an impact on the editing and presentation of a journalist’s work (see also Karstens and McNeil, 2018, for a discussion of owner impact – what they call collusive impact – on coverage). As such, misreporting of migration could still take place, purposely or otherwise. However, there is no downside to journalists being as well informed as possible, whatever the hierarchical pressures they face.

Current approaches to training

Generic journalism training has evolved over the years, with Frost (2022) identifying four broad stages in the UK over the last century: 1) early journalism/pre-World War II – learning where/as you worked supported by a limited number of introductory books, 2) post-war – the introduction of more formal in-workplace training, including the introduction of NCTJ in 1952 which oversaw training schemes in newspapers, 3) 1980s – training moving away from the workplace to universities, 4) modern journalism training – a focus on university journalism degrees, and many journalists moving into the academy to become lecturers/researchers. These developments have been stoked by technological advance, with “The development of computer technology... a serious driver for the development of journalism in the academy” (Frost, 2022: 19), as would-be journalists needed to be able to understand the technology of digital working as well as be competent online journalists, able to meet the needs of the digital providers they may be working for.

Concern about misreporting of migration has led, in recent years, to the development of an array of training materials, supplementary to the above-mentioned formal journalistic training, for journalists to learn about migration. These range from detailed handbooks – such as the International Centre for Migration Policy Development’s (ICMPD) Reporting Migration, A Handbook for Journalists (McNeil and Law: 2019) – to interactive courses from UN bodies, such as the International Organisation for Migration’s (IOM) Global Migration Media Academy (no date), UNESCO’s Reporting on Migrants and Refugees: A handbook for Journalism Educators (Fengler et al., 2021) and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights’ (FRA) eMedia Toolkit (2019). There are also short sets of guidelines from bodies such as the Ethical Journalism Network and codes of practice such as Italy’s Carta di Roma. A range of NGOs and pressure groups have also developed guidelines and recommendations, such as the Migrants Rights Network’s (2023) Words Matter campaign and the Minority Rights Group International’s Covering Migration programme (2019). All of these tools are valuable, and likely to provide journalists who have a significant interest in migration issues with the scope to improve their depth of knowledge. However, most deal with the issue of migration from an international rather than national policy perspective. Most require significant time investment. Some are produced by organisations that are keen to promote positive attitudes toward migrants and migration. This set of factors raises some potential challenges:

First, migration and migration issues are ubiquitous in modern societies, so nearly all journalists – from those covering sport or the arts to those dealing with politics or social affairs – will deal with migration-related issues in some way or another, even if they don’t class themselves as a migration focused journalist. So, if only those who have a *significant interest* in the subject become more knowledgeable about it, then problems of misunderstanding/misreporting by those who have not strengthened their knowledge are not addressed.

Second, migration issues may well be international in scope, but migration policies are generally decided at a national level, and migration debates happen at national levels. The debate about migration in the

UK is very different from the debate in Germany, Hungary, the USA, South Africa, or Bangladesh (or anywhere else). This emerges from different histories, geographies, alliances, conflicts and cultures. So very few journalists covering migration are doing so primarily at an international level, and the details of national debates are generally profoundly important.

Lastly, those who are interested in or working for a media source sympathetic to liberal migration policies may be able to undertake a course from an international NGO or UN agency which stresses the positives of migration, but those whose personal viewpoint or that of their employer tends toward restrictive migration policies may be less inclined or simply unable to undertake such training.

At this stage we have not found publicly available data on the take-up of these programmes by journalists or evaluations of their impact on journalists' working practices, so it is hard to know whether they have achieved their goals.

Filling the gap – collaborating on the Reporting on Migration online course

The collaboration between the Migration Observatory, NCTJ, and The Open University, was an attempt to address the subject specific needs of journalists covering migration, from an apolitical and academic and practice informed perspective, centered on inward migration to the UK - which is a key focus of much UK news media as noted above.

Apolitical in the sense that: 1) the Migration Observatory does not make policy recommendations, but instead seeks to provide informed, balanced, and impartial analysis of migration issues; 2) the NCTJ is a charity, backed by the news media industry, that works to develop professional journalism qualifications and support journalists' training and has not had any direct involvement in migration policy issues to date or connection to migration-focused organisations. We recognise that the 'apoliticality' of content can be challenged (see the article conclusion for discussion of course review).

Academic and practice informed in the sense that: 1) a key element was the focus on pedagogical excellence in the development of an online and distance learning tool via the expertise of The Open University; 2) the NCTJ, as the UK's provider of professional journalism qualifications, works in concert with industry. It therefore has a deep knowledge of the needs of journalists, their working practices, and the types of materials that are both appealing enough to actually get journalists to invest time in learning about a subject, and the sort of level that the information should be pitched-at to provide the core grounding that will best support journalists in a variety of roles and points in their careers.

The course thus brought together three forms of expertise: the migration-specific expertise of the University of Oxford's Migration Observatory, distance/online learning pedagogic expertise from The Open University, and journalism education and training expertise from the NCTJ. This combination of insights was used to identify common challenges and gaps in understanding migration policy and its implications, data, questions related to terminology, migration impacts, enforcement and policy implementation, integration and a range of other factors in migration debates. However, it should be noted that this expertise is specifically situated in the context of the UK's media environment and migration policy debate. The specific functioning of media industries in different countries is commonly profoundly different (see, for example, Hallin and Mancini, 2017), so practical knowledge of the specific national context of the journalism industry is critical to any effort to provide training of value to working journalists based in that country.

Critical to the value of the course, though, is not just that it is designed to be a technically robust and pedagogically sound product, but its position as a technical training programme for journalists supplied by the UK's professional journalism qualifications body – the NCTJ. The course is available through the NCTJ's Journalism Skills Academy, a platform which supports journalists throughout their careers by offering professional and expert training and development in a wide range of subjects. ESRC funding was provided to the NCTJ to ensure that the course was open-access and therefore free of charge to all journalists – as well as students, bloggers, other communications professionals and indeed anyone else who wants to learn how to cover migration issues well.

Applying the pedagogy

About the course

The learning objectives are set out to students at registration stage and at the beginning of the course once registered. By completing the course learners should be able to:

- “Identify and apply best practice in migration reporting.
- Increase [their] understanding of the dynamics of migration to the UK, who counts as a migrant, and the impacts of migration.
- Reflect on migration reporting norms and assumptions.
- Develop an understanding of the multiple spaces in which journalists deal with migration.
- Improve [their] understanding of migration policies and law.
- Understand terminology and migration data.
- Enhance [their] professional skills and employability.”

The course is therefore both information and practice focused. As a distance learning course, not offering individual tutorial support, and designed to be undertaken in a matter of hours rather than days (the NCTJ model), but nevertheless with ambitious learning outcomes, the content of the course needed to be fairly introductory, covering key areas that are commonly either not known, misunderstood, or otherwise potentially challenging for journalists. The decision was made to draw on an already existing resource, *Reporting Migration, A Handbook for Journalists* (2019), published by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development and co-written by the Migration Observatory’s Rob McNeil, lead writer for the Reporting on Migration course. This provided both a useful starting point and some accessible content, appropriate for journalists with limited experience in migration, although at nearly 200 pages long needed to be cut down and re-structured to fit the NCTJ online course format, with much new material provided.

As such, the online course is split into seven main sections – outlined below - plus an introduction, a downloadable guide to terminology for day to day use, and a final quiz to test knowledge.

The seven main sections of the course are:

- 1) Key tips: the at a glance summary points journalists should take away from the course
- 2) Understanding the context: the historical context of migration issues, including a timeline of key moments in 20th century immigration flows to the UK
- 3) Covering migration in practice - what sort of journalist does it: which reporters are likely to encounter migration (which essentially concludes almost all reporters will do) and in what circumstances (from reporting on international transfers of football stars to arrivals of asylum seekers)
- 4) Demography: migration and population dynamics in the UK - measurement and effects
- 5) Economics: migration and jobs, welfare, and the fiscal impact of migration
- 6) Integration: understanding what it means, who it affects and the role of migrants, communities and the state
- 7) Policy, law and efforts to control migration.

Most of the sections include an activity or quiz and there are a number of short video interviews with leading journalists and migration experts scattered throughout. Images, graphs, and charts are embedded into the sections too, to break up the text further.

Each section ends with a short summary in bullet point form outlining key points, and should take between 30 and 40 minutes to complete, although there are also optional click and reveal dig deeper sections allowing learners to read more about a subject if they chose. To make it as accessible as possible, the sections are designed to be studied either in order in one sitting, or one by one/at different times.

Pedagogical model

To best present the course content and to allow users to meet the learning objectives in a simple and accessible way, a constructivist pedagogical approach was taken – a task-orientated structured learning environment, guiding the user through a series of activities. The lack of tutor/student direct contact was the key pedagogical element the course design needed to address. Conole et al. (2004) outline six key

components of online learning, grouped into three continua:

- 1) Information <--> experience (learning from an external body of information versus learning through direct experience/activity/practice)
- 2) Non-reflective <--> reflective (learning by reference to memorisation etc versus learning by conscious reflection)
- 3) Individual <--> social (the individual as the focus of learning versus learning through interaction with others).

Such a model is useful in three senses: “Explanatory – as a framework for understanding learning theory... [and] As a process of enabling practitioners to evaluate their own practice and make more explicit their underpinning pedagogical approaches and how this informs their learning and curriculum design... [and] As a tool to help plan, design and profile learning opportunities” (Conole et al. 2004: 22). It was clear from the start that the Reporting on Migration course leaned more strongly towards INFORMATION/REFLECTION/INDIVIDUAL. There was of course an element of nuance, particularly in relation to the strata INFORMATION/EXPERIENCE, as learners were asked to undertake some activities and think about their own practice. But in essence they were learning individually, without a course guide, meaning the activities needed to both test their understanding and guide them through the course in a way that helped them build their knowledge in an ordered and structured way.

Scaffolding

A key part of the course structure was the way learning was scaffolded across the course. In their discussion of earlier literature, Doo et al. (2020: 71) describe scaffolding as “support from experts enabling learners to accomplish what is beyond their current ability”. In essence, enabling knowledge, understanding, skills and independence to build gradually, via planned guidance and support, with learners ultimately able to learn/perform unaided. This is particularly important in online and distance education, as learners are usually learning on their own, potentially without one on one or group tutor support – as on the Reporting on Migration course. As such, the support from experts on an asynchronous online course like this one, needs to be designed into the VLE rather than be tutor to student facilitated. There are different ways scaffolding can be implemented, but the key elements which the Reporting on Migration course uses are:

- **Chunking:** breaking up to the content into manageable sections and sub-sections including short videos, rather than lengthy sections and long multimedia content, to prevent cognitive overload
- **Building blocks:** building on previously learned knowledge, section to section, allowing students to build their understanding as they progress
- **Self-assessments:** quizzes and other forms of self-testing to check understanding and learning across the different sections of the course.

Doo et al. (2021: 60) conclude that “scaffolding in an online learning environment has a large and statistically significant effect on learning outcomes.” The concept of scaffolding is not a new one. It relates to Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of proximal development, wherein the zone of development refers to the space between two key phases of learning: what the learner can do without assistance, and what they can do with assistance/collaboration. When a learner is in this zone, scaffolding is one of the techniques that will give learners the boost needed to learn/complete the specific task at hand. The breaking up of information into small manageable tasks (the blocks and ‘chunking’ referred to above) is an important element.

An example of chunking can be found in the section Understanding the context, which is broken down into five sub-sections: 1) when did migration start to get coverage in the media?, 2) what is a migrant?, 3) key moments in UK migration flows and policy since the early 20th century, 4) understanding the main categories of migrants in the UK, and 5) section summary. Each of these sections builds on the previous one, and in themselves further broken down into smaller chunks. The section summary outlines in bullet point form the key learning points learners have hopefully taken on board, with knowledge tested in one section activity (a click and reveal question, “how recently did migration become a significant issue for media”), and overall learning then tested in the final course quiz.

Transactional distance

As noted above, testing learning was an important element of the course’s scaffolding, the importance of which is emphasized by transactional distance theory. This theory refers to the amount of theoretical distance between a student and tutor/teacher, based around dialogue (the interaction between teacher and

student), course structure (how the course is designed and can meet individual student need), and student autonomy (the ability of individual learners to understand their learning goals) (see Moore, 1997). These three interactive elements create transactional distance, which is a space in which misunderstanding can occur and therefore the teaching goal can fail. Learning designers often try and minimize transactional distance to prevent this misunderstanding happening. Transactional distance is on a continuum and can be present more or less at different points in the same course (Moore & Kearsley, 2012 in Smith and Smith, 2021). Transactional distance “has to be overcome by teachers, learners and educational organizations if effective, deliberate, planned learning is to occur” (Moore, 1991: 2). As Smith and Smith (2021: 6) write, “The decisions made when a course is designed will result in a certain amount of structure, dialogue and autonomy; each function can be consciously or unconsciously designed.”

When creating the Reporting on Migration course, it was important to recognise from the beginning the potentially high transactional distance levels that students would experience, i.e., there are no opportunities for meaning making between student and tutor because there isn't one (demonstrating, as discussed by Moore (1991), the theory's inverse relationship between structure and dialogue). However, engagement can be created in different ways, including learner-content interaction (indeed, Moore and Kearsley (2012) describe three forms of transactional distance, learner-learner interaction, learner-tutor, and learner-content). As there was no tutor, and learners could not engage with other learners on the actual online course, the learner-content interaction was essential, to reduce the high level of theoretical transactional distance.

As such, the quizzes and other interactive elements were key to the Reporting on Migration course. An example of this can be found in the Integration section, which has an activity asking learners to rank (drag and drop) a series of integration indicators (how well a person or group is integrated into UK society) from 1 (most important) to 10 (least important). Once the activity is complete the learner can check their answer, which reveals text written to the learner, as if it was personal feedback – a clear example of learner-content engagement:

“Again, there isn't a right or wrong way to assess which of these indicators are the most effective in showing whether a person is or is not integrating well into society [...] The choices you've made are essentially subjective, though some of these indicators - such as speaking good English - may be more helpful on a day-to-day basis than other.” (Reporting on Migration).

Authentic learning and enculturation

A key aspect of the course was the fact it is practice-based. This is obviously because it is a training course, aimed at working professionals, rather than people studying for purely academic purposes. It was thus essential that the learning was situated or contextualized, enabling learners to learn through authentic practices. There are different understandings of authentic learning, but essentially it is about connecting the learning to real-world issues and applications. Seely Brown et al. (1989: 34) go further and discuss the importance of “enculturation”, noting that “Given the chance to observe and practice in situ the behavior of members of a culture, people pick up relevant jargon, imitate behavior, and gradually start to act in accordance with its norms... given the opportunity to observe and practice them, people adopt them with great success. Students, for instance, can quickly get an implicit sense of what is... legitimate or illegitimate behavior in a particular activity.” This course was designed to be a form of enculturation, albeit one with restrictions due to its online nature.

The enculturation was enhanced by the deliberate inclusion of a diversity of journalistic voices from across the left/right spectrum. Indeed, a critical factor in the development of the project was the involvement of working journalists and technical experts who provided insights in short video interviews, as part of the course. This included journalists from a range of publications including the Guardian's Amelia Gentleman, Matt Dathan of The Times (and previously of The Sun), Frey Lindsey - a BBC journalist with a masters' degree in Migration Studies, and other media experts from journalism-focused civil society and with lived experience of migration (Nazem Ramadan from Migrant Voice), and experience of the particularities of working in journalism as part of a minority community (photojournalist Denise Maxwell). The technical experts were mainly from the University of Oxford's Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) - the research centre where the Migration Observatory is based. Many were members of the Migration Observatory team.

The apolitical position of the text was another important feature, enabling further enculturation of learners. The course does not take a position on how migration should be managed, politically or legally in the UK, but instead seeks to help journalists to better understand this contentious policy issue, which they can then apply to their own work. As the course states at the beginning:

“This course is designed to provide guidance on reporting migration issues for journalists in any medium (online, print, TV, radio, or any other format) at any stage in their career - from students and trainees to the editors of the biggest outlets in the country. The training is designed to be of value irrespective of your area of specialisation, your political or ideological standpoint, or the type of media outlet you work for.” (Reporting on Migration).

All four of the above factors – the pedagogical model, scaffolding, understanding the impact of transactional distance, and enculturation – contributed to the overall course design.

Conclusion and discussion

This article has discussed the recent work of the University of Oxford’s Migration Observatory, The Open University, and the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) to address the challenge of developing specialised online journalistic training in contentious policy issues. It has detailed the development of the free online training programme for reporters, Reporting on Migration, which provides participants with a basic grounding in one of the most contentious of modern political issues: migration. After discussing the overall context, approaches to and issues with current training, the article then focused on the design and pedagogy of the course, noting the importance of 1) applying and designing to a pedagogical model, 2) scaffolding design, 3) understanding the impact of transactional distance, and 4) the need to enculturate students.

The course brings together three forms of expertise: the migration-specific expertise of the University of Oxford’s Migration Observatory; distance/online learning pedagogic expertise from The Open University, and journalism education and training expertise from the NCTJ. Crucial to the course were 1) its apolitical nature, and 2) the fact it was academic and practice informed. The former was essential to get buy-in from across the industry, something helped by the charitable status of the NCTJ and the fact this organisation has not had any direct involvement in migration policy issues to date or connection to migration-focused organisations. The latter was expediated by the pedagogical and professional experience of the contributors, the up to date platform, and the design of the course which allows fast and convenient completion. The course, and the discussion of its design in this article, adds value to our general understanding of journalist training and the process and pedagogic model it provides for others to follow. For while the topic of migration is central to the course and this article, the topic is not unique – the model discussed can be transferred to other policy areas in the UK and elsewhere, and crucially is applicable whatever “hierarchy of influence” (Reese, 2024) is at play, cutting across issues like newsroom culture, editorial policies, and media ownership.

The course is under continuous review, in terms of user feedback, pedagogic and academic research input, and in order to keep it up to date in terms of policy/law. As of October 2024, the course has had 185 enrolments and has attracted the third most enrolments of this type of NCTJ course, by volume (across NCTJ’s 24 current free and paid short courses, Reporting on Migration has the seventh highest volume of enrolments in total. However, all six of the courses ahead of it were launched a significant amount of time prior - a minimum of eight months). Only 12 per cent of enrollers have provided feedback so far, but of the ones who did: 90% indicate the course met their expectations, 4.7 is the average rating of the course, 5.0 is the average score for value for money, and 4.6 is the average rating for the delivery medium i.e., platform (the latter three questions were scored out of five). While this participant feedback is positive and encouraging, it is limited, and further research would be useful to evaluate the course in more detail. As such, building upon the data we have so far, it would be useful to evaluate 1) the impact of the Reporting on Migration course (which would involve increasing the level of participant feedback) on journalistic understanding and confidence in the policy issue at hand, 2) which students enrolled on the course (e.g., which organisations do they work for/what is the policy position of the organization they work for, are they print or broadcast or other, are they new to the field or more experienced?) enabling further discussion on the success or otherwise of the ‘apolitical’ nature of the course, and 3) whether participants felt that each of the course’s learning outcomes were met. Such research would not only be illuminating in itself, but – assuming positive results – it could also provide data and evidence leading to 1) further individual journalist enrolment, as well as employers promoting enrolment, and 2) other training organisations feeling encouraged to apply the course’s model (to the same or other contentious policy topics).

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Journalism education: Reading between the lines

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Abstract

This study explores the transformative potential of journalism-focused reading clubs (bojoclubs) as collaborative spaces facilitating the transition between academia and the journalism industry. Through two documented case studies—a virtual club at New York University and a face-to-face club at the University of Klagenfurt, Austria, both involving active journalists—this research highlights how these clubs provide a dynamic environment for dialogue among academics, students, and professionals.

The findings reveal that bojoclubs play a crucial role in demystifying academia by allowing professional journalists to share practical experiences. These clubs also enable academics to stay informed about industry challenges, enriching their teaching. For students, direct exposure to real-world practices fosters critical and adaptive skills. The interaction between academics and professionals encourages joint reflection on journalism's role as a cultural and social agent. The study employs qualitative interview analysis and participant observation to demonstrate how bojoclubs facilitate bidirectional professional transitions.

Introduction and literature review

The exploration of educational studies in relation to book clubs provides valuable insights for the current article on journalism-based book clubs as journalism education tools.

The underlying principles of collaborative learning and meaning-making are highly relevant to my study, particularly in how they can bridge the gap between academic training and industry demands in journalism. Using transdisciplinary lenses, education sciences provide rich empirical research concerning book clubs in learning settings and the pedagogical approach of shared reading.

Book clubs in other educational settings

First of all, a common purpose of book clubs in higher education classrooms is to unveil the meaning of a book through listening to every student, their variety and richness of interpretations. In fact, one could argue, quoting Tarkovsky (1986), that it is not the book but the reader which makes each book unique. Smith (2017) mentioned a qualitative case study focused on a special education classroom, where Goatley and Raphael (1992) observed students as they took part in a book club. By working together, the children

could extend their understanding of the text (Goatley & Raphael, 1992). This collaboration emerged through the collaborative efforts of the teacher who led the discussions and modelled the answer. Drawing from Skinner's (1968) legacy in behaviorism, and Bandura's (1997) social cognitive learning theories, Smith (2017) described this answer modelling and the teacher's role in shaping learning through operant conditioning that is, by using rewards to reinforce desired behaviours.

These findings from educational and related settings, such as community learning environments, can be applied to journalism-based book clubs or bojoclubs, where journalists might take on a role similar to that of teachers, facilitating discussions and modeling participant's critical engagement with texts. This dynamic is particularly relevant in bojoclubs, where academics, university students, and professionals interact to demystify academia and enhance understanding of contemporary journalism challenges.

Secondly, Polleck (2010) illustrated how the book club discussions at her secondary school contributed to the emotional growth of female participants in risky social marginalization situations. She developed a theoretical concept, drawing upon the literary field and Rosenblatt's reader-response theory. "During the efferent process, readers are motivated by the need to comprehend the text and acquire information, whereas the aesthetic process is unique in that meaning construction and it is based on the readers' lived experiences" (Polleck, p.52, 2010). The book selections were not made solely by her. "The girls brought suggestions, and as a group, we visited the school library to find texts that intrigued them. All the texts were young adult literature" (p. 55). Polleck found that as she fostered freedom of choice, her students were genuinely interested to voluntarily discover the latent microcosms contained in every book. Although Polleck's research was conducted in a secondary school setting, the underlying principles of student autonomy and dialogue-driven meaning-making are equally relevant to higher education. Reflecting on this transition we will find again the force perceived by Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism, where dialogue enriches the search for meaning through social interaction. The inverse sense of this force is also true: individual reading is the fuel that enriches dialogue within a book club. Polleck's position, as an engaged conductor and researcher herself, was meaningful throughout her article and should not be overlooked. Her students develop reading values and strategies to evaluate future texts and life experiences. This principle is crucial in bojoclubs, where the interaction between academics and professionals encourages joint reflection on the role of journalism as a cultural and social agent, fostering a deeper understanding of its impact and responsibilities.

Beyond book clubs aimed at teenagers, this paper will mention Santos's work with adults (2006), and how a group of scientists was challenged to develop knowledge, all together, on a certain research topic. The implementation of a book club strategy to foster a shared understanding of their goal, resulted in long-term collectivism. "Such engagement in collaborative professional learning may lead to a shift in thinking and broaden perspectives that cannot be achieved through individual reading alone (da Rosa dos Santos et al., 2015, p. 59). This collaborative approach is particularly relevant in the context of bojoclubs, where the exchange of experiences between academics, students, and professionals can enrich both journalism education and professional practice, creating a sustainable model of collaboration that bridges traditional divisions between academia and industry.

By applying these educational principles to bojoclubs, we can leverage their potential to facilitate bidirectional professional transitions and foster networks that transcend traditional boundaries, ultimately enriching both education and journalistic practice.

Book clubs in university education

This communal force is explained through the transformative power of discussion in learning communities, very much conceived following Vygotsky's social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978). Once again his contributions are highlighted. Similarly, Long Hunt and Roessing (2015) conducted a study to determine if the genre of young adult novels enabled university students to educate themselves in their own academic field. The students' field of study covered mainly health issues, so the book club was designed to encourage students and teachers to recognize the benefits of integrating book clubs into the curriculum. The outcome of their experimental book club with students from health, education, liberal studies, rehabilitation, science majors, and chemistry was very meaningful. Books were selected based on topic relevance, timeliness, popularity, and writing quality, particularly themes related to sports disorders. Long Hunt & Roessing noted that through the reading, students expressed feelings of empathy, with one participant even stating, "I felt how she felt" (Long, Hunt & Roessing, 2015, p. 5)

The more extract, this paper aims to emphasize two theoretical frameworks which are recurrent in the literature on book clubs in learning communities. One is informed through the reader-response theory and the other one is given by social constructivism. Through both frames, we can understand the transformati-

ve power of book clubs in fostering emotional growth and in developing knowledge through guided discussion and strategic choice of genres.

Gap in the literature

While these frameworks provide valuable insights in a learning community context, it's important to note that a journalism education context can also be observed as a learning community. However, no precedent research has been undertaken to date on applying book clubs to journalism education, nor even on applying literary journalism genres to the journalism classroom. This research aims to bridge this gap by exploring how the principles of social constructivism and reader-response theory can be productive in book clubs led by journalists.

It is important to acknowledge the force of the context. The cultural and institutional differences in higher education obviously influence how these bojoclubs may manifest in practice. While the insights gained from educational studies are valuable, they may not encompass all the complexities involved in journalistic educational environments. However, by adapting these principles to the specific dynamics of two journalism-focused book clubs, new perspectives can be uncovered in this regard and perhaps, this paper may lead to considering the transformative learning experience of a bojoclub within a journalism educational goal.

Vukić (2019) highlights the approaches that UNESCO states for academic journalism education: technical - directed toward professional competencies, social-institutional - assuming various aspects of the journalistic practice, emphasizing the moral and democratic journalistic values, and interdisciplinary - connecting journalism to other areas. Vukić also refers to Deuze (2006) in his argumentation for a more international scholarly research of journalism education in terms of motivation, paradigm, mission, orientation, direction, education and contextualization.

The intersection of collaborative reading practices and journalistic training presents an opportunity to explore humanist pedagogical approaches which focus on the holistic development of students by fostering critical thinking, empathy, and ethical awareness alongside technical skills. This article examines two distinct bojoclubs: The "History of Journalism Reading Club" that was founded in New York and the "Travel Journalism Bojoclub" was implemented by the author in a classroom setting in Klagenfurt. Despite their differing cultural contexts, both initiatives share a fundamental premise: the belief that journalistic literature offers a unique lens for exploring society, providing the knowledge and perspective that the social representation of journalism often lacks.

Despite the growing body of research on book clubs in various educational settings, there is a notable gap regarding the implementation and impact of journalism-based book clubs-bojoclubs-in higher education. In particular, little is known about how these initiatives can foster critical thinking, bridge the divide between academic training and professional practice, and shape students' perceptions of journalism both as a profession and as a literary genre.

To address this gap, the present study investigates the role of bojoclubs in journalism education. Specifically, it aims to explore how collaborative reading practices within bojoclubs can enhance critical engagement, promote reflective dialogue, and contribute to a deeper understanding of journalism's cultural and social dimensions. The research is guided by the following questions:

How are journalism-based book clubs (bojoclubs) implemented in higher education and professional contexts? What are the perceived benefits of participating in bojoclubs for students and facilitators?

Data Collection Methods

This qualitative study adopts a comparative case study design to examine the implementation and perceived benefits of journalism-based book clubs (bojoclubs) in both professional and academic contexts. The selection of cases was intentional: the History of Journalism Reading Club in New York and the Travel Journalism Bojoclub at the University of Klagenfurt were chosen due to their contrasting environments and their explicit focus on long-form journalistic narratives. This contrast allows for a richer exploration of how different settings may influence the dynamics and outcomes of bojoclubs, particularly in relation to fostering critical engagement with journalism as a cultural and literary practice.

New York club context and data collection

The New York-based club operated primarily through digital platforms such as Twitter and Substack. Data collection for this case relied mainly on a semi-structured, problem-centered interview with Eleanor Cummins, the club's founder and main participant. The interview was conducted via Zoom in early winter 2024, allowing for open-ended responses and follow-up questions that provided nuanced insights into the club's operation and book curation strategies. Additional information was gathered through follow-up emails in 2024. Club materials-including newsletters and public announcements-were also collected and analyzed to supplement the interview data. Despite efforts, direct feedback from other club participants could not be obtained.

Klagenfurt course context and data collection

For the winter semester 2024, I designed and taught a university journalism course titled "Travel Journalism." This course aimed to inspire students to explore journalistic practices through the lens of travel writing, fostering curiosity, openness to diverse perspectives, and engagement with global issues. Within this course, I implemented the Klagenfurt bojoclub, a student-led book club that met weekly for one-hour sessions embedded within a six-hour teaching block.

To provide a comprehensive understanding of travel journalism and accommodate the international backgrounds of the students, I curated a diverse selection of books through an online resource known as the Wanderlust Library. This collection included both classic and contemporary examples of travel writing, as well as scholarly works on the history, theory, and practice of the genre. The library was initially created as a Google Doc, which was then expanded with specific reading recommendations contributed by students. These contributions often represented students' home cultures and featured works by local authors, rather than texts written from the perspective of foreign observers. During each reading session, a portion of the time was dedicated to student-led resource sharing, enabling the class to benefit from the diverse backgrounds and discoveries of its members, who hailed from countries including Nigeria, Hong Kong, Pakistan, Japan, Russia, Poland, and Austria.

As both course instructor and researcher, I conducted participant observation throughout the semester, observing group discussions and interactions among approximately 20 master's students from diverse international backgrounds. Detailed field notes were taken during each session, and written reflections and assignments produced by the students were collected for subsequent analysis.

Data analysis

All qualitative materials-including interview transcripts, field notes, student artifacts, and club documents-were subjected to open coding and thematic analysis. This approach facilitated the identification and categorization of emerging themes within and across both cases. A cross-case comparison was then conducted to highlight similarities and differences in the implementation, dynamics, and perceived outcomes of each bojoclub. The interpretation of findings was informed by social constructivist perspectives and reader-response theory, as outlined in the introduction.

Ethical considerations

Participants were informed about the aims of the study and provided consent for the use of their contributions. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured by removing identifying information from all records. The research was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of [your institution/university].

Limitations

A significant limitation of this study is the absence of direct feedback from participants in the New York club, which restricts the analysis to the perspective of the club's founder and available documents. Additionally, the dual role of the researcher as both facilitator and observer in the Klagenfurt case may have influenced the interpretation of group dynamics and outcomes.

History of Journalism BoJoClub: case introduction

This section provides the background and context for the History of Journalism BoJoClub case, outlining its origins, the motivations of its founder, and the educational and social environment in which it was created. This contextualization is essential for understanding the subsequent analysis and findings. The researcher was not involved in organizing or running this club, but rather adopted an external analytical perspective to understand its implementation, dynamics, and perceived outcomes.

In June 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and the heightened visibility of the Black Lives Matter movement, Eleanor Cummins, a graduate of New York University's science journalism program, identified significant gaps in journalism education. At the time of the interview for this study (conducted in 2024), Cummins was working as a full-time freelance journalist and was the founder of the History of Journalism BoJoClub.

Cummins noted a critical shortcoming in the curriculum: the lack of preparation for freelance work in an industry increasingly moving away from traditional staff positions. She articulated her concerns to her former program director, stating, "I think we need to add more to the curriculum" (Cummins, interview, 2024). Cummins noted a critical shortcoming in the curriculum: the lack of preparation for freelance work in an industry increasingly moving away from traditional staff positions. She also highlighted that "it would be really helpful if any of us ever read a history of journalism book" (Cummins, interview, 2024), emphasizing that such material was never an expectation in her education and remained largely extracurricular.

In response, she began compiling a list of books that addressed journalism history and race-related issues. The selection process was thorough, incorporating both familiar texts and newly discovered works. She explained her intent: "I wanted to make it as comprehensible as possible," acknowledging that while she could not personally endorse every item, her goal was to create a resource offering multiple options for those seeking specific knowledge or addressing personal gaps. This initiative emerged amid social unrest and a racial reckoning, responding to the urgent need for a deeper understanding of journalism's societal role. Cummins's approach was methodical, aiming to provide extracurricular resources for both journalism students and professionals.

Her efforts were driven by personal experience and a desire to enhance educational opportunities for current and future journalists, recognizing the importance of historical context in contemporary journalistic practice. The development of this book list represents a concerted effort to address systemic gaps in journalism education, particularly regarding freelance preparation and a historical understanding of the field. This initiative exemplifies how individual actors can significantly contribute to educational resources in response to rapidly evolving societal and professional landscapes within journalism.

Cummins's experience also revealed challenges in fostering engagement among journalists. She observed that journalists are often "not particularly inclined to join" groups due to their skeptical nature towards affiliations or associations. This cultural context contrasts sharply with other journalistic environments, such as *Diario de Paz* in Colombia (De Luis Andrés, 2024), where journalists actively participate in community-building efforts.

History of Journalism BoJoClub: Findings

History of Journalism is the official Substack platform that links the list of books that Cummins offered. Many of the books in this space revolve around the history of journalism in the United States seen through the lenses of societal justice, racism, feminism, and underrepresentation of minorities in the newsrooms. For instance, the book "News for All the People" by Joseph Torres and Juan González introduces a critical debate in media history between centralized and decentralized systems of news and information.

his framework provides a broader context for understanding the historical patterns of exclusion in journalism and the challenges in addressing racial and social justice issues within traditional journalistic frameworks. This historical perspective aligns with recent scholarship on media systems and their impact on diversity and representation in journalism (McChesney, 2008; Pickard, 2019).

Yet, the list of books is so large that Cummins acknowledges not having covered all the readings during the existence of her BoJoClub. However, the invitation stands and this comprehensive online library shows a commitment to journalism and to a more fulfilling approach to journalism education.

Motivations for establishing the BoJoClub

Cummins's decision to establish the History of Journalism Bojoclub was shaped by a combination of professional and social motivations. On the one hand, she recognized a gap in her own academic training regarding the practical realities of freelance journalism. As she explained, "I had gone to graduate school at NYU for science journalism and was now sort of going back to the director of my program and saying, you know, as an alum invested in sort of the development of current and future students, like I think we need to kind of add more to the curriculum" (Cummins, interview, 2024). This concern for professional development was further amplified by the broader social context of 2020, particularly the aftermath of George Floyd's murder and the surge in activism around issues of race and justice. Cummins reflected, "I think with the George Floyd sort of murder and the... activism that was welling up, I was like, you know, it would be really helpful if any of us ever read a history of journalism book, which was never an expectation in my education, was totally extracurricular, and I think remains extracurricular" (Cummins, interview, 2024).

These intertwined motivations-addressing curricular gaps in journalism education and responding to a moment of heightened social awareness-led Cummins to create a resource that would support both the professional growth and the social consciousness of journalism students and practitioners.

Gap in journalism education

Cummins faced several obstacles in fostering active participation. One major challenge was the students' limited prior knowledge. As she remarked, "It would be really helpful if any of us ever read a history of journalism book, which was never an expectation in my education." To address this, Cummins began compiling resources. "So that June, I started compiling all of these books. Some of them came from books that I had already read, but most of them were unknown to me," she explained. This process highlighted both the breadth of the field and the need to explore unfamiliar material. These observations suggest a gap in journalism education regarding historical context, a concern echoed in recent studies on journalism curriculum development (Carlson & Lewis, 2020).

Virtual format specifics

The virtual format of the History of Journalism Bojoclub profoundly shaped both its feasibility and its dynamics. Cummins acknowledged that the restrictions imposed by the pandemic were a decisive factor: "I would never have done this if I couldn't use Zoom and like virtual communication to make this possible" (Cummins, interview, 2024). The online setting not only enabled the club to exist during lockdown, but also allowed her to invite peer journalists and students from different locations, increasing accessibility and reach.

Drawing from her previous, sometimes frustrating, experiences with in-person book clubs, Cummins adopted what she described as an "authoritarian mindset" in managing the virtual club, ensuring structure and participation (Cummins, interview, 2024). While she recognized the potential benefits of in-person meetings—"if I was in Vienna, it'd be really nice to get coffee"—she ultimately found the virtual format more practical and better suited to her goals for this project.

The online environment also influenced the nature of group interactions. For instance, Cummins reflected on a meeting with guest author Lewis Raven Wallace, noting that while the session was successful, it felt "less kind of emotionally dexterous" due to the reserved nature of the guest and the limitations of virtual communication (Cummins, interview, 2024). Overall, her personal passion for literature and her experience with various book clubs were instrumental in shaping the club's structure and atmosphere in the virtual space.

Cultural insights

The analysis of the interview with Cummins highlights several aspects of North American journalistic culture that have broader implications for journalism education and practice.

First, Cummins mentions the critical importance of historical context in reporting, noting that "the importance of historical understanding in journalism is emphasized by the need to bring context to work, as it helps to fully visualize what the reporter experienced" (Cummins, interview, 2024). This perspective aligns with current debates in journalism education, which stress that providing historical context is essential for holding institutions accountable and for fostering a well-informed citizenry. As noted in the Democracy Toolkit, "Historical context provides a basis for holding public officials and institutions

accountable for their actions. By examining past events and decisions, journalists can highlight trends that impact citizens' constitutional rights or uncover repetition of catastrophic mistakes of the past" (Democracy Fund, 2021, p. 12). Journalism educators argue that integrating history into curricula is crucial for preparing students to meet these responsibilities.

Secondly, Cummins draws attention to the persistent underrepresentation of marginalized groups in journalism, attributing this issue to structural factors within the industry: "The underrepresentation of marginalized groups in journalism is identified as a result of the structure of the industry, highlighting the need for a more inclusive approach to reporting" (Cummins, interview, 2024). For instance, the Pew Research Center (2021) reports that journalists of color constitute less than 20% of newsroom staff in the United States, despite representing a much larger share of the population. This observation is consistent with recent studies showing that, despite ongoing discussions about diversity, newsrooms in North America remain predominantly white, especially in leadership positions (Canadian Association of Journalists, 2024). For example, the 2024 Diversity Survey found that approximately 70% of Canadian newsrooms employed no Indigenous or visible minority journalists in top roles, and similar patterns have been reported in the United States. These findings echo historical patterns in American journalism, where minority voices have often been excluded or marginalized, despite their critical contributions to the field.

Finally, Cummins reflects on the cultural resistance among journalists to community engagement and emotional openness: "Journalists as a group are not really joiners. They're very skeptical. They're not really big into affiliations or associations... I do wonder, you know, if we were ever going to really be able to prioritize some of the emotions here just because of also the nature of like the attendees, who were all sort of, you know, kind of like classic journalists" (Cummins, interview, 2024). This insight contributes to the growing body of research on emotional engagement and professional development in journalism, particularly in virtual learning environments (Garrison, 2017; Deuze & Witschge, 2018).

Together, these findings illustrate how structural, cultural, and educational factors intersect to shape the experiences and attitudes of journalists in North America, and underscore the ongoing need for curricular reforms that address both historical context and inclusivity in journalism education

Impact of specific books

The analysis of Cummins's experience with the Bojoclub reveals how reading and discussing foundational works in journalism history can illuminate persistent structural and cultural challenges in the field. Cummins emphasized that certain books—such as Lewis Raven Wallace's *The View from Somewhere*—were particularly influential for participants, as they provided critical historical context about the formation of the American press and exposed longstanding patterns of exclusion and violence against non-white journalists and publications. This historical perspective helped club members recognize that the underrepresentation of marginalized groups in journalism is not coincidental but rooted in industry structures and traditions.

A central question that emerged in the club's discussions was: What can a communal voice expressed through literary journalism reveal about society that other forms of reporting cannot? By engaging with collective narratives and diverse authors, participants confronted the limits of mainstream journalism's approach to history and representation, and considered how alternative voices and storytelling forms can shape public memory and professional identity.

The relevance of these historical patterns became starkly apparent during the controversy surrounding the publication of Senator Tom Cotton's op-ed, "Send in the Troops," in *The New York Times* on June 3, 2020. The op-ed, which advocated deploying the military to quell unrest during the George Floyd protests, sparked intense backlash both inside and outside the *Times* newsroom. Black reporters and their allies publicly stated that the decision to publish the piece made them feel unsafe at work, and the episode led to the resignation of Opinion editor James Bennet and a broader reckoning over editorial standards and newsroom culture.

Cummins reflected on this incident as a contemporary manifestation of the very issues explored in the club's readings: "It wasn't as if there was consensus even that it was okay to talk about the painful racial history, let alone like the painful racialized present of journalism." Her observation highlights how historical exclusion continues to shape present-day debates over diversity, free expression, and institutional accountability in journalism. The Cotton op-ed controversy exemplifies the ongoing tension between the ideals of open debate and the need to ensure the safety and inclusion of marginalized journalists—a dilemma deeply rooted in the structural history discussed in the club.

These findings underscore the value of integrating journalism history and literary journalism into professional development. By critically engaging with both historical texts and current events, journalists and

students can better understand the origins of contemporary challenges and develop the analytical tools needed to foster more inclusive, reflective, and ethical journalistic practices. This approach aligns with recent calls for reform in journalism education, which emphasize the need for robust platforms for critical dialogue and the integration of diverse voices and histories into the curriculum (Carlson & Lewis, 2020).

Travel Journalism BojoClub: case introduction

The Platonic concept of “learning with delight” emerges as a necessity in contemporary education, particularly in the field of journalism. As Plato argued, “No compulsory learning can remain in the soul. In teaching children, train them by a kind of game, and you will be better able to discover the natural bent” (The Republic, 536e; Plato, 2007). Modern educational research supports this view, emphasizing that enjoyment and positive emotions are essential for effective learning (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007). In the university context, it is essential that courses not only impart knowledge but also invite communication with the world and enhance students’ attention (Ramsden, 2003). In the university journalism course I taught, I encouraged students to read books outside the required curriculum as a pleasurable activity, with a particular emphasis on the value of physical books. To support this, I established the bojoclub—a student-led book club designed to spark genuine curiosity, foster attentive listening to diverse viewpoints, and encourage students to express their own perspectives. The bojoclub became a guiding principle for critical discussion and engagement beyond the classroom setting. As part of this initiative, guest journalists, including the director of Roads and Kingdoms magazine, participated in sessions with the students, sharing literary recommendations and professional experiences. This provided students with a unique opportunity to interact directly with industry professionals and gain valuable insights into the world of journalism.

For the winter semester 2024, I designed and taught a university journalism course titled “Travel Journalism.” It aimed to inspire students to explore journalistic practices through the lens of travel writing, fostering openness to diverse perspectives. The decision to establish a reading club focused on travel literature written by journalists and inviting guest interviews—professional travel journalists and travel publishers from diverse cultural backgrounds, including locations like New York, France, and Spain—pursues several objectives, both substantive and formal. Travel journalism literature promotes interdisciplinary learning by connecting geography, history, sociology, and cultural studies—without leaving the four walls of the classroom.

Travel literature within a journalism education context is thought of as an antidote to mitigate the excessive dependence on defining the merits of an education in journalism solely as that of a “media professional,” which could lead students to view themselves as mere cogs in a machine serving corporate interests rather than fulfilling civic, scientific and humanistic goals.

Transforming the classroom into a reading space is expected to enhance focus and attention for a period. As Turkle (2011) observes, “We expect more from technology and less from each other,” which is precisely the lack of personal communication that the bojoclub aims to prevent. To help students concentrate, a preliminary measure was to prohibit the use of mobile phones during the course. Additionally, as part of the course, students were encouraged to explore the city and write from various locations, reflecting Bruce Chatwin’s perspective, that the real home of a person is not the house but the road.

A wanderlust library

The bojoclub quickly incorporated travel journalism references from various regions, including open access to Robert Byron’s seminal book “The Road to Oxiana,” written in 1933. Comparing classics of travel literature, such as Byron’s work, with contemporary narratives was ideal for this club, fostering an awareness of diverse cultural perspectives.

Description of the course

To illustrate the practical application of a bojoclub in travel journalism, what follows is the description of the announcement of the course: “The practice of travel and its depiction in journalism is often seen as entertainment, at the expense of its potential as a learning experience in itself and as a bridge between cultures. This form of narrative, much like classic travel literature, opens up the reader’s understanding and thus facilitates dialogue with foreign sensibilities and beliefs. This course deals with travel and its

representation in the narrative of literary journalism and also in digital media. From the printed book to the latest media innovations, journalistic narrative continues to offer sustainable possibilities for the reader to share experiences and connect readers, communities and distant lands, including fostering a sense of empathy“.

This course aimed to cover a range of topics, including to consider the traveler identity in a self-reflective dimension as a mirror and as a memory, so the "tourist's gaze" was compared with the "traveler's gaze," resulting in learning to differentiate narratives, ways of remembering and representations of the experience. The syllabus invited to think in classic travel narratives, written in an age where writing and reading where produced differently than nowadays, which are catalogued in a blurry frontier of myth and reality— voir Marco Polo or Captain Cook - The course examined how travel practices and their representations were shaped by media and historical sensibilities, alongside the immediacy of travel storytelling in real time, where narratives could unfold within minutes, making travel, communication, and representation simultaneous. Finally, it looked at the profession of the correspondent journalist and its evolution.

The central focus of the Travel Journalism BoJoClub was Nicolas Bouvier's seminal work "The Way of the World" (*L'Usage du monde*). This travelogue recounts Bouvier's journey from Geneva to the Khyber Pass, undertaken between 1953 and 1954 with his friend, the artist Thierry Vernet. The book comprises 23 chapters, each offering a subjective experience of the places visited and the people encountered. The choice of Bouvier's narrative ensured that the students could appreciate a style that blends the journalistic eye for detail and the poetic, making it an ideal text for critical analysis in a Travel Journalism course. Given that the course covered aspects such as respect for local cultures, building relationships with locals, the concept of slow travel, and sustainability—while steering clear of typical tourist paths—the choice of book was particularly fitting. It resonated well with the international class, as it chronicles a journey across the globe. Moreover, it served as an opportunity to encourage students to reflect on their own experiences of cultural immersion in Austria through handwritten exercises. With the diverse backgrounds of the international students, "The Way of the World" emerged as an exemplary piece of contemporary literary travel writing. Guest journalists, including the director of Roads and Kingdoms magazine, based in New York, joined students to share literary recommendations and professional experiences, providing the opportunity for students to engage with industry professionals. This approach directly addresses the study's aims by using literary journalism as a tool to foster critical engagement, intercultural reflection, and professional development among journalism students. By analysing Bouvier's narrative and interacting with guest journalists, students were able to connect theoretical concepts with practical experiences, thus responding to the research questions concerning the pedagogical value and real-world relevance of journalism-based book clubs in diverse educational contexts.

Travel Journalism Bojoclub: findings

Several key observations emerged regarding student engagement and the reading experience during the winter semester 2024. The fortnightly sessions centered on Bouvier's *The Way of the World* (*L'Usage du monde*, 1963), a travelogue recounting his journey from Geneva to the Khyber Pass in 1953–1954. Over time, these sessions evolved from guided discussions into dynamic, student-led explorations of travel writing. Each 90-minute session typically began with a brief introduction to the assigned section, followed by open-ended discussions where students shared insights, posed questions, and related the text to their own backgrounds.

This participatory format fostered a sense of ownership and curiosity, aligning with social constructivist theories (Vygotsky, 1978) that emphasize learning as a collaborative and culturally situated process. The diversity of the group—students from Nigeria, Hong Kong, and Poland, among others—enriched the analysis and encouraged critical reflection on issues such as cultural representation, the ethics of travel writing, and the subjective nature of narrative voice. For instance, students often compared Bouvier's nuanced, introspective style to their own experiences as newcomers in Austria, highlighting parallels between the process of cultural immersion described in the book and their personal journeys. This not only fulfilled the study's aim of fostering intercultural dialogue but also promoted empathy and a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in travel journalism.

Lasting impact and professional development

The impact of these sessions extended well beyond the course duration. In follow-up conversations a year later, several former students reported that they had continued to pursue travel writing as a personal

practice, attributing this ongoing interest to the exercises and discussions from the Bojoclub. Many described how the course had transformed their approach to both travel and journalism, motivating them to observe more attentively and reflect more deeply on their experiences—a hallmark of both Bouvier's narrative and the ethos of slow travel. Some students developed habits of keeping travel journals, while others cited the class as fundamental to their writing process. Importantly, the opportunity to interact with guest journalists was repeatedly mentioned as a highlight, with students noting that these encounters provided practical insights and inspired them to consider new career paths. These outcomes demonstrate the pedagogical value of integrating literary journalism and industry engagement into journalism education, directly addressing the research questions about the transformative potential of journalism-based book clubs in higher education.

Slow travel and reflective practice

A notable shift in students' attitudes towards the pace of Bouvier's narrative was observed as the sessions progressed. Initially, some found the slow rhythm challenging, expecting a more fast-paced travelogue. However, as they acclimated to Bouvier's style, their appreciation for detailed observation and reflection grew. This gradual acceptance mirrored the concept of slow travel, which became a recurring theme in classroom discussions and is recognized in the literature as fostering mindfulness, cultural immersion, and personal growth. Students debated the merits of slow versus fast travel, drawing parallels between Bouvier's journey in his Fiat Topolino and their own approaches to journalism and storytelling. This process encouraged them to value depth over speed, both in travel and in their journalistic work, echoing contemporary calls for more sustainable and meaningful forms of travel and reporting. Such findings illustrate how the Bojoclub facilitated not only critical thinking and self-reflection, but also the development of a more nuanced, ethical, and sustainable approach to journalism.

Challenges and lessons learned

While the overall response was positive, some challenges emerged. A few students initially struggled with the poetic style and non-linear structure of Bouvier's writing, expressing a preference for more conventional journalistic texts. This resistance reflects broader debates in journalism education about the value of literary versus factual reporting. Others found it difficult to balance the demands of reading with other coursework, highlighting the importance of flexible pedagogical approaches. Peer support and adaptive reading assignments helped maintain engagement, but these experiences underscore the need for scaffolding when introducing complex or unconventional texts. Notably, the experience highlighted the importance of instructor enthusiasm and adaptability in fostering student motivation—a point that challenges common assumptions about student disengagement and aligns with the study's broader inquiry into effective pedagogical strategies. In sum, the Travel Journalism Bojoclub findings demonstrate how a thoughtfully curated literary journalism curriculum, combined with student-led discussion and professional engagement, can foster critical reflection, intercultural understanding, and sustained interest in journalism practice. These outcomes directly address the study's aims and research questions regarding the transformative potential of journalism-based book clubs in higher education.

Discussion and conclusion

It is often taken for granted that journalism does not require an academic education, only practice; this assumption can diminish opportunities for educating students in accessing the critical knowledge necessary for society. By relegating journalism to a light field of the scientific curricula, students are deprived of opportunities to reflect, measure, and discover both their local world and the unknown through humanistic values. "Education of journalists should be understood much deeper and taken more seriously than ever. Apart from being professionally educated, autonomous and responsible, (self)-conscious humanists are needed to cope and properly respond to such challenges" (Vukic, 2019). Santiago Tejedor argues that "travel journalism is unique because it encapsulates all forms of journalism; every other type travels," suggesting that travel journalism encompasses broader narratives and experiences inherent in all journalistic practices. A reading club within the context of journalism appeals both to students' cognitive abilities and their social dimensions. As Kucer (2005) points out: "Reading clubs provide an opportunity for students to engage deeply with texts, fostering a sense of community and encouraging diverse perspectives." If a bojoclub in travel journalism is perceived as a narrative form that explores the world through values born from a human experience, deeper and more critical thinking will be enhanced rather than remaining a form of superficial communication. This bojoclub tool offers the opportunity to consider jour-

nalism from a perspective of ritual rather than merely as information transmission—a viewpoint informed by Carey, Williams, or even Dewey.

Across both the New York and Klagenfurt book clubs, a number of significant patterns emerged that illuminate the transformative potential of journalism-based reading circles. In both contexts, the deliberate selection of long-form journalistic works—authored by journalists themselves—invited participants to move beyond the immediacy of daily news and instead immerse themselves in the deeper narratives and lived experiences that shape the profession.

In New York, the digital format enabled international journalists and enthusiasts to gather around a shared literary heritage, fostering thoughtful dialogue about the histories and challenges of journalism. Despite the limitations imposed by virtual communication, participants found in these curated readings a way to reflect on issues of representation, the marginalization of certain voices, and the enduring need for stories that stretch beyond the boundaries of traditional newsrooms. The founder's perspective, rooted in the vibrant and diverse landscape of New York, provided a unique lens through which the group could explore the profession's past and its evolving present.

Meanwhile, the Klagenfurt book club, held in person and shaped by the diversity of its international student cohort, became a space for genuine intercultural exchange. Here, students were not only exposed to the literary richness of travel journalism, but were also encouraged to relate these narratives to their own backgrounds and experiences as newcomers in Austria. This process fostered a spirit of empathy, curiosity, and critical self-reflection. Over time, students reported that their engagement with the texts and with each other transformed their understanding of journalism—not simply as a set of professional practices, but as a literary and humanistic pursuit capable of deepening both personal and collective awareness.

In both cases, the book club format proved to be much more than a supplementary activity. It became a catalyst for critical engagement, professional development, and the cultivation of a reflective, globally minded journalistic identity. The experience underscored the value of creating inclusive, dialogic spaces where participants feel empowered to question, interpret, and reimagine the stories that define their field.

By selecting books authored by journalists for these clubs, educators can include varied voices within the profession while allowing students to explore contemporary challenges faced by journalists through their authors' experiences. Focusing on reading works by journalists can spark encouraging conversations about the realities of journalistic work and professional conditions, motivating students in their own writing. In both Cummins's case in New York and the experiences in Austria, selecting journalist-authored books significantly enriched student learning.

This was evident in the Klagenfurt book club where many students do not typically view journalism as a literary genre or as a means of reflecting their inner lives and the societies they inhabit. Engaging in discussions about readings with peers fosters a reflective process that can be transformative for both individuals and the class as a whole. In the context of the Travel Journalism book club, participants are encouraged to share their insights and gain diverse perspectives. This discussion process necessitates textual interpretation and personal involvement from the facilitator, which is crucial for enlightening and motivating students, especially when initial conversations may be hesitant. Examples such as the analysis of Nicolas Bouvier and related activities within the book club illustrate this dynamic. Factors such as classroom composition, students' prior expectations of journalism, and the complexity of texts that require careful attention to follow the narrative play a vital role in determining whether book clubs become spaces for critical and participatory reflection.

Similarly, the multilingual backgrounds of students can cultivate curiosity about discovering representative journalistic writers from their cultures, as seen in the experiences of students from Nigeria, Pakistan, Austria, and Poland. It is essential to foster an environment that is open to new ideas and where students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts without fear of stigma or pressure to conform to prevailing opinions. Instances where some students displayed enthusiasm for exploring readings while others voiced apprehension—often stemming from a lack of confidence in their English reading skills—underscore the importance of creating an inclusive atmosphere. The "ideal speech situation" described by Habermas (1979) occurs when a non-hierarchical group allows members to engage freely in discussions about underlying cultural assumptions. However, in practice, many individuals may self-censor due to concerns about revealing their true opinions or succumbing to peer pressure. In both the History of Journalism book club and the Travel Journalism book club, journalistic literature can be viewed through Kenneth Burke's concept of "equipment for living," framing it as an essential tool for enhancing journalists' and journalism students' understanding of their profession's history and often neglected contemporary issues.

Despite facing challenges—particularly due to the limitations of digital communication that hinder genuine dialogue—the initiative to establish a reading circle remains crucial for fostering deeper comprehension through thoughtfully curated literary selections. The founder's choice of books reflects her New York-

centric perspective on journalism history, highlighting two key aspects of the relationship between literature and the experiences of many international journalists residing in this vibrant city. Firstly, it emphasizes journalists' inherent desire to tell stories that extend beyond the confines of mainstream newsrooms. Secondly, it addresses authors' awareness of the risks associated with marginalizing certain narratives within traditional newsroom settings. In such contexts, crafting longer narratives may be vital for resisting alienation and ensuring that diverse representations of reality are acknowledged and explored.

In summary, this comparative study shows that, despite their differing formats and contexts, both the New York and Klagenfurt book clubs shared a profound commitment to fostering deeper awareness of journalism's cultural and professional dimensions. By engaging with long-form narratives and encouraging open, inclusive discussion, these bojoclubs became spaces where critical reflection, intercultural dialogue, and professional growth could truly flourish.

The findings highlight that such clubs are not merely reading groups, but catalysts for reimagining journalism as a humanistic, narrative-driven practice—what Burke called “equipment for living.” They empower both students and practitioners to navigate the ethical, cultural, and professional complexities of their craft.

Building on these insights, future research should further explore the long-term impact of bojoclubs on critical thinking, professional identity, and literary appreciation in journalism education and practice, and examine how different facilitation approaches and cultural contexts shape their effectiveness. Ultimately, the experiences from both bojoclubs show how such spaces can spark deeper critical thinking, foster meaningful dialogue, and inspire growth—both personally and professionally—among participants.

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de Luis Andres, Mercedes, (2025) ‘Journalism Education: Reading between the lines’ in *Journalism Education* 14(1) pp42-55

Reviews

The reviews pages are edited by Sean Dodson. If you have a book you would like to review or have recently read a new book we should know about please get in touch. Also if you have recently had a book published and would like to see it reviewed, please contact Sean on s.dodson@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

Literary Sports Journalism: Beyond the Boundaries by Tom Bradshaw, Palgrave Macmillan (Springer Nature) 243 pages £109.99 (hardback); E-book: £87.50, ISBN: 978-3-031-76754-8

Review by Alan Geere

When I pitched up in suburban Phoenix to run an Arizona daily newspaper, I inherited a writer who called himself a Gonzo journalist. His interpretation of this was to go anywhere, do anything and write what he liked whenever he liked. I can't pretend it wasn't a management challenge.

Luckily, things all came to a head for me when this proto-Gonzo inflamed the publisher and her chichi friends from Scottsdale by writing something unflattering about one of their party. His time was up, but not before deputations of 'free speech' defenders from the newsroom beat a path to my door demanding he be allowed to carry on his hedonistic ways.

He was eventually shunted off into someone else's Gonzo land, and I was able to get back to the challenge of editing a newspaper with a diverse staff a long way from home.

I wish at the time I'd had Dr. Tom Bradshaw's thesis on Gonzo journalism and its originator, Hunter S. Thompson, which I could have used as evidence to show where he should've been heading.

Thompson gets a deserved chapter all to himself in Bradshaw's delicious romp through the life and times of sports journalism – or "games and pastimes" as one derisive editor called it – in *Literary Sports Journalism: Beyond the Boundaries*.

In a remarkably prescient observation for these fervid times Bradshaw notes: 'If there is anything that could tentatively be called a unifying theme to Hunter S. Thompson's literary output, it is the exposure of the fallacies, delusions and idiocies that he believes underpin the American Dream.'

Bradshaw himself is something of a polymath. By day he is Dr Tom Bradshaw, Associate Professor of Media Ethics and Practice at the University of Gloucestershire and joint editor of *Ethical Space: The International Journal of Communication Ethics*.

In the real world he is an award-winning rugby writer, accomplished musician and not afraid to put his body on the line in the name of research.

The author recalls in the book how he once took part in a pre-season training session at a Premiership rugby club which ended in vomiting humiliation. ‘But then that state of retching debasement, captured on film by the club’s grinning strength trainers, became a great angle for the piece.’

This inner self-reflection comes in a chapter on George Plimpton, who Bradshaw describes as a ground-breaking exponent of participatory sports writing, not only in the sense of the breadth of activities that he participated in but also in the literary depth of his reflections on those activities, and on the professionals he encountered while doing them.

True to his quest to investigate the eponymous ‘Literary Sports Journalism’ his enquiry takes him down some of the more familiar rabbit holes. CLR James, Neville Cardus, Ernest Hemingway and Tom Wolfe are exposed in devilish detail. But more contemporary writers like Martin Amis and, especially, Simon Barnes also get the treatment.

Sports writing, as Barnes exemplifies it, says Bradshaw, has the capacity to capture the manifold meanings of inherently pointless activities. ‘Meanings which enable and almost compel us to make partial sense of ourselves, others, life, death, betrayal, disappointment, fading powers – the whole sweep of human hopes, fears and feeling.’

“Sport is a contrivance and it may be an illusion, but within this world of human creation and journalistic refraction there is understanding to be gleaned as much as trophies to be won.”

Sports journalism has always been a popular option for both students and academic practitioners. And as the field for competent professionals grows ever larger with constant demand from sports clubs and organisations, Bradshaw’s contribution is a timely reminder of where we’ve come from and where we might be going.

It is a welcome addition to an admittedly slim canon of serious writing about sports journalism, but Bradshaw concludes with a warning that a sports journalist’s quest for literary style can fall flat when it tips into the overblown and the purposefully attention-seeking; when it becomes more about the writer themselves than the sport.

“Perhaps sports writing is a second-order illusion: an illusion about an illusion. Yet through the pursuit and articulation of illusion, we discover that meaning and understanding can emerge.”

* Dr Alan Geere’s career has taken him around the world as a journalist (Canada, United States, Trinidad & Tobago), media development practitioner (Afghanistan, Vietnam, Romania) and academic (Uganda, China). He was latterly in the Maldives helping on a communications governance programme, where he met the aforementioned Dr Bradshaw and teamed up to deliver the country’s first ethics course for journalists.

Voices from Ukraine by Rashad Mammadov, Palgrave Macmillan. 176 pages, £109.99, ISBN: 978-3-031-68849-2

Review by Sean Dodson, Leeds Beckett University

What happens to journalistic values when a foreign power invades your country? Do you choose to fight, or to write? Since Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014, Ukrainian journalists have been grappling with precisely this dilemma. And if you choose the pen, is it still right to criticise your own side?

Voices from Ukraine attempts to address some of these questions. In doing so, it serves as a companion piece to *Reporting the War in Ukraine* (2022, Mair, Beck et al.), an admirable anthology published in the early days of the war (and previously reviewed in these pages).

The book is thematically structured, with dedicated chapters on topics such as women journalists, disinformation, and the ‘weaponisation of digital discourse’. There is also a chapter exploring the Russian perspective. Although it includes interviews with journalists at *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, the focus lies more on Ukrainian interpretations of Russian journalism—or its absence—and on the experiences of exiled Russian journalists, such as those from *Novaya Gazeta*, which suspended operations in Russia after the invasion. Notably absent, however, is deeper exploration of the murkier online world of Telegram, open-source intelligence, and so-called ‘milbloggers’, though these are touched on elsewhere.

This is a comprehensive book in the classical sense: broad in scope and ambitious in its attempt to cover the many ways journalism intersects with war in Ukraine. Yet the breadth comes at the cost of depth. While the book draws on a commendable range of primary sources and includes many voices, few are explored in detail.

The book also feels loosely framed. It lacks an introduction or conclusion and does not present a strong overarching argument—beyond the familiar refrain that war is destructive and truth is often the first casualty.

Welcome

Journalism Education is the journal of the Association for Journalism Education, a body representing educators in HE in the UK and Ireland. The aim of the journal is to promote and develop analysis and understanding of journalism education and of journalism, particularly when that is related to journalism education.

Editors

Prof. Chris Frost, Liverpool John Moores University

Chris Frost is emeritus professor of Journalism at Liverpool John Moores University and has been a journalist, editor and journalism educator for nearly 50 years, working in newspapers before moving into the academy.

He is a former Chair of the Association for Journalism Education in UK and Ireland. He is a former president of the NUJ and still sits on the union's National Executive Council and chairs the union's Ethics Council. He is a former member of the UK Press Council.

Chris has authored several books, including *Journalism Ethics and Regulation*, 4th edition (2016) and *Privacy and the News Media and Reporting for Journalists*, 2nd edition (2010) – as well as many book chapters and academic papers mainly concerning journalism ethics and regulation.

He has been a consultant or visiting professor in much of Eastern Europe, China, Malaysia, India, South East Asia, and Africa.



Dr. Lada T. Price, University of Sheffield

Dr Lada Trifonova Price is a Senior Lecturer in Journalism at the Department of Journalism Studies, University of Sheffield, UK.

Her current research focuses on challenges to media freedom and journalistic practice in Eastern and Southern European democracies, as well as examining physical and psychological threats to safety of journalists.

She has published several papers on journalism practice in fragile democracies, examining a range of threats to press freedom, censorship and self-censorship, ethical challenges, and media corruption.

She is the editor of the *Routledge Companion to Journalism Ethics* published in 2021 and just edited a special journal issue on trauma literacy in global journalism education and practice for the *Journalism, Media & Communication Educator* published in June 2023



Book editor - Sean Dodson

Sean Dodson is the course director for the postgraduate Journalism and Public Relations program at Leeds Beckett University.

Before this role, he worked as a staff journalist at *The Guardian* and contributed to various international publications like the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Melbourne Age*, and *South China Morning Post*, among others. He has also written for newspapers and magazines such as *Wired Magazine*, *Design Week*, *The Big Issue* and *Dazed and Confused*.

His academic work focusses on the ethics of digital journalism. His ongoing research project aims to gauge the extent of influence that traditional media wields over the news agenda in the realm of social media.

Sean holds the position of a senior fellow at the Higher Education Academy and has served as a judge for the Orwell Prize, which is the most prestigious award for political writing in the UK.



The next edition of *Journalism Education*

The next edition of *Journalism Education* is due in Autumn 2025 and the deadline for paper submissions is at the end of August, although early submissions are always welcome.

The editors will be aiming to publish the following edition at Christmas allowing time for those presenting at the summer conference, to expand their ideas. The journal editors are always happy to see new papers submitted either for full referee or as a shorter unrefereed Comment and Criticism essays. Experienced researchers are very welcome to submit papers about journalism education or about journalism as it affects students or lecturers. However, *Journalism Education* was started by the AJE with less experienced researchers in mind and was structured to give members new to research a place to publish, where their lack of experience will not be held against them. The editorial policy is to give a helping hand to new academic authors who may be highly experienced writers, but less experienced in academic research.

We want to publish the best papers and cutting-edge research about journalism education and training but we believe we have to work closely with less experienced academics to help them get their paper into a publishable form. In order to facilitate that, please don't be afraid to contact the editors to discuss ideas and proposals. We will be happy to advise over what would work, and how to go about it and to make suggestions for improvements in paper proposals. Of course even experienced researchers find such discussions useful! You can get in touch at AJEjournal@gmail.com.

Academic papers to be submitted to referees

Papers should be between 5,000 and 8,000 words and involve some aspect of journalism education, teaching, research or pedagogy. The pandemic obliged much innovative teaching and new study methods, and these experiences deserve a wider audience. We also welcome papers that have followed your favoured area of research.

Essays, comment pieces or criticisms of published work

Journalism Education welcomes essays commenting on, criticising or describing innovative teaching practice, research methods, or scholarly debate on issues of journalism that crop up in your teaching. Debate is a key method of advancing good practice and is particularly important for an academic field that often welcomes experienced practitioners to become academic practitioners in mid career. Essays can be of any length from 1,000 words to 4,000. Please follow the style advice.

Book reviews or promotions

Book reviews are always welcome as they are useful in informing us of what has recently been published and giving careful guidance about why it might be useful. Similarly, if you are due to or have recently had a book published, write to us and tell our readership about it. Publishing a new book is a big deal for any author and it's important that people know that it is out there and available. Telling us about it will allow us to put it in our new books section, keeping other members up to date with the latest publication.

Our books editor, Sean Dodson will be pleased to hear from you. Reviews of appropriate books should be approximately 600 words. We can't guarantee publication of unsolicited reviews of books, but are always grateful to be given the opportunity to consider a review proposal. Please contact Sean Dodson, the reviews editor, if you wish to submit a review. All book reviews should include author, title, ISBN number, publisher, number of pages and price.

Guest editing

If you are considering running a conference on some aspect of journalism in the near future then why not contact us to discuss the possibility of guest editing a future edition with articles from conference speakers?

We welcome guest editions where journalism lecturers and researchers are able to expand on their special interest either by inviting colleagues to produce papers to a particular theme or by organising a conference and inviting colleagues to submit paper ideas.

Guest editors are responsible for identifying potential authors, inviting them to contribute, finding referees for their papers and then submitting the final version to the Journalism Education team. The team will then pull the journal together and send PDFs back to authors and editors for a final check before publishing.

This is an excellent way to spread your academic wings by making contact with authors and referees, assessing papers and deciding what is publishable and steering the research profile of journalism for at least one issue.

Talk to the editors

You can talk to the editors by emailing AJEjournal@gmail.com with your proposals, ideas, or finished papers. We look forward to hearing from you.

The deadline for articles and papers for following editions is March 21, 2025 but material sent earlier would be appreciated as would an early notification of intention to submit. Articles should be submitted to the editors at ajejournal@gmail.com together with a 100-150 word abstract. Comment and criticism articles can be more polemic and do not require an abstract.

Presentation and submission:

Articles should be produced in Word format, double spaced and set in Times New Roman 12pt with the minimum of formatting. Please **do not** press the “enter” button to put a double space between paragraphs and do not use specialist templates. Referencing should be in standard Harvard form with citations in the form: (Simmons 1955: 404) whilst notes should be set as endnotes. References should put the publication title in italic with authors’ name in the form: Jones, Brian (2004).

Please include a short (70-100w) biography as a separate document.

All tables and figures should be produced separately either at the end of the article or in a separate file. Each should be clearly labelled Table 1:..... Table 2:..... Fig. 1:..... Fig. 2: etc and a note inserted in the text identifying approximately where it should be placed.

Copyright:

Authors should confirm they have cleared all copyrighted work for publication and agree that they will indemnify the editors against claims for defamation, copyright infringement or plagiarism. All authors will be asked to sign a contract confirming this.

Process:

Papers are sent to at least two referees for comment. On return your paper will be accepted, accepted following editing as identified by the referees or refused. Comment and criticism pieces and book reviews will be decided by the editors but may be accepted on the basis that they are edited as identified.

Proofs:

Once accepted, authors are expected to return proofs within 72 hours of receipt.

Style guide

Please provide a title and an abstract and author details together with a 50-100 word biography for each author on a separate sheet to allow for anonymization. This sheet will be separated from the article before being sent to referees so please put the title only at the start of the article.

Sub-heads should be in bold;

Second order sub-heads should be in bold italic;

Please use single quotation marks (double quotation marks for a quote within a quote);

Indent long quotes of two lines or more;

Please do not use the enter button to insert space between paragraphs or headings;

All illustrations, tables and figures should be sent separately either at the end of the MS Word file or as attached JPGs. Clearly label approximately where they should be placed with fig 1, table 1 etc.

Citations and bibliographic references should be in Harvard style.

Part I: Citations

Place references in your work in the following order: Name, Date: page number(s)

For example,

1. Directly quoting an author

It is sometimes forgotten that 'English is one of the most flexible and expressive languages in the world' (Hicks, 1993, p.1)

He goes on to say, 'In brief, the reigning media consensus has been characterised either as overly liberal or leftist or as conservative, depending on the view of the critic' (McQuail, 1992, pp.255-6).

2. Indirectly quoting an author (where you sum up what is being stated in your own words). This must be grammatically correct, as well as accurate.

E.g.: Hargreaves (2003, p.47) believes that Henry Hetherington's populist journalistic techniques, employed by him in the 1830s, were the basis of tabloid journalism.

3. Referring broadly to ideas you have read in a publication (not to a specific point/quote). You don't need

to cite page number in this case. E.g.: Franklin (1997) has highlighted the effects and reasons for so-called dumbing down in the media.

4. If the same person is referred to immediately after a previous citation, you can use *ibid*.

5. If there are more than two authors, you can use *et al*.

Part II: Bibliographic References

A list of Bibliographic References is required at the end. Please provide the names of all authors (including first name initial) and provide references in alphabetical order of surname. With an author who has written a number of books and articles that have been cited, list them all separately, with the most recent first (see Manning).

Examples of how to present Bibliographic references for Journalism Education are given below

Bibliographic references

Franklin, B (2003) 'A Good Day to Bury Bad News?': Journalists, Sources and the Packaging of Politics in Cottle, S (Ed.), *News, Public Relations Power*, London: Sage pp. 45-61

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Journalism Education

The Journal of the Association for Journalism Education

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Articles

AI Disclosure in Academia: Analysing Undergraduate and Postgraduate AI Usage in 2023-24 Assessments, Emma Heywood and Jesse Armstrong, University of Sheffield

Journalism, education and AI: How Norwegian news media are adapting to AI and the implications for journalism educators: Roy Emanuelsen, and Hans-Olav Hodøl, University of Agder Kristiansand

Developing specialised online journalistic training in contentious policy issues, such as migration, Donna Smith, The Open University and Centre for Online and Distance Education, University of London and Rob McNeil, The Migration Observatory, University of Oxford

Reading between the lines Mercedes de Luis Andrés, University of Klagenfurt

Book reviews

Literary Sports Journalism: Beyond the Boundaries by Tom Bradshaw, Review by Alan Geere; **Voices from Ukraine** by Rashad Mammadov reviewed by Sean Dodson, Leeds Beckett University