



When Numbers Define the Story – A qualitative study of Danish journalists practice in working with data-driven journalism.

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Data-driven journalism has since the turn of the millennium emerged as a “new” field of journalism, which (with an emphasis on data) utilises a broad array of technological aids in the production and distribution of digital journalism. As this new form of journalism partly necessitates new skills and resources this raises a number of issues such as economy, availability of suitable staff, issues of time consumption among many others that affect the way journalists and news media produce this genre of journalism, and research has shown there are differences in the way various news media outlets handle these issues. This paper, and the prior examination of the field, points to several issues, influencing the way Danish journalists work to produce data journalism and what obstacles they face.

The study is based on qualitative interviews with six journalists working at various Danish news media outlets who all produce data-driven journalism as part of their work. Based on these the main issues concerning the Danish journalists were identified and compared to the literature of the field. This partly included comparing the Danish practice of data-driven journalism to the three dominating branches of the genre exemplified by the methods — derived from the typology by Coddington (2014) — of CAR, data journalism and computational journalism.

The study brings to light new knowledge about the way Danish journalists conduct data journalism and what influences their work as well as what they see as “correct” data journalism and it gives detailed insight into some of the issues concerning the genre.

The identified issues range from concerns about resources such as time, journalists’ abilities concerning data processing being allocated to other projects and the availability of proper tools and/assistance in the form of programmers. In addition, factors such as the editors’ understanding of the data journalistic process, lack of feedback on concrete products, extra tasks such as producing additional data elements for other journalists or producing non-data journalism heavily influenced the work day of the interviewees.

The study also offers insight into the issue of data visualization which serves as a means of analysing data as well as presenting it to the user. Furthermore, the aspect of user interaction and the relationship with the user in terms of co-creation and pandering to the users apparent need to identify with the product is discussed.

The presentation focuses primarily on, but is not limited to, the issues of:

- The importance of editors/managements understanding of the genre and limitations of both genre and journalists.
- The allocation of resources.
- Delivering data journalism to the users – and implications in the process.



- The importance of visualization in data-driven journalism.

Academic studies of the field in a Danish context has so far mainly been concerned with defining data journalism as a genre or analysing the use of single typologies such as CAR. This study offers an unprecedented wider look at the field and the journalists working in it.
