



IMAGE: Envato

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AI and the Future of Media

As artificial intelligence reshapes journalism, publishers are negotiating partnerships and reimagining storytelling to stay ahead of the technological revolution.

The internet transformed media and publishing in ways few could have predicted when it first emerged. Newsrooms that adapted thrived, while those that resisted found themselves obsolete. Now, artificial intelligence promises an even more profound disruption that is forcing publishers to make critical decisions about their future in a landscape where algorithms can generate content, personalise experiences, and reshape how audiences consume information.

Journalists are discovering AI's potential to enhance rather than replace their work.

"We had three options with AI," says Jessica Sibley, CEO of TIME. "We could litigate, negotiate, or do nothing. We weren't going to do nothing. Our owners, Mark and Lynn Benioff – Mark Benioff is the chairperson, CEO, and founder of Salesforce – agreed we didn't want to litigate, so we've negotiated."

Publishers choose partnership over litigation

This negotiation strategy has led to groundbreaking partnerships that are redefining how legacy media companies approach AI. TIME has secured multi-year licensing deals with OpenAI, which grant the AI company access to more than 100 years of archives in return for access to cutting-edge technology for new product development.

"We have lots of partnerships with many different AI companies for monetisation purposes," Sibley explains. "We're using all the tools and technologies to be more efficient and to be able to compete on a global basis, especially with a much smaller newsroom than Bloomberg. So there's so much opportunity for us."

The strategic approach reflects a broader industry shift away from

Jessica Sibley



the adversarial stance many publishers initially took toward AI companies. Rather than fighting the technology through legal channels, forward-thinking media organisations are positioning themselves as essential partners in the AI ecosystem. This ensures that their content contributes to training data while securing compensation and technological access in return.

“It’s very much a vendor relationship,” says Nicholas Johnston, publisher of Axios. “[OpenAI] has given us access to a lot of their enterprise software. We’ve given them opportunities to advertise in some of our newsletters around the United States. They provide advertising support to help us expand into new communities through Axios Local, which will get us to dozens of cities around the United States.”

Newsrooms embrace AI tools with surprising enthusiasm

The transformation extends beyond corporate partnerships into the daily operations of newsrooms, where journalists are discovering AI’s potential to enhance rather than replace their work. Unlike previous technological disruptions that met with resistance, AI adoption has generated unexpected enthusiasm among reporters and editors who see its potential to free them from routine tasks and focus on high-value journalism.

“I was really surprised,” Johnston says. “When we introduced these tools to the newsroom, they were really embraced. We wanted to create a programme internally for AI super-users to join a small group that would meet regularly, and we were vastly oversubscribed in terms of the number of people who wanted to participate.”

This enthusiasm stems from AI’s ability to handle time-consuming back-end work so that journalists can concentrate on tasks that require human insight, creativity, and relationship-building. Publishers are discovering that AI can summarise research, optimise headlines, and aggregate information while human reporters focus on interviewing sources, conducting investigations, and building community connections.

“I talk about this often in our newsroom: someone will figure out how to use this, and they will win,” Johnston explains. “They will dominate the competitors in whatever industry they’re in who do not figure out how to use AI correctly. And so my hope is that it’s us. I hope Axios can figure out how best to leverage those kinds of tools to support journalism.”

Transparency becomes crucial for maintaining reader trust

As AI integration deepens, publishers face the challenge of maintaining transparency with audiences while experimenting with new technologies. The relationship between media organisations and their readers depends fundamentally on trust. This makes it essential to clearly communicate how AI tools are being used in content creation and distribution processes.

“What’s been most valuable for me is having a human friend at an AI company where we can open it up to the newsroom and

begin to experiment,” Johnston says. “But in the bigger picture on trust, I say this in the newsroom all the time: I am a human. As a human, I am extraordinarily pro-human. I want to keep people involved in this.”

TIME has taken a particularly careful approach to transparency by emphasising that all AI-enhanced content maintains human oversight and editorial control. The company’s AI initiatives, including its collaboration with Scale AI on personalised storytelling experiences, prioritise maintaining journalistic standards while exploring new technological possibilities.

“For us, it’s also about personalisation and how media is consumed,” Sibley says. “We did a partnership with Scale AI around Person of the Year. The article could be consumed in seven different languages. There was a chat experience where you could ask questions and you could play an audio version. I think it just creates different ways to consume our human-reported content.”



Nicholas Johnston

‘I am extraordinarily pro-human.’

AI partnerships create new revenue streams and expansion opportunities

The financial implications of AI adoption extend far beyond cost savings from operational efficiency. Publishers are discovering that strategic AI partnerships can generate new revenue streams, fund expansion into previously unviable markets, and support increased investment in journalism. These economic benefits are important for an industry that has struggled with sustainable business models in the digital age.

This direct funding of journalistic positions represents a new model for how technology companies can support media organisations. Rather than simply licensing content or providing tools, AI companies are beginning to underwrite newsroom expansion because they recognise that high-quality journalism benefits their own platforms and user experiences too.

“I want fair value,” Sibley emphasises. “If you’re going to crawl and steal our content, we want to be paid for it fairly, especially with TIME’s journalism. We stand for trust — it’s our number one core value. We deliver balanced, fair journalism that’s rigorously reported, and that’s part of our relationship with some of these partners as well.”

Success depends on viewing AI as a tool that amplifies human capabilities.

Personalisation and multi-modal content reshape storytelling

Beyond operational efficiency, AI is enabling publishers to serve increasingly diverse audience preferences in ways that would have been impossible with traditional publishing models. Rather than forcing all readers to consume content in identical formats, AI allows media organisations to adapt the same high-quality journalism to different consumption styles, accessibility needs, and engagement preferences.

“I prefer text personally, but my colleague Mark Howard listens to podcasts — audio is his format,” Sibley explains. “So if we have a 26-page interview with President Trump, if you want a summation with bullet points or the audio version of that full text, these are ways that personalisation is going to be so important.”

This shift represents a fundamental change in how publishers think about their relationship with audiences. Instead of creating one-size-fits-all content and hoping readers adapt, AI tools allow newsrooms to maintain editorial integrity while presenting information in formats that match individual preferences and circumstances.

“I’m proud that last year, TIME had more on-the-record time with the president than any other publisher in the world,” Sibley says. “We’ve been experimenting with similar AI-enhanced experiences for our previous Person of the Year winners as well – Taylor Swift, Elon Musk and President Zelenskyy – so we’re building on that foundation.”

Publishers focus on sustainable AI implementation

As the initial excitement around AI capabilities settles into operational reality, publishers are developing more sophisticated approaches to measuring success and ensuring sustainable implementation. The focus has shifted from experimenting with every new AI tool to identifying specific applications that genuinely enhance journalistic value and business sustainability.

“We’re so early in this that it’s almost too soon to tell,” Johnston admits about measuring AI success. “The long-term goal is simply: can we do this more efficiently? As publisher of Axios, my entire goal has been figuring out ways to hire more journalists. That’s how to build a sustainable business that lets me take that money and give it to reporters.”



TIME’s approach emphasises building on its century-long legacy of adapting to technological change while maintaining editorial integrity. The company views AI as the latest in a series of transformations that have included shifts from print to digital, mobile optimisation, and social media integration.

“We’re an over-100-year-old brand,” Sibley explains. “I think there’s even some AI content that we found from 1960. So just to put that into perspective, disruption and new technologies are nothing new for us. We were able to go from a magazine to digital to mobile to social to video and TikTok and all the new ways of engaging with our content.”

The future promises continued human-AI collaboration

Looking ahead, both TIME and Axios express confidence that AI will enhance rather than replace human journalism, provided the technology is implemented thoughtfully with appropriate guardrails and transparency. The key lies in maintaining clear distinctions between tasks suitable for automation and those requiring human insight, creativity, and ethical judgment.

“What I think AI tools do is let your journalists spend more time on the things that robots can’t do,” Johnston says. “You wouldn’t send an AI to interview the president. You would send the human to do that. But if you can spend more time with the human interviewing the president, then what can the AI do instead?”

As the media industry continues adapting to AI’s capabilities, the publishers leading this transformation emphasise that success depends on viewing AI as a tool that amplifies human capabilities rather than replaces them, a perspective that applies to other industries too. The organisations that thrive will be those that maintain their commitment to journalistic values while embracing technological innovation.

“We need to not just survive but thrive for the next 100 years,” Sibley says. “And we’re going to embrace this new technology and make sure that we’re writing about it, using it, and that it’s helping our business serve our readers.” **GIBS**