The Death of Journalism has been Greatly Exaggerated

Saniya Udeshi

Each time a writer shares their ambition to be a journalist, a hushed silence falls on the room. Choruses of the same myopic response begin to echo: "Journalism is a dying art."

People say it in the same tone they use when speaking about their dead pets or rotary telephones: a little pitying, a little nostalgic, and often accompanied by a smile that's meant to be comforting, yet isn't. But, oh, how wrong they are! If journalism is a corpse, it is the most talkative one in history.

Reports of the death of journalism have been drafted, edited, and reissued more times than can be measured. In the 1920s, the cause was hypothesised to be the advent of radio programming; in the 50s, it was proclaimed as television. And now journalism cannot be defined without encompassing both.

Blogs arrived in the early 2000s, swiftly followed by social media, and, eventually, genAI in the 2020s. And, while the dot-com bust, the 2008 recession, and continually squeezed budgets have led to tens of thousands of redundancies over the past 20 years, no matter how often someone pens journalism's obituary, it keeps finding new ways to crack its knuckles and start typing again.

Perhaps more pertinently, the doom and gloom isn't stopping anyone from trying to enter the industry; UCAS figures show a marked increase in applications to media, journalism, and communications courses compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Lillie-Rose Lenga-Kroma is a student journalist who decided to enter the field not because journalism looked safe or shiny, but because she brought something the industry was missing. "I want to have a voice that I can put out to people," she explains. "I want to represent the best parts of society, because all we hear about is the negativity. I want people to pick up my work and think: 'Oh, there's a really cool culture that I'm missing out on.' Hopefully, it can bring us all a little bit closer together, because we need more of that."

James Mole also has little time for journalism's funeral arrangements as a trustee for the Student Publication Association (SPA), a charity that has been supporting student journalists for over a decade."[It's] a quick and easy thing to say journalism is dying, but I think you can just as easily make the case for journalism being in an era where it's going to be more respected than it ever has been.

"The more people turn away from verified sources of information, the less attention span [they] generally have. So, it becomes more important that there are sources which adhere to certain standards, practices, behaviours, and ways of looking at the world, and [journalists] are trying to do something about that to equip people for the future."

The myth of journalism's demise persists for many reasons, including declining print sales, the rise of genAI, and a surge of social media influencers offering an engaging and relatable alternative to 'traditional' journalism. It's the latter that James believes makes "journalism become more important, not less".

Indeed, the Reuters Digital News Report for 2025 reveals that 47 per cent of the public believes online influencers are the biggest source of false or misleading information. While many influencers are well-meaning, many do not have the professional training that equips journalists to interview, investigate, contextualise, verify, analyse, and articulate stories with integrity.

BBC News presenter Maryam Moshiri has similar thoughts: "[The biggest challenges are] the rise of fake news, the impact of social media, and the way in which people consume their news. There is a push now towards people getting their news from social media, younger people especially, and, because of the way social media works, they tend to get their own views served to them. Unbiased, fact-based journalism is more important now than ever."

The consequences of this are not theoretical. In September 2020, more than a million posts circulated on X with inaccurate, unreliable, or misleading information related to the pandemic, while researchers separately found that exposure to such information could increase vaccine hesitancy. In other words, the moment journalism recedes, misinformation fills the vacuum at an alarming speed.

It may be a stretch to say journalism is thriving — it is being forced to evolve, sometimes painfully, in response to fractured attention spans, unstable business models, and a polluted information ecosystem. But that doesn't mean it's any less important or becoming irrelevant; rather, it's adapting as it outgrows its old structures.

Just take a look at independent journalism start-ups, which can often move more quickly than legacy outlets. "Innovation in indie journalism is more than just trying out new tools," says Marcela Kunova, managing director at JournalismUK.

"We have the freedom to experiment, to listen closely to our communities, and to change quickly when something isn't working. Indie outlets are often the first to spot emerging trends because we're embedded in the realities of our audiences, not beholden to legacy processes. That's where real transformation happens."

And there are success stories. Mill Media now boasts 10,000 paying members across titles in Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Sheffield, London, and Glasgow. *The Bristol Cable* increased membership income by 50 per cent in 2024, some £60,000. *Black Ballad*, *Gay Times*, *Diva*, and *Amaliah* joined forces in 2025 as part of a community media partnership lab, showcasing the value of independent, community-rooted media to businesses. They're all proof audiences and businesses are willing to pay for the news they believe in.

Major publications are also innovating: *The New York Times* now lures in subscribers with its suite of games, retaining some 10 million of them for its journalism. Similarly, *Le Figaro* uses a paid cooking app to attract new audiences, while *The Economist* has pioneered a podcast subscription, effectively putting its best audio behind a paywall. A year later, it claimed it had managed to keep some 80 per cent of its listener base as paid subscribers.

There's still a long way to go, but Maryam is optimistic that the adaptability of journalism means the medium is primed for longevity — and she doesn't see why journalists in training shouldn't be optimistic, either. "There will always be a need to hold power to account, to inform and to seek the truth, to tell stories and to give a voice to the voiceless," she says. "The younger generation is more curious and wants to be informed and to inform. This gives me hope."

Having interned at Metro.co.uk over the summer and seen the inner workings of a national newsroom, Lillie-Rose agrees — it's an industry in flux, not one coughing its last breath. Again, she believes futureproofing is about finding the right people: "The industry is changing, but they're recruiting now, more than ever, young people from a host of backgrounds and minority groups. People want to relate to the voices. It's very much about finding your niche."

It's a similar story for James, especially when he sees student journalists working together at SPA events: "[They're] comparing notes, discussing shared challenges, arguing, disagreeing… It's just a really healthy, positive thing. You can absolutely see that there is enthusiasm there and I don't really see a reason why that wouldn't continue."

The truth is that these so-called 'deaths' of journalism only help it redesign and redefine itself. Journalism can change its shape, distribution, and business model, but not its purpose. "The mindset and the worldview journalists bring to the job is the most precious thing," says James.

In other words, it's not a medium, but a methodology — and one to smile and stubbornly hold onto next time someone tells you it's all about to fall apart.