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## Shoe-Leather Journalism Matters More in the Era of AI

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Journalist Report Interview. New Broadcasting Reporter. Journalism And Press

**By Bibhudatta Pradhan**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly transforming newsrooms and mass media. Today, news organizations are leveraging AI and related technologies for various tasks, including content summarization, information gathering, translation, transcription, image generation, editing, fact-checking, data analysis, and enhancing user experience.

As AI continues to evolve, the media industry will increasingly embrace it to stay relevant in a rapidly changing landscape and tackle challenges like economic sustainability and declining public trust. To remain competitive, media companies will actively invest in AI, foster newsroom experimentation, and drive innovation.

As a result, AI is poised to become a central pillar of journalism, driven by the unstoppable momentum of technological innovation. Over the next five years, AI will fundamentally transform the journalism landscape, influencing every stage of the process—from content creation and editing to data mining, interactive storytelling, video production, audience analysis, and news presentation.

### **AI Revolution in Journalism**

With broader adoption, AI will continue to revolutionize journalism by accelerating content creation, streamlining workflows, and enabling more efficient reporting without compromising quality. Advancements in natural language processing will allow AI to generate human-like text, supporting content creation, editing, and SEO optimization. By quickly translating content for diverse audiences, AI will enhance objectivity and significantly expand reach.

In investigative journalism, AI will play a crucial role by analysing massive datasets to uncover hidden patterns and insights. Additionally, real-time fact-checking and disinformation detection tools will help maintain credibility by swiftly verifying information and combating misinformation.

On the downside, AI will face criticism for enabling the creation of convincing false news and for spreading biased or offensive content. As technology advances, concerns about the diminishing role of human journalists will intensify, raising questions about the future job market for aspiring writers. AI also poses significant challenges to journalistic quality, credibility, ethics, and equitable access to information. However, these concerns can be mitigated to some extent through careful regulation, robust ethical oversight, and a balanced integration of AI with human expertise.

**Human-AI Jugalbandi**

Love it or hate it, AI is set to significantly transform journalism, reshaping how news is produced, distributed, and consumed.

With the widespread adoption of AI, collaboration between humans and machines will deepen. AI will enhance journalists' capabilities, improve efficiency, and empower publishers to deliver richer, more engaging news experiences.

AI will take on routine tasks such as data analysis, fact-checking, and basic reporting, freeing reporters and editors to focus on investigative journalism, in-depth reporting, creative storytelling, thoughtful analysis, and ethical decision-making.

By working together, journalists and AI can produce news that resonates with readers' interests, delivering a more personalized and engaging experience. This harmonious partnership will elevate journalism to new heights of quality and innovation.

### 'Shoe-Leather' Reporting

However, as AI-driven content becomes more prevalent, the demand for genuine, authentic, and creative journalism will continue to grow—an area where AI cannot compete with human journalists. Unlike journalists, AI cannot physically attend court hearings, interview a defendant in prison, or speak with survivors after a tragic rail accident. It cannot investigate wrongdoing, hold authorities accountable, or report firsthand from conflict zones and insurgent areas. These human-centered roles remain irreplaceable and vital to the essence of journalism.

As AI takes over certain tasks traditionally performed by journalists, media companies will increasingly rely on smart, hardworking professionals to deliver authentic stories—those with the energy and determination to be on the ground, witness events firsthand, engage in direct conversations, uncover unexpected facts, and connect with sources, even if it means wearing out the leather of their shoes.

This traditional practice of 'shoe-leather reporting'—on-the-ground journalism involving first hand interviews and observations—will see a resurgence in demand as audiences increasingly seek credible, authentic, and human-driven stories.

In a rapidly evolving media landscape, the irreplaceable value of human curiosity, empathy, and persistence will remain at the heart of journalism, ensuring its continued relevance and impact in the age of AI.

*(Bibhudatta Pradhan is a senior journalist based in New Delhi.)*



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