

Investigative journalism is evolving as newsrooms continue to shrink

Investigative journalism is under threat as newsrooms continue to shrink, with technology disrupting media and collapsing its funding model...



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“This has impacted investigative journalism in its traditional form. However, technology is also a fantastic boom for this form of journalism as it provides journalists and newsrooms with new approaches not previously available,” says Anton Harber, Caxton professor of journalism (adjunct), Wits University. Harber was a founder and former editor, *Mail & Guardian* as well as a former editor-in-chief, eNCA.

Data journalism

With this a new form of journalism has come about; data journalism. “This new form of journalism is generating stories from massive digital databases and this requires a wide range of new skills,” he continues.

The new phenomenon of the last few years, the leakage of a large quantity of data such as Paradise and Panama, has only been possible because of technology that is able to deal with massive data dumps. “For example, the Gupta Leaks, which comprised of a couple of hundred thousand emails, required sophisticated database analysis skills to explore them fully.”

The Gupta Leaks is one of the finalists of in the Sikuville Journalism Investigative category this year and is a collaboration between *Daily Maverick/Amabhungane/News24* and their journalists, Branko Brkic, Pauli van Wyk, Lester Freamon, Adriaan Basson, Richard Poplak, Adi Eyal, Micah Reddy, Susan Comrie, Angelique Serrao, Stefaans Brummer, Antoinette Muller, Marianne Thamm, Sam Sole, Tabela Timse, Pieter-Louis Myburgh, Craig McKune, Lionel Faull, Rebecca Davis and Sally Evans.

Find the truth

What is also interesting about these projects, Harber adds, is that they have been done by large collaborative cross-border teams and that they are funded by philanthropic foundations. “These foundations are stepping in to bridge the gap in financing this type of journalism. Non-profit journalism as a public service is increasing.”

Regardless of how investigative journalism has changed, its essence remains to find the truth, to expose something someone is hiding. “Two other things highlighted by these projects is, on one hand, the growing pressure on investigative journalism all over the globe, from threats to their lives to harassment while trying to do their work.”

Last year’s Investigative category winner, Suzanne Venter’s articles about the decision by the Gauteng Health Department to remove the mentally ill, that brought to light the Life Esidimeni Scandal is an example of in-depth journalism resulting in scoops, arising from research, perseverance, courage, determination.

The winners will be announced at the prize-giving function on 13 September 2018 at the Johannesburg World Trade Centre (known as The Venue Greenpark).

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