

Editorial

The long and short of it

How long should an editorial be? What amount of text is reasonable? At what point do you, dear reader, get engaged, and when do you stop reading?

It may seem that News Feeds, »bite-sized« journalism, and the economy of attention have won. But there is no trend without a counter-trend: extensive articles are also finding their audiences. In the US, the *New York Times* is considered a pioneer of longform journalism, i.e. narrative pieces whose multimodal online versions are enriched with images and sound, videos, and podcasts. In Germany, for example, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* with its »Langstrecke« format and *Zeit Online* feature longer pieces. In her very worthwhile [blog](#), journalist and blogger Sonja Kaute provides an overview of numerous national and international examples of longform journalism.

Science also provides new insights into storytelling and scrollytelling. Marco Braghieri, Tobias Blanke and Jonathan Gray examined [longform.org](#), a US website that collects and curates journalistic longform articles. Their study not only sheds light on the economic and technological background of the digital long-tail model; but also provides information about the diversity of its sources, predominantly newspapers and magazines from whose archives [longform.org](#) gleans its texts, as well as about the topics of such long texts. The fact that a format like [longform.org](#) is viable raises the questions about its users. The readership of such longform articles, their motivation, and their modes of reception remain to be studied.

The same is true for the recipients of *Constructive Journalism*, a topic to which *Journalism Research* has recently been devoting continuous attention ([Meier 2018](#); [Hooffacker 2021](#)). The data is more abundant, however, regarding the »masterminds« at editorial departments and the authors of »solution-oriented« articles. Marc-Christian Ollrog, Megan Neumann, and Amelie Rook followed the implementation of Constructive Reporting at Verlagsgruppe Rhein Main, examining how new work methods affect journalists' notions of their own roles as well as other aspects. Based on the results of their interviews and comparative content analyses, they offer some practical recommendations for action.

Hans Peter Bull is also concerned with journalistic practice, but even more so with truth and veracity in media reporting. He deplores campaign journalism that goes after figures like Christian Wulff and Olaf Scholz, partisanship, and a lack of differentiation. To counter Bull's rather pessimistic outlook and criticism of the »ignorance« of political actors and journalists alike, Oliver Günther and Tanjev Schultz offer a quite constructive set of »10 theses for strong journalism in the digital media world« with the objective of greater journalistic autonomy. The authors of the debate contribution are very clear: »Journalism must not submit to a market and product logic.«

Another threat to independent journalism and freedom of the media is the concentration of political and economic power in the hands of a few. Valérie Robert shows how this trend is at work in France. To her, entrepreneur Vincent Bolloré, who among other things holds a majority stake in the conglomerate Vivendi, is the Rupert Murdoch of France. Like multi-billionaire Bernard Arnault, Bolloré wields political power through media power – which is certain to impact the outcome of the 2022 Presidential elections, in which Marine Le Pen is a confirmed candidate.

However, before the citizens of France head to the polls, Germany will hold its Federal Elections on 26 September 2021. We know that Angela Merkel will no longer be available for Chancellor after 16 years in office. What we don't know is who will end up governing and in which coalition. This issue contains many great tips on good journalistic practices during this hot phase of the election campaign – both for short as well as longer pieces!

Martina Thiele, summer of 2021

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