# AI errors expose risks of misinformation and ethical dilemmas in journalism



# The Complicated Landscape of Artificial Intelligence and Journalism

In an age where Artificial Intelligence (AI) has permeated almost every facet of our lives, a striking illustration of its limitations emerged recently when Tom Utley, a columnist at the Daily Mail, shared a bewildering revelation. In a moment of curiosity, he queried Google about his famous niece, Olivia Utley, only to receive the absurd reply that she is, in fact, his mother. This highlights a significant issue: while AI has been lauded as a transformative tool, it often fails to deliver accurate information, raising crucial questions about its reliability.

Utley voiced concerns that such errors might lead to unwarranted trust in AI technology. He noted that the ramifications of incorrect outputs extend far beyond familial relationships. For an ever-increasing segment of society, AI-generated information is fast becoming a primary source of knowledge, and if this information is misled or falsified, the consequences could be dire.

This concern is echoed by a global coalition of media organisations advocating for ethical AI use. The initiative, dubbed 'News Integrity in the Age of AI,' calls for AI developers to ensure transparency and respect for original content. This coalition includes notable entities like the European Broadcasting Union and the World Association of News Publishers. They are pushing for regulations that require explicit approval before AI systems can use news content to mitigate the risks of misinformation—a scenario that has grown more pressing as traditional media continue to navigate their own attrition in the digital age.

The challenges posed by AI are not limited to issues of accuracy; they also extend to concerns about copyright and the sustainability of journalistic professions. Experts have testified before various legislative bodies, including the U.S. Senate, highlighting how AI models exploit journalists' work without adequate compensation. Since 2005, the U.S. has witnessed a staggering decline in both the number of newspapers and professional journalists, a downward trend exacerbated by the rise of digital platforms. This has led to calls for legislative action that ensures fair compensation for news content used by AI systems, as exemplified by legal battles involving major news outlets like The New York Times.

Adding to these woes is the growing public scepticism regarding AI's role in news production. According to the Reuters Institute’s Digital News Report, a significant portion of global audiences express discomfort with AI-generated news, particularly on sensitive subjects such as politics. As misinformation continues to permeate the digital landscape—where experts predict AI-generated content could form an overwhelming majority of online material—legitimate concerns about distinguishing truth from falsehood arise. The potential for AI to amplify misinformation is not merely a theoretical risk; it’s a pressing reality that demands proactive measures.

Beyond the immediate impacts of misinformation, the technology also raises ethical dilemmas concerning the manipulation of public sentiment. Recent incidents of AI-generated videos and other content have demonstrated its potential for exploitation, notably in political arenas. Researchers have found that while some forms of AI-generated disinformation have garnered attention, its explicit influence on electoral outcomes remains relatively limited. However, the spectre of deepfakes and moderate levels of misinformation still create a complex environment that complicates public discourse.

Amidst these concerns, a backlash against the unchecked use of AI in news, culture, and creative industries calls for greater scrutiny. Reports of AI-driven mishaps in workplaces underscore the potential harm of poorly trained systems disseminating sensitive information, jeopardising professional integrity and trust. Furthermore, the existential threat that AI poses to numerous creative professions—by recycling and repurposing human-created works for profit—serves as a cautionary tale for future developments in AI legislation.

As the world grapples with the implications of AI, particularly in journalism, there’s an urgent need to foster media literacy among audiences and reconcile ethical dilemmas with technological advancements. Without a concerted effort to navigate these challenges, the future of information may teeter on the edge of a precarious abyss, marked by confusion, misinformation, and a loss of the human touch that has long characterised the art of journalism.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-14693907/TOM-UTLEY-AI-niece-mother-grandmother-smart.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.reuters.com/technology/artificial-intelligence/global-audiences-suspicious-ai-powered-newsrooms-report-finds-2024-06-16/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/61fb43f20d945753a8c86881aa631d65), [[3]](https://time.com/6554118/congress-ai-journalism-hearing/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.reuters.com/technology/artificial-intelligence/global-audiences-suspicious-ai-powered-newsrooms-report-finds-2024-06-16/), [[3]](https://time.com/6554118/congress-ai-journalism-hearing/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://www.axios.com/2023/07/10/ai-misinformation-response-measures), [[6]](https://www.ft.com/content/62d81e6c-eec0-4d09-a71f-6aba579912dd)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://time.com/6554118/congress-ai-journalism-hearing/), [[6]](https://www.ft.com/content/62d81e6c-eec0-4d09-a71f-6aba579912dd)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-14693907/TOM-UTLEY-AI-niece-mother-grandmother-smart.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://apnews.com/article/61fb43f20d945753a8c86881aa631d65> - A global coalition of media organizations, including the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and the World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), is urging artificial intelligence (AI) developers to collaborate in combating misinformation and safeguarding fact-based journalism. Announced at the World News Media Congress in Krakow, Poland, the 'News Integrity in the Age of AI' initiative encompasses thousands of media groups and outlines five core principles for ethical AI use in news. Key demands include requiring prior authorization for using news content in AI models, ensuring transparency in attribution, and making original sources clearly identifiable. The initiative involves major media associations such as the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union, North American Broadcasters Association (which includes Fox, NBC Universal, PBS, and others), and the Latin American broadcasters association AIL. The call to action comes amid rising tension between traditional media and AI developers, with some outlets—such as The New York Times—pursuing lawsuits against OpenAI and Microsoft over copyright concerns. Meanwhile, other organizations have entered content licensing agreements with AI firms. The debate continues over whether using copyrighted content to train AI models falls under 'fair use' provisions.
3. <https://time.com/6554118/congress-ai-journalism-hearing/> - Experts and media executives testified before the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Privacy, Technology, and the Law, warning of AI’s threats to journalism. Key concerns include AI models using journalists' work without compensation, contributing to the decline in local news, and exacerbating misinformation. Since 2005, the U.S. has lost almost a third of its newspapers and two-thirds of its journalists due to the rise of digital platforms. Countries like Canada and Australia have passed laws requiring tech companies to pay for news content, with similar legislation proposed in the U.S. High-profile lawsuits, such as the New York Times suing OpenAI, highlight the legal battles over AI training on copyrighted materials. Generative AI critics argue for congressional intervention to ensure fair compensation, while some believe current copyright laws suffice. The hearing also discussed how AI-generated misinformation burdens newsrooms and risks spreading false information.
4. <https://www.reuters.com/technology/artificial-intelligence/global-audiences-suspicious-ai-powered-newsrooms-report-finds-2024-06-16/> - Global concerns about AI in news production and misinformation are rising, according to the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism's annual Digital News Report. The report, based on surveys of nearly 100,000 people across 47 countries, highlights challenges newsrooms face in engaging audiences and maintaining revenue. It found a significant number of respondents, especially in the US and UK, are uncomfortable with news generated by AI, particularly for sensitive topics like politics. Furthermore, despite the introduction of AI tools by companies like Google and OpenAI, doubts persist about content reliability and trust. The report also noted a steady concern about fake news, with South Africa and the US showing the highest levels due to upcoming elections. Additionally, audience hesitance to pay for news subscriptions remains, with only 17% of respondents paying, a figure unchanged over three years. Alternative news sources, especially influencers on platforms like TikTok, are gaining traction, with a larger role in delivering news compared to traditional media. Newsrooms are encouraged to connect directly with their audiences and strategically use online platforms to reach younger demographics.
5. <https://www.axios.com/2023/07/10/ai-misinformation-response-measures> - Artificial Intelligence (AI) poses a significant near-term threat of escalating the spread of misinformation online. Experts suggest that generative AI will significantly amplify misinformation, making already challenging content moderation systems even more strained. AI-generated content could soon surpass 99% of all online information, making it increasingly difficult to distinguish factual content from falsehoods. The proliferation of AI misinformation can take various forms, including deepfake photos and videos, text articles, and memes. To address this issue, experts suggest several mitigation strategies: 1. Provenance: Enhancing clarity on content origin and modifications with initiatives like Adobe's Content Authenticity Initiative and metadata tagging by companies like Microsoft and Google. 2. Regulation: Implementing laws to require transparency for political advertisements and curb deepfake misuse. 3. Algorithms: Utilizing AI to detect machine-generated misinformation, though recognizing the inherent arms race challenges. 4. Media Literacy: Investing in public education to foster critical analysis and informed consumption of information. Tech companies are actively working on applying existing policies and developing new methods tailored to counter AI-generated misinformation.
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/62d81e6c-eec0-4d09-a71f-6aba579912dd> - In 2024, significant concerns about AI-generated deepfakes disrupting elections were prevalent, with warnings from leaders and surveys identifying AI disinformation as a major risk. During various global elections, several deepfakes like Joe Biden's robocalls and false videos of Marine Le Pen’s family appeared. Nevertheless, experts found that the actual impact of AI disinformation was minimal. For instance, the Alan Turing Institute noted only 27 viral AI-generated pieces across UK, French, and EU elections, and many people did not recognize these widely shared deepfakes. In the US, only 6% of misinformation about the presidential election involved generative AI. Moreover, mentions of deepfakes were more associated with technological advances than with elections. Much AI content aimed for emotional or symbolic purposes rather than to deceive, such as satirical or expressive images. However, confusion over real and AI-generated content did occur, though users generally maintained scepticism. While the potential dangers of deepfakes should not be ignored, the focus should remain on addressing the root causes of political disinformation like polarization and media consumption habits, rather than being overly concerned with the deepfake technology itself.