# AI reshapes photojournalism by threatening archives and challenging visual truth, says Kira Pollack



Artificial intelligence (AI) is presenting both challenges and opportunities for the world of photojournalism, as exemplified by the insights of Emmy award-winning visual storyteller Kira Pollack. Pollack, currently the Walter Shorenstein Media & Democracy Fellow at the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, shared her perspectives on the technology's potential to fundamentally alter the craft and industry of photography.

In her reflections, Pollack noted significant concerns arising from AI's capabilities to create hyper-realistic images, which pose existential threats to traditional photography practices. "My immediate reaction was that we were entering an entirely new era of image-making — one that posed an existential threat to photography as we know it," she remarked during an interview with the Harvard Gazette. The burgeoning sophistication of AI-generated images has triggered alarm within the photojournalism ecosystem, particularly as the prevalence of fabricated visuals increases.

A central issue that Pollack has identified during her fellowship is the precarious state of photojournalism archives. Contrary to the common perception of archives as mere collections of dusty boxes, Pollack views them as dynamic repositories that encapsulate the visual history of society. She emphasised that many photojournalists possess extensive collections, with an estimated 95% of their captured images remaining unseen and unpublished. This unexploited wealth of visual storytelling finds itself at risk of being forgotten, particularly as AI technologies evolve. Pollack urges a dual approach: while the preservation of these images is vital, there must also be an exploration of how AI can assist in this end, ensuring the ethical and responsible use of technology.

Pollack's the research seeks to address these challenges. She has embarked on collaborative efforts with photojournalist Christopher Morris and engineer Gregor Hochmuth to investigate the potential of AI in archiving and contextualising photographic work. In their studies, they tested AI's ability to extract meaningful insights from conflict photography. For instance, during one experiment involving images from the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the AI successfully identified specific actions, settings, and even the emotional states of subjects, demonstrating an ability to parse complex visual narratives.

Despite these promising developments, Pollack recognises the broader anxieties surrounding the technology. Concerns about the erosion of trust in visual media and issues related to copyright are pressing. "In today’s relentless breaking news environment, where images spread rapidly on social media without gatekeepers, this can be a dangerous mix that erodes public trust,” she noted. Her work deliberately separates itself from the generative aspect of AI, aiming instead to preserve and enhance existing photojournalism rather than exploit it.

As Pollack continues her fellowship, she expresses a desire to critically examine the broader implications of AI on journalism and photography. By engaging with a diverse array of professionals, including technologists and ethicists, she aims to ensure that the evolving landscape of photography prioritises the core tenets of truth, authorship, and memory. Her ultimate goal is to provide valuable insights back to the photojournalism community, promoting a proactive rather than reactive approach to the sweeping changes brought about by AI.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://nieman.harvard.edu/articles/the-battle-over-using-journalism-to-build-ai-models-is-just-starting/> - This article discusses the challenges posed by AI to journalism, including concerns about content scraping and the need for fair compensation, aligning with Pollack's concerns about AI's impact on photojournalism.
2. <https://nieman.harvard.edu/stories/reframing-how-we-see-and-understand-news/> - This piece explores how digital advancements challenge the trustworthiness of visuals, echoing Pollack's worries about AI-generated images posing threats to traditional photography.
3. <https://shorensteincenter.org/emmy-award-winning-visual-storyteller-kira-pollack-joins-shorenstein-center-fellow/> - This announcement details Pollack's role as a fellow at the Shorenstein Center, where she is addressing the challenges AI presents to photojournalism.
4. <https://ijnet.org/en/story/perspectives-photojournalism-integrating-new-technologies> - This article discusses the integration of new technologies in photojournalism, highlighting the importance of adapting to AI advancements, a theme central to Pollack's work.
5. <https://nieman.harvard.edu/articles/photojournalism-at-a-crossroads/> - This piece examines the crossroads faced by photojournalism, including the impact of technological developments and cultural shifts, resonating with Pollack's concerns about AI's influence on the field.
6. <https://nieman.harvard.edu/articles/a-new-focus/> - This article addresses the need for diversity in visual journalism, emphasizing the importance of varied perspectives, which is relevant to discussions about AI's role in shaping visual narratives.
7. <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiekFVX3lxTFBMUW91UTBUWnBvX3F6MVd2UTVMNDB4dHM3WmdTMzBVSjZrTFEwdzVrREhTcFE0RXE5UlhpQjR6ZUVzb2xGUzdRUzhiU2JQUFV1dGxGdlNDQ09vbVk5Uk9CVVdNSV96VmlpREN5akpzMjNJWHRZNXdsM3Rn?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data