

# **Information Integrity Forum Report**

**2024**

# UTS CENTRE FOR MEDIA TRANSITION

## ABOUT THE FORUM

The Centre for Media Transition (CMT) is an interdisciplinary initiative exploring news media regulation, information integrity, news media best practice, and new business models for journalism. In 2023, we published a report on how Australian newsrooms are adopting generative AI, and its impacts on the production of public interest journalism and the challenges it poses for the integrity of the news information ecosystem. As the ethical implications of genAI become clearer and new technologies continue to be refined - often outpacing regulation - the CMT is exploring the possibilities of intra-newsroom and co-regulatory policies to safeguard what we call 'information integrity', both in Australia and significantly, the region.

In 2024, the CMT partnered with the U.S. Embassy & Consulates in Australia to deliver the Information Integrity Forum 2024 at our premises at the University of Technology Sydney on the 1st and 2nd of August. We extended the scope of our research on genAI, journalism and information integrity into four key countries: India, the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia, inviting four senior news editors from different outlets in each country to participate. Hon Michelle Rowland MP opened the event with remarks on research the CMT has conducted in the fields of information integrity and media policy.

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## ABOUT THE FORUM

On the first day of the forum, keynote speaker Marian-Andrei Rizoiu, Lead of the Behavioral Data Science Lab at UTS, spoke to his team's extensive research on understanding, tracking and intervening radicalisation online. Participating editors were then invited to share the professional challenges of protecting information in their newsrooms and broader media ecosystems in a full day of sessions. The editors, alongside CMT researchers, reviewed intra-newsroom mechanisms to secure information integrity from a global best practice perspective. At the close of the sessions, the cohort visited the Google News Initiative to learn about their investigative tools for journalism.

On the second day, keynote speaker Hamish Boland-Rudder, Head of Digital and Product at the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), shared real world case studies demonstrating the use of AI tools to facilitate collaboration among team members working across the world, sometimes with large data sets. The CMT then facilitated two roundtables on media policy solutions and AI regulation with additional input from Australian experts in academia and the news media industry.

## HOST TEAM

**Prof Monica Attard**

CMT Co-Director

**Prof Derek Wilding**

CMT Co-Director

**Kean Wong**

Researcher & Consultant

**Dr Michael Davis**

CMT Research Fellow

**Alexia Giacomazzi**

Project Manager

**Rosa Alice**

Centre Coordinator

## DELEGATES

**Mark Maley**

Editorial Policy Manager, ABC News

**Corinne Podger**

Senior Manager, Programs & Education, Walkley Foundation

**Chris Zappone**

Digital Foreign Editor at The Age/Sydney Morning Herald

**Miguel D'Souza**

CMT Researcher & Google Teaching Fellow 2020-22

## **DELEGATES CONT.**

### **Creina Chapman**

Deputy Chair and CEO at Australian Communications and Media Authority

### **Alan Sunderland**

Journalist, Board Member of the Local & Independent News Association

### **Rashell Habib**

Head of Digital News & Strategy 10 News First

### **Anya Shiffrin**

Director of Technology, Media and Communications at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs

## **KEYNOTES**

### **Marian-Andrei Rizoiu**

Lead of the UTS Behavioral Data Science Lab

### **Hamish Boland-Rudder**

Head of Digital & product and the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists

## FORUM PARTICIPANTS

### INDIA

**Pooja Prasanna**, The News Minute, Editorial Head (Reporting)

**Samar Halarnkar**, Article 14, Founder and Editor

**Sannuta Raghu**, Scroll.in, Executive Producer, Leading AI Working Group - News and Journalism

**Seema Chishti**, The Wire, Editor

### INDONESIA

**Laban Laisila**, Narasi, Head of Newsroom & Narasi Academy

**Uni Lubis**, IDN Times, Editor-in-Chief

**Victor Mambor**, Jubi Papua, Chief Editor and Founder

**Yandhrie Arvian**, PT Tempo Inti Media Tbk, Executive Editor

### MALAYSIA

**Ashwad Ismail**, Astro Awani, Editor-in-Chief

**Esther Ng**, The Star, Chief Content Officer

**Lee Chin Tan**, MCIL Malaysia, Group 000 (Group Content and Strategy)

**Ling Fong Ng**, Malaysiakini, Managing Editor

### THE PHILIPPINES

**Arlene Burgos**, ABS-CBN, Head, Engagement and Partnerships

**John Ray Arrabe**, GMA Network, Senior Assistant Vice President for News Programs

**Marichu Villanueva**, The Philippine Star, Associate Editor/News Editor

**Mildred Galarpe**, SunStar, Associate Publisher

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## SESSION SUMMARY

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The overall purpose of the sessions was to explore the complex interplay of political power, technological advancements, and journalistic ethics in the fight against misinformation, offering insights into effective countermeasures and highlighting the systemic challenges involved.

*The scope of challenges to information integrity* session which was led by Prof Monica Attard focused on the challenges faced by journalists and media organisations in combating the spread of mis- and disinformation in participating countries. Key themes included the increasingly blurred lines between legitimate news and propaganda, driven by government actions, the influence of social media platforms, and the varying effectiveness of fact-checking initiatives. The discussions highlighted the difficulties in establishing trustworthy sources, the impact of low media literacy, and the need for collaboration and innovative strategies, such as prebunking and contextualised reporting, to counter the spread of false narratives.

The *Review of intra-newsroom mechanisms* session was led by SE Asia media expert Kean Wong, focusing on the challenges facing news organisations regionally. Participants explored issues such as political interference in media ownership, the impact of misinformation and disinformation, and the role of training and technological advancements like AI in maintaining journalistic integrity. Discussions also highlighted the importance of building audience trust, the need for innovative approaches to community engagement, and the evolving relationship between news outlets and their audiences in a rapidly changing digital landscape. Specific examples from the various news organisations were used to illustrate these challenges and potential solutions.

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## CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

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### **An evolving media landscape**

The media landscape is evolving rapidly with the rise of online platforms and the decline of traditional media and lowering of trust in traditional media. This shift brings new challenges:

- Younger audiences primarily consume news on platforms like YouTube and seldom go directly to news sources. This makes it challenging for news outlets to reach these demographics and combat misinformation within those spaces.
- The rise of social media as a primary news source allows for the easy and rapid spread of misinformation, often organically through trusted personal networks.
- Social media algorithms can exacerbate the problem by amplifying content based on engagement rather than accuracy.
- In countries like Indonesia, where there are over 43,000 online news media accounts often run by individuals with vested interests, the sheer volume of information sources makes it challenging to discern credible information.
- There is an oversupply of news products and a growing distrust in politicians and the media organisations that amplify them. This leads to news avoidance among certain groups, particularly Gen Z.
- Controversial topics such as race and religion are routinely mobilised by bad actors to spread disinformation in countries represented. In Malaysia, race, religion and royalty are used by the government to walk in legal changes without proper consultation, such as requiring social media platforms and messaging services with more than eight million users to register for a regulatory license.

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## CHALLENGES

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### Government interference

In the participating countries, governments are actively undermining information integrity, posing a significant threat to media ecosystems and causing the media to self-censor in fear of retribution or penalties. The participants identified the following challenges:

- In **India**, the ruling party runs an "information infrastructure" that promotes misinformation, often assisted by government bodies. The Indian government also exerts control over resources and uses lawfare to demonise and subjugate journalists who hold them accountable. This has led to the imprisonment of journalists reporting on sensitive issues like Kashmir.
- In **Indonesia**, the government and police act as gatekeepers of information, often promoting their own narratives and undermining trust in traditional sources. They also utilise influencers to bypass traditional media and spread their message. The Indonesian government has attempted to regulate online content (beyond broadcast) and prevent investigative journalism, further eroding press freedom. During the 2024 Indonesian general election, Tik Tok was not used organically; government officials exploited relationships with online platforms to amplify algorithms and take down content.
- Government allies spread disinformation in **Western Indonesia**; the military and police pay a small sum to have websites created, often by retired journalists, as websites have more credibility than social media accounts. There are more than 25,000 news websites in Indonesia.

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## CHALLENGES

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- In **the Philippines**, government officials, including local mayors and governors, utilise social media to present their narratives and control the flow of information, often sidelining traditional press conferences. A concerning example is the governor of Cebu, Gwendolyn Garcia, who operates her own media channel, Sugbo News, with a considerable following. Ultimately, the Government of the Philippines does not subsidise the media; it pays for its own broadcast machinery.
- In **Malaysia**, there is discussion on how to regulate social media platforms and striking the balance between freedom of expression and the prohibition of incitement to violence. This is a changing point from Anwar Ibrahim's calls for reform and freedom of the press, to now where there is a general understanding that some form of governing must take place. There is an opportunity for government overreach in the setup of the Malaysian Media Council, where two government representatives will be appointed by the Communications Minister to sit on the board.

### **Lack of resources and expertise**

- Newsrooms often lack the resources to effectively combat misinformation with several organisations only having 1-2 people dedicated to fact-checking.
- The lack of media literacy, particularly digital literacy, among the public makes them more susceptible to misinformation. This issue is compounded by low levels of reading comprehension and critical thinking in certain populations, especially when the press responds to misinformation with lengthy articles that exclude poor readers.

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- Fact-checking itself can be problematic. It is often a reactive and resource-intensive process that can resemble a "whack-a-mole" game. Furthermore, focusing solely on fact-checking can detract from the core principles of journalism by placing less emphasis on the process of verification.
- The challenge is not limited to fact checking stories, but entire narratives, for example, in India, being against the government is conflated with being against the state and sedition laws make this connection easier.

### The nature of online platforms

- The encrypted nature of messaging apps makes it difficult to study audience behaviour and understand the spread of misinformation.
- Search engines may direct users to websites based on popularity rather than accuracy, further amplifying misinformation.
- In the Philippines, agents of disinformation will purchase domains, inheriting readymade audiences, and change the website content over time. This is also standard practice in Indonesia and India.
- It must be noted that platform users have, in some instances, helped to counter popular narratives spread by governments. Samar Halarnkar from Article-14 believes that YouTube influencers destabilised Narendra Modi's 2024 election efforts, which prompted a non-transparent attempt to make modifications to the Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill 2024 that defined YouTubers as broadcasters. Since the forum, this bill was scrapped; a result of Modi's diminished power in the coalition government.

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## SOLUTIONS IMPLEMENTED BY NEWSROOMS

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### Internal news ombudsman process

- **Tempo** employs an internal news ombudsman process to uphold information integrity. This process involves a legal counsel and an external expert who routinely review content, ensuring adherence to best practices. Wage penalties are enforced for violations. Two to three senior editors are needed to oversee the ombudsmen system, who remain members of the office for three years at a time. The outcomes of the ombudsmen process are not communicated to Tempo's audience.
- At **ABS-CBN**, the ombudsman has oversight over the whole company. It's a high-profile office that used to be headed by a retired associate justice of the Supreme Court.

### Comprehensive style guides and SOPs

- **IDN Times** uses an extensive style guide exceeding 90 pages, which is continuously updated to reflect evolving trends. This guide goes beyond grammar and style, encompassing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for situations like breaking news and journalist protection.
- **The Star** maintains online guidelines to ensure flexibility and facilitate adherence to KPIs.
- **Narasi** utilises a production book for SOPs and a code of ethical conduct.
- **Malaysiakini**'s handbook provides guidance on best practice including what to do with gifts if it is not possible to reject them.

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### Public-facing ombudsman

- **The Wire** has appointed a respected senior journalist as their ombudsman, who can publicly comment on the outlet's work and even request the removal of content.

### Buddy system for new journalists

- **IDN Times** implements a "buddy" system, pairing new journalists with experienced colleagues for a three-month period, fostering mentorship and knowledge transfer.

### Regular training and reminders

Before the next generation of digital natives take the mantle, it will be necessary for legacy journalists to pass on knowledge of orthodox methods during the transition period.

- At **IDN Times**, training is embedded in the daily news production process, with staff receiving reminders of key SOPs as news unfolds.
- **The Philippine Star** offers both external and in-house training programs. Their employees also conduct training for other organisations, public and private.

### External story review

- **Narasi**, with a small team of 28, cannot engage an ombudsman, instead enlisting external individuals to review stories before publication for an added layer of scrutiny.
- During elections, **Tempo** brings in an external expert to assess reporting for bias.

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### **Transparency regarding ownership and funding**

To build trust with audiences, it is crucial for outlets to be transparent about their ownership structure and any potential corporate or political influences.

- Seema Chishti from **The Wire** points out that media diversity is not a defense against bigotry because there is competitive bigotry, for example, India has more than 400 news channels and none are independent.

### **Combating corporate influence**

Outlets need to navigate the influence of corporate sponsors and advertisers. Corporate Social Responsibility programs can sometimes be used to leverage positive coverage.

### **Building audience trust**

Hyperlocal and hyperniche approaches: Focus on covering local issues or catering to specific niche interests. Smaller audiences have value because they are more invested in the less popular topic and have a higher level of engagement. This is harder for legacy brands to achieve as they transition to digital in contrast with born digital outlets. Also important to note that in countries like Indonesia, regional offices are considered hyperlocal even though they cater to huge populations.

**Behind-the-scenes content:** Provide audiences with a glimpse into the news production process to humanise the outlet and enhance authenticity.

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- **Astro Awani** delivers news on location to appear less highly produced.

**Community voices:** Encourage audience participation through citizen journalism programs or community writer initiatives.

- **IDN Times** now has more than 50,000 community writers/members that are trained with a similar style book. They are not journalists, but they are trained like them. IDN Times receives 600-800 submissions from these community writers, of which around 200 are published. These submissions are made on specific desk CMS (entertainment, foreign affairs) and quality checked with built-in AI that screens first for plagiarism. Then one of fourteen human editors screen the submissions for misinformation. Top writers receive bonuses of USD200-300.

**Offline activities:** Organise events or leverage platforms like WhatsApp to connect with audiences outside of the digital realm. Reddit is a popular source of information sharing among groups as large as a few hundred thousand users that adhere to their own moderation policies.

- **IDN Times** has 500 WhatsApp groups, which are not just for community writers. Citizen journalists send paid footage to IDN Times before journalists can capture it.

**Content creator collaboration:** Acknowledge and engage with content creators who contribute to the news cycle.

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- At **IDN Times**, community writers are often experts that can produce explainers to accompany breaking news stories. However, editors continue to guide the news agenda, not the content creator or volunteers.
- **ABS-CBN** will sometimes publish a piece of content to honour the engagement of the community with a particular story and recognise the effort of some content creators by publishing their work, which might include artworks of athletes or K-pop celebrities.

**Responding to audience conversations:** Acknowledge how audiences engage with the news and tailor content to their interests. Building relationships with audiences is necessary to be able to do things such as crowdsource eyewitness videos. To build those relationships, it might be necessary to commit 70% of a publication's editorial to human or cultural interest.

**Industry collaboration:** The whole business of journalism must invest more in audience trust, working collectively in consortia. Collaborative ground reporting brings regional expertise together, leading to richer journalism, addressing resource constraints, and overcoming the lack of political will in larger media outlets to investigate significant stories like corruption.

- **The Wire** and **The News Minute** in India were part of an experiment where they were two of five news websites that broadcasted live election results, allowing them to reach a much greater audience.

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### **Fact-checking and verification**

**AI-assisted fact-checking:** Use AI tools for plagiarism detection and fact verification, particularly for content generated by community writers.

**Manual verification:** Implement rigorous verification processes, including contacting sources, cross-referencing information and scrutinising user-generated content.

- **IDN Times** reporters will first search for an image provided by a citizen on Google Images and contact the owner of the image on social media to verify their identity.

**Metadata analysis:** Use metadata from images and videos for geolocation and source verification.

- In a catastrophe such as a public demonstration wherein police use violent force, **Narasi** journalists rely on crowdsourcing eyewitness accounts on the ground through their social media activities. A small team will scour hundreds of thousands of videos and stories and will often need to collaborate to verify them all. The journalists will ask the content owners to share the footage format to view metadata and geolocate the source.

**Moving away from fact-checking products:** Several organisations have moved away from dedicated fact-checking units and instead integrate verification more deeply into their journalistic processes.

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- **Scroll.in** transitioned from dedicated fact checking for years ago, instead contextualising their coverage of major events, producing stories two hours after the event being covered as part of a larger brand strategy.
- The **ABC** has closed its fact-checking unit and reallocated resources to focus on verification. They now investigate stories with consequential misinformation and make the misinformation itself the story, also using this method to scrutinise their own integrity.

### Engaging younger audiences and enhancing media literacy

Newsrooms are experimenting with innovative formats like explainers, behind-the-scenes content, and interactive quizzes to engage younger audiences and improve media literacy.

- **IDN Times** has successfully used quizzes on political and foreign affairs topics to engage Gen Z. One quiz attracted 20,000 users, with the quizzes thematically linked to the articles in which they are embedded, and incorporating fact-checking elements. They also deliver explainers, brainstorming and behind-the-scenes content.
- **Astro Awani** is attempting to make newspapers a primary source of information in schools as part of a media literacy initiative.

### Prebunking strategies

Prebunking involves proactively releasing information to counter potential misinformation before it gains traction. This approach is used for specific event types like elections.

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- **ABN-CBS** prebunks fake news before it becomes widespread, aiming to nip it in the bud as soon as possible.
- The ABC employed a prebunking strategy for the 2023 Australian Indigenous Voice referendum by providing journalists with a resource to answer public questions, particularly helpful for inexperienced journalists.

### **Navigating the challenges of AI and GenAI**

**Human oversight:** Ensure human journalists play a central role in overseeing AI-powered tools and verifying AI-generated content.

**Transparency with audiences:** Be open about the use of AI in the news production process.

**Balancing scale and trust:** Recognise that while AI can enhance scale and efficiency, prioritising trust may require limiting its use.

### **Financial sustainability**

Explore alternative funding models like subscriptions to reduce reliance on advertising and corporate influence.

- Subscriptions for **Article 14** are higher than other outlets in India, especially at the entry level option. Reporters do long-term research, go where mainstream media does not go, and report from the ground on legal issues rather than global affairs - which makes their real-world impact strong.

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- It is important for the sustainability of outlets to own audience data so they can offer their audiences better products.

### **Advocating for collaboration with tech platforms and regulation**

**Collaboration:** Newsrooms are calling for greater collaboration with tech platforms to develop solutions to combat misinformation.

**Regulation:** They are also advocating for regulations that ensure accountability from these platforms without compromising freedom of expression. Many in the industry believe that tech platforms should be required to adhere to their own community standards.

- In Malaysia, there is ongoing discussion about regulating social media platforms and finding a balance between freedom of expression and preventing incitement to violence.

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## ROUNDTABLE: CHALLENGES TO REGULATING FOR STRONGER INFORMATION INTEGRITY

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This roundtable discussion led by Prof Derek Wilding examined the regulatory challenges of combating mis- and disinformation in the digital age. Delegates included ACMA's CEO Creina Chapman and the former ABC Editorial Policy Director and now Local & Independent News Association's Alan Sunderland. Participating editors debated the effectiveness of government regulation, contrasting approaches in Australia, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaysia. The discussion highlighted the tension between media freedom and the need to address misinformation, exploring diverse regulatory models and the role of self-regulation by press councils. Concerns were raised about the power of digital platforms, their impact on media revenue, and the potential for government overreach. Ultimately, the editors considered the need for greater transparency, accountability, and international collaboration to address these complex issues.

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## ROUNDTABLE: CHALLENGES TO REGULATING FOR STRONGER INFORMATION INTEGRITY

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### **Resistance from media outlets**

Alan Sunderland notes a historical resistance within certain sections of the media to government involvement in their publications. Alan suggests that this resistance is tied to broader philosophical considerations. It is fueled by concerns that platforms might exploit regulations to remove content that doesn't align with the legislation's specific criteria, even if it is not actually misinformation. There is perhaps a degree to which media brands benefit from seeing platforms as misinformation hotbeds, but of course this can only be fully exploited if the media industry is itself responsible, transparent and accountable.

### **Concerns about government overreach**

- Pooja Prasanna from The News Minute argues that India already has sufficient laws to tackle misinformation and that further regulation would make journalists vulnerable to government manipulation. This sentiment is echoed by other Indian editors who strongly oppose any government role in regulating social media platforms or mainstream media.
- Seema Chishti from The Wire contends that government involvement in determining truth would be detrimental, citing the example of India's Press Information Bureau, which she views as a government propaganda tool.

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## ROUNDTABLE: CHALLENGES TO REGULATING FOR STRONGER INFORMATION INTEGRITY

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### **The complexity of international cooperation**

- Ashwad Ismail from Astro Awani highlights the limitations of regulating big tech companies at a national level, arguing that countries like Malaysia contribute an insignificant portion of their revenue, making it difficult to exert leverage. A regional approach, such as collaboration within ASEAN, is proposed as a more effective strategy.
- Corinne Podger suggests that international aid may become necessary to finance news production, as alternative revenue streams like subscriptions may be insufficient. She advocates for press councils to collaborate and drive these conversations.

### **The effectiveness of self-regulation**

- Alan Sunderland argues that successful efforts to combat misinformation often focus on establishing responsibility, transparency, and accountability within the industry itself.
- However, Creina Chapman notes that Australia lacks a robust self-regulatory system that effectively serves the media.
- Alan Sunderland also points out the inherent limitations of press councils, often perceived as "toothless," despite offering some positive models in Europe. A key element that makes for a good press council is a high level of involvement with members of the public.

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## ROUNDTABLE: CHALLENGES TO REGULATING FOR STRONGER INFORMATION INTEGRITY

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- The sources highlight challenges even in countries with established press councils. For instance, The Wire's Seema Chishti criticizes India's Press Council for being limited to newspapers and influenced by the government. Concerns are also raised about potential conflicts of interest, as exemplified by NewsCorp's significant funding of the Australian Press Council.

### Challenges and opportunities in diverse contexts

- **Malaysia** introduced a new law that requires social media services to apply for a license if they have more than eight million users in the country to combat cyber offences. Its impact is still to be seen.
- **Malaysia** does not have a press council but there is mobilisation to form one. Perhaps problematically, the government is pushing for at least two representatives from government to sit on the council, along with NGO members who are often associated with government.
- Freedom of expression is embedded in **the Philippines** Constitution. Every administration after Aquino has tried injecting some form of provision into it without success demonstrating its strength. At the same time, there are so many ways around it, including cyber libel.

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## ROUNDTABLE: CHALLENGES TO REGULATING FOR STRONGER INFORMATION INTEGRITY

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- **ABN-CBS** was in conversation with online platforms initially but lost millions after Meta pulled away from news. Revenue sharing with platforms was the result of informal agreements not regulation.
- In **the Philippines**, a publisher can turn political ads on or off their organisation's social media page. This option does not exist in India according to The News Minute's Pooja Prasanna.
- 40,000 local media outlets online in **Indonesia** are not listed on Google because they are too small. Indonesia has an enterprise council; a coalition of media organisations that can sit down with big tech companies to negotiate revenue sharing. It is not yet clear how it will work. Six members were appointed by the government, which might be an attempt for it to control negotiations.
- In **India**, big tech companies can push political ads on a publisher's own website without its knowledge, which could see a political ad positioned next to a story on state government.
- **The News Minute** received so little from its use of big tech that it made fiscal sense to transition to a subscriber model. They attracted subscribers when it went ad-free. Most stories are in front of the paywall, and they have a once-a-month interaction with subscribers who can put questions forward to the journalists.

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## ROUNDTABLE: THE COST OF DOING NOTHING AS GEN AI APPROACHES

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This roundtable discussion led by Dr Michael Davis explored experiences with and perspectives on AI in journalism. Delegates included 10 News' Rashell Habib and Columbia University's Director of Technology, Media and Communications Centre, Dr Anya Shiffrin. Key concerns included copyright infringement by large language models, the need for ethical guidelines and transparency regarding AI usage, and the potential for AI to exacerbate existing inequalities between large and small news outlets, particularly in the Majority World. Discussions also highlighted the importance of human oversight in the AI-driven production of news content, the need for responsible AI use policies, and the challenges of combating misinformation and deepfakes. The potential benefits of AI in streamlining workflows, improving language translation, and increasing content reach were also acknowledged, but often offset by the significant risks and limitations. The need for a multifaceted approach to supporting journalism, including regulatory measures and financial support, was emphasised.

# UTS CENTRE FOR MEDIA TRANSITION

## ROUNDTABLE: THE COST OF DOING NOTHING AS GEN AI APPROACHES

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### **Current applications and hesitations**

- Newsrooms are hesitant to use genAI in journalistic output due to concerns about brand reputation and the need to maintain integrity. However, they are exploring its use in backend processes such as workflow improvement, SEO optimisation, and data analysis. These applications are seen as opportunities to save costs and free up journalists' time for reporting.
- In terms of developing editorial policy around AI, it is best to find what fits an outlet's unique business model, whether that's governance, consumer first or journalist led or a combination of all three.
- Editors highlight the importance of evaluating and addressing potential biases in AI systems, so stereotypes are not perpetuated or indeed amplified.

### **Optimism and concerns regarding the future**

- There is cautious optimism about the potential of AI, although the initial hype seems to be moderating. The consensus is that AI will have a significant impact on the industry.
- Journalists are more optimistic about AI's potential for investigative work compared to an apprehensive public. A chapter in the Reuters Institute Digital News Report found that Australian audiences are mistrustful of AI and literacy is low.

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## ROUNDTABLE: THE COST OF DOING NOTHING AS GEN AI APPROACHES

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- Concerns exist about the reliance of large language models (LLMs) on quality content, which they often obtain by trawling news content. This raises concerns about copyright infringement and the potential for model deterioration if LLMs are trained on low-quality data.
- Fair use laws in the US, which do not exist in many other parts of the world, make it possible for Open AI and the like to mine huge amounts of online data, even turning to YouTube and violating its Terms of Service. In the US, people end up suing. But regulation is needed elsewhere.
- There is a debate about whether news organisations should sue or sign deals with tech companies using their content to train AI. Smaller outlets, particularly those in the Majority World, face a significant power imbalance in these negotiations.
- The experiences in Australia and the EU suggest that government support can strengthen the position of news organisations in negotiations with tech companies. However, tech companies have successfully employed tactics like "divide and conquer" by offering small sums to news outlets, creating an illusion of support while simultaneously undermining regulatory efforts like bargaining codes.
- News publishers have adapted their formats to accommodate platforms like the pivot to video, which was problematic when Meta exited news from Canada. This highlights the vulnerability of news organisations to platform decisions.

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## ROUNDTABLE: THE COST OF DOING NOTHING AS GEN AI APPROACHES

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### Challenges and opportunities in diverse contexts

- AI is built into **IDN Times'** CMS and used for weather, pollution and sports reports. AI is also used to summarise reports which has increased the click through rate and revenue. As IDN Time uses AI so much, the newsroom released its first SOP in 2023 on the ethical use of AI. This SOP is never final; it is a living document to reflect changing trends.
- **Jubi Papua** steers away from relying on AI because if a newsworthy story kicks off, the government can shut down the internet for up to a month. Starlink is an attractive option to circumvent this form of government censorship. When the internet connection dies in Papua, Jubi relies on collaborators in Indonesia.
- **The News Minute** has experimented with Otter AI for transcription but found it challenging due to language differences. Editors found that using AI for tweets required significant rewriting.
- Not all contributors to India's **Article 14** are highly proficient in English, so AI helped clean up their submissions in that regard but failed to include vital elements of their original submissions.
- The promise of AI for smaller publishers in India is scalability by offering content in multiple languages. But there are no usable data sets for training AI in local languages. The Indian government in partnership with ARTPARK and Google, and funded by The Gates Foundation, is running a program called the Bhashini's Vaani project; an open-source model inviting people from 80 districts to contribute speech data. Sannuta Raghu from **Scoll.in** believes the program is ineffective because the task is so great.

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## ROUNDTABLE: THE COST OF DOING NOTHING AS GEN AI APPROACHES

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- Before Covid, **ABN-CBS** had the budget to send two reporters to cover a story, one for English and one for the local language. Now, they only have the budget to send one reporter; so, their English report is translated by AI into dialect. Google Translate is inferior to Chat GPT for translation into local languages in the Philippines.
- **MCIL** newsrooms are looking into the operational side of AI tools like language transcription to make work easier. The LLMs for the Chinese language are more advanced than other Asian languages, so Malaysian Chinese language papers require more editorial oversight. Some senior leaders need to be convinced by operational staff to adopt AI.
- Ashwad Ismail from **Astro Awani** believes this particular juncture is about experimenting and guiding teams through the adoption phase, so AI becomes part of the DNA of a journalist.
- Both Japan and China have AI regulation, but are ultimately very protective of the companies, asserting that copyright is not a matter of concern when it comes to inputs, making it possible for tech companies to build models on data without remuneration.
- Brazil and South Africa are trying to introduce regulation with difficulty as these big tech companies come with powerful lobbyists and threats. Since the forum, Brazil has had some success with X, bearing in mind its population and the leveraging power that brings.

# UTS CENTRE FOR MEDIA TRANSITION

## ROUNDTABLE: THE COST OF DOING NOTHING AS GEN AI APPROACHES

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### Shaping a future with AI

- The future of journalism in the age of AI will depend on navigating the complex interplay of technological advancements, ethical considerations, and economic realities.
- Transparency and trust are crucial. Newsrooms using AI should be transparent with their audience about its use.
- Building AI literacy among journalists and the public is essential to ensure responsible development and use of AI in journalism.
- Collaboration and collective action are necessary to address the power imbalance between news organisations and tech companies, particularly for smaller outlets and those in the Majority World. Note that it has been observed in some markets that just one entity needs to break from the group for a collective bargaining effort to collapse.
- Regulation plays a vital role in ensuring ethical and responsible AI development and use, promoting fair compensation for content used in training AI, and mitigating the risks of misinformation and bias. But the saving of journalism needs to be multifaceted, ie not exclusively employing the bargaining code or taxation, but all the above. Regulation may present a barrier to information integrity in many countries.



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