RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE IMPACT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON JOURNALISM. ADVERSE EFFECTS VS. BENEFITS

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ABSTRACT

Artificial intelligence has revolutionized the way work is done in journalism. Whereas in the past, employees in the field would spend hours trying to find the right approach to a story, now AI tools can solve specific requirements in minutes. It is all within journalists' reach, from suggesting ideas to creating entire storylines or generating images using associated text. Moreover, avatars can be generated using artificial intelligence; voice-overs can be created on demand to give sound to clips or specific graphics can be made. So the work of people employed in this field can be made significantly easier. This article takes an empirical look at how the work of these professionals can be made easier with artificial intelligence tools. Preliminary results indicate that, currently, artificial intelligence has limitations and serves as an aid to human characters; in the future, as technology improves, there is a risk that these automated tools will take the place of today's professionals. This paper aims to provide insight into the advantages and disadvantages of this emerging technology in journalistic content creation.

Introduction

Artificial intelligence has seen a meteoric rise since the end of last year, and in a few short months, a host of tools have emerged that we never imagined we would see working so quickly. However, the term artificial intelligence is familiar; we found it after 1950 when it was first coined by the man considered to be the father of A.I. According to Beg & Verma (2023), "Artificial intelligence is a rapidly growing field that has the potential to revolutionize the way we think about intelligence." Artificial intelligence started from the human desire to make machines replace some of the work of humans. From the simple turning on of lights, as SmartThings does, to autonomous driving of cars, as Tesla does, all of these attributes of artificial intelligence have been developed over the past 50 years. Moreover, many aspects of our lives have been automated, and robots like Pepper are used in many spheres to replace human staff (Huang, 2018). Since the end of 2022, the development of artificial intelligence has seen a considerable advance, so several policymakers involved in this process have proposed that this phenomenon be put on hold, at least temporarily. The proposal resulted from the risks that society could be exposed to due to rapid technological advancement that could rapidly replace human tasks due to the development of digital minds. Chat GPT (Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer), created by OpenAI, San Francisco, has radically changed how many view artificial intelligence. The new A.I. tool can answer questions and logically converse on the coherent question-answer model. In preparation for this study, we asked Chat Gpt, the free version, what it can do, and the answer came within seconds. He stated that he could give answers on various topics in areas such as science, geography, and general culture, assist with writing texts, perform translations, answer riddles, and do voice synthesis, but without playing the sound. Many of the tasks of Chat Gpt are related to many of the activities of journalists, and together with other A.I. tools, they can significantly contribute to traditional newsrooms' working procedures.

Avatars and journalism

Since the end of 2022, several tools have emerged that can influence the work of journalists. For example, avatars created by artificial intelligence have been developed. In 2006, a definition given to avatars stated that it

is "a digital model of a person" (Bailenson et al., 2006). Today, some sites offer for fee a variety of avatars, ranging from young people who can appear in a sneaker advertising clip to serious-looking people who can be used to present news stories. Such avatars are hardly distinguishable from people. Perfect lip-synchronization with the transmitted text has reached a level that is hard to distinguish for people unfamiliar with the technology. Avatars can be used, for example, as virtual presenters, virtual reporters, or to explain complex topics to make them easy to understand. The procedures for using avatars are elementary and can be done quickly.

Furthermore, customized avatars can be made on request, and the avatar of an authentic presenter or reporter can be used even when they are not available for work. At the moment, using custom avatars is quite expensive. However, as more companies develop the technology, it could become more affordable and be used on a macro level. However, avatars also have drawbacks. For example, websites offer a small variety of avatars for a small cost, and these, used by many media companies, could limit original content and not arm you with a visual identity for those publications. As mentioned above, customized avatars are expensive and can only be used as long as, for example, the presenter or reporter whose image was used works for the company. If he or she decided to resign shortly after the avatar was made, the costs would not be justified, and they would be unnecessary. Another disadvantage would be the avatar's voice. In the absence of a customized voice which is expensive for the time being, websites offering avatar images have a limited number of possible voices that can be used in each language. If there are several options in English, in Romanian, for example, only few voices may be available, which may only fit some of the activities in the newsroom.

However, in addition to websites offering voice and image avatars, there are also online companies offering artificial intelligence-generated synthesized voice services. By providing written text to these apps, they can turn text into speech, and various vocal timbre, emotion, or intonation variants can be chosen.

Journalism and chatbots

As mentioned in the introductive part, one of the tools that can solve some of the journalistic activities is Chat Gpt. Asked what it can do to help a journalist in the daily work in the newsroom, he answered that it can do several activities (Fig. 1). It can solve several tasks from the work of documentation, checking information, suggestions and story ideas, summarizing and summarizing, proofreading and editing, translation, as well as analysis of trends in certain areas.
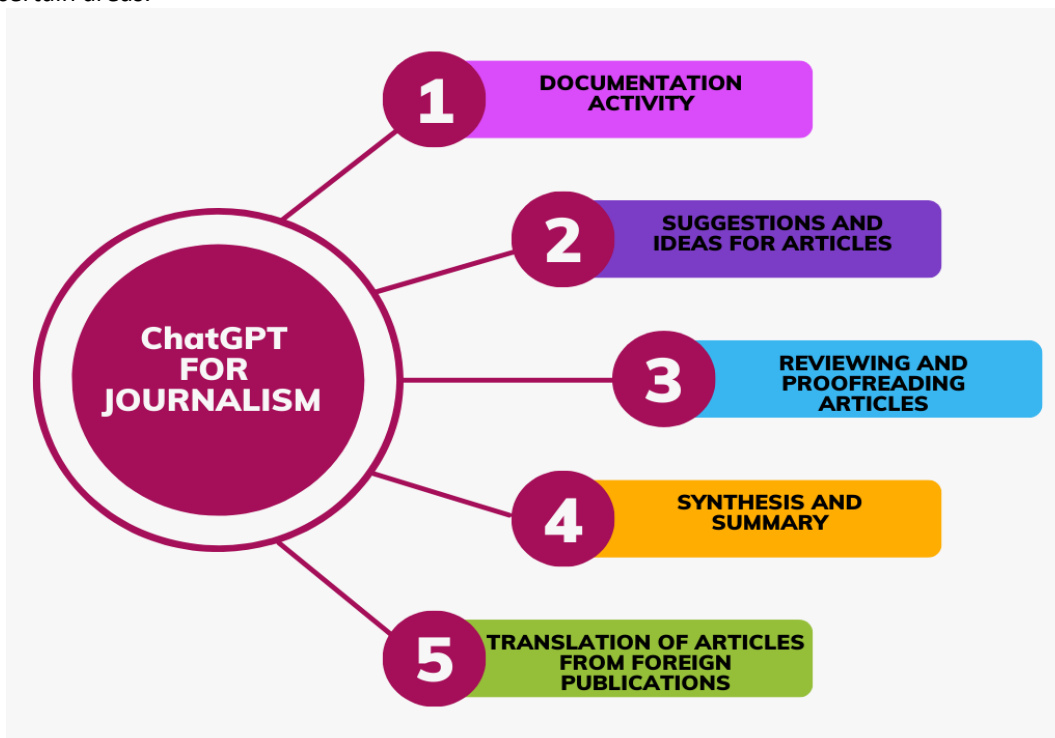

Fig. 1 Chat Gpt's answer to the question of "How he can help a journalist in the newsroom?"

Chat GPT can document in seconds, for example, on an older topic. To see the accuracy of the information, we asked ChatGPT what he knew about the Colectiv fire, one of the most publicized and severe incidents in Romania in the last ten years. The information was 100% factual. He wrote:

"I am familiar with the tragedy at the Colectiv nightclub in Romania. It occurred on October 30, 2015, when a fire broke out during a concert, resulting in the deaths of 64 people and injuring over 140 others. It was one of the most severe tragedies in Romania's recent history". (ChatGpt response)

This is a single paragraph, and he gave precise details on all aspects of the case, and mentioned that the data was updated until September 2021. Also, when journalists run out of ideas, they can ask him for story suggestions, especially timeless material. It can provide a range of possible topics, especially among those likely to generate an audience. It can also summarise information or several long articles to reduce the time needed to document and retrieve information from other publications. It can also serve as a translation tool.

1.   Journalism and task Automation in Newsrooms

Artificial intelligence can help journalists in the automated transcription of interviews. For reporters and web editors who handle the monitoring side of other publications, these resources can be valuable and significantly reduce the work time. Also, through artificial intelligence, the content of journalistic material can be tailored to the individual preferences and interests of readers. It can automatically attract a larger audience and more online traffic. Through the use of artificial intelligence, interactive journalistic content can be created by using virtual reality and augmented reality to explain specific topics. This provides an immersive experience where the audience is not just spectators at an event. High-quality visuals can be produced to appeal to a broader audience.

In addition, artificial intelligence can optimize news distribution on digital platforms, provide personalized recommendations, or improve interaction with readers through virtual assistants.

Tools that generate images based on explanatory text in online media are also helpful. The same is valid for publishing software. The procedure is greatly simplified, primarily as images can be generated based on a given text. Thus, the work of image editors is shortened in terms of time.

Artificial Intelligence and the Risk of fake news

Misformation is one of the most significant risks in journalism that can arise from using artificial intelligence. News sites are experimenting with and exclusively using artificial intelligence for news aggregation and publication worldwide. Thus, the lack of the human factor in weighing and analyzing information can spread false information. As mentioned by Vlăduțescu&Voinea (2019) regarding the widespread appearance of fake news "these are signs that we are in one of the important moments of humanity".

Manipulation of audio-visual content is another phenomenon that may increase with the possibility of AI-based content generation. Deepfakes may increase significantly in the current media environment, where information propagates at lightning speed. And given that

"Communication starts with the premise that man is an influenced being, permeable to influence" (Vlăduțescu&Dima, 2012); the risk of trying to influence people through these types of material is very high.

Moreover, advanced digital technologies allow the rapid distribution of information on social platforms, including those with false content. So there is a risk that artificial intelligence can rapidly influence and manipulate other information propagation methods to spread false information.

Another point to note is that artificial intelligence could help those spreading false information manage fake profiles on social networks using bots or other automated software.

Conclusions

Artificial intelligence is already here, and some publications are already using tools that can help in small, understaffed newsrooms. There are several tools that can help journalists and related staff in newsrooms and make their working time easier. Automating tasks, translating articles from the international press, and creating interactive content through virtual or augmented reality are just a few examples of how artificial intelligence can make its way into newsrooms. This allows journalists to optimize their time at work and focus their attention on the more complicated things that require human involvement. Specifically, AI can be a tool to create engaging content, but more importantly, content that can bring in an audience. However, the risk of spreading false information increases exponentially with the development of artificial intelligence.

Professional ethics must be respected in this field, and human journalists are the only ones who can weigh information well, verify it, interpret it, and put it in context. Otherwise, the risk of misinformation will be very high.

In addition, the use of intelligence needs to be very well regulated, which is why laws on copyright, privacy, or image rights should be rethought in the context of the emergence of artificial intelligence tools. A balance must

therefore be struck between freedom of expression and the responsibility of journalists so that artificial intelligence is not used for malicious purposes.

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