

“Automated Journalism”, Robots in the Newsroom: The Future of Corporate Media

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The Main-Stream Media (MSM) or corporate media has recently began making moves to replace humans with robots or “automated journalism” to produce its news stories. Not to say that the corporate media journalists who currently work under the propaganda machine are independent and are committed to the truth. However, more than ever, corporate media conglomerates are slowly replacing those same traditional journalists with robots that can produce twice the amount of stories at a faster rate to beat out their competition is just one of the reasons for the change. But there is a bigger picture to this new advanced technology.

Robots as we know, have replaced humans in several industries especially in the automobile industry where robots are already replacing humans on production lines. The media is no exception. Recently the *New York Post* (a tabloid propaganda newspaper) reported that Bilderberg attendee and Bloomberg’s Editor-in-Chief John Micklethwait told Bloomberg’s 2,400 journalists in an internal office memo that he was creating a 10-person team that will study how to “use more automation in writing and reporting.” Micklethwait reportedly said:

“Why do we need you, if the basic idea is to get computers to do more of the work?” Micklethwait asked in the memo, obviously addressing an unspoken concern among his staff.

One irony of automation is that it is only as good as humans make it. That applies to both the main types of automated journalism. In the first, the computer will generate the story or headline by itself. But it needs humans to tell it what to look for, where to look for it and to guarantee its independence and transparency to our readers. In the second sort, the computer spots a trend, delivers a portion of a story to you and in essence asks the question: Do you want to add or subtract something to this and then publish it? And it will only count as Bloomberg journalism if you sign off on it.

“Done properly, automated journalism has the potential to make all our jobs more interesting,” he said



New York Magazine published an article in 2014 titled ‘Robots Are Invading the News Business, and It’s Great for Journalists’ interviewed an independent analyst by the name of Ken Doctor:

Ken Doctor, an independent analyst who studies the news industry, told me this week that the rise of robot reporting is a product of the times — both technologically and in terms of the troubled economics of the news industry, which has led media organizations to search for ways to reduce their costs. “The robots are just another tool of new journalism,” he said. In the future, Doctor predicts, robots won’t just be reporters’ competitors. They’ll collaborate with us by preparing data-dense paragraphs that we can then supplement with our own analysis, producing a hybrid story that’s better than our human efforts alone.

“Journalism is becoming a more highly skilled job,” Doctor said. “Simply showing up, in the Woody Allen sense — being able to read a press release or interview a single person, and write up a story that is understandable in 750 words — that’s not going to be enough. The optimistic part of this is that we’d use computers to do the basic work of organizing facts, and that the judgment and analysis, the interpretation, the experience is brought to it by humans”

In 2014, the *Associated Press* partnered with *Automated Insights* (AI) to produce automated quarterly earnings reports by using AI’s *Wordsmith* platform. According to AI’s website:

The Associated Press, working with Automated Insights and Zacks Investment Research, uses automation technology to write earnings stories. Previously, AP’s reporters wrote such stories. AP now produces nearly 3,700 quarterly earnings stories for US and Canadian companies, over 12 times the number that AP reporters and editors produced manually

Robots taking the place of humans in the newsroom are just another way of eliminating journalists to cut labor costs. Just like *McDonalds* is eliminating their workforce and replacing them with robots to serve customers due to the \$15 an hour increase in the minimum wage across the U.S. Although Ken Doctor said that the way robots (providing and organizing basic facts) would collaborate with humans who would then provide the experience and the final analysis to produce a “*hybrid story*” is nonsense, it’s about reducing costs for corporate news owners and executives. Another important factor to consider is that humans and robots collaborating to produce news are easily controlled by top management. According to a 2014 article from *Politico* by Charles Lewis, a former *60 Minutes* “investigative” producer and founder and former Executive Director for the *Center for Public Integrity* (CPI) wrote a story titled ‘*Why I Left 60 Minutes*’ and said:

Fewer commercial news organizations support investigative journalism now than at any time in recent history, and reporters today—especially those who aggressively seek the truths that government, business and other powerful institutions seek to conceal—are arguably more alone, more exposed and more vulnerable to professional and even physical harm than they ever were. There has to be a better way

Charles Lewis left the CPI in 2005 which has been hijacked by the CIA-connected *Ford Foundation*, George Soros’s ‘*Open Society Foundation*’ and other corporate foundations who are major contributors for the nonprofit organization. The corporate media will be a competitive market for journalists especially if they are competing against robots that do not require a salary, a retirement plan or healthcare benefits. It is not a hard choice for those who manage or own corporate media especially when it comes to their profits and political agendas.

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