How journalists can use Artificial Intelligence

In recent years, artificial intelligence (AI) has become all the rage in the world. It has been presented both as a great opportunity in our world and as a big threat to our way of doing things. But what exactly is it?

I asked Google AI. Here is what it says: "Artificial intelligence (AI) is a branch of computer science that develops computational systems capable of performing tasks typically requiring human intelligence."

So almost everyone sitting in their corner – be it medical doctors, architects and engineers, journalists, social workers, accountants, priests, etc – feel threatened or emboldened by the advances in AI. Nearly everyone accepts that AI has come to stay and that it is getting better by the day. Many, however, do not know how they can leverage it in their day-to-day work without being destroyed by it.

In the newsrooms, like in other professions, AI has been seen through mainly two prisms: the mega blow against journalism as we have known it, or the best tool to improve the quality of journalism and the quality of writing in particular.

But many of us have formed these perceptions without understanding AI and how we can work with it. So for me and many people in the journalism profession, the article by Stephen J Adler published on March 12, 2026 in the *Columbia Journalism Review* is one of the best on this subject with regard to the media.

Titled, "How Journalists Can Make AI Work for Them: A framework for newsrooms to use AI in ways that don't sacrifice quality or lessen oversight," the writer breaks the AI phantom into three basic ways journalists can make use of AI.

> I hope this simple breakdown by Mr Adler helps many journalists here in Uganda find footing in this increasingly AI world that we live and work in.



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He writes: "These days, in my role at New York University's Ethics and Journalism Initiative, I'm finding it helpful to demystify AI chatbots by separating their use into three categories known to just about every journalist: source, colleague, and assistant. Within each category, it becomes easier to see where the risks, as well as the opportunities, may lie. It also may make it easier for newsrooms to articulate clear guidelines for their use."

Below are extracts of his three areas that journalism can approach in using AI.

AI as a source: "Given the mass of information an AI bot can synthesise almost instantaneously, I can't imagine ignoring it as a source, despite its obvious flaws. I liken its abilities to those of an erratic human, someone I've nonetheless found to be useful, if occasionally frustrating, in providing background information, suggesting story angles, and dishing about people and events that may turn out to be newsworthy. Such sources offer a lot to check out and confirm or debunk, even though you know they sometimes make things up—and quite often don't even know they're doing so."

AI as a colleague: "Reuters' Mo Tamman changed my way of thinking about chatbots when, in late 2023, he described to an NYU journalism audience how he employs a bot as a perpetually handy colleague, chatting away with it on one screen—vetting story ideas, considering approaches, reviewing what others have said and written on a topic—while he works on his story on a second screen. He said he uses generative AI throughout his workday, and, while 'I don't expect it to be right half the time, when I'm asking a question, I'm having a conversation with it'."

AI as an assistant: "AI's role as an assistant, or junior colleague, might include outlining or writing first drafts, analysing and visualising data, providing transcriptions and translations, creating story summaries, and helping critique and edit one's work.

When it comes to writing, I certainly believe it is essential for journalism students to learn how to draft and organise their own stories, mostly because the writing and thinking processes are intertwined. But if a story is really straightforward, like a sports results recap or a corporate earnings report, AI can probably draft it faster and about as well as I can, from the audience's perspective. It writes, I check."

The full article can be accessed at *www.cjr.org*. I hope this simple breakdown by Mr Adler helps many journalists here in Uganda find footing in this increasingly AI world that we live and work in.

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