



Science Communication in the Digital Era

From broadcast to algorithms: how platforms shape news

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IR0000032 – ITINERIS, Italian Integrated Environmental Research Infrastructures System
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Mission 4 “Education and Research” - Component 2: “From research to business” - Investment
3.1: “Fund for the realisation of an integrated system of research and innovation infrastructures”



The Dawn of Digital News

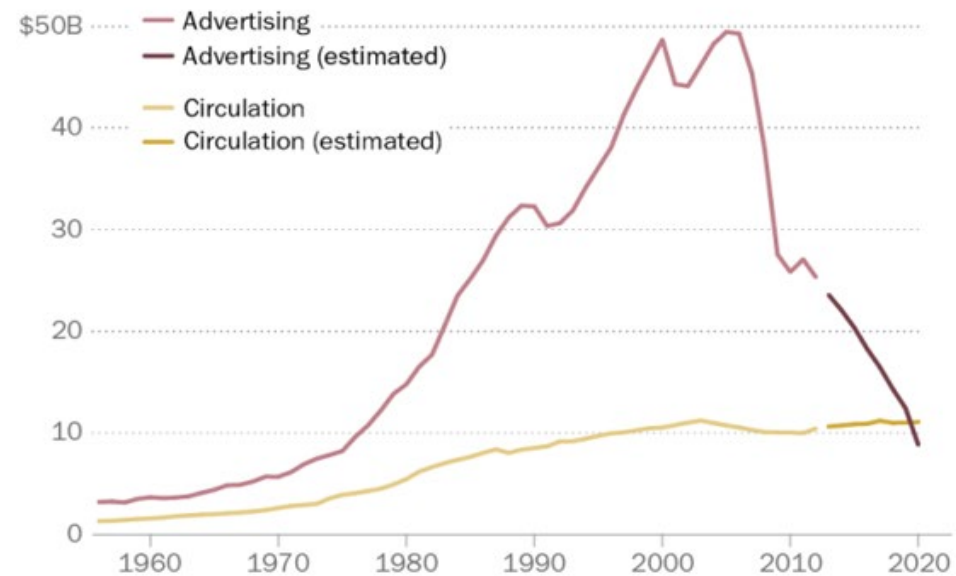
- 🌐 In the second half of the 1990s, major international newspapers begin to appear online, one after another.
- 🌐 In Europe, the process is slower. In many newsrooms, computers themselves only arrive during the '90s.
- 🌐 In Italy, *Corriere.it* goes online with a digital edition in 1998.



The Dawn of Digital News

Estimated advertising and circulation revenue of the newspaper industry

Total revenue of U.S. newspapers (in U.S. dollars)



Source: News Media Alliance, formerly Newspaper Association of America (through 2012); Pew Research Center analysis of year-end Securities and Exchange Commission filings of publicly traded newspaper companies (2013-2020).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The Dawn of Digital News

	DIFFUSIONE Cartacea Aprile 2000	DIFFUSIONE Cartacea Aprile 2022	DIFFERENZA	DIFFUSIONE Cartacea e Digitale Aprile 2022	DIFFERENZA
CORRIERE DELLA SERA	721.051	157.260	-78,2%	261.691	-63,7%
REPUBBLICA (LA)	648.140	89.992	-86,1%	142.134	-78,1%
SOLE 24 ORE (IL)	430.321	50.208	-88,3%	137.396	-68,1%
STAMPA (LA)	382.257	75.698	-80,2%	98.160	-74,3%
MESSAGGERO (IL)	281.671	52.813	-81,3%	68.832	-75,6%
GIORNALE (IL)	259.548	30.883	-88,1%	32.700	-87,4%
QN-II Resto del Carlino	187.509	67.106	-64,2%	69.826	-62,8%
QN-La Nazione	154.003	43.469	-71,8%	44.989	-70,8%
GAZZETTINO (IL)	139.018	33.605	-75,8%	48.120	-65,4%
SECOLO XIX (IL)	129.912	23.832	-81,7%	26.666	-79,5%
MATTINO (IL)	109.769	21.013	-80,9%	25.566	-76,7%
QN-II Giorno	97.505	21.330	-78,1%	21.647	-77,8%
AVVENIRE	96.027	75.403	-21,5%	104.530	8,9%
TIRRENO (IL)	89.543	22.370	-75,0%	24.362	-72,8%
ITALIA OGGI	82.875	8.157	-90,2%	17.044	-79,4%

A prophecy

“The classified ads (and stock market quotations) are the bedrock of the press. Should an alternative source of easy access to such diverse daily information be found, the press will fold.”

Marshall McLuhan 1964

The News Economy before the internet

News in newspapers, as a commercial product, have some very specific characteristics

Non-fungible and non-excludable

Distribution cost remains the same regardless of production cost

The audience seeks out the product (in proportion to its salience)



Natural monopolies

Start-up costs especially distribution were very high, so competition was limited.

After the initial investment, all other marginal costs were relatively low.

Local newspapers tended to be natural monopolies, and the only place to publish and read classifieds.



“The newspaper business was as easy a way to make huge returns as existed in America. No paper in a one-paper city, however bad the product or however inept the management, could avoid gushing profits.”

Warren Buffett (2007)

Generalization vs Specialization

In the 1990s, the structural incentive of Web 1.0 isn't integration, but rather specialization and the disaggregation of services.

Creation and distribution costs on the web were comparatively tiny.

Around the year 2000, initially simply because it's trendy, advertisers begin to move online as well.



Content is King

“When it comes to an interactive network such as the Internet, the definition of “content” becomes very wide. [...] But the broad opportunities for most companies involve supplying information or entertainment. No company is too small to participate. [...]

The Internet also allows information to be distributed worldwide at basically zero marginal cost to the publisher. Opportunities are remarkable, and many companies are laying plans to create content for the Internet.”

Bill Gates – Content is King, 1996

The rise of the smartphone

Around 2005, the first smartphones start gaining popularity, especially among the population segments most valuable to advertisers.

Gradually, the world becomes always online.



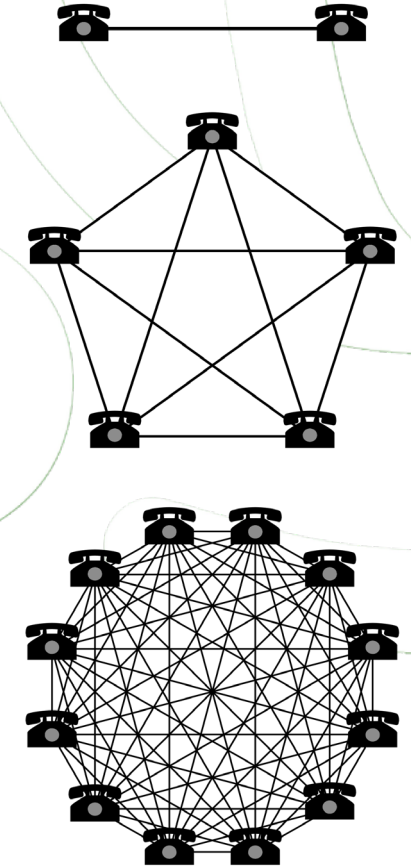
The Rise of Social Media

- 🌐 In 2003, Zuckerberg creates a creepy website, Facemash, using photos of Harvard students. It will become the precursor to Facebook.
- 🌐 In 2005, Odeo, a podcast company, launches twttr, a service that lets you post SMS messages visible to anyone in your group.
- 🌐 That same year, Rupert Murdoch's media giant NewsCorp acquires Myspace, which quickly fills up with ads.



Network Effects

- 🌐 Newspapers, especially local ones, like social media, are typically subject to what economists call network effects.
- 🌐 They tend to concentrate and create monopolistic or oligopolistic equilibria. Once established, they generate lock-in and coordination issues.
- 🌐 These are the same network effects behind the explosive growth of social media and other digital platforms.



It was not inevitable, and it's not just the internet

Newspapers were online before most institutions, with more money, authority, and visibility than anyone.

But they fell victim to the contradictions of their own business model. They thought their business was content creation, but in fact they were in the business of intermediation.

It is certainly not just the fault of the internet or social media. The rise of the 24-hour news cycle had already exposed some of the press's structural weaknesses.



Native advertising, Sponsored Content

- 🌐 **Sponsored content** – The sponsor pays a publisher to create, distribute, and promote a specific piece of content, with or without editorial collaboration.
- 🌐 **Native advertising** – Advertising that matches the look and feel of the content on the host site. The goal is to reproduce the user experience of the surrounding content, both in form and in substance.



Perché l'intelligenza artificiale ha qualcosa da insegnare ai medici (e viceversa)

La prima cosa da sapere è che oggi giorno abbiamo a disposizione enormi quantità di dati sulla salute.



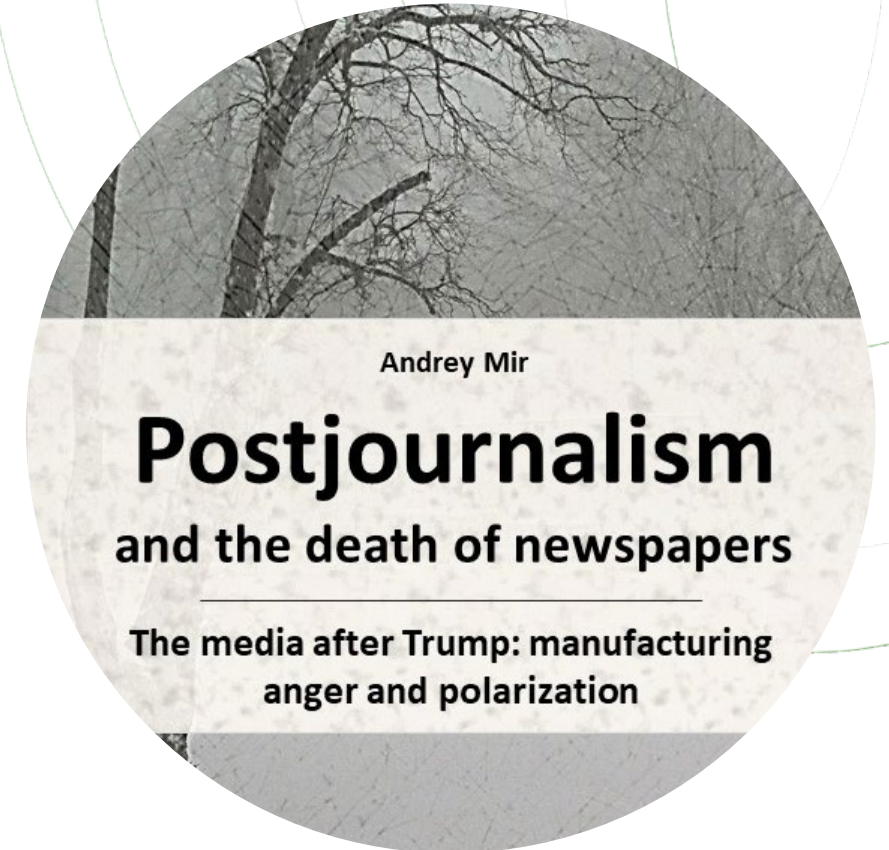
Di [Alessandro Tavecchio](#)

27.10.17  [Facebook](#)  [Twitter](#)  [Snap](#)

Questo post fa parte di [Formula](#), la serie di Motherboard in cui esploriamo le meraviglie dell'intelligenza artificiale del 21esimo secolo.

Post-Journalism

- 🌐 The shift from an ad-driven business model to one based on subscribers or memberships changes incentives for what gets covered.
- 🌐 “In postjournalism, reporting is commenting.” – Andrey Mir
- 🌐 From this perspective, media polarization is not a side effect but a necessary condition for survival as a business.



Churnalism and Sturgeon's Law

- Starting in the 2010s, journalism began to polarize into two paths: churnalism/PR/native advertising on one side, and quality journalism on the other.
- In 2016, four out of five articles in British digital media were copy-paste from press releases.
- Another interpretation is that digitalization did not change the quality of journalism much, but significantly increased its quantity.
- This is gonna get much worse with AI


News ▾ U.S. edition ▾

Realtime Coverage

Are you reading journalism or plagiarism? A new online tool can help uncover ...

Digital Trends - Apr 24, 2013

Ever wonder if you're reading original reporting or a regurgitated press release? In our age of digital journalism, things move quickly, and writers sometimes crib pieces of their articles straight from press releases. While it's fine to occasionally quote press ...



check your surfing for plagiarism and recycled press releases with Churnalism

Flick Filosopher (blog) - 16 minutes ago

Should you trust that report? Open-source tool can help

PCWorld (blog) - 13 hours ago

Churnalism: discover when the "news" you're reading is a press-release

Boing Boing - 17 hours ago

"Churnalism" tracker catches journalists copying press releases, Wikipedia

Ars Technica - 20 hours ago

Is This Work Of Plagiarism? Here Is Tool Called 'Churnalism' To Answer That ...

iDigitalTimes.com - Apr 24, 2013

Show recently hidden articles

Highly Cited

Is It Journalism, or Just a Repackaged Press Release? Here's a Tool to Help ...

The Atlantic - Apr 23, 2013

Today the Sunlight Foundation unveils Churnalism, which will compare any text online to a corpus of corporate, government, and other promotional content. Rebecca J. Rosen Apr 23 2013, 10:01 AM ET. Tweet. More. Email · Print ...

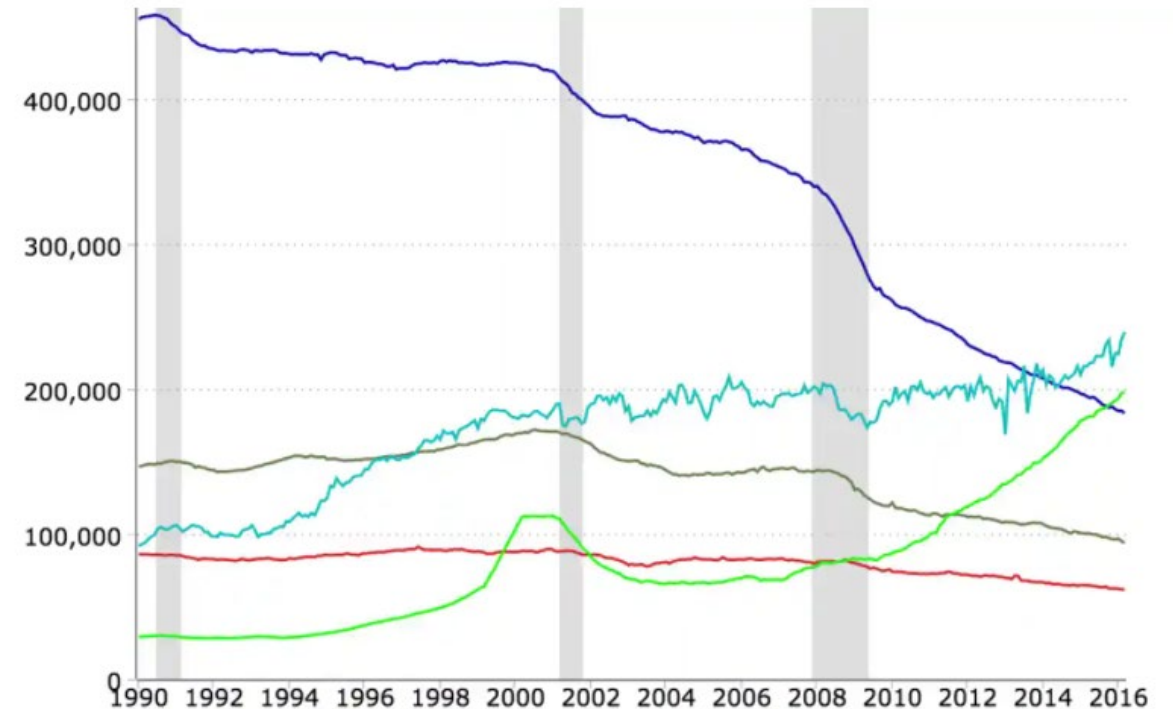
The Golden Age of Journalism, the end of journalists

On one hand, news content is better than at any point in history. New technologies and digitalization have enabled new formats and brought in new voices, to the second live coverage is considered normal and obvious, and there is an overabundance of expert voices everywhere.

On the other: In the US, 60% of journalism jobs have disappeared over the past 25 years. In Italy, the number of registered journalists dropped by about 10% from 2010 to 2018 (though the vast majority of those contributing to the news media ecosystem are not even “pubblicisti”).

Journalism is fine, journalists are not.

Employment statistics show the effects of the digital age on newsprint



The blue line represents newspaper employment. The green shows internet jobs. Red: books. Turquoise: film and video production. Olive green: magazines. Photograph: US Bureau of Labor Statistics



THANKS!

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