

# The Future Newsroom

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By

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# Introduction

This research was commissioned by Facebook in May 2017. On the internet, everyone can play the role of journalist and publisher — capturing and sharing stories, images and video about how they experience the world around them and their thoughts and opinions. In some instances, citizen journalists have helped mainstream media extend their coverage with live at-the-scene events. In other instances, citizen journalists share content that can be shared rapidly and create confusion about the authenticity of a story.

In a world where everyone is a publisher, what does the future newsroom look like and what is the skillset of future journalists? This research will look at what has changed with professional journalism and foreshadow what is to come.



The research was conducted by Dr Andrea Carson and Dr Denis Muller, both of the University of Melbourne. They also wrote this report.



## BACKGROUND

The objective of this research was to examine how newsrooms and the practice of journalism are evolving in the digital era, what skills journalists will need in the future, and how news start-ups are working as businesses.

It was carried out between July and August 2017 by Dr Andrea Carson of the School of Social and Political Sciences and Dr Denis Muller of the Centre for Advancing Journalism, both at the University of Melbourne. It consisted of in-depth interviews with seven leaders of online newsrooms and three heads of university journalism programs.

## FINDINGS

This is the first report of its kind in Australia to investigate digital-only newsrooms. Through in-depth interviews with their most senior editors, the report provides new insights into how 21st century digital newsrooms function compared to large-scale newsrooms of last century. The report examines what tertiary journalism programs are teaching their students, and compares this with the journalism skills future newsrooms require.

The findings tell an optimistic and largely untold story about modern digital newsrooms that starkly contrasts with the doom and gloom narrative of the decline of traditional media that has pervaded much commentary about news media.

This report finds modern digital newsrooms are flourishing. All but one of the case studies experienced substantial growth in the past five years. This has resulted in digital outlets hiring more journalists, attracting larger audiences, and increasing their revenues. For most, this success has come from diversifying their business model and understanding how to best engage their audience.

The report also finds a close alignment between what journalism schools are teaching students, and the skills that modern digital newsrooms require from journalism graduates.

### **THEME 1: Newsroom operations and the journalistic environment for digital-only newsrooms**

Modern digital newsrooms have adopted some of the routines and practices of legacy media such as the daily news conference and using a journalist's professional skills and sense of newsworthiness to prioritise stories. Where the routines and practices differ for digital-only newsrooms is the use of data analytics to track audience receptiveness to stories.

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*Digital only newsrooms are smaller, more nimble and less hierarchical than their analogue predecessors. They know their reporting strengths and do not try to cover everything.*

In the 21st century, the audience is central to the news process. For this reason, social media is essential for distributing stories and allowing a two-way conversation with the public. The reporter needs to consider the audience in every step of the process from gathering information to posting the story.

Digital only newsrooms are smaller, more nimble and less hierarchical than their analogue predecessors. They know their reporting strengths and do not try to cover everything. Their newsroom culture is more informal, as is the editorial voice within their stories. They are also growing their operations. Within the past five years, most of the studied

newsrooms had expanded from employing a few staff at start-up to 30 (*Mumbrella, Huff Post*), 50 (*Junkee*) or even 80 employees (*The Guardian*) now.

Further, digital editorial staff have a broader range of skills and can work on multiple platforms compared to their predecessors. They not only gather, prepare and present news in textual, audio and video formats, but they provide headlines and thumbnails on their stories and pay close attention to how their stories are followed on social media.

The style of modern news writing is more personal, more open, less reverential, more humorous and more consciously in tune with the intended audience. Less weight is attached to conveying objectivity, and more to fairness and accuracy.

Social media share-ability is an important consideration when crafting a story. The presentation of a story is shaped to drive greater reach and engagement on social platforms.

In the data age, numbers are important sources of stories, and provide new ways for reporters to tell stories through data journalism. As yet, not all organisations have the resources to do these stories regularly, but their interest in doing so makes this a reporting genre to watch for the future.

In the same way that data journalism stories are becoming more desirable because they can tell stories through graphics and other visualisations, video also matters.

Video stories, or stories that contain video, are considered valuable because they are readily shared on social media platforms and provide powerful visual formats for advertisers.

Media literacy now cuts both ways. It's not just the audience knowing how to decode stories, but journalists knowing how their audience will respond to stories.

### **THEME 2: Journalism skills and education**

The basic practical skills of journalism such as news gathering, writing, and checking for accuracy and are being taught in tertiary journalism schools. News skills being taught include how to use social media to gather information and disseminate stories.

The importance of narrative in writing news features heavily in the university journalism programs, signifying a move away from the century-old claim of objectivity in news reporting.

Online newsroom leaders and the heads of university programs share a broad consensus that journalists will continue to need the essential skills of journalism: finding things out, telling stories and engaging audiences. But they also share an unresolved conundrum about how to achieve this while also teaching new technological skills. For example, schools identified data journalism and visualisation as important skills for the future. Yet the curriculum is crowded, and no one knows what new technologies might arise.

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### THEME 3: Financing journalism

There have been two economic tipping points for the news media sector in Australia: in 2005 and 2012. In 2005 a shift in advertising revenue from analogue to digital media became evident. In 2012 the journalistic consequences of that shift became clearer, when almost 3,000 journalistic jobs were cut from traditional newsrooms.

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Today's digital news media outlets have adapted to this new economic environment and have adopted a hybrid model to finance their journalism. This means more than one or two methods of funding are relied upon to be profitable.

The most common revenue raising methods that form part of a hybrid media funding model include: advertising (display and native); building databases to sell access to them; hosting events related to an outlet's digital media content; developing new media products based on market research; crowdsourcing funds and philanthropy and, the least used option, erecting paywalls.

For most digital newsrooms, the most important source of revenue is native advertising. This is paid ads that match the news outlet's page content, overall design and is consistent with its platform behaviour.

The reliance on native advertising means media organisations are having to think differently about the relationship between journalism and advertising, especially about issues of transparency and audience trust.

The importance of audience trust is not just a question of editorial credibility but of native advertising credibility: if people don't trust the news content, they are unlikely to trust its advertising.

# Key Findings

## THEME 1: NEWSROOM OPERATIONS AND THE JOURNALISTIC ENVIRONMENT

The main contours of past newsrooms that are visible in the online newsrooms of today are:

**Organisational structure:** an editor, news editor, reporting staff assigned to defined beats, copy editor, and specialists in key functions (in today's newsrooms these are video production, online publication and curation).

**Operational routines:** morning news conferences; a news desk that prioritises stories, assigns them and keeps track of their development; a backbench that reviews and edits stories and clears them for publication.

**Commitment to certain professional standards:** verification, accuracy, truth-telling, source-protection, fourth-estate obligations.

**A keen sense of the importance of news:** There is a palpable presence of the vocational attitude towards journalism that has permeated newsrooms for generations, along with a deep sense of the importance of news as essential to the working of a healthy democracy.

**Expending shoe-leather:** For all the conveniences and possibilities afforded by digital communications, the value of direct personal contact with sources and story subjects is still prized. Reporters are urged to make phone calls, get out and meet people, get their hands on the evidence, and not just rely on texting or emails.

The main differences between today's and yesterday's newsrooms are:

**A flatter hierarchy:** Today's online newsroom has a small, light executive structure with only a couple of layers of management – editor and news editor, typically.

**Small and selective:** Today's online newsrooms are a fraction of the size of old newspaper newsrooms. Newsroom staffs in this study were counted in tens, not hundreds. News content is more niche and selective. Unlike the newsrooms of legacy media, digital newsrooms don't try to cover everything. Instead they focus on areas they think their audience is especially interested in or in areas they see as under-reported but interesting to young people such as LGBTQI and Indigenous issues in the case of *Buzzfeed* and *Junkee*.

**Informal culture:** Smallness, the need to be flexible and nimble, and the relentless urgency needed to stay on top of stories that often develop hour-by-hour on social media leaves little room for bureaucratic procedures and hierarchical formalities. So the atmosphere is one of getting things done.

**Breadth of skills:** Today's reporter is also a sub-editor, video-maker, audio-maker, provider of data for graphics, and creator of presentational aspects of a story, including headlines and thumbnails.

**Style of writing:** Today's copy must be factually accurate but it is also more personal, more open, less reverential, more humorous, consciously in tune with the audience and designed to directly engage the audience. The old idea of an impersonal, detached style full of all-knowing authority is dead.

A shift in some professional standards: With the death of this old idea has come a change in the concept of impartiality. Less weight is attached to the formal elements of

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impartiality such as fairness and balance. Instead the focus is on a generalised idea of a fair go and fair portrayal that is plausible and acceptable to the audience.

**Stylistic flexibility:** While a commitment remains to answering the basic Who, What, Where, When, Where, Why and How questions, there is no longer a rigid adherence to the so-called inverted pyramid story structure. It happens that this is still commonly used because it is the best way of telling the essential facts quickly, but there is plenty of room for the structure to change to fit the story, rather than the story changing to fit the structure.

**Social media connectedness:** For the online news organisations themselves and for each of the individuals working in them, social media connectedness is absolutely central. Not only is it a primary means of dissemination, but it is a source of story ideas, information, tip-offs, audience engagement and accountability to the audience. It also plays a vital role in decisions about how to shape and present the news. Share-ability is a key criterion in news judgments.

**Understanding social media platforms:** For those online newsrooms who use social media platforms to maximise their distribution, they pay close attention to presenting the story in a way that will drive greater reach and engagement. This means trying to see that it has the makings of a viral post. Therefore, story headlines and thumbnails are tested – on Twitter or on a newsroom’s own site – to see which presentations are most likely to succeed before being shared more broadly.

**The place of media literacy:** In the newsroom of the future, media literacy will cut both ways. Already the burden of media literacy no longer falls just on the audience to decode what the media are saying. It falls too on journalists to anticipate how an audience is likely to react to a story, because if they misjudge this, there can be direct material consequences: the story will not be shared or may be shared for the wrong reasons.

**Journalistic accountability:** The ease, immediacy and public transparency of social media interactions between journalists and audience, coupled with the reliance by many online newsrooms on social media for successful distribution of their content, is imposing a degree of public accountability that journalists have never previously experienced.

There is one aspect of newsroom operations and the journalistic environment that is both similar and different: the importance of building and retaining audience trust.

This has always been important to serious news media, but in less serious media if trust fell away it didn’t matter so long as the advertisers kept coming.

In today’s newsroom and in the newsroom of the future, trust is recognised as absolutely essential. It is now not just a question of editorial credibility but of the credibility of the native advertising content on which many digital media depend for financial survival. If people don’t trust the news content, why would they trust the native advertising? For this reason, trust in an outlet’s journalism is bound up with the outlet’s material fortunes more tightly than has been the case traditionally.

Moreover, this is happening in an environment where it is possible to decouple advertising from news, as many non-news-media online ventures do by attracting online advertising without linking it to journalism.

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### THEME 2: JOURNALISM SKILLS AND EDUCATION

The broad consensus between newsroom leaders and academic leaders is that the journalists of the future will need the attitudes, personal attributes and basic skills that journalists have always needed: a restless curiosity, a healthy scepticism, energy, belief in the intrinsic social merit of journalism, the ability to assimilate information and turn it into an interesting story under deadline pressure, and an appreciation of the ethical and legal dilemmas that journalism brings with it.

In addition to these timeless requirements, though, a suite of new skills are required and are being taught: how to produce stories in writing, audio and video, how to publish online, how to be effective in using social media for gathering information, publishing stories and engaging with audiences.

Newsroom and academic leaders alike are wrestling with how to bring in new technological skills such as data visualisation. It is recognised on all sides that it is impossible to know in advance what technologies will prove to be essential beyond what is currently foreseeable, so academic leaders are trying to prepare their students to be technologically adaptable, and newsroom leaders do not express dissatisfaction with this general approach.

However, university course development would benefit from more input by newsroom leaders. There is a healthy and active relationship between many online newsrooms and the university programs, and an openness and respectfulness on both sides that hasn't always existed. The newsroom of the future would benefit if there were a more hands-on exchange of ideas between the two.

### THEME 3: FINANCING JOURNALISM

In economic terms, there have been two tipping points for the news media sector in Australia so far: in 2005 and 2012.

It was in 2005 that the shift in advertising revenue from analogue to digital media became clearly measurable. In 2012 the journalistic consequences became clear as analogue newsrooms ramped up their journalism job cuts. In Australia, Fairfax and News Corp have shed staff in a series of rounds of redundancies. The largest single cuts were in 2012 when, between them, the two companies cut almost 3,000 staff.

The central difficulty is that digital advertising does not earn as much as print. According to the Nieman Lab's "newsonomics" numbers, the *New York Times* draws 37 per cent of its revenue from advertising, down from 68 per cent in 2005. *The Wall Street Journal's* parent Dow Jones now gets only a third of its revenue from advertising. The figures are similar in Australia.

In short, even though the advertising market is growing, media companies cannot get the revenues necessary to support journalism on the scale that was possible in pre-digital times. The 17 August 2017 edition of *Media Week* quotes Standard Media Index saying that media agencies were reporting that total demand for advertising demand is down 12.5 per cent to \$496.6m at the start of the 2017 financial year.

Meanwhile, new home-grown and overseas digital news media sites began to set up

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Australian operations. A few pre-dated the two tipping points -- *Crikey* (2000) Pedestrian TV (2005), *Mamamia* (2007) *Mumbrella* (2008) and *the Conversation* (2010). A few also rose and fell like the philanthropically supported *Global Mail* (2012-2014) and Wendy Harmer's *Hoopla* (2011-2015).

Among the new entrants from 2012 were: *Junkee* (2012), *Daily Mail* (2015), *Huff Post* (2015), *The Guardian* (2013), *BuzzFeed*, *Vice* (2014) and its digital TV station *SBS Viceland* (2016) and *The New York Times* (2017).

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So any growth in journalistic capacity has been in digital newsrooms. In Australia, they are mostly located in Sydney, but all seek to be an Australian voice for a mostly Australian audience.

Online newsrooms are developing hybrid business models by including:

- native advertising in a range of forms;
- display and banner advertising;
- events and festivals;
- advertising relationships with organisations whose activities form the core of an outlet's coverage, such as the arts;
- sales of data from an outlet's own database, and
- providing skills workshops.

Of these, native advertising is by far the most important. However, it requires media organisations to think differently about the relationship between journalism and advertising and the ensuing issues concerning transparency and the need for honesty with audiences. This is doubly important because of the reliance on building and retaining public trust.

Few digital news operations rely primarily on subscriptions. *Crikey.com* does, and will continue to, but for the others studied here, subscriptions and paywalls are not an option.

*The Guardian* Australia does not use a paywall but appeals to readers to support its journalism by taking out a subscription as small act of philanthropy.

# Qualitative Research Insights

## THEME 1: NEWSROOM OPERATIONS AND THE JOURNALISTIC ENVIRONMENT

This section provides the findings from the digital newsroom case studies to provide insights into: their routines and practices; their perceptions of their journalistic style and content; audience considerations; journalistic values; how they use social media; and what they identify as emerging trends. The data for this section of the report comes from interviews with *Buzzfeed*, *The Guardian*, *The Daily Review*, *Crikey*, *Junkee*, *Mumbrella* and *Huff Post*.

### Routines and practices

**This section finds that digital newsrooms have adopted some of the routines and practices of legacy media such as the daily news conference and using a journalist's professional skills and sense of newsworthiness to prioritise stories. Where the routines and practices differ for digital only newsrooms compared to past practices is the use of data analytics to track audience receptiveness to stories. The audience is central to the news process in the digital age. For this reason, social media is very important for distributing stories and allowing a two-way conversation with the public. Digital only newsrooms are smaller, more nimble and less hierarchical than their analogue predecessors.**

Most of the case studies were of small, nimble newsrooms compared to the traditional versions in the last century that employed hundreds of staff. At one point, for example, Melbourne's *The Age* had more than 300 journalists and *The Sydney Morning Herald* nearly 400. The scale of today's newsroom is much smaller – counted in tens rather than hundreds, but the majority of them are growing rapidly in size.

All the digital newsrooms studied use some of the traditional organisational and operational arrangements of newsroom practice such as daily morning news conference, having a news desk that assigns stories, keeps track of what reporters are doing and sees that the copy is reviewed and edited before publication.

In some places, the news conference is repeated later in the day, as is the case on morning newspapers. Typically the morning conference is where the outlet's news agenda is decided. For example, at *Junkee*, all the writers come together and pitch stories. This is overseen by a managing editor, Rob Stott, formerly of *Buzzfeed*. *Junkee's* founder, Tim Duggan sees it as both an old and new-style media outlet:

"We kind of work like a traditional news organisation. But, we're also not. We are generally entertainment news. It's the focus of what we do. That means that 'native' [advertising] is a bit easier to do. Sometimes we call [the editorial staff] writers, sometimes we call them journalists, but they're not really proper editorial journalists. I don't mean that in a negative way either to our staff, or to journalists, but more as a nod to the difference between *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *Junkee*. And there is a big difference."

In all the newsrooms visited, a critical part of tracking the development of stories is to know what is trending for both the stories being developed and the stories being published. At *Mumbrella* the editorial team starts at 8am. There is always one person

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rostered to the news desk. Founder Tim Burrowes says: “The central thing is having one person as the owner of the stress of the day about getting a decent e-mail newsletter out the door [by 10.30am] and keeping the action going on the site all day.”

They have a news conference at around 10.45am. “It’s a sort of planning meeting for what’s going on this afternoon”. Every reporter has a beat. With its focus on media and marketing, one reporter covers the advertising agency and PR agency beat, another the media agency beat, another the media companies beat. *Mumbrella* also has a features editor who also deals with unsolicited opinion pieces. Burrowes says they pay for all commissioned work from freelancers, but not things they haven’t requested.

The *Huff Post* has four people who manage the primary website: a news editor who starts at 5am, a night editor who starts at 6pm, a site editor who oversees the content management system, and the editor-in-chief, Tory Maguire. These four people manage the home page. “At any given time one of the four of us is the sole person in the chair and responsible for publishing absolutely everything that goes on the site,” Maguire says.

*Huff Post* includes a Head of Audience Development in its senior editorial team. Previously this role might have been known as the Social Media Editor who would put content on Facebook. Her role is one of audience analysis. Maguire explains:

“Every week she gives out, the entire team, including the commercial team, a really in-depth briefing on what worked and what didn’t work, any trends that she’s detected in our audience’s behaviour, any changes in the algorithms of the social networks, any tools that are coming online that are useful to us. It’s like a master class in audience engagement every single week.”

Similarly, Duggan says *Junkee* uses many sources to understand what is trending, including Twitter, NewsWhip, BuzzSumo and Chartbeat. “We use Chartbeat a lot. Chartbeat is our live real-time analytics program, and ...within ten seconds you can tell if that story is going to do well or not. So that then determines what your next follow up is.”

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If a story is not performing as expected, reactions across newsrooms are mixed. Some publishers will stay with the idea and rewrite the first paragraph or reframe the story before relaunching it. Maguire argues that because her team are all journalists they usually have the news instinct to know a good story, but sometimes it does not do as well as expected. “We will examine the stuff that tanked and come up with why, what we got wrong about it and resell it, and often come back with a totally different result.” That might involve changing the accompanying pictures, or the social status, or the time of day in which it is put out, or changing the delivery platform. Maguire says this rethink of how to sell the story often delivers a totally different result than the first time around. “That exercise in itself is a learning exercise, so not only do we rescue that piece of content, we learn for the next time.”

*Junkee* takes a more ruthless approach. “More often than not, you give up on it,” says Duggan. Duggan says the Facebook algorithm rewards stories that are well received by users. The feedback is immediate, so either something gets lots of clicks, likes, comments and shares and does well, or is does not, in which case it isn’t widely seen by the public. Because Facebook is the most important social media site for *Junkee* for story distribution,

*Junkee* tests stories on other social media sites first. Before loading it to Facebook. One test site is Twitter:

“Often we’ll test things out on Twitter through different kinds of headlines, and then push it through Facebook, using what we’ve learnt on Twitter.”

*Mumbrella* also closely monitors its digital audience metrics. The newsroom has large television screens displaying Google Analytics. Burrowes says almost as soon as they send out an email, all heads in the office turn to the live analytics on the big screen. “Typically when you send a newsletter out, that’s 600 or 700 people on site at once for the next hour or two,” Burrowes says. “On a really amazing day ... you’ll have over a thousand on the site at once”. He says that on average they get a million page impressions a month. About 80 per cent are coming from Australia. But, like many of the other cases, *Mumbrella*’s audience is growing and that is partly because of its launch in 2013 of *Mumbrella Asia*.

Like *Junkee*, *Mumbrella* is experimenting with stories to maximise their appearance on social media sites, particularly Facebook. Burrowes says it’s trial and error.

“When we post things out to Facebook, if it’s not working, we take it off again so it doesn’t hurt our scores on the algorithm and that sort of thing. And, again, experimenting with creating much more basic Facebook-friendly video that isn’t about taking traffic back to the site, it’s just about making the Facebook algorithm like us.”

*Junkee* also uses its data about the youth market to teach other organisations how to speak to young people. And to develop and launch new media products themselves: “Data is a huge part of what we do. So, almost every piece of content we look at [and] figure out why it’s working, why it’s not working, how can we do it better.” It is not perfect for prediction, that still requires a “journalist’s hunch,” says Duggan.

“The science can tell you so much, but you then need someone, a journalist with data experience, to analyse that and make a prediction off the back of it. The computer can’t tell you that.”

*Buzzfeed* in Australia operates a very lean newsroom. There are 12 people on the news team and they are deployed in a very targeted and strategic way.

The editor, Simon Crerar, says *Buzzfeed* decided from the outset that federal politics was a priority. In 2014, when Tony Abbott was Prime Minister, this proved to be an inspired decision. Abbott was doing things that young people in particular found baffling, outrageous and entertaining in almost equal measure. “We got lucky,” Crerar says.

They hired a reporter to cover big breaking news.

In his first year he did the G20 summit, the ABC cuts, AIDS congress, the terror attack in Martin Place.

But two other fields that *Buzzfeed* considered under-covered by existing media yet socially important were LGBTQI and Indigenous affairs.

“The US was going down the route of same-sex marriage. We didn’t know what

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was going to happen here. We felt that was being under-reported, even by the biggest organisations. They didn't have an LGBTQI reporter so we hired one. She's a journalist. She came straight from *Honi Soir* [the Sydney University student newspaper] where she'd done great work on campus scandals.

Then we had Indigenous affairs. We had someone from the ABC who's now at SBS. We've hired a new reporter for that beat.

Mr Abbott was down in Tasmania talking at a forestry conference and saying how much Australia had benefited from the arrival of the British. How it was an uncivilised place. We had half a million Australian views on it. It had a list – 60,000 years of history. And a beautiful rainbow map of the native languages.

It was Walkley-nominated but lost out to Stan Grant."

Another reporter with a long track record of doing investigative work for online newspapers has just joined, and there is a photo editor and video news producer. There is also a copy editor, a news editor and a head of news.

"We've got some real experience matched with some really hungry young 20-somethings who are really connected on the internet."

The physical layout of the BuzzFeed newsrooms in Sydney and New York has elements in common with traditional newsrooms: open plan, staff dotted about, everyone within earshot.

The effect is to generate a familiar newsroom culture of banter, focus and urgency but with an overlay of informality missing from old newsrooms, which tended to be more hierarchical.

Crerar speaks of the necessity of having some central editorial space:

"There has to be a hub where you can have conversations. And people like to be able to come in and be with the other people, feel part of the process."

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This capacity to be able to bring people together in one place is important because geographically the newsroom is decentralised. There is the hub in Sydney's CBD, but the three federal politics staff are in Canberra, including a parliamentary press gallery reporter and a political editor; the Indigenous reporter is in Rockhampton and the copy editor is in Orange.

The Sydney newsroom is also linked continually to *Buzzfeed* newsrooms overseas, especially those in Los Angeles and New York. The way Crerar speaks of this suggests that these connections give the Sydney team a clear sense of global belonging:

"Our news teams speak with LA all day. I've had two phone calls already today with New York [this was at lunch time].

You get to know them. They're not real-world friendships but you do get camaraderie and we've got some great reporters around the world."

The Sydney operation is about to hire a person for news curation. Crerar describes the role:

"News curation is a global team and their job is basically running Facebook, Twitter,

Apple News, packaging our journalism for video, audio, podcasts, multi-media and info graphics and data deep dives and increasingly Snapchat and Instagram and our home page and news app, all the different ways to distribute our stuff.”

Globally, there are 25 people on the news curation team.

While there are significant differences between traditional newsroom operations and the *Buzzfeed* operation, there are also some important similarities. This indicates that in the newsroom of the future there are likely to be some important constants too.

The important similarities are:

- A daily news conference each morning – *Buzzfeed's* is at 8.45 – which yields a news list from which editorial staff are assigned stories.
- A weekly planning conference which yields a list of big stories that *Buzzfeed* plans to drop during the week. One such story that Crerar says got a lot of hits was about the “Foxification of Sky”.
- A requirement that editorial staff work at multiple speeds. They have to produce the stories assigned to them each day, work on longer-range stories and stay on top of social media developments, especially those affecting the stories they are working on. This last requirement did not exist in pre-internet days although the other two certainly did.
- A system of copy review and editing prior to publication, which operates like a backbench in a traditional newsroom.
- A requirement to meet deadlines for peak viewing times. For *Buzzfeed* this is 6pm to 9pm and whenever a big story breaks.
- The need to cope with variable workloads driven by major external factors such as parliamentary sitting schedules.

The interview with Simon Crerar took place at about the time the federal government decided to conduct a postal ballot on same-sex marriage, and this story provides a case study in how *Buzzfeed* covers politics:

“We did a news story this morning [Wednesday 9 August 2017]. We did loads and loads and loads. The whole team were working on Monday night – three people in Canberra. This morning we updated with a story on the Senate.”

Then they developed the story further:

“Here’s what same-sex parents and their kids think about the postal ballot” this morning. “Tony Abbott’s sister has sub-tweeted the hell out of her brother online”.

This was obtained by keeping track of what was happening on this issue online and in social media, and there was a direct quote from Mr Abbott’s sister, indicating that the *Buzzfeed* reporter had spoken to her.

So it follows a conventional pattern: breaking news, follow-up, further development. But by using the informal conversational language of social media, it breaks out of the traditional news constraints of detachment and authoritativeness.

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*Without doubt, the biggest differences between contemporary newsroom operations and those of the pre-internet era are in style and presentation of news.*

Without doubt, the biggest differences between contemporary newsroom operations and those of the pre-internet era are in style and presentation of news. Like *Junkee*, *Buzzfeed* tests its presentation before posting it on Facebook, as Crerar explains:

“A kick-arse viral post is a weird combination of skill, planning and luck, but there’s one thing every viral has: an outstanding thumbnail and headline combination. And there’s a master class on how to make them.

And that’s where it’s different from when you and I were reporters. Then, you just had to get the story, someone else would edit it, it would go to a copy queue (for publication) and the next day you’d wake up and either the boss had butchered everything or the treatment was all wrong, and you didn’t have that much input.

Whereas here, they build it in CMS (content management system). They write their own headlines. We have a thing called an optimiser. So you have four or six alternative headlines and thumbnails, and before we run it on social, it usually runs on our website and the algorithm figures out which headline and thumbnail will work.

So you’re very analytical about the frames that will work, the headlines that work. The reporter learns quickly about what is the core of the story, what will work in a headline and a thumbnail.”

*Crikey.com* was founded in 2000 by Stephen Mayne a former newspaper journalist and state political staffer who has become an outspoken activist on behalf of shareholders in public companies.

Although their business models are different, in their newsroom operations *Crikey’s* has some similarities with *Buzzfeed’s*:

- It has a small editorial staff and an editorial structure that is hierarchically flat compared with traditional newsrooms.
- It takes politics seriously but irreverently.
- It identified gaps in traditional media coverage and set out to fill them. In *Crikey’s* case two of the big gaps were in robust and independent-minded coverage of issues affecting the media itself, and coverage of business news generally.

But there are also some important differences.

- *Crikey* is not reliant on social media for distribution so its engagement with social media is not as visible or intrinsic to its news operation as is the case with *Buzzfeed*.
- *Crikey’s* focus is more specific -- politics, media, business, culture – and it has a mixture of news, analysis and opinion that is rather like that of an online newspaper.
- There are significant differences in presentation.

But *Buzzfeed* and *Crikey* share a reliance on basic journalistic skills for identifying what is news, gathering information and writing it an arresting style, which is less formal and less respectful of authority than is found in legacy media.

### The tone of content

**This section concludes that digital newsrooms develop a tone and approach to story-telling in their news stories that is not only unique to their product, but it is also a deliberate move away from the 20th century model of news reporting that purported to be objective. Today, reporting does not aspire to fit the 'inverted' pyramid model of news journalism. Instead, it is more focused on narrative and of speaking with the audience, not at the audience. Engaging readers and viewers in the story so that they will want to share it is an important part of the story-telling.**

As the example from *Buzzfeed* given above about Mr Abbott's sister shows, editorially the key difference from a traditional newsroom is that news content from contemporary online newsrooms does not aspire to be dispassionate about its subject matter. While all strive for the best available version of the truth as it is known at the time – what reporters have been doing for centuries – the old ideal of a coldly detached objectivity has no place in this style of news writing. But it is a new kind of impartiality achieved with a less respectful and more satirical tone and including an element of opinion, based on a generalised idea of a plausible fair go and fair portrayal. Humour and slang play a much more important part in news writing than before.

The basic news questions of *Who, What, Where, When, How and Why* are tackled at the top of a story, just as they have always been. As Simon Crerar of *Buzzfeed* observes, a tweet is all about those basics.

*Junkee* covers serious topics such as politics, but it does so in an accessible way with its audience front of mind. Tim Duggan:

"We insert tone, and opinion, and attitude into it; and that, I think, is the part where it differs. So, we're not trying to be impartial, we think that we know who our audience is, which is young Australians. Most of them are a bit progressive and we write for them."

It's the same at *The Daily Review*. Ray Gill says: "Our site, it's got to be different. It's got to have a more casual tone." At the *Huff Post*, Tory Maguire says the inverted pyramid would not be taught now, although, with breaking news, the most important and recent aspect of the story goes first:

"I wouldn't teach the inverted pyramid to anyone coming into my newsroom now. It's much more nuanced than that, it's much more about what is the piece of information that is most useful to our readers. So there's two things that I run every piece of content through in my filter and one is does this serve our audience and does this serve our own reputation and place in the market."

As well as their journalism, the *Huff Post* has two staff members who run its blog site. Unlike its US parent, where freedom of speech is less restrained by media laws, the Australian blog is closely monitored. Maguire says:

"We have to take responsibility for everything that anyone writes under our banner. So we have a very different model [to the US] ... we rarely publish a blog that we wouldn't be prepared to put on the homepage. They require a lot of copy editing, good headlines and the right photo, so it's much more of a quality control thing."

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*The basic news questions of Who, What, Where, When, How and Why are tackled at the top of a story, just as they have always been.*

And those blogs probably are responsible for about one in eight of our page views, so they do very well.”

At *Buzzfeed*, the language is vivid, contemporary and informal. The so-called inverted-pyramid story structure is not so rigidly adhered to, although the most newsy and arresting facts still go first as they would with the old model of news reporting.

In this and in presentational style, the news content is geared strongly towards distribution on, and engagement with, social media.

For Crerar, the key test is: How will this share?

### Audience considerations

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*...digital newsrooms are keenly aware of their audience and aim to speak with them rather than at them.*

**In summary, digital newsrooms are keenly aware of their audience and aim to speak with them rather than at them. To do this, data analytics are used to track what people respond to and what stories do not get attention. Market research is also used to better understand the target audience’s needs, wishes and desires. The audience is part of the process and invited to participate in discussing and sharing the story. Each outlet knows who their primary audience is and stories that do not attract these readers and viewers are generally not included in the news mix. Unlike larger legacy media newsrooms, they do not attempt to cover all news stories of the day with the view of offering something for everyone. Rather, news content is niche with the outlet’s primary audience front of mind.**

For *Junkee*, an evidence-based understanding of its audience is central to its delivery of news and information. Over the past seven years, it has commissioned one of the largest longitudinal studies of Australian youth. Tim Duggan explains that this empirical study of the media environment, and explicitly of the youth market, led to the development of *Junkee*. The research paid off. Within *Junkee*’s first year it was named ‘Media Brand of the Year’ at the Mumbrella Awards. “That’s when we realised there was something special here,” Duggan says.

*Junkee*’s market research indicated that it should target youth, defined as 35 and under, and focus on identifying trends about their fears and most salient issues. The information was used to create media products online. Duggan says at that time they were surprised to learn that the biggest fears for young Australians were FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) and FONK (Fear Of Not Knowing).

Duggan believes these phenomena, identified in 2012–13, coincided with the rise in the use of smart phones and significant changes to the news media environment. This was within the period during which major media companies, including the two biggest newspaper companies Fairfax Media and News Corp, laid off about 3000 staff between them.<sup>1</sup> Not only were traditional newsrooms shrinking but new entrants from overseas such as *The Guardian*, *Daily Mail*, and *Buzzfeed* were appearing. Locally, *The New Daily*, *The Conversation*, and *Junkee*<sup>2</sup> were starting up. Duggan says of the time:

“The traditional silos of where you get your news from was fragmenting. No one was sitting down at 8.30pm to watch a show on Channel 7 anymore. They were starting to look at YouTube. And there was so much information out there that people found it hard to navigate their way through it. So that was the impetus for us to launch

<sup>1</sup> Carson, Andrea. Death by 1,900 cuts: will quality journalism thrive under Fairfax’s new model? *The Conversation*, 18 June 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Carson, Andrea. Australian media’s Super Saturday: will readers be the winner? *The Conversation*, 3 March 2014; Carson, Andrea. A New Daily, new models and new hope: journalism’s silver lining, *The Conversation*, 15 November 2013.

*Junkee*. We were a music publisher up until then. We had no credibility in pop culture space. And *Junkee* was meant to be for pop culture junkies. It was meant to alleviate FONK – that Fear Of Not Knowing. So, we did things like explainers; things that are now pretty commonplace. We were one of the first people to start doing explainers in Australia. We call them Junk explains ... We also looked a lot to the US and saw the rise of things like *Buzzfeed* over there. The changing in the guard was happening with news."

*Junkee* extended its media coverage from the lighter side of pop culture to include politics around the time of the end of the Gillard Government. Duggan recalls:

"It was the second coming of [Labor Prime Minister] Rudd, around 2013. We saw that most young Australians were becoming really disillusioned by politics, by the people that were meant to lead them. They saw with things like social equality and climate change, there was this kind of inertia. A couple of months later, [Liberal leader] Tony Abbott got into power. That was our gift, because we saw that people needed somewhere to rebel against what was happening, that they were really disillusioned by. We became the voice of young people disillusioned by politics."

When *Junkee* started to cover federal politics in a "funny, smart, ballsy, interesting way" its audience grew exponentially, the media awards came next, and the business needed to hire more staff. The content goal for *Junkee* is about treating the audience as equals.

"We try and be the smartest, funniest friend to the audience. That's how we write. It's not meant to be an authority saying: this is it, this is how you do stuff. It's meant to be really accessible and relatable. And we're constantly making sure of the tone. Tweaking the tone, to make sure that it feels like your funniest, smartest friend telling you a story."

Duggan says audience interaction is part of the modern media equation. "The audience likes interacting. The model now is: you see something on Facebook, you click through and you read the story, and you go back to Facebook to comment on it. The audience is very vocal. Very vocal."

While *Junkee* knows its audience is younger Australians, the *Huff Post* knows its audience is about equal men and women. Maguire says:

"Our audience, like any general news website, is quite broad. So we have people who come to us purely for our lifestyle, food and wellness content, and we have people who come for to us purely for politics."

Maguire says the site does target some stories to one gender more than the other at times, but overall the readership is an even mix of the genders:

"For instance this year we've run a big series on women's reproductive health and hormonal health and of course that is going to appeal to more women than it is men, although we have included men in that content... I didn't want *Huff Post* to be a women's website. That's not our market."

The main areas of content for *Huff Post* are news, politics and lifestyle. Maguire observes that any story to do with mental health usually has a strong audience and so she looks out for that angle. She says the kind of political stories they do not cover are the political

minutiae like factional infighting. “It’s not a broad enough appeal, and we don’t have the resources”. She says they also tend not to cover much finance news: “We link out to that. So that’s other thing we’re prepared to do: if someone else has got a good story, we’ll just link out to it and send the traffic to them. I’ll happily put a *Guardian* story or an *SMH* story or a News Corp story on our home page.”

*The Guardian’s* audience is similar to that of Fairfax Media’s daily metro publications: mostly educated Australians with reasonable disposable incomes and progressive social values.

*The Daily Review’s* readers are mainly from Melbourne and Sydney. In common is their love of the arts. Gill says whenever they do anything with singer/songwriter comedian Tim Minchin, such as his video in 2016 on Catholic cardinal George Pell, audience numbers soar. “We have great support in terms of readership and interest from readers”, Gill says, but making the website pay its own way is the difficult part.

At *Mumbrella*, Burrowes says that they think about the audience in different ways.

“Our most precious audience are the ones who buy tickets and come to our events because something like *Mumbrella* 360 -- to spend nearly two and a half grand to buy a ticket, that’s a pretty heavy commitment.”

Readers who sign up to subscribe to the email are also considered very important because they are self-identifying as being part of the industry, which makes them valuable to *Mumbrella’s* advertisers. Burrowes says they have about 50,000 people on their e-mail data base. He says social media is also important and they have another 50,000 people who “like us on Facebook”.

All of the case studies seek an Australian audience first and foremost. Duggan says *Junkee’s* audience is linked to its biggest capital cities. “It’s about 50% from Sydney, 30% from Melbourne, 20% Brisbane. And primarily metro.”

### Values – Importance of trust and accuracy

**In sum, trust and accuracy matter to digital newsrooms. This is because the trust relationship that an outlet has with its audience is key to its success. To keep readers and viewers returning to a news site, digital outlets understand that they must produce stories that are useful to their audience. Like newsrooms of the past, digital outlets see themselves as ‘sensemakers’ to help their audiences navigate through the vast amounts of information available to what matters to them each day.**

*The Guardian’s* Lenore Taylor, a former Fairfax Media journalist, says she joined *The Guardian* because she believed Fairfax’s print and digital strategies were diverging. Also she was concerned that there was a need for greater media diversity in Australia. “Diversity was something we always said was important, and it was reducing, and there was a chance to start a new media voice in Australia, and a sort of progressive type voice and a quality voice.”

Quality journalism is reporting that is fair and factual, Taylor says:

“It needs to tell people something they wouldn’t know if you, the journalist, weren’t there gathering information or looking for facts. Or it needs to provide them with a

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*Like newsrooms of the past, digital outlets see themselves as ‘sensemakers’ to help their audiences navigate through the vast amounts of information available to what matters to them each day.*

fair observation or perspective that they might not be able to otherwise get. So there's different types of journalism, but if it's observing and interpreting the world type journalism, observational kind of journalism, then it's coming from that position of fairness and fair factual observations."

Tory Maguire at the *Huff Post*, has a similar definition of quality news. "It's got to be accurate and it's got to be fair and it's got to be in the public interest." She says the *Huff Post*'s philosophy about its readers is to "write for our audience, not about our audience." As with the other case studied, the *Huff Post* understands what it does not do, as well as what it does do. "We're not here to provide an analytic lens on Australian society, we're here to write stories for Australians that are going to be useful to them."

Simon Crerar at *Buzzfeed* echoes this statement about selectivity of coverage:

"There's no expectation we'll cover everything. That's where Twitter's very useful. We cast it [a story idea] out, we tweet about it.

We used to have this "hundred re-tweets" rule. If something got 100 re-tweets, that's a signal that if we do a piece of reporting around that, and try to advance, it will catch fire.

[That rule has been relaxed but what is happening in Twitter still informs *Buzzfeed*'s news decisions.] There's an all-day feedback loop."

At *Mumbrella*, Tim Burrowes says that the editorial philosophy is helping the readers in their working lives and careers. "These days we're tending to replace the word 'readers' with 'audience' because obviously readers is probably too narrow a definition." *Mumbrella*'s approach to content is journalistic whether it is in the form of hosting a conference or putting a news story on the site and in the daily e-mails.

Burrowes believes that readers remember your best work and your worst work. For this reason he will fund a freelance investigative reporter to do in-depth research on some stories, which can take weeks to complete. He says:

"It will cost us a fair bit of money and we'll get decent traffic for it, but not enough to cover the cost directly. But it just adds to your kudos and your credibility. It shows that we take the industry seriously."

At *Buzzfeed*, Simon Crerar is alive to the importance of trust, not just for the credibility of the journalism but because trust in the *Buzzfeed*'s news content affects the credibility of the branded content that is *Buzzfeed*'s lifeblood.

"I do feel that the complexity of the ecosystem, just as much as previously, does need professionals to help people navigate to where truth is. Who can I trust to tell me what is true here?

And therefore it remains a key part of journalism to build a bridge between facts and understanding. And it is so fundamental important. And if we can build a brand where people trust us and know that they believe that our take is giving them an objective, true assessment of what is happening, that can be a valuable proposition still."

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*Burrowes believes that readers remember your best work and your worst work. For this reason he will fund a freelance investigative reporter to do in-depth research on some stories...*

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...all of the case studies without exception use social media to disseminate their stories, get traffic to their sites, and to judge what stories are worth pursuing.

### Role of social media

**Modern newsrooms and social media are inextricably linked. This section finds that all of the case studies without exception use social media to disseminate their stories, get traffic to their sites, and to judge what stories are worth pursuing. Social media is highly cost effective and fast at achieving each of these goals.**

However, Burrowes says not all social media are equal for attracting audience. Facebook works best for *Mumbrella*. He says he has about 165,000 followers, but, "of course they're not as self-identified as of the industry." He says, "What's interesting for us in social media is that we now get more traffic from LinkedIn than from Twitter." Burrowes says of the LinkedIn traffic: "It's not through us doing anything particularly clever." A lot of traffic is driven to *Mumbrella* because LinkedIn's emails alert other followers to "learn about your connections".

For *Junkee*, the role of social media is partly about getting audiences and keeping them. Most of *Junkee's* audience comes from Facebook, rather than directly to its *Junkee* website (<http://junkee.com>). In 2017, *Junkee's* audience predominantly comes from Facebook (60 per cent), and the other 40 per cent comes either directly (20 per cent) or through search engines and other social media (20 per cent). Therefore, social media, particularly Facebook is critical to getting audience, and in turn, advertisers.

*Junkee* does not look to Twitter, SnapChat or Instagram for audience. A small proportion of referrals come from LinkedIn. Younger Australians use SnapChat and Instagram, but they are unlikely to get their news through those sources, observes Duggan:

"Our research shows us that less than about 15% of under 35s use Twitter daily. It's big in the media and marketing world. Journalists and politicians, are the ones on Twitter. They think everyone else is on there, but our audience is not on Twitter. They're on Facebook."

At the *Huff Post*, approximately a third of the audience comes directly to their website, Maguire explains. She says another third are social media referrals, and a diminishing number of viewers also come from Fairfax Media sites because of their joint venture partnership. Maguire says a third also come from search engines. "They're rough figures because it changes all the time."

In addition, *Huff Post* offers a weekly newsletter (or EDM) that has an "incredibly high open rate." Maguire says that so far the outlet has not paid for Facebook and Google referrals. "I'm not ruling it out, but we've never had to do it, yet."

*The Daily Review*, like *Mumbrella* has its own subscribers. Gill says this is about 70,000 and their email open rates are about a fifth of that. He says he has worked hard to increase the number of likes on the outlet's Facebook page by offering readers incentives such as entering a draw for tickets to shows. "We do that quite a lot, which brings in probably a couple of hundred Facebook likes every week. And our traffic now is about half through Facebook," he says. The other half is through the website's direct email and organic searches. He doesn't bother with Twitter, Snapchat or Instagram, largely because of time, but occasionally puts stories on LinkedIn. However, *the Daily Review* does have a YouTube channel and posts video to its website.

For *Buzzfeed*, Facebook is absolutely crucial to its distribution system, but it is not the only one, as Simon Crerar explains:

“There are some businesses that are just on Facebook and not on anywhere else. They are Facebook-only publishers. But Apple and Google give us lots of audience as well, so people are trying to figure out all these different avenues of reaching audiences, and we give lots of thought to that.”

### Emerging trends in the digital era

**In summary, the in-depth case studies reveal four key trends in the digital era, some more established than others. The first is that the audience is paramount to everything that is done in modern newsroom. Reporters need to consider the audience in every step of the process from gathering information to posting the story. Related to this is the second trend: readers will react to stories publicly, but often in a very personal way. The boundaries between the personal and public have blurred, and because of this, the personal response is now part of the overall political discourse. The third trend is that numbers tell stories more than ever before. In an era where data is everywhere, numbers are important sources of stories, and also provide new ways for reporters to tell stories through data journalism. The final and perhaps most recent trend is that video is king. Stories that contain video are considered valuable because they are readily shared on social media platforms and provide useful visual formats for advertisers. These four key trends are explained in more detail below.**

#### Audience and content

Tory Maguire best summed up the difference between journalism today in the digital form compared with its analogue form:

“The newsroom of the future doesn’t really look any different to the newsroom of 2005. What’s different is the audience. And so to be a newsroom of the future you have to be prepared to understand that you can’t control the audience or the platform on which they engage, or the time at which they engage, and you have to be prepared to shift, to understand them daily and to shift with them when they shift.”

Part of understanding the audience is understanding it is no longer a one-way interaction, but two-way or many-to-many interaction. This has also meant that personal narratives and issues become public and, at times, political.

#### The personal is now public – and political

During Tim Duggan’s earliest days as a media publisher of *In the Mix*, he observed that audiences responded to stories and issues through online forums that were mostly anonymous and very popular. “It was like millions of pages a month,” Duggan recalls. “I remember when Facebook came along and people started inserting Facebook comments at the bottom of stories, or people started commenting on Facebook.” Duggan thought that the lack of anonymity would make people more accountable and the standard of commentary would be politer than in the forums.

“That lasted for about six months, and now people’s online persona is indistinguishable from anything else. People just say exactly what they want. Politically, they wear their opinions on their sleeves.”

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*Stories that contain video are considered valuable because they are readily shared on social media platforms and they provide useful visual formats for advertisers.*

Blurring of the public and private spheres is a trend that was recognised by academics such as Catherine Lumby in the late 1990s. But unlike many other scholars at the time who saw this blurring of the boundaries as disintegration of the public sphere and of the quality of its discourse, Lumby welcomed it. She argued that a new analytical framework was required to make sense of these new times. The once personal issues of feminism, gender and environmental issues could be articulated in the public realm and were being politicised. The result was that the boundaries between public and private have blurred and were now inherently unstable. She identified that the role of 'old media' and 'new media' were linked to create, '...a kind of virtual map of the diversity which defines contemporary democracies'.<sup>3</sup>

### Data journalism

Data journalism is essentially the use of numbers to tell stories. These stories might be displayed using graphics that the audience can interact with. In some instances, data journalism uses publicly available datasets to find patterns in the data that tell a bigger picture story about society. Data journalism has been around for many decades and was previously known as Computer Assisted Reporting (CAR). But it did not really take off beyond the USA until 2009/10, when data journalism started to be recognised in major journalism awards around the globe, such as the British Press Awards. In 2009, the *Daily Telegraph* won several awards for its data journalism when it asked its readers to help it wade through hundreds of thousands of leaked documents to determine if British MPs were incorrectly claiming expenses for which they were not entitled. The exercise produced dozens of revelatory news stories about MPs abuses of their expense entitlements.

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*Australian digital publishers generally recognise that data journalism is here, but many do not have the resources to mine data for stories and visualise the findings in an attractive way for their audiences.*

Australian digital publishers generally recognise that data journalism is here, but many do not have the resources to mine data for stories and visualise the findings in an attractive way for their audiences. Duggan says that it is not something *Junkee* is involved with.

"I know data journalism is like the buzz word and the hot thing, ...but, I haven't seen that much good data journalism produced [in Australia]. And outside of the big news organisations, it's pretty hard to do."

*The Daily Review* does not do any data journalism. It's a similar story at *Huff Post*.

Maguire says she would 'love to' do data journalism but they don't have the staff numbers or resources:

"We don't really do any of it because we don't have the resources, we don't have any developer resources, so all of our product development is done in the US."

In contrast, *The Guardian* has excelled at data journalism and won awards for it in the UK. It now provides it for its Australian audience. The UK Guardian's most famous example combining data and crowdsourcing, involved uploading half a million documents in 2009 to allow readers to scrutinise politicians' expenses.

The Australian edition has a dedicated data journalist who works with a small production team. Lenore Taylor says reporters are requesting more data journalism training. "I want to do that because I think it's really important."

<sup>3</sup> Lumby, Catherine. 'Media Culpa: Tabloid Media, Democracy and the Public Sphere,' *Sydney Papers*, vol. 11, no. 3, p. 121.

Some stories obviously lend themselves to the use of, others don't:

"Increasingly all journalists are going to have to be much more aware and alive to telling stories other than using just words: visuals, data, graphics, using other ways of storytelling intertwined with words."

Using information from readers is also really important, Taylor says. A recent example was the release of the latest Australian census data:

"It allowed you to go down and look at what had changed in the demographics and census information for your local area. And then we added a call-out to it so people could write in and tell us what they'd noticed in their area and what that data meant on the ground where they lived. And then we packaged that up into a story, and we'll probably do it again, and we actually got ideas for a whole lot more stories from that."

The newsroom saves costs on digital development by using its British parent company's tools, with some local adjustments.

*Mumbrella* also likes data journalism. "We love doing infographics and that sort of thing," Tim Burrowes says. "You'll find examples in [our stories of] the daily TV ratings." It takes him only about half an hour to input the data and get the infographics to produce interactive graphs that show how various TV programs or channels have rated over the year. He does it with media audience numbers too, using a program called Infogram.

Another example of *Mumbrella's* data journalism was collating Australian TV's "real time" viewing audiences over four years with data from industry press releases. "Lo and behold you can see the [audience] number is absolutely plummeting and it's only when you build the graph you see the story," says Burrowes. "So that's the sort of data journalism I look for."

### Video content

Video is increasingly important for all digital news outlets. One reason is that advertisements on video are more likely to be seen. News sites are experimenting with types of videos and duration. *Junkee*, for instance, is investing heavily in video. However, it has found that video works better for entertainment and humorous stories than for hard news, so text also remains important.

Both Ray Gill at *The Daily Review* and Tim Burrowes at *Mumbrella* say they are experimenting more with video because it does so well on Facebook and other social media platforms.

This trend can be observed more generally with other newsrooms, not included in this study, embedding curated video in their online stories to drive engagement and bring the words on the page to life. For example *the Sydney Morning Herald's* story on same-sex marriage: <http://www.smh.com.au/video/video-news/video-national-news/samesex-marriage-the-facts-20161003-4leoa.html>

The *Huff Post* has two people on its video team who produce a range of things, including video news pieces that take them an hour to produce. They also do two- or three-minute videos that might take half a day to shoot and half a day to edit. Tory Maguire says that

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*Video is increasingly important for all digital news outlets. One reason is that advertisements on video are more likely to be seen.*

sometimes they do 15-minute features that can take months, while they're doing all their other things. "That mix of content has worked for us so far". She says that they also create videos purely for social media use "to increase our Facebook reach and our Twitter reach."

Maguire observes: "Advertisers want more video and Facebook wants more video." She says other *Huff Post* editions around the world have really doubled down on video, and a third of their teams are video producers. But in Australia it is not changing its editorial mix just yet.

#### Other observations

**Editors were generally cautious about predicting future trends other than to identify that news story-telling is likely to become more visual, using video, data and graphics to rely information to the audience. Editors were optimistic that Australian's media literacy is developed enough to discern real news from fake and opinion from fact.**

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*Editors were optimistic that Australian's media literacy is developed enough to discern real news from fake and opinion from fact.*

*The Guardian's* editor, Lenore Taylor, says it is difficult to predict the future trends of journalism and news media. She believes it would be 'arrogant' for someone of her generation to pretend to know, particularly given how quickly the channels that young people use to get information change.

She says her instinct would be that news would become more visual. "Data or graphic presentation will be critical for presenting complicated ideas, that will change quite significantly, but I think trying to sort of make hard and fast predictions out to the future is a fool's game," Taylor says.

The quality of news at present is varied and this is a problem for the media industry and journalism, Maguire says:

"I think there's an awful lot of excellent journalism happening and it's happening across a broad range of outlets. I think we're doing some excellent journalism and we're less than two years old. And there's plenty of it happening. But I also think that there is a lot more attention being paid to a lot of really noisy, nasty crap. That's probably more in the commentary space than in the journalism space."

She says it is not just commentators putting forward nasty views, but also journalists:

"Obviously people are doing it because it drives traffic, but I don't think you have to do it to build an audience. I think there's a certain sector of people that like to indulge in that stuff, but I think it gives the whole industry a terrible stench."

Maguire says that while fake news exists most people can probably tell real news from fake. "I don't think people are stupid." She believes that most Australians do not spend a lot of time thinking about the media. "They're spending all day trying to pay their mortgages and raise their kids and put dinner on the table, they're not spending all day thinking about us... they've also got pretty good bullshit detectors."

### THEME 2: JOURNALISM SKILLS AND EDUCATION

This section is focused on journalism skills and education. The qualitative findings arise from interviews with journalism educators representing the University of Canberra (ACT), University of Technology Sydney (NSW), Swinburne University of Technology (Victoria) and Deakin University (Victoria). It canvasses what is being taught in these institution's journalism programs and compares this with what digital only media outlets say they look for when hiring new journalism graduates. On the whole, this section finds that the journalism skills and education of graduates are quite well matched with the needs of modern digital newsrooms.

#### What is being taught in university journalism programs

**The research finds that the basic practical skills of journalism such as news gathering, writing, and checking for accuracy are being taught in the studied tertiary journalism schools. There are also news skills being taught such as how to use social media to gather information and disseminate stories. The importance of narrative in writing news is also taught in university journalism programs, and this means a move away from the claim of objectivity in news reporting. Some schools had identified that data journalism and visualisation were important skills for the future.**

There is a tension within university journalism programs between the imperative to teach the basic skills of journalism and the imperative to prepare students for a future where the specific skill demands are unknowable.

This tension exists in all four of the university programs examined in this research: at the University of Canberra, Deakin University, Swinburne University of Technology and the University of Technology Sydney.

In every case, students were being taught the basic skills of journalism:

- how to recognise news;
- how to gather newsworthy information, and
- how to write a basic news story.

They were also being taught:

- how to do communicate news in aural, visual and textual forms;
- how to use social media to gather and disseminate material;
- how to use digital technology to enhance the audience experience, and
- how to find audiences rather than waiting for audiences to come to them.

The third common element was the teaching of media ethics and media law, and at least an elective subject about the role of journalism in society.

It was also clear that each university's pedagogical approach was strongly influenced by the concept of "learning by doing". Students were required to gather and produce stories constantly.

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Professor Matthew Ricketson has been teaching journalism in universities since 1993. Until the end of 2016 he was Professor of Journalism at the University of Canberra and is now Professor of Communications at Deakin University. He spoke about the journalism programs at both those universities:

“It’s both similar to and different from 1993.

It’s similar in that we teach students how to write a basic news story: how to get it, check it for accuracy; how to do that across print, broadcast.

One of the main differences is that you have to think of yourself in any medium. You might be working across any media form, including mobile and social media. This is pretty well embedded in most courses: how to use social media to gather material.

Social media allows you to tune into events much more quickly: who’s talking about what. Understanding that is quite embedded in a subject about gathering news.”

Professor Ricketson also saw it as increasingly important to teach students how to write in a variety of styles and voices to suit different platforms: the language used and the way the audience is addressed.

He observed that news was presented in a more personal way now, that the reporter was more often likely to be a presence in the narrative, and that the language of news writing was less formal than in the past.

Professor Andrew Dodd, Program Director of Journalism at Swinburne University of Technology, spoke of a strong emphasis on giving students practice at gathering news and writing stories.

“There is a lot of emphasis on writing through repetition. We have compulsory “taster” subjects for audio and video for six weeks each. We have an absolute focus on practice: learning through doing, not learning through how others do it.”

Professor Peter Fray, Professor of Journalism Practice at the University of Technology Sydney, also placed emphasis on the basics:

“There are foundational skills of storytelling, reporting and editing that are eternal. I wouldn’t want to be at a J school that didn’t teach you how to write a news story.”

All three were acutely aware of the need to keep course content dynamic as a way of preparing students to participate in a digital revolution that was showing no signs of slowing down, and in which the exact nature of future developments was impossible to know.

Achieving this dynamism in institutional settings that were not resistant to change but were weighed down by bureaucratic and slow-moving processes was a constant challenge.

Another challenge was how to include new material in courses that were already bursting at the seams.

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*[Professor Ricketson] observed that news was presented in a more personal way now, that the reporter was more often likely to be a presence in the narrative, and that the language of news writing was less formal than in the past.*

Professor Fray:

“There’s a great tension. The tensions are in the shortage of time and the speed of the evolution of the transformational skills we are trying to cope with.

You can’t keep changing subjects every five seconds.

Three years or so ago the funkiest thing was Google Glass. Should we teach this? It fell off the planet, although it’s making a bit of a comeback now. So how do you temper the enthusiasms?

Now we want to teach more immersive journalism, so we’re buying 360-degree cameras.

Ideally you would have a way of upskilling student who use traditional cameras to using mobiles and then 360 within the same subject. The trouble is you try to stuff more into a subject and they’re bursting at the seams.”

UTS was considering introducing more focused shorter subjects, perhaps over six weeks rather than 12 or 13, as well as weekend courses, boot camps and courses conducted in between semesters.

The jargon term for this is micro-credentialling, and Professor Dodd also spoke of it. Like the other three universities in this study, Swinburne was wrestling with how to give students sufficient grounding in the basis while also exposing them to transformational skills.

The particular transformational skill that Professor Dodd had in mind was data-visualisation.

“How do you pay attention to data-visualisation or photography in all its forms? A unit? Or integrate it across the program? We’ve decided to integrate it across the program.

Take a helicopter view of everything you’re doing. What do you absolutely have to know about data-visualisation to make it in the world today?

Map-based story-telling can help you tell a story visually across a landscape. We’re telling a story about an Indigenous massacre in Victoria that happened around a landscape. You can tell the story and understand the topography and that helps you understand what happened.

The other way that’s taking hold is micro-credentialling: a couple of weeks’ intensive, not quite as much as a full unit. That way you can tick off lots of things you’d like to put in your program but can’t find space for. And you can do them as electives.”

Professor Ricketson did not speak of a specific transformational skill but took a broader approach to this issue:

“Journalism students need to be across a lot of different technologies and ways of gathering and disseminating information, but you still have a standard three-year degree.

I'm increasingly conscious of the limits of what you can teach people in three years and how ready they will be both in a practical sense and up-to-date skills.

But also, have they got the critical literacy and maturity?

There's a lot more to be taught but it's almost out of date as soon as its taught so you have to learn to be adaptable and how to use new technologies even if it's changing quickly. Teaching technological adaptability is very important.

I'm more strongly of the view now, even more resolute about it now, that the baseline skills are still very, very important. Verify, write, present. If you have those skills, don't piss them away.

We live in an age of all this hoo-ha about fake news. What's become clear in the past six months since the new President of the US was elected, is that almost all the major stories of the past six months which have shaped perceptions of the president have come out through standard journalism work: finding things out, verifying them and presenting them.

When CNN transgressed recently they got their bums kicked and that was a good thing.

So whatever technologies and however innovative you are in the use of them, it must be married with teaching those baseline skills."

Professors Dodd and Ricketson saw a need to place more emphasis on teaching students how to collaborate with other journalists, not just with people they knew but in other institutions and organisations. Professor Dodd gave the Panama Papers case as an example. Here, a global story of tax avoidance was simultaneously told at the local level in more than 90 countries. This collaborative journalism effort involved almost 400 journalists from across the globe. Over the course of a year they secretly trawled through 11.5 million leaked financial and legal documents from law firm Mossack Fonseca to identify who with power abused tax havens. There were obvious benefits for working collaboratively and digitally for the reporters involved: the sharing of costs and information; increased story reach and a strengthened ability to set the news agenda; and the potential for more comprehensive or complex reporting on a grander, global, scale. In this way, investigative collaborations and digital approaches can be seen as powerful antidotes to declining revenues and falling journalist numbers as we move deeper into the 21st century.

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*...investigative collaborations and digital approaches can be seen as powerful antidotes to declining revenues and falling journalist numbers as we move deeper into the 21st century.*

Closer to home, both Dodd and Ricketson spoke of a large collaborative project they had both been involved in called Uni Poll Watch. This was a collaboration of journalism schools all round Australia in the lead-up to the 2016 federal election. Hundreds of journalism students were assigned to write profiles of every seat in the House of Representatives and interview every candidate in every one of those seats.

It was seen by Professors Dodd and Ricketson as way to help make up for the deficit in civic journalism brought about by the digital disruption of legacy media.

### What employers want in their journalists

**In sum, employers want five things from their new recruits: 1) a portfolio of published work to show they have some experience beyond their tertiary qualification. 2) Curiosity and an ability to critique information to determine fact from fiction. 3) Communicate with people on the telephone and not just rely on email and texting. 4) Be versatile in telling stories using different mediums and platforms. 5) Know how to engage with the audience using social media.**

The publisher of *Junkee*, Tim Duggan says experience matters more to him than formal qualifications:

"I say that all the time to journalism students. If you come in for a job interview, and all you can say is 'I've studied for four years at Charles Sturt or at UTS': if you don't have a blog, or you don't have a Twitter [account], or you can't show me 50 examples of your work that you have got published, or if you haven't done work experience at *Mamma Mia*, or something like that, then I just don't believe it. There's no excuse to come out of uni and not have experience."

Duggan says that he is concerned that many more university students are studying journalism and media than there are jobs. "When we have a job, we have hundreds of people applying for it. And I often think: What about the other 350 that didn't get this job? Are there 350 jobs for them to get?"

Certainly, 20 years ago newspapers offered a handful of cadetships each year and hundreds applied. Duggan says the difference now is that there are fewer entry points.

"Getting that first foot in the door is hard, because those entry level jobs now go to people who have the experience. Experience might be that they've started building up a Twitter profile, and they've contributed 20 stories to *Junkee*, or one of our titles, that puts them above the person who's just got a degree."

When *The Daily Review* advertised for a deputy editor in its early days, Gill says more than 80 people applied, all recent graduates. Gill explains:

"They were all pretty raw, I thought. The problem was that because [the job] was arts orientated, and entertainment orientated, they weren't really specialists in that area. Very few of them seemed to have a particular specialty, or passion for that. The guy we got had that. He was a recent graduate, he had all the skills, he'd shown that he'd been writing review and theatre stuff for other sites, little sites. But out of 80 applicants, I think we had a short list of about seven."

*The Guardian's* Lenore Taylor says all journalists must have a 'critical faculty':

"I think it can be included in education and if it's not there then I don't think someone should get through a journalism degree. If someone doesn't come to the world questioning what they see, why it's happening, what's behind it, or what the back story is, then you're not cut out for it. Or not this kind of [news] journalism."

At present, *The Guardian* takes trainees. It has had two so far, but as yet has not taken university interns:

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*Duggan says that he is concerned that many more university students are studying journalism and media than there are jobs.*

"I've had a number of journalism schools ask to send interns here, and up until now we haven't because I didn't feel like we were big enough to offer the students the training and that experience that they would deserve ... And if you're as stretched as our news room has been, I didn't feel like it was going to be possible to do that. That's probably going to change."

A similar position about interns is taken at the *Huff Post*. Maguire explains:

"I'm constantly being asked [to take interns]. But if it was going to be of any use to them it would be a huge investment for us, or they're going to come in here and just sit there watching other people do their jobs, which is not useful."

The traineeship at *The Guardian* is a 12-month position during which the trainee is put through a conventional system of rotation through the various editorial sections of the masthead.

Taylor says the trainee experience has been a positive one. "I've got no idea what he's being taught [at University], but he's very good. His writing is good and his approach to news is really good and hopefully we can teach him a lot as well, but he's a really talented young man."

The *Huff Post* has hired several graduates and employed third-year students in part-time and casual positions with great success.

"They're super across everything that I need to them to be across. Obviously they're young and their training continues in the workplace. You can't expect them to come out of journalism school and be able to immediately know whether that story about George Pell is a threat of breaching contempt laws without some help."

The next generation of reporters is particularly good at audience engagement, says Maguire. She says this is because they grew up using social media. She finds little to criticise about the new generation of reporters except that they are tentative about using a telephone and prefer to text or email people to get information. She says most of her junior casual employees have graduated from Sydney's UTS, a few from Macquarie and from the University of Perth. "I think we probably get the cream of the crop because I get them by personal recommendation from the people who have trained them. To expect journalists to come out of university being perfect journalists is ridiculous, and I think employers have a big responsibility to train them."

Gill, at *The Daily Review*, has also noticed that any time he has had graduates work with them, they have shown an aversion to talking to anyone on the phone. "They're terrified. That's what I discovered. They can't be just ring people and get an answer straight away from them."

Reporters need to be multi-skilled to thrive in today's newsroom. At *Mumbrella* this includes being able to run events. Burrowes says that while it may be challenging for a journalist to learn these skills, it helps them understand better their audience and the issues that matter to that audience. "It's different to writing a news story, but a lot of the journalists have become very adept at it." Burrowes believes that having journalists curate the events makes the events more engaging for the participants.

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*She [Maguire] finds little to criticise about the new generation of reporters except that they are tentative about using a telephone and prefer to text or email.*

Burrowes hires reporters with journalism degrees, mostly from Sydney's UTS, and also people outside the industry who have knowledge about the media or technology skills. He has observed deficits in their training, particularly media law. He also believes that it would be useful if they were taught general knowledge about public administration and how governments and courts function. Unlike Duggan, Burrowes laments the absence of shorthand training in today's journalism schools. "Even if you are recording something it's still so much quicker to have a shorthand note."

*Mumbrella* does take interns for work experience, and has subsequently hired some of them.

*Buzzfeed's* Simon Crerar looks for journalists who are "definitely rooted in that curiosity, rat-like cunning":

"They've got to be able to sniff out bullshit on the internet where it's very easy to be tweeting with the cat [that is, wasting time communicating over the internet with someone whose identity you have not established]; verification; using Twitter to connect with sources.

Twitter is an amazing journalistic tool. It's your notepad, your visibility to the world, you can cast out ideas, people start giving you tips, giving you insights. So using Twitter is a key skill set.

They have to be fast and be able to tune out the noise. It's hard to deliver on a deadline if you're then spending a load of time tweeting and looking at stuff. So sometimes you've got to shut that thing down and concentrate on the reporting."

Like other editors, he is frustrated by the tendency of young reporters to rely on texting or email to get information out of people, and their reluctance to use the phone.

"You have to instil in them that people aren't always going to oblige you. They are not always going to reply to your email. So when they get back I ask them, what have you done? They say, "Emailed them". I say, "Get on the phone, get on the bus, get out there"."

*Buzzfeed's* "on-boarding" program – induction – consists of classes on how to work the content management system, copyright rules for sourcing and crediting images, copy editing, thumbnail and social media optimising basics.

### The industry-academy relationship

**There is a sound relationship based on mutual respect and recognition of mutual interests between the media employers and academics who participated in this research. That was not always the case in Australia. Certainly in the last three decades of the twentieth century there was an element in the Australian media industry that held journalism degrees in contempt, an attitude cordially reciprocated by elements of the academic community.**

On the evidence of this research, those attitudes have melted away. The reasons for this are beyond the scope of the research but there can be no doubt that with the increasing incidence of university graduates entering the journalism, and the increased

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*...journalism programs are now staffed to a significant extent by journalism practitioners ...each of whom have had substantial careers in the industry and still practise.*

professionalisation of journalism, has come a realisation that each has an important role to play in the development of the media as a democratic institution.

Moreover, journalism programs are now staffed to a significant extent by journalism practitioners, exemplified by the three program leaders interviewed for this research, each of whom have had substantial careers in the industry and still practise.

Yet the extent to which the development and evolution of the four university journalism programs described here are informed by industry input is variable. All three academic leaders have well-developed industry links, and make use of their contacts and their standing in the industry for the benefit of their students.

To a large extent, however, this is focused on creating internship places for students, an aspect of the programs that is considered absolutely essential by the academics because they not only give students invaluable real-world experience but because they and often lead to job offers.

Industry input to course content and design is much less well-developed, although all programs include guest lectures given by industry practitioners and all the academics seek advice from their industry contacts, usually on an *ad hoc* basis.

Simon Crerar at *Buzzfeed* has taken his message to the universities:

“I’ve been into chat with Jenna Price’s students [at UTS]. I’ve been to Macquarie. People [academics] have come from Canberra, from QUT and the University of Melbourne. I like to go and talk about our brand to the reporters of the future.”

Eric Beecher is a sponsor of a research project at the Centre for Advancing Journalism at the University of Melbourne called The Civic Impact of Journalism. The research objective is to identify what it is that journalism brings to civil society and what is at risk if journalistic capacity is so reduced that public-interest journalism cannot be carried on at a level necessary for the operation of a healthy democracy.

Professor Ricketson revamped the University of Canberra course and in doing so consulted leading practitioners from legacy and new media in the planning. As a result, it now takes a broader interpretation of what constitutes journalism:

“Journalism and content marketing, brand journalism: bespoke journalistic content on behalf of a body. Also a stream on social and digital campaigning: people producing their own journalism were not just corporations but organisations like Greenpeace and the Australian Conservation Foundation. This appealed to students who wanted to work on campaigning journalism.

Job opportunities are changing dramatically. I’m pretty sure that there are more journalists employed at AFL.com than at the sports desks of *The Age* and *Herald Sun* combined.”

Professor Fray has attempted to inject more industry input by inviting three senior editors in to talk with him and his students about the kind of skills they would like to see taught in journalism programs.

One of the editors was from a wire agency, a second was from legacy media and the third was a digital editor.

“The wire agency person said we’re working a lot with AI. We’d love to have some journalism graduates able to work with machines.

The digital editor said give me a journalist who can code.

And the legacy media guy said data.”

It left him to reflect on how such disparate and specialised skills could be incorporated into an already crowded program. His response so far has been to think how the journalism program might collaborate with other parts of the University where there is expertise in these fields.

“We don’t produce people who can code and we haven’t started to think about AI. But other parts of the uni do, so how can we collaborate with those people?

Q: So the journalism school of the future is going to be making connections for students into other areas of study such as AI and IT coding because the transformational set of skills is going to demand a broader approach?

That’s pretty well it. In the US there are examples of journalism schools being inspired by other disciplines first and foremost. So what does journalism look like if it sits in a design school or an engineering or IT school?

Things would be gained but things would be lost.

I sometimes have to pull myself up from waxing lyrical about technology. Fundamentally journalists tell stories. And we should not lose sight of those fourth estate functions of journalism: bringing down bad people.”

Professor Dodd shares this view. Like Professor Ricketson he also places an emphasis on teaching students to be technologically adaptable:

Education is about giving people the tools to continue learning. Showing people that they can adapt as the media platforms around them develop is really important.

Some of it’s probably predictable, but the last 15 years taught us that everyone who predicts gets it wrong. Don’t be over-awed by the technology so you lose sight of the importance of truth-telling.

For all that there is a lot of focus on technological competence and adaptability, however, it is clear from what the industry respondents say that basic journalism skills remain fundamentally important: natural curiosity, the ability to find things out, tell stories, know enough about law and ethics to stay out of trouble, and a good general knowledge about how government and the courts work.

In these respects, the general direction of journalism courses is in tune with the industry’s needs, but adjustments to the future are not all about technology. They are also about adaptability, knowledge of how the world works, how to get information out of people, and an appreciation of what constitutes journalism in the digital age.

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## THEME 3: FINANCING JOURNALISM

The case studies in this research reveal a range of revenue-raising activities but most use some variant of a hybrid model involving advertising and some other revenue-raising activity. To the extent that they rely on advertising, these newsrooms are like traditional commercial outlets which also depend on advertising. The difference in the digital age is that the advertising revenues are much less lucrative than before and so many digital outfits are turning to supplementary ways of remaining sustainable.

This section examines the approaches being taken in each of the seven case studies.

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*The difference in the digital age is that the advertising revenues are much less lucrative than before and so many digital outfits are turning to supplementary ways of remaining sustainable.*

### Understanding the new model

**Today's digital media outlets use a hybrid model to finance their journalism. This means more than one or two sources of funding are relied upon to bring in revenues. The most common types of revenue raising options that might be part of a hybrid media funding model include: advertising (display and native – see studio work below); building databases and selling access to them; hosting events related to their media content; using market research to develop and offer new media products; crowdsourcing funds and philanthropy, and the least likely, paywalls. These methods for raising revenues are outlined below.**

The new hybrid business model as it has evolved to date is not as straightforward as the model that it has displaced, and the evolution is far from over. In addition, it has required media organisations to think differently about the relationship between journalism and advertising and the ensuing issues concerning transparency and the need for honesty with audiences.

The 20th century model for financing commercial media typically relied on a combination of paid advertising and the cover price of hardcopy newspaper sales. Historically the income from the cover price barely covered the masthead's distribution costs, so the element of the revenue stream that kept the newspapers viable was classified and display advertising.<sup>4</sup> The internet has increased competition for advertising while also driving down its unit price, causing traditional media's advertising revenues to fall sharply.<sup>5</sup>

The advantage of digital media companies' multi-pronged approach for raising revenues – the hybrid model – is that it spreads the risk and the reward. Tim Duggan of *Junkee* says that it's highly effective for this purpose:

*"If we see that native [advertising] is going up, and that display [advertising] is going down, it allows us to put more energy into the areas of revenue that are most going to impact on us. So, by having five or six different revenue models, it's the only way of surviving and thriving, in 2017, as a media company."*

Tim Burrowes, founder of *Mumbrella*, observes that specialist and niche outlets are doing better at finding a workable business model than are general news organisations. "I'm not sure that the mass journalism model will work for much longer, certainly not as it exists, which isn't saying that another model won't emerge because it always does." Burrowes says traditional media were not alert enough to the risks to their businesses in the earlier days:

<sup>4</sup> Samuel, G. Communications and Media Law Association speech, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, 4 May 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Carson, A. Behind the newspaper paywall — lessons in charging for online content: why Australian newspapers are stuck between digital and print, *Media Culture and Society*, 37(7), 2015, pp. 1022-1041.

"I've pretty much seen cutbacks in most newsrooms for most of my career. Right back, on local papers they were beginning to centralise subbing, and each time it was a step backwards because you'd lose knowledge out of your team. And the heart-breaking thing is, there was so much wastage and there were so many people who were under-utilised who could have made it such a more amazing newspaper than it was. And that's one of the issues: it's partly we did it to ourselves as journalists by not making the most of what was available as a resource when it was there."

On the positive side, Burrowes believes there is now more opportunity than ever before for small news outlets to play a role in the media landscape. You can break in now, he says, but you need to win the audience's respect.

Each of the different revenue raising elements that might be part of a hybrid model are alphabetically listed in more detail below.

### Advertising

**Advertising is a very important revenue source that is generally employed in two or three ways: classified ads, online display or banner ads, and native advertising, in both text and video form.**

The US Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) formed a working group of 100 companies to define **native advertising**. It identified six forms of it that fit the broad description of advertisers and publishers delivering paid ads that match the page content, fit its design and is consistent with the platform behaviour. The result is that the consumer feels that the ad belongs. To achieve this advertisers use six ad products. These, according to the IAB's *Native Advertising Handbook*<sup>6</sup> are:

1. **In-feed ads.** Usually written in story form whereby the content has been written by or in partnership with the publisher's team to match the surrounding stories. Commonly used disclosure language for in-feed ads includes: "Advertisement" or "AD", "Promoted", "Sponsored", etc.
2. **Paid Search Units.** Usually found above the organic search results. It looks exactly like the surrounding results (with the exception of disclosure aspects).
3. **Recommendation Widgets.** Usually an ad or paid content link that is delivered via a "widget."
4. **Promoted Listings.**
5. **In-Ad with Native Element Units.** This ad unit must have clearly defined borders and not be confused with normal page content. It may link to another page.
6. **Custom.** Examples of native advertising that do not fit in to the above categories.

*Junkee*, for example, carries traditional banner ads and uses native advertising too. Its native ads are a "massive part of our revenue," Duggan says. "And then, even within native advertising, we divide that up into 'written native', and 'video native'. And video native is an even larger part of that revenue," he says. But also critical to *Junkee's* profitability is what it calls its agency division that involves helping clients with their advertising needs over the long-term.

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*Advertising is a very important revenue source that is generally employed in two or three ways: classified ads, online display or banner ads, and native advertising...*

<sup>6</sup>IAB. The Native Title Handbook. 2013. URL: <https://www.iab.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/IAB-Native-Advertising-Playbook2.pdf>

An advantage for *Junkee* is that its content speaks to a specific audience – young Australians. For this reason, advertising with *Junkee* costs more than it would with most major news organisations. Duggan explains:

“Brands want to speak to young Australians, and find it hard to get them elsewhere. So, our [cost per thousand or CPMs,] the rate that we can charge an advertiser to get to that audience, is quite high. And it is across the whole youth space. So, us, Pedestrian, and *Buzzfeed*, all have similar CPMs.”

But being so audience- and content-specific does not necessarily work for other news media. *The Daily Review*'s initial business model relies on display advertising from the arts sector. Gill says the plan was to sell advertising as a yearly packaged deal – such as a gold or platinum package – to major arts organisations like art galleries and opera companies. The website's target was \$800,000 to fund an arts newsroom with five journalists. It achieved early successes with advertising revenues coming from the National Gallery of Victoria, and Opera Australia. “Then the money disappeared,” says Ray Gill. With disappointing advertising income, he experimented with co-sharing advertising with *the New Daily*, offering advertisers more readers, over a million subscribers. Gill also began running ‘masterclasses’ with industry leaders (discussed below) and in 2016, called for crowdfunding. So far, none of the initiatives are bringing in enough revenue to sustain the website.

The most successful revenue-raising strategy for *The Daily Review* has been native advertising. “That was where most of our advertising came from last year. Very little of it came from banner advertising.” This involved doing reviews of shows such as *Matilda* for sponsors. Gill says the website did not explicitly state that the review was sponsored, which he has mixed feelings about, but stressed that it did not change what he wrote. “I’d write about [*Matilda*] anyway and I wanted to write about it. And, I just thought this was the reality of [sponsored content].”

At the *Huff Post*, most of the revenue comes from display ads, but, Tory Maguire says, an ever-increasing proportion of revenue is coming from native advertising, which it sells through its studio, Partner Studio.

*Mumbrella* attracts advertisers to its website, its emailed newsletters, and at its events. They also send one EDM (Electronic Direct Mail) a week on behalf of a commercial partner.

## Databases

**Some outlets are developing their own databases and selling access to that information to clients to help fund their journalism.**

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*The Database is a clever revenue solution that also informs the site's journalism and vice versa.*

*Mumbrella* manages a database called the *Source* that matches brands to ad agencies. Tim Burrowes says they hire journalism students to build and maintain the database through desk research. The database is then available to companies through a subscription. The Database is a clever revenue solution that also informs the site's journalism and vice versa. “When our reporters are writing about when an [advertising] account changes or how an agency is doing, they've got the *Source* then as a resource, in its own right, to look at what other accounts the agency has.”

### Events

**Another revenue raising method in the digital era is to host events that are directly relevant to the media content offered by an outlet and to its primary audience.**

Hosting events has become another revenue activity for media companies. Both *Mumbrella* and *Junkee* host events. Both hold several major functions throughout the calendar year that heavily overlap with their audiences' interests. For example, *Junkee* hosts 'Video *Junkee*', a video festival. They also host 'Junket', which Tim Duggan describes as "an influencer un-conference".

Burrowes says events are very important to *Mumbrella* and constitute more than half of the business model. They do about 30 a year. Their signature event is a two-and-a-half day media and marketing conference in Sydney called *Mumbrella* 360, which attracts 3,000 participants. Other events include three major industry awards; breakfast gatherings; training; specific marketing industry summits, and a free site to list other's upcoming events. Ticket prices vary depending on the function, but can be \$2500 per person for the major event, *Mumbrella* 360. The events are inseparable from the work of *Mumbrella's* journalists. Burrowes explains, "All of our journalists curate our events and conferences, so the thinking is, our journalists should be the ones who understand our readers, what the issues they're facing are."

*The Daily Review* turned to events to bolster its ailing advertising revenues. These included screen acting with friends of Gill's who were actors on Netflix's hit political drama, *House of Cards*. Gill also organised creative writing workshops with his wife, the playwright Joanna Murray Smith. "We did 'Aiming for the Archibald', with an Archibald winner," says Gill. "We did another painting workshop, and we've done two fully subscribed classes with Helen Razer on opinion writing."

Attracting audiences to the website or to the masterclasses has never been the problem for *The Daily Review*. The problem is to sufficiently monetise the content. "They've all been fully subscribed, all the classes." Faced with hard choices, Gill had to downsize, losing his full-time marketer and reducing the number of EDMs, which impacted on audience size. "Our highest audience last year on Google Analytics was 180k. As a result of dropping on EDMs, it's probably gone down to 120, or to 130," Gill says. "Everyone used to say to me, at the beginning, 'Just wait till you get to 100k and everything will change, then you'll get the advertisers come to you.' It didn't happen."

### New products

**Market research has played a role in some digital outlets identifying new markets to develop and produce new media products.**

From their extensive longitudinal data on the youth market, *Junkee* Media identified that Australian youth from five years ago thought quite differently about the world compared to the youth surveyed in 2017. Duggan says the data showed that, "The Gen Z's are a lot more optimistic than their older brothers and sisters." Duggan says their research showed home ownership was viewed differently by the two groups:

"Older millennials have had home ownership taken away from them in their lifetime. So, when they were 18, they thought they were going to buy a home, by the time

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*Junkee Media identified that Australian youth from five years ago thought quite differently about the world compared to the youth surveyed in 2017*

they got to 25 they realised they're not. Whereas, younger Gen Z know house prices as too expensive for them. So, it's almost like they've readjusted."

From these findings, *Junkee* Media had the confidence to launch a new digital site, *Punkee*, aimed at 15-22 year olds focused on pop and media culture, which replaces *TheVine*. It features stories such as "Meet the Memelord: Chatting with the dude behind Facebook meme page 'It's James'".

Like *Junkee*, *Mumbrella* has launched many new products based on their audience and advertisers' needs, and drawing on Burrow's past experiences in Britain. These include very specific industry summits for marketers, and also for the public relations sector, awards and conferences. They also provide a weekly newsletter for the PR industry. The same formula of hosting awards and events is provided for the publishing industry. Burrowes says the journalism of *Mumbrella* gives authority to host the events and builds trust with the audience. "You're becoming a familiar brand with your readers so that they'll trust you that you know what you're talking about when the event comes along," Burrowes explains. The events also have sponsored content whereby sponsors address the audience, and that is clearly identified at the conferences, says Burrowes. The awards involve 'live judging' rounds and industry presentations across dozens of award categories, which make for a lively, entertaining and informative spectacle for the audience. Burrowes concludes:

"For me, trust, audience trust is probably more important than ever now. And it's so easy to take shortcuts in order to keep advertisers happy or, you know, not upset contacts and all of those things. But if you want people to trust you to enter your awards or trust that you're going to put on big events, they've really, really got to believe in what you do. So, you know, not applying those old journalist strictures around not writing something just because they're an advertiser ... making sure that's embedded into the whole team, that, I think is really, really important for our long-term commercial success."

## Paywalls

**Paywalls require the audience to pay for the content they use. They are more popular with legacy media companies than new digital-only newsrooms. There are different types of paywall models – soft and hard. Soft allow users to access some free content before they must pay for it. Hard paywalls do not allow access to any stories for free. In Australia, Fairfax media uses soft paywalls for some of its major mastheads, whilst News Corp employs hard paywalls on digital publications such as the Herald Sun. Paywalls emerged around 2006 across the globe, but uptake did not pick up until about 2012. This research shows they are not a popular choice for new media entrants that are digital only.**

*Crikey* is the only site in the study that uses paywalls. Its is a freemium model, meaning that some of the content is provided free of charge, but to have full access readers need to subscribe.

Eric Beecher, whose firm Private Media took over *Crikey* in 2005, inherited the subscription model from its founder Stephen Mayne:

"It made a small profit but it got to a stage where he [Mayne] felt it needed to be taken to the next stage commercially.

We built it up a lot. The great thing was it was a subscription model. That was almost non-existent then.

Stephen Mayne couldn't sell much advertising because of the kind of journalism he did. It was quite aggressive public-interest journalism and sometimes a bit reckless. A mixture of good and bad. Advertisers didn't want to be associated with this. There might be a story getting stuck into their corporate behaviour alongside their ad. So they said it's not worth the risk.

So we could position it and it was very well known in the media. It had a mixed reputation and the day we bought it we changed the reputation. We cleaned it up. We brought in a lawyer who looked at content every day."

Beecher is clear in his views about the incapacity of the subscription model to support public-interest journalism on the scale necessary to the healthy functioning of a democracy.

"Digital subscriptions will continue play a large role. The problem is that in Australia, with its small population, it's almost impossible to imagine a subscription model that can fund civic journalism on a scale that used to exist.

If the *SMH* and *The Age* just relied on digital subscription revenue and some advertising --small and falling -- and now their newsrooms are down to 150 and used to be 300, the digital subscription model might fund 50 journalists.

So what can you do with 50? You can't do that kind of shoe-leather civic journalism: federal and state politics, courts, local councils, and education, sport, business, arts and have foreign correspondents. You can cover one fifth or one quarter of that.

Q: What are the possibilities?

If we're talking about funding a newsroom of 150 to 200 in this country now, there is only one funding source: government. To me there's no other.

So to do civic journalism, the only way is government. It's a critical part of the machinery of a democracy. It's as pivotal as the court system and parliament.

You could make the case that the commercial funding model of journalism ended up in the wrong bucket, whereas the court system ended up in the public bucket. So this is the corrective.

I'm talking about arms-length government funding. I'm not talking about the Melbourne or Sydney Pravda. France do it. The Canadians are looking at it.

It's now binary. Either you do it that way or you don't have it.

People will talk about philanthropy. Philanthropy doesn't exist on that scale. That's just wishful thinking.

"Someone will come up with a business model". There is absolutely no evidence of that happening. The Washington Post and *New York Times* are a bit closer to it but

they operate in a completely different marketplace: much bigger and national and global, in a country of 350 million.

There's no equivalent in Australia. The market here is local. That's where it starts and ends. If you don't want government funding it's going to end up with newsrooms of 50 people."

Beecher spoke of what he saw as the need for a fundamental mindset change concerning the ownership and definition of news, and the financing of journalism:

"The traditional approach is that a story or the journalism is ours if we have it and if someone else has it, we either ignore or downplay it. And that news is owned by news outlets.

News is now a free commodity because of social media and mobile phones and messenger technology and all sorts of things.

News as a commodity includes the fire down the road, everything that is being covered by anyone."

He made a clear distinction between this class of news – the free commodity class – and non-commodity news.

This non-commodity class of news was not the news content that was available to everyone. Non-commodity news was what is dug up by journalists who did investigative journalism or who brought expert insight and analysis to bear, or who joined up the dots and to people what was going on.

It was resource-intensive and therefore expensive to do.

He also defined a third category, civic journalism, as described above. Like the second category, this too was resource-intensive because it required journalists to be present in many locations such as courts, parliaments, commissions of inquiry and local councils.

"Reinvent the idea of what that means. Covering courts and politics is reasonably straightforward. You need human beings sitting in court or parliament.

There might be other ways of setting up coverage of courts – like the Marshall Project in the US that covers Justice. It could be pooled, funded partly by government or other funding sources or even the court system itself. It sees value in having good coverage of the courts."

*Junkee's* Tim Duggan said it would not consider using paywalls:

"I don't love them. I understand them, in some media, but I think for our audience, which is under 35-year olds, they are used to getting their content for free now. We need to figure out what our business model is that provides them free content."

Tory Maguire concurs. "It's really hard to make paywalls work in straight general news. I think that to get people to pay for your content you have to be doing something unique." Whilst the *Huff Post* has a 'unique' editorial voice, Maguire's view is that "you have to be providing information that the audience can't get anywhere else that adds value to their business or their lifestyle".

At *Mumbrella*, Burrowes says paywalls wouldn't work for his site for two reasons. First, the advertisers they attract want to talk to *Mumbrella's* audience and will pay a premium for it. He said the high CPM means that they are 'fairly sustainable' just through advertising alone. Second, more than half of the revenue comes from the event side of the business and this means it's important to have "daily conversations with a mass audience to tell them about our events."

Burrowes says if he were in different business circumstances he might consider a paywall:

"Paywalls work where your boss is paying for it. So a subscription to *The Australian* or maybe a subscription to *Crikey*. It's probably that the boss, or the taxman, is paying for it so they work. I think that's why, you know, when you look at things like, the *Daily Telegraph* or the *Herald Sun* or whatever, maybe it doesn't go as well because that's harder to justify as a business expense."

### Philanthropy/public donations

**Public donations and corporate philanthropy are funding models that have worked for not for profit media organisations overseas, particularly in the United States. In this research, only two of the seven case studies had included this method in their hybrid funding models.**

*The Guardian* has resisted paywalls to date. Taylor states: "We haven't ruled it out, but we would vastly prefer our journalism to be open to everybody." Instead, *The Guardian* is raising funds through advertising and a voluntary membership of *The Guardian* community. Taylor says the membership drive is so far working. It involves a call to readers to give a donation if they like what they have read:

"Effectively, it's a voluntary pay wall, so asking for people to pay for what they read, that way it remains open to everyone. It's like a built-in alignment between editorial excellence and financial reward because people are going to be more inspired to give you money if you've done something that they really like. I hope we can make that work, but we've never said never to a pay wall. We're working with this model and at the moment it's going fabulously."

But *The Guardian* also has plans for other philanthropic activities, yet to be disclosed. "We're working on ways to do it," Taylor says. As mentioned earlier, in the case study profile of this report, in the US this has led *The Guardian* US to recently launch [theguardian.org](http://theguardian.org), a new nonprofit to support independent journalism.

*The Daily Review* called on its readers for the first time in 2016 to support its journalism after failing to attract enough revenue through events and advertising, Gill explains:

"First time around, we just set up a sort of payment thing and just said: 'help us'. In those first three weeks, we got, I think, \$13,000. It's the first time we ever asked, you know. We did it after *The Guardian* had done theirs, so we used that as an excuse. Then, we relaunched it a couple of months ago and a guy came to me, a wealthy theatre owner, and he said: 'I tried to give you money, but I found it difficult'. And you should have recurring payments... And then we did that this year."

## Studio work

Digital news outlets recognise that they have skills that they can offer to other businesses to attract advertising to their products. To do this, some of the case studies have set up ‘studios’ as part of their hybrid business model to either teach other businesses how to attract the audiences they desire, or to offer them native advertising products (see p. 38 for a definition of native advertising).

*Junkee Studio* is how *Junkee* works with clients to help them develop social media. It is modelled on overseas outlets such as *The New York Times*’ Brand Studio, Vice’s *Virtue* and *The Guardian*’s *Guardian Labs*, among others.

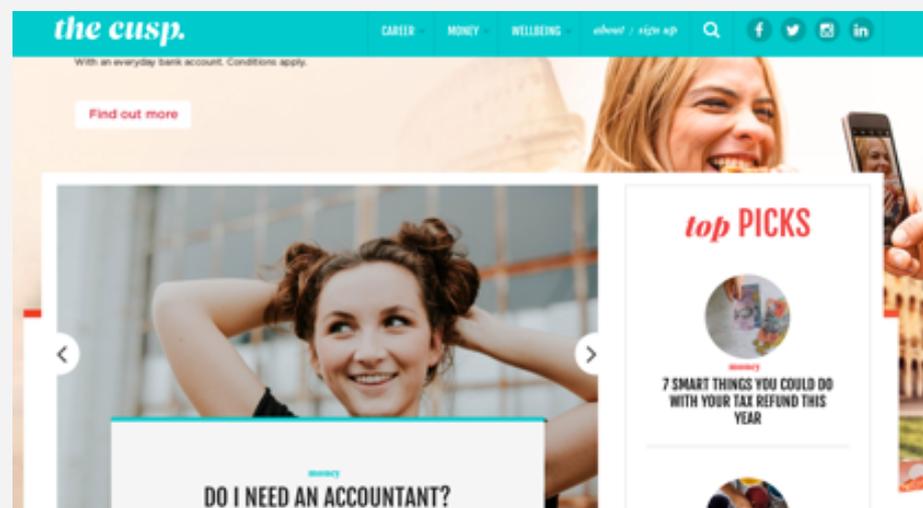
*Guardian Labs* describes itself on its website as: “the branded content arm of *The Guardian*. We create the most engaging and influential stories that connect brands to a progressive audience.”<sup>7</sup> The media outlet uses a range of digital and multimedia storytelling ‘products’. These include: “written editorial, visual journalism, mobile experiences, video and audio, digital interactions and live events. Its partners to date have included: Nespresso, Spotify, Hyundai, Vulcan, SanMiguel and Silent Circle – a US company specialising in software encryption and privacy devices and services –among others.

*Junkee Studio* has partnerships with Qantas, called *AWOL*, which is a long-term native partnership. It also works with Westpac, producing an online publication called, *The Cusp*. Duggan explains that both Westpac and Qantas were established, credible brands, but brands that had “trouble speaking to millennials.” This is how *Junkee Studio* helps:

“We identified the best way of doing that was creating sub-brands that catered to what we knew young people were into. So, *AWOL* is like a sub-brand of Qantas, essentially, where we talk about travel and trying to give FOMO people [the opportunity] to go off and travel the world. And *The Cusp* is also based out of our research, which showed us that three of the biggest concerns of the young Australians were: my career, my money, and my health and wellbeing.”

Most young people access *The Cusp* through Facebook, Duggan says, although they can go directly to it: <http://thecusp.com.au> (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Screenshot of *The Cusp*, a native website for Westpac by *Junkee Studio*



<sup>7</sup> theguardianlabs.URL: <https://guardianlabs.theguardian.com/au>. Accessed 4 September 2017.

Duggan is clear that *Junkee* would not survive without *Junkee Studio*:

"The media business is almost a shop front for the work that we can do in brands. So, for the media business we say we're experts in speaking to Australians 35 years and under.

And so, Coca Cola might come along through a media agency, and say:

*Coke*: Hey guys, can we do an ad campaign with you?

*Junkee Studio*: Cool, what's your problem?

*Coke*: We need to get more young people to drink Coke.

*Junkee Studio*: Oh, okay, cool, let's talk a bit more about that.

One solution might be that they do work with *Junkee*. And the other solution might be that we create content for them on their own channels. Or, almost what an ad agency, or creative agency used to do, media agencies and publishers are now doing."

### Declaring advertising content

A question for debate about native advertising is whether to declare to the reader that it is advertising and not pure editorial.

Duggan says they fall on the side of declaring content: "We think everyone wins when you declare it as loud and proud as you can." For sites like *The Cusp*, this means that Westpac logos are on the site with taglines such as "inspired by Westpac."

However, *Junkee Studio* will also get income by doing contract work to create content for individual brands on their websites' Facebook pages and other online platforms. This, has no requirements to declare that *Junkee Studio* produced it. "It's the same as if you know where a TV ad comes from, or a where a print ad comes from, it comes from the brand, essentially," Duggan explains.

At *Huff Post*, the native content is transparent, says Tory Maguire. "It's very, very obvious on our site what is a piece of branded content and who's paid for it."

Maguire says native content can elevate consumers' regard for a brand:

"We've done some analysis about their view of the brands, who was behind it, when they read a piece of our content that's sponsored by a particular brand and they're attitude towards that brand always improves after being exposed to content on our website that that brand has sponsored."

*Buzzfeed* distributes news free through social media, financing it by native advertising. Simon Crerar explains:

"Based on our understanding of our audience, we are giving brands an opportunity to leverage off that [news content], finding ways for them to connect with big audiences, with young people particularly.

Increasingly in Australia there's a recognition that we're not just a publisher, as

we have been for the first few years, that connects with millennials, but also with mums and with people looking for financial services.

So I think our understanding of how content shares makes us a really good partner for brands. That's where we get our revenue from, and our business is looking very good here. And think that over the next three to five years we're in a position to take much more revenue there.

There are some businesses that are just on Facebook and not on anywhere else. They are Facebook-only publishers. But Apple and Google give us lots of audience as well, so people are trying to figure out all these different avenues of reaching audiences, and we give lots of thought to that.

Q: So subscriptions would be no part of your model?

No. We don't need to ask our audience to pay and they're not used to it. So it's up to us to build a business model [without subscriptions]."

He implied a direct connection between the credibility of *Buzzfeed's* news – and therefore the degree of trust in *Buzzfeed* – and the native-advertising business model.

"I do feel that the complexity of the ecosystem, just as much as previously, does need professionals to help people navigate to where truth is. Who can I trust to tell me what is true here?

And therefore it remains a key part of journalism to build a bridge between facts and understanding. It is so fundamentally important.

And if we can build a brand where people trust us and know that they believe that our take is giving them an objective, true assessment of what is happening, that can be a valuable proposition still."

# Appendix 1: Research Methodology

Desk research and a qualitative research method were used for this research. The qualitative research took the form of in-depth semi-structured interviews, conducted in person, with seven editors of new online news media operations and three heads of university journalism programs. The news media operations were selected because they were all prominent examples of digital newsrooms for specific reasons, i.e. niche content (*The Daily Review, Mumbrella, Crikey*); large general audience (*The Guardian, Huff Post, BuzzFeed*), and youth audience (*Junkee*). All were new digital-only entrants to the Australian media landscape this century. Brief biographical details of each are given in Appendix 1. The interview schedules used are given in Appendix 2.

The strength of in-depth interviews is that they provide the researcher with a detailed understanding of the interviewee's perspective of their newsroom's operations, its audience and content. The number of in-depth interviews was designed to follow the principles of grounded theory, which is an inductive methodology that enables conceptual sorting of notes to find patterns in the data. These patterns relate to the operation of newsrooms, business models, role of social media, an outlet's relationship with its audience, the tone of content and impressions of the formal training of graduate journalists at tertiary institutions.

This research does not provide detailed information about the news provided by each of the studied cases beyond the outlet's own description of it. A detailed understanding of the types of stories covered, and those omitted, was not among the aims of this research.

The interviews were carried out by Dr Carson and Dr Muller between 6 July and 11 August 2017. The interviews were audio recorded and each respondent agreed to be identified in this report. The researchers thank them sincerely for their time, the generosity with which they shared their knowledge and the invaluable insights they gave.

# Appendix 2: About the Case Studies and Interviewees

## **Junkee and Tim Duggan**

*Junkee* Media, the owner of *Junkee* (<http://junkee.com>) has grown from its early days as a small national gay and lesbian website, *Same Same*, operated by Tim Duggan, his business partner Neil Ackland and “a couple of other people”. *Same Same* was part of the company Sound Alliance, which had other sites including *Fast and Louder*, a rock music site, and *Inthemix*, a dance music website that still exists 15 years on. *Junkee* was founded around 2012. Two years later, the company, Sound Alliance, was renamed to *Junkee* Media. Its headquarters are in Sydney, it has about 50 staff, and works with hundreds of freelance journalists as needed. Of the 50 staff, about half are dedicated to editorial content, such as native content, including, increasingly, in video form. Its business model is a hybrid one that sells advertising – banner and native ads – runs events, provides content for other organisations, and uses research about the market to launch new media products.

Duggan’s personal story is an interesting one. He started, straight out of school, in an advertising agency. At the same time, he studied, part time, a bachelor of business at UTS. He then began freelance journalism, reporting on the music industry. It was not long before he was writing about electronic music for *Rolling Stone*. After several years freelancing and writing for big names including *GQ*, *Harper’s Bizarre* and *Daily Telegraph*. But Duggan wanted to try something different and that is when he cofounded ‘*Same Same*’.

## **Huff Post and Tory Maguire**

The Australian *Huff Post*’s (<http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au>) first editor-in-chief Tory Maguire, a former Canberra Bureau reporter and night editor at Sydney’s *Daily Telegraph* newspaper. She moved to the digital side of the News Corp business and was running the irreverent news website *The Punch* before being head-hunted to the inaugural role of Editor-in Chief of Australia’s *Huff Post*. The two-year-old newsroom is Sydney based, and is part of the global Huffington Post franchise that has expanded to 17 countries. It began with founder Arianna Huffington and her political blogging site in the US in the mid-2000s. It developed into a major US political voice, and, like *The Guardian*, *Daily Mail*, *Buzzfeed* and *New York Times* has expanded to a number of global markets. The *Huff Post*, which already had a strong Australian following of its US site, commenced operations in partnership with Fairfax Media (49 per cent), in August 2015. The Australian outlet has about 30 staff including 19 full-time editorial employees with a journalism background, part-time staff and casuals, and about five staff responsible for the commercial aspects of the business. Maguire oversees everything that goes on the site and all of its platforms, and commercial accounts on all of its platforms. She is responsible for audience growth and for managing the editorial team, and for representing the brand in the Australian market to potential clients and potential audiences.

## **Mumbrella and Tim Burrowes**

Tim Burrowes founded *Mumbrella* (<https://mumbrella.com.au>) in 2008 after more than 20 years working as a journalist. He began his journalism career local newspapers in Britain, then moved to specialist magazines including *Hospital Doctor*, for National Health Service consultants and then a magazine called *Media Week*, about British media agencies. Tim moved to the Middle East to launch the Middle East edition of *Campaign Magazine*, geared at the advertising industry in the region. He came to Australia to be the editor of *BMT*, a long-standing advertising magazine in Australia. These experiences provided him

with the ideal skills and specialist knowledge to launch *Mumbrella* with a staff of one, himself. In 2017, the Sydney-based *Mumbrella* employs about 30 staff including four in Singapore, one in Adelaide and Tasmania and is looking to hire a Melbourne correspondent. The site's slogan is: "Everything under Australia's media and marketing umbrella." It provides news on these sectors, hosts industry events and awards, and provides a free industry job directory to attract traffic. Tim took advantage of the low-cost publishing environment of the internet using Word Press as his platform for his blog, *Mumbrella*. Tim says that you "no longer had to mortgage your house in order to get the first edition out. Not only was email cheap, but Twitter had just taken off and this was another avenue for reaching the target audience:

"We'd Tweet out a story, the conversation would then happen. By the time we e-mailed out a story the conversation was already going on and then that became self-sustaining. So we were extremely fortunate to pick the right moment to, you know, to go in the way that we did."

Tim had a few false starts with other products. He bought the film magazine *Encore* and wanted to produce a high-quality digital magazine on the iPad, but like many other such ventures including News Corps' *The Daily*, it failed to attract advertisers.

### **The Guardian Australia and Lenore Taylor**

*The Guardian* (<https://www.theguardian.com/au>) launched in Australia in May 2013 and is based in Sydney. It began local operations with a team of 15; it now has 80 staff, including some from the UK, and has since extended its operations to include a Melbourne office. Of the 80, half have editorial roles, the other are commercial. It belongs to *The Guardian* Media Group plc (GMG), a British mass media company that owns various media outlets including *The Guardian* and *The Observer*. The group is wholly owned by Scott Trust Limited, which exists to secure the financial and editorial independence of *The Guardian* in perpetuity when it began in Manchester in 1907. *The Guardian's* slogan is 'Independence Matters'. This decade, *The Guardian* has sought international expansion, beginning with a presence in the US market in 2007, officially launching a full spin-off, Guardian US, in September 2011. In order to expand its franchise to the US and Australia, GMG sold off assets belonging to its Trust.<sup>8</sup> It also received a start-up donation, large enough to underwrite the company for the first five years, from Wotif founder Graeme Wood.<sup>9</sup> *The Guardian's* business model is a hybrid one that sells advertising – banner ads and native – provides content for other organisations, and has a philanthropic arm to raise funds to support its journalism. In August 2017 it officially launched [theguardian.org](http://theguardian.org) in the US, a new nonprofit to support independent journalism. "Set up by the Scott Trust, [theguardian.org](http://theguardian.org) will raise funds from individuals and foundations and direct them towards projects that advance public discourse and citizen participation around issues such as climate change, human rights, global development and inequality," according to the company.<sup>10</sup> In its first months of operation, [theguardian.org](http://theguardian.org) secured more than \$1m in grants. *The Guardian's* Australian editor is Lenore Taylor, who has worked as a federal press gallery journalist for 30 years and a foreign correspondent for three.

<sup>8</sup> Carson, A. Behind the newspaper paywall — lessons in charging for online content: why Australian newspapers are stuck between digital and print,' *Media Culture and Society*, 37(7), 2015. pp: 1022-1041.

<sup>9</sup> Fitzsimmons, C. Graeme Wood-backed Guardian Australia launches with Gillard interview, *Australian Financial Review*. URL: <http://www.afr.com/leadership/entrepreneur/graeme-woodbacked-guardian-australia-launches-with-gillard-interview-20130527-jz13z>, 27 May 2013.

<sup>10</sup> The Guardian. The Guardian announces the launch of a new US nonprofit to support story-telling and independent journalism. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/gnm-press-office/2017/aug/28/the-guardian-announces-the-launch-of-a-new-us-nonprofit-to-support-story-telling-and-independent-journalism>, 28 August 2017.

### ***The Daily Review and Ray Gill***

*The Daily Review* is a website (<https://dailyreview.com.au>) that is dedicated to the Arts. It was founded in 2013 by Eric Beecher, owner of *Crikey*, working with Ray Gill. Two years later, Gill bought it from Beecher. Gill is an experienced arts journalist and has reported on all its aspects for more than 20 years at Fairfax Media's, *The Age*. After completing a law degree, and an arts degree, he became a finance cadet at the *Sun News Pictorial*. Then he moved to the *Sunday Age*, when it opened as a distinct paper from *The Age*, to be its deputy business editor. Gill shifted to *The Age*, to be a features writer, the TV Green Guide writer, and editor, and then arts editor and, at times, chief arts writer before taking a redundancy from Fairfax in 2012. *The Daily Review* is a WordPress website that reports on arts news and writes reviews of performances. It has a committed, sizeable but niche audience, yet is the only one of the case studies that has not grown its newsroom. Since its beginnings it has struggled to find a financial model that sustains the website's activities. Gill operates with two regular freelancers, Helen Razer, and Luke Buckmaster, and, hires others as needed.

### ***Private Media and Eric Beecher***

Eric is a journalist and media entrepreneur whose first venture was a cricket magazine he started while as secondary school. His first reporting job was on *The Age* where his potential as an editor was noticed and he was sent to Britain and US to learn about editing for 18 months. When he returned he was appointed Saturday features editor of *The Age* and later as assistant editor of *The Sydney Morning Herald*, where he launched five new weekday lifestyle sections, eventually being appointed editor of the paper. He accepted an offer from Rupert Murdoch to become editor-in-chief of the *Melbourne Herald and Sun* at a time when the *Herald* was being re-launched as a more serious afternoon broadsheet. He stayed for two years before leaving to start his own business. His Text Media company published glossy real estate papers that began to make inroads into the property advertising in News Corp and Fairfax papers and Fairfax eventually bought him out. In 2005 he started a series of online publishing ventures, including buying out *Crikey.com*, which his company, Private Media, still owns.

### ***Buzzfeed and Simon Crerar***

Simon has an extensive background in newspaper journalism. He started his career in Scotland and in the late 1990s got a job on the *Sunday Times* as a reporter in the paper's technology section, where he worked for four years. On a visit to Australia he worked briefly for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, including on its website. He returned to the UK and worked on *The Times* where he edited the arts and entertainment section. He worked there for between eight and nine years, including on the digital side of the paper. Returning to Australia, he became online editor of the *Cairns Post* before moving to News Corp headquarters in Holt Street, Sydney. He described himself as a fan of *Buzzfeed*, and when in 2014 he saw the job of editor advertised, he successfully applied for it.

### **Andrew Dodd**

Andrew is Program Director of Journalism at Swinburne University. From December 2017 he will be Director of the Centre for Advancing Journalism at the University of Melbourne

He has been a journalist for 32 years, and a journalism academic since 2010. During his career as a practitioner he has worked for ABC radio and television, *The Australian*, community radio and *Crikey.com*. He is currently involved in a large research project funded by the Australian Research Council called *New Beats*, which is tracking how journalists made redundant by the current digital disruption are faring, and what this indicates about the future of journalism. He is also making a series called *Change Agents* for ABC Radio National on the dynamics of change across a range of fields including law reform, government and road safety.

### **Peter Fray**

Peter is Professor of Journalism Practice, University of Technology Sydney. He has an extensive background at senior editorial levels in Australian newspapers. He has been editor of *The Sunday Age* (2005–2007), the *Canberra Times* (2008) and *The Sydney Morning Herald* (2009–2011), editor-in-chief and publisher of the Herald (2011–2012) and deputy editor of *The Australian* (2014–2015). In 2013 he founded *Politifact Australia*, a fact-checking website and that year was appointed Adjunct Professor of Media and Politics at the University of Sydney. He took up his present appointment at UTS in November 2015.

### **Matthew Ricketson**

Matthew is Professor of Communications at Deakin University. Until the end of 2016 he was Professor of Journalism at the University of Canberra. He began his career as a journalist on a suburban paper in Melbourne in 1981. The following year he got a cadetship on *The Age*. After completing his cadetship there moved to *The Australian*, then to the *Sunday Herald* and later to *Time Australia* for three years. In 1993 he took up a position at RMIT as a journalism academic. He was in charge of the journalism there from 1995 to 2006, during which time he also continued to work as a freelance journalist. He returned to daily journalism at *The Age* in 2006 and until 2009 was media and communications editor. In 2009 he was appointed inaugural professor of Journalism at Canberra University, a position he held until 2017. In 2011–2012 he assisted the Hon Ray Finkelstein, QC, conduct the federal government's Independent Inquiry into Media and Media Regulation.

# Appendix 3: Interview Schedules

## THE FUTURE NEWSROOM RESEARCH PROJECT

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

#### 1. For academic interviews

(Record name, position, institution, subjects taught, relevant research interests and practitioner backgrounds. Ask whether they prefer anonymity or are prepared to be identified.)

1. I'd like to start by focusing on the subjects that are currently being taught in your journalism program. Can you tell me the core subjects and the main electives?
2. How many, if any, of those subjects have a component that is explicitly about the nature of work in today's newsrooms? (Probe: Teaching the skills demanded in today's newsroom; adapting news judgment and writing styles to multiple platforms; new modes of reporting, such as tweeting from court.)
3. What were the inputs into the development of those subjects? (Probe: Personal experience; collective experience of other scholars either in the program or outside; ideas from the media industry.)
4. Thinking specifically about the new media organisations such as *Crikey*, *Buzzfeed*, *Mumbrella* and so on, what, if any, input have you had from them? (Probe: Have you asked? Have they offered? Why or why not?)
5. Do your students have internships or other forms of work experience with this kind of media organisation? (If yes: Have they and the media organisation found them to be well-equipped for life in the contemporary newsroom? What lessons have you learnt from this? Have you made any changes to your teaching program as a result?)
6. Are there gaps in the current program? (Probe: What are they and are there any plans to fix them?)
7. Looking back, in your experience what have been the big changes in the content of journalism teaching programs?
8. Looking forward, what do you see as the priority areas for teaching in journalism programs in the foreseeable future?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about this whole question of how to prepare people for life in the newsroom of the future?

### THE FUTURE NEWSROOM RESEARCH PROJECT

#### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

##### 2. For industry interviews

Record name, position, organisation and whether they would prefer anonymity or are prepared to be identified.)

1. I'd like to start by asking you about your own professional journey. How did you come to be in the position you hold now?
2. What skills and knowledge proved to be the most important for you to acquire in becoming a successful practitioner in this new field?
3. Do you or anyone in your organisation use data journalism skills? What types of stories would this involve? Does it require specialist computer/software knowledge?
4. How do you define quality journalism?
5. Do you think it is possible for readers to easily differentiate between quality journalism and fake news?
6. Is funding a challenge for your organisation?
7. What is your organisation's main source of funding?
8. Is your organisation looking to other funding sources? Examples if possible.
9. What experience, if any, have you had in employing recent graduates from university journalism programs, or with interns or work-experience students from those programs? (Probe: Did they have the right skills? How well-developed were those skills? Did they show an aptitude for journalism?)
10. Speaking generally, what would you say were their strongest points?
11. And what were their weakest points?
12. If you had the chance to tell universities how best to prepare students for work in the newsroom of the future, what would you tell them? (Probe: Why do you say that? What do you think the newsroom of the future will look like?)
13. Of those things you have just mentioned, what do you regard as the most important?
14. And what is the second most important?
15. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about what the newsroom of the future will look like and the skills and knowledge people will need to make successful careers in them?





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