



Mapping the future: news, data and automation in the Nordic region

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Automation has been present in newsrooms for decades, especially in television news production where advanced software is used for many purposes, such as newsroom management, video editing and robot cameras in studios. Recently, computers that “write” news, popularly albeit erroneously labelled “robot journalism”, has been prominent in texts that deal with technology and the future of journalism.

Automated text generation is an emerging field of journalism in the intersection between journalism, statistics and computer science. However, current practices are rudimentary and dependent on templates manually produced by journalists. In the next phase deep machine learning with text mining and natural language generation will be used to automatically produce texts. Learning algorithms are fed with massive amounts of journalistic articles to find out topic selection, story structures, news angles and presentation style.

This paper is based on six case studies of news automation in Sweden, Norway and Denmark. The aim of the research is to map current and future practices of news automation as part of business models for new forms of data journalism in the Nordic region. The six cases are Mittmedia, Nyhetsbyrån Sirén, Svenska Dagbladet and Journalism ++ Stockholm in Sweden, Orbit and NTB in Norway as well as Ritzau Finans in Denmark.

Two research questions are asked. RQ1: How have current practices been developed?, and; RQ2: Where is development in the field heading and how far has Nordic companies come compared with state of the art? The study is focused on the business models for news automation and the role of data journalists. The data will be collected through interviews, algorithm design, internal documents and publicly available material from web sites and the industry press. The study is an extension of previous research performed in the United States and Europe.
