25th ISOJ AI in Journalism: Ethics, opportunities and pitfalls

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Josephine Lukito [00:00:07] Welcome to our last panel for the 25th annual ISOJ. I hope you're all super excited to talk about AI. So the name of this panel is AI in Journalism: Ethics, Opportunities and Pitfalls. And I should note that in kind of thinking about this panel, we figured out that we wanted to talk not only about AI in journalism, but how journalists report on and talk about AI. And so we'll be covering both of those things today. Before we start. I know there are bios for all of our lovely, wonderful and brilliant panelists, but I thought it might be helpful to do just a quick primer on them so they'll start, over here. Actually, we'll start at the end. Sil Hamilton is a researcher in residence at the journalism nonprofit hacks slash hackers and a machine learning researcher at McGill University. Next we have Andrea Guzman, who is an associate professor of communication at Northern Illinois University and a co-director of the Human Machine Communication Lab. She is also a former journalist. Next we have Sebastián Torres, who is a Uruguay based, audience strategist at Now This and a media consultant for organizations like Sombra Media and ICFJ. Hopefully I pronounce that right. And then finally we have Nicolás Guzman, who is the deputy project director at the Global Index on Responsible AI and the Global Data Barometer. And so, as you can tell from our, descriptions, we have quite a few folks who do both research on journalism and AI and folks who are actually using AI in their ongoing work as journalists. And so I thought we would start with a nice broad question, because when you hear the word AI or artificial intelligence, a lot of things come up. And so I thought we could start with a simple question. When you hear AI, what does that mean for you? And what does that kind of cover? And we'll start with you.

Nicolás Guzman [00:02:09] Thank you very much. First of all, I would like to, thank the invitation. It's an honor for me and for the team to be invited here, so it's a pleasure. So well. Definitions of AI that may look like a very short and easy question, and that it might be not that showed anything. And as we have seen in the last few days in this conference, definition has been an issue has been discussed in the previous panel regarding the content creators. We we have seen the the debate around the definition of what is a journalist nowadays, what is not the journalist in the panel or in the workshop regarding the regulations, on AI and news. We saw that there were struggles defining fake news, for example, or when we were talking about the acts or the laws to support, independent journalism. There were also debates on what is journalism. And those definitions have impact. If when we talk about, regulations, the definitions have impact in protecting rights, for example, or in allocating resources to some place and not other places. So, yes, I think that this question about the definition of AI could open a lot of fields of debate because definitions have themselves values, point of views, ideologies and, from a methodological point of view, they are obviously a key tool to organize the research and to shape the scope of the work. And as in the Global Index of responsible AI, we are taking, why the approach of a definition of responsibility. And if I can introduce very briefly the study because it will justify why it is so, so wide and broad. In the global index of responsible AI, we have, build a research network of 150 people that we are doing a global study on what countries are doing towards commitments and progress towards responsible AI. So we are

assessing governments, we are assessing non-state actors like civil society organizations, universities, private sector, media, etc. And when you face, so such a big global study, you have to be very careful about the concept that value is using that are meaningful in each of the countries, in each of the regions that, you are incorporating the study because it has to be valid in different contexts cultural context, political, economic and social historical context. So that's why we took a very general, definition. So for the researchers, we gave them the main definitions that are being used in their international agreements and their more widespread, definitions. And for today, for example, we could use something like when we think about AI, we could say, I propose to, to to think about them like a set of technologies that in, kind of important autonomous way, can perform cognitive, task that a few years ago we thought were only made by humans and while doing so. They are seen as a solution for many of the problems that society are facing now, and also are posing new threats to society's or strengthening old, problems that they are reinforcing. And this including this potential risk of of these tools, these potential risk of fire. Yeah. It's intentional and it's I think it's related with what we have seen in the previous days regarding when I topics were arising in the conversation, for example, in panels where people were telling very good stories on how they use AI, and in the same conversation they were concerned about the risks, concerns about accountability, concerns about the human intervention, the transparency. Because I think that the the gap that has been between the rise and the hype of the use of the technology and the concern has been so short. So I propose that when we talk about these technologies, we include these potential risk.

Josephine Lukito [00:06:38] That's such a great point, Sebastian, would you agree?

Sebastián Auyanet Torres [00:06:41] Yeah. I would like to complement what, what the definition of that, that Nico was providing because I'm pretty much aligned with with that. And since I come more from a practice point of view, as I've been trying to develop, solutions that have some sort of assistance of, of I for my own work, I would say that that as a compound of technologies, automatism as algorithms, I or the way I use AI mostly ChatGPT has allow me to, say time to focus on my human capabilities to the journalism as an audience strategist. I'm deeply obsessed with listening process and conversation and real engagement. So the AI allows me to have a lot of time to actually do that, to reflect and to and to have conversations. So for instance, it's helping me and the newsrooms I consult for to better map their stakeholders, the around the communities they try to serve in a more effective and quicker way. And that's that is just an example. And I know we're going to delve further into how we are or the ways we are using AI for. But I think that in journalism, we are at the very beginning of this, that the ubiquity of the concept of AI around many people saw it as a content generator of all things. We again prioritize content as journalists and content creation as if it was the the end and the beginning of everything. And I think it's not that it's an assistance to actually have, it's AI to do AE which with the actual experience, as Jennifer Randall from Harken said. So yeah, it's it in my case is more an assistant and a means, not an end.

Josephine Lukito [00:08:50] A way to help humans do more work and to help journalists do their work more easily or better.

Sebastián Auyanet Torres [00:08:56] Exactly, exactly.

Josephine Lukito [00:08:58] Andrea.

Andrea Guzman [00:08:59] So I think we are learning here. And by the way, thank you for having me. That we could have an entire panel on what is AI. But, let me bring in a perspective from human machine communication. So I focus on how do people understand artificial entities, robots, AI as a communicative other? Just like we perceive humans when they communicate with us, how do we perceive and understand artificial intelligence? And, to add to the definitions that we're hearing here, you know, again, something that can stand in and perform a human like, intelligent task and we can spend all day talking about how this definition has changed over time. I do want to talk about I have interviewed more than 100 people, including news consumers, about what they think artificial intelligence is. And much like we've seen with Charlie Beckett's report, as we've seen in the AP report, as we've seen in reports out of Oxford, there's a wide range in the consumer mind and AI that's really important for us to keep in mind here. Consumers think artificial intelligence is everything from what we as researchers call the Hollywood effect. The Terminators coming to come and get you, down to I've had people tell me it's aliens. Yes. And, you know, now what's interesting is it's shifting because people say, oh, it's. Siri. Oh it's Alexa. And I'm going to be going out to do another round of research. And, you know, now they're answering with specific applications. And that's really important to keep in mind when we're talking about artificial intelligence with our audiences. Because how they may be filtering that information when you talk about, hey, we're going to be using AI is is really broad based, and you need to have some really great discussions with them, and we can discuss that more. But, you know, and I think the agency part, which I know will return to you when it gets to ethics, when we start having machines kind of step into human like roles. So yes.

Josephine Lukito [00:11:09] That's a great point.

Andrea Guzman [00:11:10] Yeah.

Sil Hamilton [00:11:12] I'd like to add a third perspective. So on the one hand, yes, I can meet a lot of different things to a lot of different people, and I can mean a whole myriad of things to consumers. But I've done a lot of work with news organizations over the last year in trying to integrate what middle managers think I should be capable of, and so they bring me on, and we look at the data and we look at how they integrate their CMS into their end points and how consumers read articles and whatever, whatever. And nearly every single time, the conclusion is that. Wait, what is AI? And as someone who. I've done two courses now at the Knight Center, that's it's reached about 12,000 people. It's very successful. I'm a little bit ashamed to have had AI in the title for both courses, and it made it very sexy for people to read and like, oh, there's a free course on AI can take this, it's for journalists specifically. It doesn't really mean anything nowadays, I don't think. So I'm a bit of a pessimist in that sense, but, to give maybe a bit of a historical background to the term, it was coined in 1958, I think, when a couple of really important computer science researchers held a workshop at Dartmouth, they came together for the summer. They held a workshop on trying to figure out how to achieve artificial intelligence. And what they meant by artificial intelligence was this idea that the brain, our brain computes. It's this idea that the brain can compute things. It makes sense of the world by logical operations plus minus addition, subtraction. And they wanted to figure out if they could mimic the way the brain works with a computer. And, the people who attended this workshop weren't, including, Claude Shannon, who invented the language model, which is the same technology that ChatGPT uses on the inside. So in some ways, well, we didn't realize it until, you know, 2017, this group of people who came together at Dartmouth and coined this idea of AI to try to replicate the brain works with computers were maybe a sort of a little bit correct in that their technologies do seem to work, but at the time it really didn't

seem like it would work. And so AI research has gone through several hype peaks and crashes and the AI winter in the 1980s, people tried to get out of the different ways they thought, maybe if we use symbolic AI would work. Maybe if they did, statistical machine learning would work. And every single time the hype eventually faded. It's a little bit different now, but I still think the hype over the last couple of years are a little bit like crypto, and I think that impacts the way that businesses think they should be integrating it. So from a historical perspective, I very definitely has a particular meaning. I don't think people think about this when they see the word AI. They think they do think Terminators often. And but it's important for businesses to maybe get a better sense of what the technologies are first before calling out to consultants is, how it end that little spiel.

Josephine Lukito [00:14:10] Great. And as you can see, I think when it comes to AI, you're right. So there's been this has been, the latest, I guess, cycle or iteration of this. But certainly AI is something that our society has been talking about and speculating for a long time. And all of you here on the panel have been thinking about AI for a long time. And so I'd love to ask, how have you thought about either incorporating or asking research questions about artificial intelligence in your work? And, Sebastián, I know you mentioned that you're actively working with and developing artificial intelligence tools, so I thought we'd start with you.

Sebastián Auyanet Torres [00:14:43] Yeah. So, as I was saying, I mostly used, that, you know, I am deeply invested in trying, AI in simple ways, because I have no code experience and no, no, no mental structure to think in terms of, like, coding and, and, you know, that kind of stuff that you can do with, with an LLM or a solution such as the GPT. But I as a consultant and a as an audience strategist, I, I always do this particular exercise, which is the network maps that I was telling you about, which basically allows you to identify the people that you want to reach to in order to, detect the needs of the community that you are trying to serve with your journalism. And that's usually a pretty tough exercise to do as a consultant. It's it looks like a great idea. And when you show the network map, they say, oh, my God, this is so great. This is a pretty visual way to to see, the, the people that we should try to reach in order to listen to them in order to inform them. And they say, okay, great. So let's just meet next week and see how far you can go in the map. And it never has a ton of progress. And it's like, hey, this this is just so hard. It's like we need to take care of doing actual journalism. I usually work with digital media and independent media entrepreneurs with like really tiny newsrooms are like two people operations. They'd have to do a lot. So I always struggle with that. And when GPT came up, it really allowed me to streamline the process and obviously is not perfect. Like we always have to check and reiterate and yeah, it hallucinates. It gives you weird like fake names of organizations and community groups. But but pretty much it helps to, you know like super speed the process so they don't have an excuse to not reach into them anymore. It's like, hey, let's try to come up with a plan of reaching to these people. So this is a very example of like how to use it to streamline a particular process that makes it, you know, more efficient. And, and I ended up discovering that that also helped me to better present and organize, for example, the results of an audience survey. So, nowadays I am working in this project around like, building audience personas, which should be like, a task for another department of the organization. But since I am the one person the results of our audience service I ended up coming up with with the audience persona, but not because the GPT team invented it for me with a basic prompt. I used it, you know, basically, I, I threw all the information of our audience survey, I detected the patterns by myself, and the GPT just helped me, came with a better text and a better composition of that. So that will be reiterated by and corrected by, you know, the people at the brand level by me. So the human component is always in the middle. So I think it's a probably a pretty superficial use

of it, but I think it's better that way. I don't want that GPT to think for me or to or to do that, I actually want the time to do it by my myself. And this is how in different ways I, I ended up like this could work for everything. It could work for finding stakeholders or potential partners or brands that you might, you know, propose a partnership on sales like this is usually the kind of things that we don't have time to think and to plan, and this is a way to do it quicker and better. So yeah, again, it's mostly in favor of actual experience. This thing with AI in my at least in my opinion.

Josephine Lukito [00:19:00] It's a such an optimistic take, right.

Sebastián Auyanet Torres [00:19:02] Yeah. It's in a way.

Josephine Lukito [00:19:08] Andrea, I know you mentioned. You know that you're interviewing and talking to folks more, do you find that they take a very similar kind of perspective?

Andrea Guzman [00:19:16] Yeah. So I again, focus more on how the average person just makes sense of what is this AI thing. And I'm really interested in how preconceived notions of technology and artificial of of the media, the media perceptions enter into and affect how people then make sense with. And do they engage with the technologies or not engage with the technologies? To go back, you know, to this discussion of history and not to nerd out here because I understand we are standing between you all like barbecue and margaritas. So thank you for hanging out with us. You know, Joe, you brought up a great point. And also back to the history. You know, artificial intelligence was first defined as a thing we're going to work toward. It's always been a technology of speculation, and, it's always been a technology of thinking, you know, of kind of recreating humans in human agencies. And it's a very emotional technology for people. And what I'm interested in is how do those, you know, I'm starting to think about more in depth with emotions. How do emotions start to get in the way, especially as someone who's an educator? I've been teaching students about artificial intelligence in journalism now for, 8 or 9 years. This is not new to me or my program. But how some students just won't even engage with learning about artificial intelligence. And I know if we go back and look at the AP report, about 20% of newsrooms don't want to engage. And part of that goes back to this question of. Agency and thinking about what these technologies are. So that is where my kind of research is lying now and going into, thinking about, you know, why do people engage, not engage with these technologies? I think we also have to think about freelancers. You know, we talk so much about how, you know, journalists working for organizations use these technologies, but the freelance community, what ChatGPT means for them is also huge. And so those are some of the things I'm thinking around these technologies.

Josephine Lukito [00:21:31] Great. Super interesting. Sil, so you also a machine learner learning specialist, right.

Sil Hamilton [00:21:39] Yeah. So I'm actively engaged in trying to figure out where language models fail when it comes to understanding culture. I think when it comes to text on the internet, it's the exact same problem we're facing with deepfakes. We're looking at a technology that can pretty closely produce text that looks almost real and human produced, but just not quite. And sometimes we can tell. So we've thought we've had a kind of pseudo Turing test in one of my classes where we, I made students pair up and one student would, write a short story, and then the other student would write a short story with ChatGPT, and then they'd, like, go from group to group to group. And every single time the students could tell when something was generated with ChatGPT. But despite it

being so obvious to pick it out, sometimes, we still want to believe that it is real, but we still have a trust in the provenance of text. We have a trust that somebody was on the other end of writing it. And it's really difficult to to distrust that trust and to look past that, trust them to look at a piece of text and suspect that maybe a bot wrote it. There's an addiction statistics saying that goes all models are wrong. And it's and it's really true. Techuan wrote a really great piece, for the Atlantic. The ChatGPT is like a snapshot of the internet. You take terabytes of text and you compress it down to a couple of gigabytes. It's not going to perfectly capture everything in that original group of data. And there's always going to be falsehoods and mistakes and things that didn't quite learn during training. And those will always pop up. It's a model. All models are wrong. And learning to predict maybe when it gets things wrong and to highlight those and be aware of that. If you're looking at using these models in production is really important. But it's also so difficult because you can talk to each other and it seems like it understands what you're saying, and you can have a conversation. And there's just like, I want to believe. But it's still, at least in my research, I mean, I think obviously if you if anybody has ever used ChatGPT, it's like I still gets things wrong. And, so it's, I don't know, maybe we're a little too trusting.

Josephine Lukito [00:23:50] Well, it's like what Andrea said, right? It's a technology of speculation.

Andrea Guzman [00:23:55] Well, and this goes back to, how our brains are wired, right? The fact that we've been communicating for thousands of years, and there's been a human on the other end of that, and now there's a machine in our brains have to, you know, from a cognitive perspective, have to catch up to that.

Sil Hamilton [00:24:16] In, like, a year or two.

Andrea Guzman [00:24:17] Yeah. Exactly. Yeah. So, yeah.

Josephine Lukito [00:24:20] Well, and related to this and I think both of you alluded to, you know, artificial intelligence used in positive and negative ways. And, Nico, I know a lot of your work is really interested specifically in responsible AI. And so I'd love for you to talk a little bit more about that.

Nicolás Guzman [00:24:35] Yeah, sure. Well, as we have introduced. AI can be used for good, for bad, but even if you are trying to use it for good, it could have negative effects. And there have been, like in the recent years, a lot of debates at the global scale and also at a country level regarding how can we prevent those harms, happening when deploying, designing and using AI. And, well, one of the most important ones was the UNESCO recommendation on the ethics of AI. But there are a lot of, multilateral organizations working on this. And while we we are preparing the the conceptual framework for the study, we also analyzed hundred of other guidelines, documents, etc, that different situations of different size university, companies, media, etc, where we are developing to guide day to day action to our AI. So I think that having these protocols, these set of rules, these values are very, very useful. And from doing a huge scan of all this available information, yes, we absolutely were able to build these hundred of indicators that we are measuring across 140 countries. And, you know, many of them are around, the, the governance when using. I like the transparency of the processes and also transparency with the people that is going to be consuming the outputs of that the human oversight. And in the case that we were discussing human oversight might be the expert oversight, because it's very useful to have experts on the field that are going to use it. And then also, apart from the technicalities, there is the impacts of on the human rights side. You know,

we know that there is a lot of concern regarding the bias that could be the outcome of the use of AI, the impact in the environment. And that's not only when using AI, but also in the the whole value chain. And then it's another complete, discussion regarding the hardware and the resources use it for that. Apart from the the outcomes of AI system, we have the the effects on the children's rights for example, in the labor and the world of work. So there is a great fear, a great range of rights that could be affected by deploying, AI systems, using them or purchasing them. So yes, what I recommend to the people, which is not so engaged with this world of responsible AI, is like there are a lot of institutions, a lot of civil society organizations, school group, etc. are working on this. And as we have seen in these recent days, that there is a concern from journalists regarding how and when to use AI. And I have to say, you are not alone. There are a lot of different sectors and communities that are thinking and working on how to use AI in a responsible way. We are in the process of this, global study that we are going to release the results in June, where we collect, of course, evidence of what governments are doing, but also we will share what other non-state actors are doing towards responsible AI. So that could be very inspiring. We will have information from all the continents in 140 countries. So then we will invite you to to revise that and to have a solid ground where you could learn how to take the most of AI, but to avoid the potential harms that it could have, for the whole society, but also to the communities that the children are more related to.

Josephine Lukito [00:28:39] And that's a great pivot into our next big question as we transition, not just talking about AI generally, but AI and journalism. And so there's been, you know, several pieces, including one in Columbia Journalism Review, talking about how I can be used to make journalism more efficient. Right, in many, many different ways. But there are also a there's a big camp of journalists who are skeptical, and individuals who are really skeptical about the use of artificial intelligence in newsroom. And so I'd be curious to know, where do you fall on that spectrum? Are you more optimistic about it, or are you more perhaps pessimistic and to put you on the spot, let's start with Sil.

Sil Hamilton [00:29:18] What I've seen over the last year is, it's a tad a little bit of nuance to the conversation. If there's two camps of people, maybe when it comes to there are people who are sort of interested in using it, people who don't really want to use it. I think there's also two corresponding groups in the newsroom who get affect impacted in different ways. And it depends if you write shorter form pieces versus longer form content and someone who might like, you know, a couple of weeks into their work and they do investigations and they talk to people and they collect data and they do a little bit of data journalism and they produce a graph. These people will probably benefit largely from things like ChatGPT vs code interpreter. There's like a lower level application of AI that I see working out. And so examples include like I think everybody's seen examples of transcribing and summarizing town hall meetings, school board meetings, taking really long three, 4 or 5 hour transcripts and compressing them all the way down, like, I think one of the APs, projects that something along those lines and that works, generating titles works pretty okay. Generating captions works pretty good, okay. So when people talk about using AI in the newsroom, I think often the examples are lower level kind of just time boosters make everything a little bit faster. But the real danger, I think, comes in and there's a little bit of a creep here that everybody can acknowledge that as soon as you're using these technologies for these lower level tasks, you might go, oh, well, maybe they'll work for the higher level tasks, maybe it can produce content. And just like weather news, financial news has been automated for a while now. And different publications, you might think that it can cross genres. And the answer is probably no right now. But that's that won't stop people from trying. So it really depends on what kind of content you're working

with. I think that's going to determine your particular fate moving forward, which is not a really great way to look at it, but I think it's fairly realistic.

Josephine Lukito [00:31:16] No and I think that makes sense. Right? This kind of nuanced interpretation of certain tasks are going to work really well in the context of AI, and some things really do require human investigation and human labor and human work. Andrea?

Andrea Guzman [00:31:28] Yeah. And this goes back to the agency question and the perceived agency question. And, the piece you're citing is by Felix Simon, who's doing some great work. He just came out of Oxford. Just looking at, you know, how are people making sense of these technologies? And as far as, you know, how do people feel about them? How do I feel about them? I am a former newspaper journalist, like, legit work for newspapers. And, you know, the turn of the millennia 2000, and I worked at a Hollinger publication, and that's going to become important in a moment here. And anytime you have technological change and we've seen, you know, it's journalists have been dealing with wave after wave after wave of fast technological change from the internet, I think we all know we screwed that one up. Social media started to do a little bit better. I, you know, we're doing pretty good in terms of we've, we've we learned, from that. But I think when it comes to, yes, there's this question of efficiency. But there's also this question of agency, and this is why we have to think about what's different about AI and how it's perceived. Because we've seen newsrooms be whittled down. More is expected of us. And part of this fear about artificial intelligence has nothing to do with AI itself. Like I said, I used to work in a newspaper newsroom. I used to work for Hollinger. For anyone who's been around you, you would know that that is a company that collapsed after Lord Conrad Black stole all of our money. And, you know, it really started this, this huge decline in local newsrooms in the Chicago area where I was, and this is part of the I question you can't disentangle the AI technology question from the economic question. The hedge funds, who is owning and running journalism. Right. And what are the values? And that is where you get this pessimistic side. Right? Because journalists are trying to do so much they don't take get rid of the technology. A lot of times just don't even have agency. In their in their own newsrooms, you know, because they're, you know, it's very limited agency. And now you're bringing in a technology that in some ways can help but also can undermine agency. And so that creates really complex feelings and really complex ethical questions. And we really need to be thinking about, you know, AI in relation to what are the funding models. Because it's not AI that is going to save or ruin journalism. It's people making decisions about what is journalism and what do we value in journalism and what value are we going to put into journalism.

Josephine Lukito [00:34:33] So yeah, certainly AI is in no way a replacement and could never be a replacement for journalism. Sebastián?

Sebastián Auyanet Torres [00:34:40] Yeah, I completely agree. And would also add that I think that with every new technology, we as journalists with with exceptions of course, but we seem to be pretty proficient in, getting amused with a new toy that you can apparently do super complicated stuff and that so you congratulate to each other with your with your colleague, and then it just happens that, no one has a clue on whether the audience, the community you are trying to serve actually needs that. So every time I listen about or I hear about AI related to content, it's as I said at the beginning, again, we're thinking about content. And I think that if if, for sure, AI is not going to save journalism, it's a step towards the future in the sense that it's a new term. It's a ubiquitous like, entity that it's around our newsrooms. But if we're thinking if we're trying to think about how to push journalism into

the future, how to make it evolve, I would love for us to just stop thinking about just content, because content journalism has been a part of the history of journalism. But, you know, there has been a moment in history in which journalism wasn't about content. And I would like for us as a community to keep thinking about, like, what comes next, because if anything, that ChatGPT just proved that to create content is actually pretty cheap and you can do it. Just in a snap. So it's great for propaganda but. And for propaganda disguised as journalism. But it won't make the cut for us, luckily, because we have already capabilities that should be in play when we are journalists. So yeah, this is a pessimistic part of that because I really think that, that every new technology seems to gives to give us a new excuse for avoiding doing what has to be done, which is let's just try to find a way to do things differently, especially, in terms of our relationship with with our audiences.

Josephine Lukito [00:37:13] Great, Nico?

Nicolás Guzman [00:37:15] Okay. Yes, I agree with that point of view of not waiting for the AI to solve problems that humans have had to solve, obviously. And I can not avoid thinking about from the conceptual framework of responsible AI where we know that accuracy is a value. It's a principle that always need to be, ensure when using AI and that's in the newsroom. That's extremely important. And that's why there needs to be an expert in the loop. And on top of that, there are also, yes, the principle of transparency or explainability, you know, and who is going to explain how it work to the audience. For example, if you use something not for content, but you are using AI in some stages of production of news, it's fair to to explain how it was used and who is going to do that, if not the humans? Who is going to decide where to better include those those technologies? So yes. From a responsible AI point of view, it's also, I mean, important to know when to use it, where and to be transparent to the audiences on why and how that was done.

Josephine Lukito [00:38:25] Yeah. And that's so important. And I think journalists play such a critical role in explaining AI to so many individuals. Right. Part of the responsibility of technology and AI reporters is to take this very technical beat and actually make it accessible so that citizens understand what AI is and how it's being used in society. And so I'd love to ask, in your country, in the context of what you're studying and what you're seeing, how do you see AI being reported on? And are there stories or topics that you wish were covered more or less? And we'll start with Andrea.

Andrea Guzman [00:39:02] Yeah.

Josephine Lukito [00:39:04] Big question.

Andrea Guzman [00:39:04] I'm deciding if I want to go into the rant route or so. I think when we're talking about covering, I. Let me just say, a lot of the journalism we've seen so far revolves around Silicon Valley, and as a whole, there is not a lot of good critical reporting of Silicon Valley. It's getting better but Elon Musk, by the way, is not the end all, be all of AI. I just need to say that on behalf of pretty much every AI researcher I know. And so we have really dominant voices. And one of the reason those voices are able to be dominant is because people think AI is magic. And people don't understand AI. What it can do, what it can't do. And listen, as a former journalist and I used to work, covering technology, it's hard. Right? It's hard because you're strapped for time. You're trying to figure out, this time what these technologies do. And the one thing I would encourage when it comes to reporting on AI is to not treat AI as a monolith. As to really understand if you're talking about, you know, how is artificial intelligence used in determining home lending and home loans? Focus on that specific application, what it does and what it does

not do. If you're thinking about, you know, artificial intelligence when it comes to facial recognition, focusing on that form, what it does and does not do. And this is kind of ironic because we're having a whole panel about AI. But if we can get away from these larger general sweeping claims and statements about AI and just focus on specific applications, AI and what they're doing, I think that is where we end up in a better place. I know that's what we focus our journalism education on at Northern Illinois University, is thinking about, how do we demystify and treat it as not this magical force, but as a technology that people use in presenting it within the best context? Yeah.

Sil Hamilton [00:41:28] So to build off of Silicon Valley as being maybe, the dominant voice in the room. So I'm from Canada, and our news situation is, I think, reportedly pretty okay. If you look at, like, the Press Freedom Index, it's supposed to be pretty good and progressive and pretty equal in terms of viewpoints. But when you live there, it doesn't feel that way because there's only maybe like 4 or 5 major news organizations. All the newspapers are owned by a single company, Torstar. It's not super hot, but in general, all the publications support whatever the government is doing. And the government right now is just trying to create a micro Silicon Valley in Canada. So all the money and the national narratives is to create some kind of Canadian miracle of innovation. So there are funding institutes in Toronto and Mila and Quebec, and there's a lot of money into trying to recreate what's happening in Silicon Valley, because I think, well, they're looking at the economics of it, but there's a cultural implication of Silicon Valley dominating the narrative that's really destructive. If you look at people like Marc Andreessen, Andreessen Horowitz, it's like, this idea or Meta, OpenAI and Tropic, Google, they're all really pushing this AI is a miracle narrative right now because, well, they're raising tons of money and they're able to invest lots of money and make more money on the money that they make it more money, money, money. And but what you end up getting is people who are a little mystified about these technologies, buying into the narrative and investing in these things when they could be doing a lot more that's better or, you know, better use of their time. And so, but because there is money involved and there are a lot of people who are associated with, I guess, effective altruism and acceleration ism and all these newfangled new age police in Silicon Valley. It's hard to get away from that. And it's hard to get your your head out of the box on it. So in Canada, at least, I think we always do whatever the US is doing. And right now the US is doing whatever, you know, money is doing.

Josephine Lukito [00:43:26] So sounds about right, Nico.

Nicolás Guzman [00:43:30] Okay, regarding the question of what I would like to see more. I think that there are two topics that I think, that would require more attention, at least in, in my region in South America, in particular in Argentina, is not so, so present. One is the the different challenge that the AI poses in the whole value chains that we are mentioning, and especially regarding the resources that are needed to to deploy, and to design and to use that that is going to have impact in the region. And another topic, I think it would be that it comes from time to time, perhaps mainly in elections. Time is the impact that, AI tools are having in the public discourse. And to talk about that, I brought some brief notes regarding in our study, we covered a section regarding the intersection of AI and, freedom of expression and access to information. And we were scanning different frameworks, laws, policies, etc. in different countries regarding this topic. And I think that this is kind of covered sometimes, but not in a robust way. And what we have seen, we have identified more than 30 framework at the national level, policies, laws, etc. that address this issue of the intersection of AI and freedom of information. That's access to information. And this was in very variety countries, different countries, Germany, Netherlands, Oman, Vietnam, China with different traditions. And but there is this global

consensus of what AI tools are doing to public discourse. And this variety that we have. Indentified is not only on the type of policies. There are the national AI policies, sure, but we have guidelines, white papers, we have laws. And the way of how the intersection of AI and the public discourse is addressed is not we're always direct, connected with AI regulations. For example, we have seen obviously AI policies, but we have seen laws on cyber security, laws on regulation of video sharing platform algorithm. We have seen loss on net neutrality. So how the internet provides services, provider services using AI could benefit or ban some context impacting, access to information. So there is a variety of ways that countries are addressing this. And we have identified two main approach to address this. One was is more related to a proactive way of informing audiences on how to deal with these new issues of misinformation, fake news, etc. and the other is more banning or reacting to the existence on that. And this is also something that is interesting to analyze how different political systems are addressing this topic. That is why I think that we need more of this in the in the media, in the public debate. And for example, a quick glance of these regulations, they said, okay, what's the limit? What's how are we going to define that something is fake news and we have, okay, if it is threatening democracy. But other countries say if it threatens the public order, religious values, national security, peace, the image of the country also could be a reason for banning, a content or ethical principles, or even rumors. So, as we can see, this is a global concern that affects the media itself. But I see that it's not it's sometimes it's cover, but it needs to be made more constant debate to be to altogether do with the local particularities, to have some, common approach to these issues.

Josephine Lukito [00:47:32] And I think we're going to see continued conversation about regulation of AI.

Sebastián Auyanet Torres [00:47:37] So, I'm going to talk about my experience in my country and in the Americas and what I'm seeing around there. I also make some notes, but the first thing that I would say is like I'm so happy that we have the margaritas after that, because this is also a pessimistic answer. So I think that mostly the coverage about around AI in my experience, in my opinion, is pretty similar to the way, tech journalism covers the usual things, such as like a new cell phone, like it's more like marketing or doom and gloom. So having said that, I think that there are several areas in which journalism should consider and report on AI, at least in in about its influence, particularly in my country. I think that what the tech has been created and the region where it has been. It has an effect. So for example, in my country there's at the Social Security, office uses a model. I think it's built in the Global North. I don't remember where, but that model, assigns, like, how much money you should give a specific person, and they already have detected flaws at that model. So, monitoring the usage of these models, should be important because usually the the details of how these models have been trained are hidden. And this is a huge, business. It's a built environment all around business and sooner than later a geopolitical one. So in terms of, like, security, like facial recognition, like, guess who are the countries who are trying to sell or why facial recognition technologies. So we should definitely be aware to that. And I, I don't see having like something 404 news for Latin America. I will gladly take a grant to develop that, but I don't see it coming in the short term. So but I think we need we really need more more about that. So I think that ethical breaches are not being really covered. And I think that an. Also, I think that the role that we could play as journalist would be to inform future legislation. But I think that we start jumping into the urgency of legislation and we say we need legislation now. And I feel and maybe Nico is a better person, to to answer about that in the sense of his experience in Latin America. But I think that, we don't even have observatories of AI implementation. I mean, we're starting to have observatories in

Uruguay. The first thing that a group of academics built was an observatory, because they want to inform conversation. So I eel that the conversation is really disconnected and sort of like despondent at this point and really informed by this whole like, thing of like, AI is ChatGPT, great plan your trip with you and and not with all this, the things that are behind us.

Sil Hamilton [00:50:54] And to add a little bit more, a parallel situation in Europe is they passed the AI act a couple of months ago, and that took a couple of years of conversation. And, I visited a journalism conference in Lithuania, last year in November, and there were a bunch of media leaders from Eastern Europe attending, and they were really pro AI act. It was all I act and special relevance to journalists. I think there's there's something in the act, mandating that people respect the provenance of content that is created. So if you do use AI for the production of some content legally, you are bound to, display it on your website in some form. But where, this approach begins to draw some heat is not in journalism and not in the news, but in other parts of, the European Community. There was fear that this focus on provenance, this focus on tracing back the origin of any piece of content to their originator would in some way harm privacy. And, with the GDPR, the European Union has also made a really big effort to preserve privacy. And so they began to run into this strange issue with the passing of the AI act, where enforcing companies to state where they got their data from to state certain things, or else they risk, such and such a percentage of their global revenue in enforcing the, the, the clear communication of the provenance of some piece of content. They were also beginning to run into certain. Ideals and tenants that they had previously held important. And so I think there's obviously a good need to at least be discussing it, right. There should be observatories and think tanks and what have you discussing, the possibility of legislation. But at the same time, I think the general theme of our conversation so far has been that AI is really hard to define. What is it? It it means so many different things to so many different people. And so, with something like the AI act, it was almost like an omnibus bill where they, they, it just it might have overstepped in some situations and not done enough and others. But I mean, at least they tried.

Josephine Lukito [00:53:04] Yeah. And, I know I want to make sure we have time for some audience questions as well. But first, I want to just thank you so much for all of the panelists, for your incredible insights. And I'm sure even after the audience questions, we will continue to talk about AI, hopefully over margaritas.

Josephine Lukito [00:53:22] And while the, list of questions on the tablet are coming to me, I do want to just give a small plug. I know still, in the beginning, you mentioned, the courses that you ran with the Knight Center on AI and that you didn't want to necessarily put the word AI in them. But I do want to say these are excellent, excellent courses. Many, if not all of them are free. And I highly, highly encouraged you to participate in one of them because they're just so incredibly useful.

Sil Hamilton [00:53:45] They're still available.

Josephine Lukito [00:53:48] They are avaliable.

Josephine Lukito [00:53:51] Journalismcourses.org. Go there. All right, we have one question from Slack. From Sylvia that asks, does local regulation affect how a journalist can use AI for journalism in their country?

Sil Hamilton [00:54:08] I mean, it depends on the country, I guess in the EU have established that there is such a thing. Andrea?

Andrea Guzman [00:54:12] Yeah, in the in the United States, right now there's no regulations, around the use of artificial intelligence. The EU is, is the main player I know of. Well, there's, I mean it so I think there's privacy and then there's the copyright issues, but those are still because this is, you know, an ongoing story when it comes to technology and the law. The law is always way behind. And part of that is just because, you know, like it's adaptive to kind of what comes out there.

Josephine Lukito [00:54:54] And slow moving the law.

Andrea Guzman [00:54:55] Yeah.

Nicolás Guzman [00:54:57] Yes. The short answer is yes. Absolutely. The local regulations to that effect that the work that they are doing and also sometimes the international regulations, because the information cross borders and sometimes the you are affected by that. But after saying that the most of the of the regulation that we are seeing right now, for example, is not legally enforceable yet there are like guidelines, policies, etc. That aims that match some of these for the medium long term. However, as we have seen, for example, in these efforts, again, misinformation this there are some laws that they have to to respond to. Yeah.

Josephine Lukito [00:55:37] It's a question if it's if it's an enforceable.

Andrea Guzman [00:55:39] Yeah. And and to add to that I will say it's not so much journalism focus. But in the US we had an incident about two months ago now, a month ago now, in which the president's voice was cloned, as part of, a political effort to not get people to vote. I will say there's, you know, moves toward regulating, artificial intelligence in terms of, like, labeling content. But that has I mean, we're still kind of working, toward that. So there may be some uses of AI in which, if you are taking on another persona. But that's not really a journalism use. That's more disinformation, misinformation that it may fall under some current legislation, you know, stuff. But for the most part, yeah.

Nicolás Guzman [00:56:25] Not just such a comment that, yes, you don't need a specific legislation for AI to have, some way of regulating the use of AI. You have to follow the general rules and laws and not to, even though it doesn't mention AI, it could be related to digital technologies, or it could be related to journalism or communication in general. And you have to follow that.

Josephine Lukito [00:56:49] Yeah, that is wrong, regardless of whether you use AI or not. Sil?

Sil Hamilton [00:56:53] I was just going to add on in, we haven't really spoken about training. And, you know, the lawsuit, The New York Times and AP's licensing deal with Open AI and etc., etc. in Canada. That's more of the tune right now, is where these companies are getting their data from. Because, I mean, Rupert Murdoch and his whole Fox News, Google, linking on social media like link tax thing in Australia have made it over to Canada, where Facebook and Google refuse to pay news organizations for content linked on their platforms. Which meant that for about half of last year, you couldn't send a news article on Facebook Messenger, which is more popular than AI message in Canada,

which was really bad. And so that that, from that perspective, who owns what content are you allowed to use? It is really more so I think the narrative, at least up north.

Josephine Lukito [00:57:47] Great. Scott also asks if a bad actor wanted to employ ChatGPT or another large language model, or Gen AI tool to manipulate political events. Would journalists be able to detect the purpose and are intent on modify that just slightly? What should journalists do in that situation?

Sebastián Auyanet Torres [00:58:10] I think we still lack the the tools and the training to detect that in a more effective way. I'm not saying we're not doing it like we're too broad of a of our, of our built environment of, of practice. So there are obviously I think that that for a for as I said does great work on this might be able to do this in an easier way. Lighthouse reports also had done some, some amazing, reporting on, on AI, but I think that at a more, on a more general level, like, journalism doesn't just they're just not focusing on that and that thing with some things that, that are now being more easily created through AI is that, the people all know that. So, for example, with, with them with a campaign in, with a company in Argentina, like there where there was a heavy component of a, generated content, like everyone knew, it was like those beautiful melee videos were fake, but it wasn't even the point, like that they were fake. So I think we usually fail at trying to convey that message to the people. Like, people don't need to be told this is fake. People need to be told like what? How that plays in a broader context and how that allows powerline supporters to, put their message across there in the, in the very, digital arenas where they make a difference while we are all talking to ourselves.

Sil Hamilton [00:59:52] I'm going to add on to that with a very simple sure thing that we can say. One thing that we know for sure, and that's, you cannot. Probabilistically or algorithmically detect a AI generated text. You just, you can't. There are companies that say you can turn it in we'll supported. GPT zero is the thing. You know, he was a student at Harvard. Whatever, it's amazing it. You just can't.]ChatGPT was given one goal, one goal, one goal only. And that was to mimic human text. And in that regard, it's really good at it. And you just cannot detect generated text.

Andrea Guzman [01:00:29] When it comes to images, there are some cues, as to whether, you know, when it comes to like the deep fakes, some voicing, that, you know, I think this comes down to old school verification. And it's and it's hard, right. Because now we do see, you know, the war Garza has had just use an example has had a lot of artificial images circulated through. And this is comes down to, working to verify, working to verify sources, using tools to, not necessarily AI tools, but, you know, this says this is an image, you know, where is where is this image coming from? You know, and and taking a moment, and, you know, this is what's really difficult for journalists because now, because these other actors can I think this is where this question is kind of going, can create this content. And, you know, this kind of firehose propaganda situation that we see where it's just flooding, flooding, flooding, and then people are coming to you being like, why aren't you reporting this? Why aren't you reporting this? Why aren't you reporting this? Which goes back to your, you know, you know, explanation here of, you know, explaining that it's not just fake, but this is actually part of a bigger effort going on. But I don't want to make it seem like, you know, anyone's being dismissive of this. This is something that, is just emerging. And I think that's really important to keep in mind as well, trying to figure our way through it, but just, you know, going back to being skeptical, I think the previous AI panel, you know, said, like, double check your your mother loves you and then double check that it's your mother, not I. I think it kind of goes back to that, as well. So. Yeah.

Nicolás Guzman [01:02:20] You know, I agree with Andrea regarding the old school methods are still useful. You can, make it more powerful with some technologies like open source intelligence, as we have seen yesterday. By double check. But I agree also a lot with. And that audience is not only waiting to say, okay, this is fake, these are not fake, but to understand a word that it come from where it goes. And so a more deeper debate on the impacts of AI in society.

Josephine Lukito [01:02:51] Do you think that, AI generated myths and disinformation is going to impact the many, many elections we have this year?

Sil Hamilton [01:03:01] Yeah. I don't know.

Andrea Guzman [01:03:05] It already did in New Hampshire, right. We had, I mean, what's happening now is complex and messy, and I don't mean to be dismissive of that. We are living in an initial moment of, you know, now, we have misinformation and disinformation can be ramped up at scale. I think, you know, one of the concerns is, will people act upon this? Sam Woolley, who's here at, UT Austin, does a lot of work around bots and things like this. And, you know, he always makes a great point. And I think this is needs to be brought into the conversation that the point of this firehose of misinformation and disinformation and deep fakes is not necessarily to change minds, although it can do it. A lot of times this is just to reinforce beliefs in some cases, but in other cases it's just to confuse people so that they check out and they're like, I'm done. I don't I can't make sense of this process. I, you know, I, I don't know what's going on. And so and so they check out, and that's kind of the, the bigger threat from this misinformation. And in disinformation, campaigns, regardless of AI is just now they can flood more.

Sil Hamilton [01:04:29] So yeah, I think, to add on to that, there are bigger issues to play. The US was downgraded to a flawed democracy in 2016, and I don't think very much has actually changed since then in terms of preserving democracy and the democratic right to vote and etc. and like the deepfake robocalls, there are bigger issues at play that need to be solved before AI is really you can really pin fake noses being the main source of disinformation. But maybe the the silver lining over the last two years with Elon Musk taking over Twitter is. X is starting to die, and the shift over to Blue Sky and Mastodon might actually be a benefit in the situation. So, you know, like, shut down one major social media site and social media starts to seem like it's maybe going downhill a little bit, which is it doesn't help all the older people on Facebook, but there's some kind of benefit process happening there.

Sebastián Auyanet Torres [01:05:24] I mean, I think that there's there's this joke of, a dad checking something in the computer, his daughter telling them that this is fake, and her dad responds, how in the world could this be fake if it's exactly what I think? So, I think that I just plays, a bigger I'm more efficient role in the production of content that just basically resonates with yourself and confirmation bias. Yeah. And that's operating on a different level that cannot be channeled in the same or confronted in the same arena by just finger pointing and saying, this is fake and this is not nothing I have nothing against fact checking. I know this information, pointing efforts, but, I really think that ee probably need to get out of the digital arena more and more if we want to actually, you know, make people be more aware of this because in this autoplay field, we keep losing because we just have different tools, like there are some tools that we just can use.

Josephine Lukito [01:06:52] As the kids say, go out and touch grass.

Sebastián Auyanet Torres [01:06:55] Yeah, yeah. It's I think it's pretty much about that. And this is for a much broader conversation by we again, I think we make several efforts to forget about that.

Andrea Guzman [01:07:10] Yeah. And I would like to kind of tie in a few other things that have been discussed at this conference, for example around, you know, solutions journalism or earlier, our panel, the panel that was on from content creators, I think, you know, the content creators, had a really powerful message for journalists. And that is demystify, explain, bring it down to people's level. And so if you know, helping a series on demystifying artificial intelligence, a series on this is how artificial intelligence can be used in disinformation series on this is what, you know, fake visuals look like. That is some great content that is going to be really interesting to your audience and is helpful to them. You know, is another way to turn this into think about. Because if you think about the type of content that ends up in disinformation, misinformation, and going back to this emotional aspect, it's meant to fan, it's but to be controversial. It's meant to feed in and, you know, feed that. So give them something different.

Josephine Lukito [01:08:24] And I, you know, I always like to end my panels on something perhaps more optimistic, especially in a panel on, you know, AI, where we're spending all this time talking about myths and disinformation. And for me, as an educator, the my silver lining, my optimism point is always my students, right? They they're always the ones who come in with so much energy, so much willingness to be journalists. And so when thinking in that vein, I'd love to know if you have any advice for journalism educators or newsrooms with young journalists. Because AI is inevitable, right? You can't put the cat back in the box or whatever the proverbial statement is. So what advice would you have for journalism educators and newsrooms with young journalists as you think about the future of AI?

Sil Hamilton [01:09:05] I still run into people who haven't actually used ChatGPT despite regularly talking about it. So, my, my biggest, piece of advice is just use the technology a little bit and then you'll get a pretty good sense of what it is and isn't capable of after that point. Yeah, I think that's all that's really needed. And in a weird way, that might be a kind of like a consumeristic like, yeah, everybody should be downloading the app onto their phone and you should be using this and that. I've been sitting up here for an hour, and I'm really wondering what's happening over there right now, but, so I think my biggest point. I'm gonna. You get my point. I'm going to shut off my phone now.

Josephine Lukito [01:09:50] Oh, it's a child abduction? Okay.

Sil Hamilton [01:09:56] Amber alert. Okay, so.

Josephine Lukito [01:10:01] So in the United States we have if a child goes missing, phones will go off. For those of you who are not from the US and that's or but sometimes it's also there's a tornado that I've come from and I was like, is there a tornado like it seemed?

Sil Hamilton [01:10:13] I think, actually, I read about this a while back. The, the alarms that are built into the phones, the AAS system. Yeah. The Amber alerts go off with noise. It causes disruption in the traffic. I think they use the setting that's meant for nuclear attacks. There's a lower level that was intended for a child abductions that didn't make the noise, that didn't make your phone vibrate, but they up for the highest level anyway. That's not relevant.

Andrea Guzman [01:10:38] But, yes, as we all get distracted and we're all. I think our brains are. And thank you all for hanging with us. You know, as as someone, I'm also heading up, the provost I action team at my university, actually working with faculty across every single college on how do we think about artificial intelligence? Because it's not just journalism, right? When we want to think about how do we educate students or when we have new people in the newsroom, I think what you're talking about, you know, this idea of use it, but play, "play around with it." Have students experiment, my students and I'll for those of you who are educators in the audience, ping me, I have some assignments. I have students doing an AI future, assignment now where they're just plugging different things into ChatGPT. One of them is to take something they wrote, plug it in, and ask ChatGPT to spit it back in a pirate voice. All right. But then also ask them questions about how do they feel. So this goes back to that that question of agency, that question of what you can do, can't do. And understanding, its limits and, and its uses. But you kind of, you know, go back to some, some ongoing themes. We can't do what happened in the early 2000 with the internet. And I'm glad to see a lot of us aren't, but putting our heads in the sand. I think we all know is, is where we end up in a very bad place. So, yeah.

Sebastián Auyanet Torres [01:12:20] On a positive note, and I started my intervention in this funny with, with some very optimistic, views on I because I'm really using it to be able to the work that that is important. And it's the word that I prepared myself for, my whole career, I my first advice would be try for them to find ways to empower themselves to do that, to do whatever they want to do. If they want to be an investigative reporter, there are some uses that they could apply to AI, such as tidying up their, their, the, all the them, that crew and stuff that they have that they have to process in order to do an investigation if they are, audience strategists. But you can you can teach them how to map, network and to identify who they might not be speaking to. And, you know, there are several things that could be incorporated to the way AI is used in the newsroom, so they can incorporate us as a tool that exists and really could help you in your career. I would just say that, yeah, let's it would be helpful to address the whole content thing. Pardon for repeating, the same concept, but a it's a concern for me. Like, I think that the first thing we think about this, is, is that. And, last but not least, I think that, when you are in, in journalism school, you start, having these pretty and orgasmic conversations on what a new technology such as I could do for us as journalists. And it might do wonders, but I feel that we usually forget the perspective of like, it's not only about like what it does for a tiny subset of society is like it doesn't have social value if it doesn't do good, good things for all our society. So let's just take that into account and let us keep that in mind. In order to not get to, you know, to to do in love with I think that could be dangerous. It's just responsible use.

Josephine Lukito [01:14:53] And that comes with using it, right?

Sebastián Auyanet Torres [01:14:54] Yeah, exactly.

Nicolás Guzman [01:14:56] Nico. Yeah, I agree with what has been said. I mean, from an optimistic point of view, I agree, like encourage them to use them and to explore limitations and all the aspect that comes along with the with these technologies, but also, in this and on the side of it with the values perspective. And also you can get stick with the old school values of the journalism. And if they follow them, I'm sure they will be able to to use and explore the new tools in a responsible way.

Josephine Lukito [01:15:31] And on that wonderful note, let's thank our excellent panelists. Here you go, Sebastián, Andrea, Sil. Thank you so much. And thank you all for attending ISOJ.