

2017 SPECIAL REPORT

The 10th DIS took place from 20 - 21 March 2017 in Berlin.

This report, compiled by Ashley Norris and Sadie Hale, highlights seven of several key issues discussed in Berlin.



“Eight years ago, we had absolutely no idea where we were going or how to get there. Now, we have a very good sense of where we’re going and how we’re going to get there.” (John Wilpers)



John Wilpers, Senior Director, Innovation Media Consulting, USA

John Wilpers, Senior Director, Innovation Media Consulting, USA and author of FIPP and IMC’s annual [Innovation in Media World Report](#) started the 2017 [Digital Innovators’ Summit \(DIS\)](#) in buoyant mood, citing many examples of how legacy publishing companies had transformed themselves and were now confidently looking forward.

Wilpers’ assertion that media companies had begun to feel more bullish about their prospects was reinforced time and again at DIS from the speakers in the largest hall through to informal discussions over coffee. The optimism was also reflected in the way that a trio of key themes emerged at [DIS 2017](#).

Firstly, that in spite of the pace of change publishers and media companies were at last working out strategies to keep up digital evolution. Many presenters spoke of cultural change at the top of their businesses which have enabled them to be more flexible and respond more quickly to market innovation.

A second theme, and another reason for optimism, was the continuing development of new monetisation options. Wilpers argued → *“We’re all facing an inevitable transition - and many people have already made it - from advertising-based support to reader revenue. I think convincing your readers you are producing content of great value that they can’t get anywhere else, and should pay for, is the ultimate solution.”*

The rise of fake news and the growing realisation, reflected in an increase in subscriptions and memberships among newspapers, that quality content needs to be supported has opened up new monetisation prospects for media companies. In fact in his presentation Wilpers referred to as many as fourteen different monetisation options for publishers.

Lastly the summit reflected a feeling that some control was starting to ebb away from the big social and web brands back to the publishers. Issues with measurement, monetisation and controlling fake content have taken their toll on the web platforms. In fact not long after the conference several major media brands felt confident enough to pull out of Facebook’s Instant Article programme - a move that would have seemed counter-intuitive a year ago.

The main summit took place on March 20 - 21st and included a number of ancillary networking events in addition to the main conference. We trust [DIS 2017](#) once again excited and energised the some 600 people who attended, leaving them ready to face a year that will present many challenges and opportunities, armed with the intelligence they need to make the big calls that will help shape the future of their business.

This report, compiled by Ashley Norris highlights seven of several of the key discussions in Berlin.

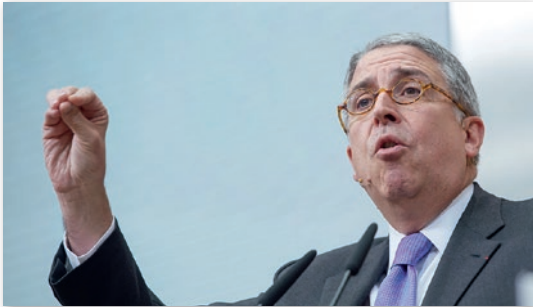
See [videos](#) of all DIS 2017 speaker sessions [here](#)



DIS 2018 (19 - 20 March, Berlin) launch offer:
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1. Strategy and culture – changes in the last 12 months

Time and time again at DIS presenters spoke candidly about the speed of change and how it has impacted on their business. The key advice to the gathered delegates was to be prepared for it, and this entails creating a company culture that is flexible and ready to adapt.



Arnaud de Puyfontaine, CEO, Vivendi, France

The way that digital change has revolutionised several industries was the focus of the keynote speech given by **Arnaud de Puyfontaine, CEO of entertainment giant Vivendi**, who also has been at the helm of several publishing companies. → *“No matter whether you are in magazines, books, movies or video one thing is the same - content is king,”* he stated. *“In every part of our business our content and services have been optimised to serve an audience that gravitates to a pick and mix model.”*

Speaking of the entertainment business de Puyfontaine said → *“many in the entertainment industry still pined for previous methods of content distribution. There was sense of grief - shared pain for the old, predictable analogue way of distributing content. It has been a painful experience. However shared pain has been replaced by shared opportunity.”*

De Puyfontaine finished by concluding that media was on a similar journey to the music industry and that the opportunities were now at last starting to emerge.

How companies adapt was perhaps best illustrated by the presentation from **Frank Dopheide, Managing Director, Handelsblatt Group**. The

exec from Germany’s leading financial newspaper admitted, → *“Innovation was a weak point. In the last 70 years the only major innovation was that we added colour.”*

Dopheide then outlined how there had been a significant cultural change in the company as they sought to keep up to speed with digital developments in publishing as well as broaden their audience. → *“We have lots of 44 years old males who have made lots of money, but not necessarily readers from other groups or demographics. So how do we attract people and bring them to the brand? Our only strategy until recently was to offer money, or a power tool.”*

Dopheide then explained how a cultural shift had enabled the company to discover more about their audience and communicate with them in new ways. The demand of younger audiences who want their content on new platforms and delivered in new ways was also an ongoing theme.

City Magazine’s Publisher Ilkka Lavas began his talk by saying that companies need to → *“fail fast: you need to know within six months if something will work or not”.*

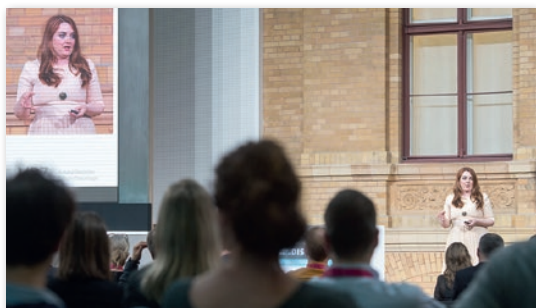


Ilkka Lavas, Serial Entrepreneur and Publisher, City Magazine, Improve Media, TableOnline, EatAndTheCity, Finland

Lavas bought the 30-year-old legendary City Magazine Finland when it was close to bankruptcy. He has since turned it around by focusing exclusively on digital content and it is now worth over EUR 100 million. He stressed the importance of a culture of constant evolution to keep ahead of rival publishers.

He recommends media companies challenge their existing business models, try out new ideas, have an external focus, and learn quickly from mistakes. “Urbanisation, digitalisation, VR and AR all represent threats and opportunities for us,” Ilkka said. “I advise people to test ideas early: don’t wait for perfection. When you send your child to school, you don’t expect them to be whole before they go. They go to school to learn and develop - it’s the same with new ideas.”

It was a view echoed by **Samantha Barry, Executive Producer for Social and Emerging Media at CNN Worldwide** who said → *“I’m surprised how often people are afraid to try new technologies. You have to be very willing to embrace new technologies.”*



Samantha Barry, Executive Producer for Social and Emerging Media, CNN Worldwide, USA

The depth and intensity of change was also discussed by **John Wilpers, Senior Director, Innovation Media Consulting, USA** in his address.

→ *“The speed and depth and breadth of all of the changes in our industry continues to crescendo with no sign of letting up,” Wilpers said. “As a result, only the media companies willing to radically and thoroughly reimagine their entire organisation, from org charts and job descriptions to work flows, training, publishing schedules, equipment, data use, working spaces, etc. will survive and thrive in the dramatically different media world.”*

Another speaker who tackled core issues around strategy was **Jeremy Gilbert, Director of Strategic Initiatives, Washington Post**. Since its acquisition by Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos in 2013 the company has become a leader in media innovation continually delivering new insights, platforms and initiatives.

Gilbert said that much of this was driven by the shift of the audience from desktop to mobile. He acknowledged → *“the audience is different now. It is much younger, coming via smartphones. 80-20 mobile to desktop.”* Yet he also added *“the switch has not led to decrease in engagement.”*



Jeremy Gilbert, Director of Strategic Initiatives, Washington Post, USA

He stressed the importance of the flexibility of the newspaper and the way it adapts quickly to change being key, but he also admitted that 2016 had been a good year for The Post for another reason too. → *“At the heart of it all is storytelling. And there’s no story more important than the 2016 [US presidential] election.”*

Looking to the future Gilbert finished by saying “we are also thinking deeply about audio, the Amazon Echo and podcasts. The opportunity to go from being a text based media company to one that releases its own audio is very important to us.”

Jamshid Alamuti, former MD at the Berlin School for Creative Leadership focused his presentation on creativity. He said → *“it has been a long held belief that creativity is something you are born with. But when it comes to creativity in business, this is a skillset.”*

He added → *“Creativity is striving for simplicity. We forget that simplicity has value,”* and exhorted companies to *“create an environment where your staff can feel at home. Then not only your people will want to work there, but your consumers want to be part of it, too.”*

Another key topic was how should publishers strategically use data. Several speakers made the point that any journalist now needs to be able to analyse a set of figures and come up with a story.

In his presentation **Ole Petter Pedersen, News Editor at Kommunal Rapport** said → “*there is little space in the newsroom for those who can’t handle huge pieces of information and provide the reader or user with context and clarity. It’s unlikely I’d hire anyone who doesn’t have some kind of data skills.*”

Ultimately, though data may be important but it doesn’t completely replace the intuitive feel media professionals have for their product and their audience. Or as Jay Lauf, President & Publisher, Quartz and SVP, Atlantic Media, USA put it “at Quartz we make big decisions with our gut and little decisions with data.”

2. Video - Ongoing growth, innovation and monetisation

For many media companies creating and monetising video content is a priority. A host of presenters at DIS 2017 spoke about their video strategy, with several themes constantly recurring. Firstly that creating video strategies is a complex process. Which platforms should companies use? How do they measure the effectiveness of video in the absence of any universally agreed metrics? Which is the best way to ensure high levels of distribution for video content?

Yet the main topic that came up time and time again was monetisation. Up until recently brands had largely been focusing on pre-roll advertising as their main source of video-related income. As several presenters at DIS 2017 argued relying on pre-rolls was not a great strategy and one that was not always popular with their audience.



Moritz Gimbel, VP Product, NBC News Digital, USA

There are in fact many technical issues with pre-rolls one of which was highlighted by **Moritz Gimbel, VP Product, NBC News Digital**, who explained that → “*the introduction of third party ads meant that it could be as long as 13 second before a video started.*” He deemed this unacceptable and said that with NBC all videos started instantaneously.

One of the sessions that that generated the highest levels of audience engagement was delivered by **Josh Rucci, GM and Global Head, Media Distribution, Bloomberg LP** who took a detailed look at his company’s distribution and syndication platform.

Rucci said that distribution was a main revenue line. Content licensing, including images, text, photo, video and data, are distributed via the linear TV business. Bloomberg also has many branded partnerships - localised versions of Bloomberg in specific countries.



Soumya Sriraman, President, BritBox; ex-EVP of Franchise and Digital Enterprises, BBC Worldwide North America, USA

Another speaker who focused about the importance of syndication and distribution was **Soumya Sriraman, President, BritBox**. BritBox is a new SVOD channel which debuted in North America in March 2017. It is a collaboration between the BBC and ITV and aims to serve the best of British TV content. It is a subscription-based service.

She suggested that there may be revenue potential for video creators in syndication as social media has enabled like minded people to come together. → “*Audiences are defining themselves, forming online tribes and seeking services dedicated to their favourite content.*”

How to present that video content is an issue that several presenters spoke candidly about. Several implied that the numbers game of chasing views

was now history and that the key for media companies and brands was quality of the audience and the level of engagement. Gimbel admitted that → *“the hardest thing NBC has done in the last 12 months is to switch off autoplay on video - a tactic that is a staple in the US. Inevitably the number of streams dropped, but is now showing signs of climbing back due to the quality of the video content, the headlines and tagging. NBC is now doing 100 million streams per month.”*

It was a view echoed by **Athan Stephanopoulos, President at NowThis**, a company which creates content and distributes it on a wide number of platforms. He argued, → *“Virality isn’t a strategy. Chasing viral hits is a race to the bottom. Virality is outcome of good strategy and content. We try to understand why content performs well or not.”*

Companies also need to optimise the content they create to suit the platform that they are working with. → *“How you produce content is fundamentally different on Facebook compared to Snapchat.”* It is a view that also chimed with **Kelly Day, Chief Digital Officer, AwesomenessTV**. → *“AwesomenessTV is focused every day on engaging with new platforms and a commitment to innovation. This, we believe, will drive long-term value.”*



Kelly Day, Chief Digital Officer, AwesomenessTV, USA

Finally **Alan Saura, Audience Development Strategist, AJ+**, shared some thoughts for would be video content creators. → *“I advise video producers to come up with a description and headline before they begin making the video, so they know exactly where they’re going”*

3. Social platforms and mobile – the ongoing impact of Facebook, Google and others and how publishers view and are working with them

The rise of mobile platforms and the response to them from publishers has been an ongoing theme at recent DIS conferences. The jury still appears to be out with some brands acknowledging that the reach that the likes of Facebook and Google can give their content is crucial to their strategy. Others have taken an alternative approach and are worried that they are giving away too much to the tech companies in terms of audience data.

At DIS 2017 many publishers outlined plans for integrated approaches that stretch across both their owned platforms as well as those provided by social networks.

One of the biggest advocates of working with social networks is the NowThis. As **Athan Stephanopoulos, President at NowThis**, explained, NowThis sits at the intersection of social media, mobile and video. It is the largest news organisation on the social web, Stephanopoulos said. It has 2.6 billion video views a month and an audience of 20 million on social media. Seventy-five per cent of their audience is under 35.

For NowThis, the bottom line is about platform-appropriate content. → *“One format doesn’t fit across the board”* for different platforms like e.g. Facebook or Snapchat.



Athan Stephanopoulos, President, NowThis, USA

It is by adhering to best practices by platform that NowThis is successful with its content believes Stephanopoulos. → „Platforms own the distribution, they are the pipes, but brands own hearts and minds. It's about using insights from the platforms you're on, and investing in other technologies you're using.“

Another company with a strong outreach to Millennials that is also very enthusiastic about social platforms is AJ+. As **Alan Saura, Audience Development Strategist, AJ+**, explained in his presentation AJ+ is Al Jazeera's digital-only offshoot, launched in September 2014 to build a new kind of media outlet for people who don't watch traditional news networks on TV.



Alan Saura, Audience Development Strategist, AJ+, USA

In a big bet on distributed content, AJ+ traded a website for an editorial strategy centred on building audiences directly on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Medium, and other social platforms by creating custom content for each social network. AJ+ became one of the biggest video publishers on Facebook by creating custom videos optimized for the emerging video platform.

Saura acknowledges that the speed of innovation and change in social platforms can be a constant headache for publishers, but says they must always look for the positives. → „A lot of publishers complain about new features - for example, Facebook Live - but we see it as an opportunity,“ he told the summit.

Samantha Barry Executive Producer for Social and Emerging Media, CNN Worldwide, was another speaker who championed reach from social channels. → „During the recent US presidential election, CNN engaged with 100 million people on Facebook“, Barry said. „We also experimented

with VR and 360 video. We streamed these events on VR for people in countries around the world.“

In the run up to the election, CNN played a lot on messaging apps, for example launching Kik for the conventions in the US, targeting a younger Millennial audience with a different type of storytelling altogether: → „We did it with stickers and emojis,“ she said.



Samantha Barry, Executive Producer for Social and Emerging Media, CNN Worldwide, USA

For every presenter enthusing about the potential of social platforms there was however one with arguing about how they could damage the industry in the long run.

Daniel Butler, CEO and co-founder, Socius warned → „Facebook seems to be unbeatable and it's growing at a breakneck speed. It's a paradise for advertisers, they can target consumers with laser precision. The result is that publishers look obsolete.“

Agustino Fontevecchia, Digital Director at Editorial Perfil from Argentina was one of those who suggested that publishers need to fight back: → „We live in a world where Google and Facebook dominate; we understand that we have to live in their world, but we're not going to let them twist our arm. There's a fight in Europe over this as well, so we want to join that fight.“

Andrew Losowsky of The Coral Project, which is an open-source collaboration between Mozilla, The New York Times and The Washington Post, spoke of issues around trust and engagement on social platforms.

Losowsky began by stating 'there's no problem with Facebook per se. However, some of the biggest problems faced by the media do relate to Facebook. Change needs to come in the form

of increasing trust, more diverse voices, new revenue opportunities, productive dialogue, and meaningful relationships with readers. Right now, Facebook owns and controls these relationships.”

He finished his presentation by stressing that issues for publishers around social platforms aren't all about monetisation and data sharing; they are about engagement too. → *“The problem is, Facebook’s goals are not your goals. Its goal is to keep people on Facebook - yours is to keep people engaged in your journalism. We need to think about how we engage super fans. Serial commenters, loyal subscribers, people who write letters to the editor: they want to be recognised and valued beyond just the data and cookies they provide.”*

Grzegorz (Greg) Piechota, research associate at Harvard Business School and 2016 Nieman Fellow used his presentation to tackle the issue of advertising. He began by quoting what some would see as scary figures; that ‘the combined share of Google and Facebook in the US digital ad market is 70 per cent, and publishers fight for three per cent of the remaining ad share’.



Greg Piechota, Research Associate, Harvard Business School and 2016 Nieman Fellow, USA

He continued, → *“even if we imagine the platforms give us better deals, there are 50 million publishers on Facebook, and split between us, we would only get \$500 a year to pay for our content.”* It is unrealistic to expect that amount to pay for quality content.

Yet Piechota struck a note of optimism about the future by stressing that in many ways publishers have lots of cards they can play.

→ *“Maybe we should forget about chasing each platform and focus on the audience, and think about how we can make revenue from them. People trust our brands more than they trust*

social media. We have advertisers who are withdrawing their campaigns from Google, because Google won't guarantee they'll run them in the right context. Trust is important.”

Interestingly, only a few weeks after DIS 2017 a glut of publishers including The Guardian withdrew their content from Facebook's Instant Articles scheme, which is designed to optimise content for Facebook users, but keeps users inside Facebook rather than have them engage on publisher sites.

4. Journalism and newsroom innovation - techniques of harvesting and presenting news

An intriguing presentation came from **Gerrit Klein, CEO, Ebner Media**. He spoke about how his company had learned key lessons about making the most of the content they create.

→ *“Media operated under a ‘publish and forget’ paradigm,”* he said. *“Content was created, distributed and forgotten. This is not the best way to deal with a single content asset, for example an article - many weeks could have been invested in producing the asset which is then wasted with one shot.”*



Gerrit Klein, CEO, Ebner Publishing Group, Germany

Klein went on to explain how content had become atomised and that one story could yield numerous elements of content, which were published on many different platforms, in numerous different ways.

The way that subscription and membership schemes can be used to bring readers and content creators closer together was explored at DIS 2017 including the presentation given by **Francesca Donner, Director of Times Insider at The New York Times**. Among the many things discussed in her speech was podcasting, which she describes as being → *“more intimate than seeing something on screen. You also have this wonderful conversation. Listeners can feel like they’re sitting in on dinner party conversation.”*

Most of all though Donner exhorted publishers to constantly redefine their relationship with their readers. → *“We do a lot with soliciting readers in advance, building in quizzes and challenges,” she explained. “We feature and answer reader questions, post comments. If a journalist responds to them, it’s incredibly fulfilling.”*



Francesca Donner, Director, Times Insider, The New York Times, USA

Donner also discussed about how membership schemes can help take readers behind the scenes of a story. → *“Readers need real communication right now,” Donner explained. “We need to remind people these are real stories, and that our reporters are real people and often funny. The idea is to go to tell you the story behind the story, we want to show you where reporters have gone, or what it’s taken to land a scoop. That can sharpen the story as a whole, and we wanted to put a face on it.”*

One criticism of contemporary media companies is that they don’t often engage properly with the readers. An award-winning startup attempting to address this issue is Hearken, which is a platform that partners with audiences to take storytelling to a new level.

According to **Jennifer Brandel, CEO and Co-founder of Hearken**, → *“there is a way to*

know before you report stories, whether your stories are going to be valuable to your audiences,” she said. “You don’t have to guess.”



Jennifer Brandel, CEO and Co-Founder, Hearken, USA

It requires putting the public first instead of last, a concept Brandel called a public-powdered story cycle. → *“Start with your audience questions. What are they looking for, how you can answer for them?” she asked.*

Creating the right content and the right time was an issue that featured prominently in the presentation from **John Wilpers, Senior Director, Innovation Media Consulting**. In particular he spoke of precision content, which he describes as → *“content that is appropriate for and relevant to the consumer’s needs at the moment in the format and on the platform of the moment. Precision content speaks to a fundamental shift in how consumers engage with and consume content, meeting the unique needs of consumers and the characteristics of mobile.”*

Mobile “precision content” must be done right. Stories we tell as publishers must combine both the gut instinct of editors, and also use data to make these editorial decisions. Readers want certain types of content throughout the day. Content must be planned around these ‘use cases.’ → *“Readers’ content needs are diverse, they change throughout the day, they are situation-specific, and they are both restricted and enhanced by the platform the reader is using at the moment,”* according to Wilpers.

→ *“Mobile is much more intimate,” explained **Jay Lauf, President & Publisher, Quartz and SVP, Atlantic Media**, “people aren’t multi-tasking, they are focusing on the content.”*

The use of mobile notifications or alerts to drive readers to content can be a contentious area.

Rasmus Nielsen, Director of Research at the Reuters Institute of Journalism sounded a note of optimism by suggesting that → *“our research suggests that legacy media companies are still doing best when it comes to alerts. Most people we surveyed accept that alerts are useful, but 23% of them have uninstalled an app that has bugged them in the past year because of the notifications that come with it. Control and personalisation is a key issue for potential alert-users.”*



Rasmus Nielsen, Director of Research, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, Oxford University, UK

Nielsen stressed that there is → *“an unmet need for more relevant articles on issues of personal interest. Publishers need to use alerts to build loyalty and revenue - but remember to serve the audience well and not annoy them.”*

5. New technologies/platforms – AI, everything from chatbots to voice and VR/AR

There was great deal of talk about new technology and how it was shaping the media. Many of the presenters spoke of innovations and platforms that at the very least should be on the radar of industry leaders.

However some presenters struck a note of caution when it comes to foisting innovation on to readers.



Paul Berney, Co-Founder and Managing Partner, mCordis and The Connected Marketer Institute, UK and USA

Paul Berney, Co-Founder and Managing Partner, mCordis and The Connected Marketer Institute said, → *“many of us struggle with future shock - too much change in too short a time. The more connected devices you have, the more you live in state of connectedness. The more you live in that state the more it impacts on your behaviour”* and publishers need to be aware of this.

The integration of artificial intelligence into the newsroom was one very hot topic at DIS 2017 with a number for presenters discussing how robots creating content could impact the production, distribution and consumption of content.

Wolfgang Zehrt, independent entrepreneur in the digital media industry and international consultant for automated content projects, stressed that while most of the industry have been talking about AI, some media companies have already got on with it and started automating content. He explained that → *“The Financial Times in London, for example, saves up to 80 hours per month on data analysis thanks to automation software.”*



Wolfgang Zehrt, Independent Consultant for Automated Journalism, Germany

However Zehrt added that automated content creation was not necessarily going to replace journalists and shouldn't be seen as threat to writers.

Rather it should help them to create better quality content with greater depth of research. → “Don’t take time away from (human) editors – automated content should help, not disturb,” he explained.

Laurie Benson, CEO of Upnexxt focused on another recent innovation in the media - the use of bots. → “As things evolve, bots are now doing everything, from distributing media to delivering services. This will transform how business and consumers will interact. You no longer have to search, you just ask,” she explained. “When AI lives up to its promise, we are going to have super bots. They’re going to learn and improve, and become more in tune with our needs and behaviours.”



Laurie Benson, CEO, Upnexxt, UK

She finished her presentation by predicting that → “the website won’t die, but we will see the continued erosion of the homepage and the search bar. We have some big names and a lot of investment. If you follow the money, you’re going to follow AI and bots.”

The ongoing rise of Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality was the theme of a fascinating presentation by **Jamie Pallot, co-founder of Emblematic Group**.

A pioneer in the field, Pallot is a co-founder, with Nonny de la Peña, of one of the world’s leading producers of immersive virtual reality content.

He explained that he felt that Virtual Reality was a technology whose time had arrived as → “we’re beginning to see VR everywhere. Through outlets with already-vast audiences such as PlayStation, Facebook, and Steam, VR will be able to reach enormous amounts of people.”

He outlined several other innovations that media company execs need to keep tabs on namely, he added. → “A second development is video-grammetry. This consists of holograms of human beings, for example, with real depth and substance; one example is of a prison cell where you sit with an inmate who tells you what it’s like to spend time in prison.”



Jamie Pallot, Executive Director and Co-Founder, Emblematic Group, USA

He ended his presentation by arguing that publishers need take VR seriously. → “It can seem a little sci-fi, I know,” said Pallot. “But the emotional impact of VR is huge and powerful: it has been well-documented, and could even be a little dangerous, because it extracts such powerful empathy from users. But 3D depth perception has the potential to help make us more intuitive and more informed – which is why I think we do it.”

Several presenters also spoke of the potential of voice at DIS 2017 and the impact that potentially disruptive devices like Amazon Echo and Google Home could have on the media, especially the search industry and the use of apps.

Carmel Ventures’ Venture Partner, Zvika Orron said → “people are not interested in loading an app. I can now speak to my Amazon Echo and ask it to get me an Uber. Time is of the essence, and services that come to your home are getting more popular”

Max Amordeluso, EU Head of Alexa Skills Kit (ASK), Amazon, also spoke at DIS 2017 and started his presentation by explaining that → “voice is everywhere. It can give you an immediacy that your hand does not provide.”

He then ran through a history of the way we interact with computers and devices saying we are now at the point where the dominant method

will be voice user interface - leveraging voice for interactions between people and machines.

This has come about as in the last few years that has been a dramatic improvement in speech science and understanding of voice. He said this, coupled with the importance of AI that makes the system smarter and the way that cloud storage gives voice controlled devices flexibility has been transformative.



Max Amordeluso, EU Head of Alexa Skills Kit (ASK), Amazon, Luxembourg

Ultimately Max said that Amazon believes that voice is the next major disruption in computing. Max also said that Amazon was working on innovations such as ESP, which enables users to walk around the house and give the same instruction to multiple devices as they move through the house. There is also Alexa Voice Service which enables companies to place Alexa into a real or virtual mobile apps.

6. Revenue streams and monetisation - ways of making money

One of the overriding themes of DIS 2017 was the tension between publishers aiming for scale and those focusing on niches. Time and time again throughout the conference different publishers spoke of how they had energised their business in some way by focusing on reach. Others said that they only began to properly optimise their digital strategy when they left scale behind and concentrated on specific niches.

Josh Rucci GM and Global Head, Media Distribution, Bloomberg LP stated his company's case by arguing: → *"it easy to publish content that has reach, but often that type of content is not in keeping with Bloomberg's brand values or relevant to its core audience."*

In his speech **Ole Petter Pedersen, News Editor at Kommunal Rapport**, pointed out the advantage of having a niche: → *"It's much better for us to have as close to 100% readership as possible, than reaching as wide an audience as possible,"* he said.



Ole Petter Pedersen, News Editor, Kommunal Rapport, Norway

The centrality of preserving notions of brand and not just chasing traffic for traffic's sake was echoed by other speakers. Several felt that low quality traffic potentially tarnished their brand and made it trickier for them to monetise content.

As several speakers testified, high quality content can help build existing or open new monetisation streams.

One company that has focused on appealing to a high-end audience and not compromised on the quality of advertising is Quartz. As **Jay Lauf, President & Publisher, Quartz and SVP, Atlantic Media**, explained in his speech that strategy is reaping significant rewards for the company and that year on year they have doubled revenue and this was for a number of reasons.

Lauf spoke about the centrality of trust saying that there are two ways of building it. Firstly by providing high quality content, and secondly by relentlessly focusing on the user experience.

→ *"Stay out of the user's way - ensure that everything renders well on mobile first,"* exhorted Lauf.

To underline his point Lauf listed a series of things that you won't find on Quartz products from video pre-rolls to content recommendation ads. He also said that industry had to look again at banner ads - saying that you are more likely to be struck by lightning than intentionally click on a banner ad.



Jay Lauf, Publisher, Quartz and SVP, Atlantic Media, USA

As Lauf explained Quartz takes a different approach. → *“We had a blank canvas from day one, and tried to create own ad scarcity and therefore deliver better, more relevant advertising that adds to the experience.”*

Lauf also referenced the Quartz app and its Daily Briefing email newsletter, both of which are now providing significant revenue opportunities.

Summing up his view on monetisation included in the [Innovation in Media World Report](#) **John Wilpers, Senior Director, Innovation Media Consulting** argued → *“we're all facing an inevitable transition - and many people have already made it - from advertising-based support to reader revenue. I think convincing your readers you are producing content of great value that they can't get anywhere else, and should pay for, is the ultimate solution.”* In the Innovation Report, he listed as many as 14 ways for publishers to make money.

Ian James, General Manager at Verve, said that publishers were in a strong position to make money from reader purchases because of their reputations. He said → *“95% will make in store purchases based on ads they have seen on their device. This is the good news for those of us in this industry - it's an astonishingly high percentage. The message here is, 'I'm up for it if you get it right'. 42% of mobile users will click on an ad for more information - if the ad is tailored to their current location, context and time of day, and if it's creative.”*

Working creatively with brands to monetise content creators was the core theme of the presentation by **Mark Stephens, Head of Content Marketing at The Foundry in the UK.**

As a branded content studio, The Foundry relies on the resources available at TimeInc., including 500 journalists who are passionate about storytelling. The studio is a different way TimeInc., approaches monetisation, and how it connects with audiences, Stephens said. It also gives advertisers the ability to engage with audiences in social communities and audiences the ability to have interesting conversations.



Mark Stephens, Head of Content Marketing, The Foundry, Time Inc. UK

→ *“Reinvention is in our DNA,”* he said. *“We are balancing between familiarity and the new.”*

Print is still important, as it accounts for 50 per cent of revenue, according to Stephens. But, The Foundry helps the company plant itself in the digital space. → *“Our model has evolved,”* Stephens said. *“We work in passion verticals and in passion expertise.”*

By offering content in partnership with advertisers, as well as expertise in niches people are passionate about; the combination has allowed The Foundry to own the vertical. For example, in the cycling scene in the UK (which is worth about one billion pounds), TimeInc., has several print titles, but The Foundry has also have delved into the cycling space. The Foundry, with their partners, have put on about 40 different events across the UK and Europe.

→ *“This, again, allows us to own the vertical,”* Stephens said. *“We have print brands that allow us to share stories, but now we give them the opportunity to take part and participate in the events.”*

7. Fake news – and combatting it

One year ago very few delegates would have highlighted fake news as a key issue for the media. However the manipulation in political debate and election campaigns since then has made it a hot topic. Inevitably it was a subject several presenters spent time discussing.

What once was thought to be the harmless preserve of few misguided mischief-makers has now become a massive issue for mainstream media. Especially given the evidence of organised cabals creating disinformation to achieve political ends.

First Draft is an organisation was set up in 2015 to provide guidance and training for journalists in social newsgathering and verification. More recently it launched the First Draft Partner Network, the first initiative of its kind to bring together global newsrooms and social media companies to collaborate on tackling common issues relating to sourcing, reporting and consuming information that emerges online.

Jenni Sargent, MD of First Draft News explained that fake news falls into a number of categories. For example some fake news might just be legitimate news which is wrong because of the fault of lazy journalism.

→ *“Typically though it falls into two categories - misinformation or disinformation. Misinformation is invariably when a person shares a story that they believe to be true - they are not seeking to misguide other people. Disinformation is when someone deliberately creates a fake news story to achieve an end, which is often political.”*



Jenni Sargent, Managing Director, First Draft News, UK

Sargent suggested that there are also grey areas such as satire and parody sites.

Tackling fake news is an issue that the whole industry needs to consider in 2017 and not allow it to disappear from the radar as general interest wanes. Sargent concluded that → *“trust in media is a major issue”* and exhorted media companies to do all they can to check news stories and work with her organisations on its projects.

A further example of how publishers are tackling the fake news issue came from **Rachael Kennedy, Senior News Journalist, Storyful**. As Kennedy explained her company monitors social platforms to find news for its clients. Crucially it verifies the content and clears it for publishers to use. Kennedy ran through a series of examples of how Storyful works to ensure the images and videos it distributes are legitimate.



Rachael Kennedy, Senior News Journalist, Storyful, UK

She started by describing an image from the Brussels bombing in 2016. A journalist who was near the incident shot and uploaded photos and Storyful reached out to her and made the images available for use by news companies by verifying them. They were then posted on the front pages of much of the world’s media.

Both Kennedy and Sargent stressed that fake news could be countered, but only if the whole media, from social platforms through to broadcasters and newspapers worked closely together to fight it.

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