



Book Review of Mike Reilley, *The Journalist's Toolbox: A Guide to Digital Reporting and AI*

BASUDEV PAUL

Culture and Communications Team, Aspire to Innovate (a2i) Programme, Dhaka, Bangladesh.



Article History

Published by: 03 October 2024

Mike Reilley's "*The Journalist's Toolbox: A Guide to Digital Reporting and AI*" offers an overview for the journalist looking to understand today's rapidly changing landscape of digital reporting and artificial intelligence. First published in 2024, the book is both an instructional manual and a reference book full of insights from Reilley himself in decades of experience within journalism. The aspects of digital reporting include data journalism, the integration of AI, multimedia storytelling, and the ethical challenges in a digital world.

The strength of this book lies in it bringing tools, tips, and techniques that are important, in a structured, chapter-wise breakdown that a journalist can immediately apply to their work. It will cover, through exercises and practical examples, not just the 'how', but also the 'why' behind using these very tools in an effective journalistic context.

Chapter 1: Reporting, Writing, and Editing

Reiley addresses the importance of field reporting using modern tools like Otter.ai for transcription and Google Docs for collaboration in real time. It lays out precisely to use the combination of guaranteed accuracy and speed on report writing compared to the traditional journalistic standards. The whole chapter emphasized more on these fundamentals of report writing and editing that lays the foundation for a journalist to improve his/her skillsets.

Chapter 2: Searching the Web and Using AI in Research

This section includes the usage of AI and search techniques to gather information with more accuracy in faster process. Reilley provides practical examples using Google's advanced search operators and tools

CONTACT Basudev Paul ✉ basudev.mcj@gmail.com 📍 Culture and Communications Team, Aspire to Innovate (a2i) Programme, Dhaka, Bangladesh.



© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Enviro Research Publishers.

This is an Open Access article licensed under a Creative Commons license: Attribution 4.0 International (CC-BY).

Doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.12944/CRJSSH.7.2.03>

like Dataset Search giving journalists the power to dig deeper into the web and uncover valuable data for their stories.

Chapter 3: Fact-Checking and Building Trust

Adherence to the ethics while using tools like Snopes and TruthNest is an important criterion for a journalist to preserve the credibility of news reports. False information doesn't just nullify the credibility the itself, it also hampers the reputation of the journalist's reputation. Importance of building trust of the targeted audience is discussed in this particular section.

Chapter 4: Social Media

This chapter debates the balance between news reporting and audience engagement in effective use of social media. Reilley's comments highlight a growing reliance on social media as a source for news stories but equally reinforce their potential pitfalls, such as fostering misinformation and audience overload.

Chapter 5: Data Journalism

Data journalism forms the backbone of the book, and Reilley gives a step-by-step guide on how to handle data effectively. He introduces tools like Google Sheets and Tableau, right through to the cutting-edge visualization software Flourish that turns unwieldy datasets into an accessible story for readers.

Chapter 6: Mobile Journalism

The rise of mobile journalism is not something that we can ignore in modern age. From the use of LumaFusion in video editing and the FiLMiC Pro app in the capture of high-quality footage with a smartphone, the importance of mobile journalism has been described by Reilley in this chapter. What is specifically useful here for a journalist on the move is Reilley's practical tips on how to produce professional-grade journalism using just a smartphone.

Chapter 7: Multimedia- Podcasting, Audio, and Photo Editing

Introduction to some key multimedia skills with a focus on podcasting and audio/photo editing for the journalists is highlighted here. The section begins with basic podcasting equipment and techniques, then covers Adobe Audition for professional editing and Audacity for free high quality audio editing. Second, this chapter briefly discusses Anchor.fm as a simplified platform to record and distribute podcasts, and SoundCloud as options to host them. This chapter will cover some of the popular audio formats: MP3, WAV, and AIFF; utility concerning podcast production is discussed. The chapter then proceeds with photo editing tools, helping journalists learn how to use Adobe Photoshop and other free alternatives to Adobe Photoshop-Adobe Firefly-for manipulating images.

Chapter 8: Google Earth and Satellite Imagery

Google Earth and satellite imagery for investigation is a skillset that modern journalist needs to adopt. Here in this chapter, it highlights quite nicely the power of showing changes over time or of covering places that are difficult to reach. For instance, Reilley relays a story of how two skiers were rescued from an avalanche in Sierra Nevada, thanks to a flyover video created with Google Earth Pro. This chapter teaches how to create video flyovers, use historic satellite imagery, and then create time-lapse videos of environmental and urban change. Among others, suggested tools include Google Earth Studio, Juxtapose JS, and Adobe Spark Video, which can give differing results from each. The free, rights-free imagery in Google Earth has also been valuable in the construction of visually rich stories.

Chapter 9: Artificial Intelligence and Productivity Tools

This chapter talks about how AI tools can amplify productivity in journalism. Reilley addresses the ever-lingering anxiety that AI can take up jobs from people; he speaks more about how AI can help journalists do repetitive tasks such as data transcription and its analysis. He highlights a number of tools such as Descript for audio and video editing, Fireflies for transcription in meetings, and Canva Docs Magic Write for writing

and editing assistance. This chapter highlighted that responsible AI should be used, any output from AI should be fact-checked, and also AI-generated content is not to be passed off as one's own to the readers.

Chapter 10: AI, Productivity Tools and Exercises

Reilley goes on in this chapter to provide some exercises that will enable the journalist to apply the AI tools to real situations. They might use AI to storyboard with Chat GPT, illustrate with Mid Journey, or organize a project with Google Bard. In fact, there are a few fun challenges included, such as the creation of creative visualizations, so one can see how AI might enhance their storytelling. Reilley provides multiple hints-for example, labeling AI-generated illustrations-to remind the journalists that ethical considerations are paramount.

Chapter 11: Digital Security, Advanced ChatGPT and Data Visualization Exercises

Reilley covers a very important topic 'Digital Security' in his final chapter by providing insight into how data and sources could be safeguarded in an increasing, digitized world. There are remarks on the use of AI, cloud-based utilities, privacy concerns, data breaches, and practical means of protecting personal and professional information.

Merits of the Book

Perhaps the greatest strength of *The Journalist's Toolbox* is its hands-on approach to doing digital journalism. Rather than a theoretically heavy volume, Mike Reilley grounds the book in the key tools needed by today's reporter, complete with step-by-step instructions for everything from fact-checking to video production. In addition, there are real-world exercises at the end to facilitate immediate application. This is further enhanced through integration with JournalistsToolbox.ai, providing additional resources such as training videos and hot-linked interactive glossaries. One of the singular features of Reilley's approach is his clear forward thinking about AI and new technologies. He discusses how AI can take some of the headache out of tasks such as data organization and fact-checking-largely time-consuming aspects in today's news climate. However, aside from his excitement over technology issues, Reilley doesn't look past AI-related ethical considerations such as misinformation, data security, and bias. He reminds the readers that while tools are great, "journalism is about the story." This balancing between technological innovation and journalistic integrity, with various examples from newsrooms around the globe, makes the book useful to journalists across the world.

Overlooked Aspects

While *The Journalist's Toolbox* covers a broad range of digital tools, there is an element of beginning with the assumption that a journalist is already at the level of comfort in practice. Beginners might find the advanced tools challenging without more foundational guidance. Additionally, while AI tools are discussed in detail, the book could have explored the long-term implications of AI in journalism more deeply, especially regarding job displacement and ethical AI governance. Another gap is the lack of exploration into non-Western contexts. Although the book offers global perspectives, many tools and examples are tailored toward American and European journalists. Those working in less resourceful environments may struggle to access or use some of the recommended tools due to financial or technological constraints.

Key Learning Points for Readers

Readers of *The Journalist's Toolbox* will find actionable skills to help them effectively and efficiently enhance their digital journalism immediately. Mastering data visualization, producing podcasts, or researching with AI-powered tools, the book teems with exercises, insider tips, and case studies that provide clear guidance to improve technical proficiency in today's multimedia environment. Reilley's progressive approach to AI prepares readers to get ahead of trends, generating content, automating workflows, and enhancing investigative journalism with AI. Additional global case studies put readers in a wider frame of thought, showing how different parts of the world use digital tools; thus, this book is a pertinent tool for international journalists. Importantly, it discusses the dimensions of ethics in digital journalism, which allows the readers

to develop not only the skills required technically but also a good sense for integrity, accuracy, and fairness in this digital era.

Conclusion

The Journalist's Toolbox is the ultimate guide for any journalist who wants to make it big in today's digital-first world. Reilley combines decades of experience with leading technology in order to give useful, actionable insights. While the book raises very important questions regarding the ethical and professional impact of AI on journalism, finally it arms journalists with what they need to navigate the fast-changing era of reporting.

References

Reilley, M. (2024). *The Journalist's Toolbox: A Guide to Digital Reporting and AI (1st ed.)*. Routledge. ISBN: 978-1-032-46021-5 (hardback), 978-1-032-46020-8 (paperback), 978-1-003-43178-7 (ebook), 978-1-032-46022-2 (eBook+). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003431787>.