

Abstracts

Christina Holtz-Bacha: The Threat to Watchdogs. Freedom of the Press in Decline in the Western World

In the US, whose media system was once considered the freest in the world, press freedom is in decline. Year after year, the US continues to fall in the rankings for press freedom. The trend is exacerbated by the Trump administration's anti-media policies, and the US has lost its model status for good press freedom. But even in Europe, which consistently ranks highest among the world's regions, press freedom is under threat. Journalistic work is under pressure from many sides. This article traces recent developments in press freedom in the US and in EU countries, which find it difficult to escape transatlantic influence on their media policies.

Volker Lilienthal/Viviane Schönbachler/Jannis Frech: Journalistic Source Protection as a Concerted Action. Media Ethics Standards in the Context of Cyberattacks and Ubiquitous Surveillance

Source protection is a non-negotiable basis of the journalistic craft—and yet it is at most a footnote in journalism research. This article outlines the various dimensions of source protection, with a particular focus on cybersecurity and surveillance. Based on observations and guided interviews, it reveals the fascinating interplay between management, research, and IT security. The results underscore that responsibility for digital security and journalistic source protection must be a collective effort.

Melanie Verhovnik-Heinze/Liane Rothenberger: Dealing with Security-Sensitive Sources. Risks and Ethical Challenges

Many journalists work (consciously or unconsciously) in security-sensitive contexts. This may be because they 1) communicate with sources who are particularly vulnerable, 2) meet with individuals who could potentially become violent or already have been, or 3) leave digital traces that could be used against them. This article addresses these three scenarios, draws on practical examples, and introduces the concept of security-sensitive sources. It aims to raise awareness of the importance of considering the consequences of professional actions in security-sensitive contexts at an early stage and making ethically sound decisions. Physical, psychological, and digital security must all be taken into account.

Hektor Haarkötter/Mariana Ochoa-Moreno: Digital Naivety. On Gaps in Media Ethics in Security Communications

This article analyzes the phenomenon of digital naivety as a structurally conditioned misjudgment of one's own digital skills, especially among vulnerable groups. It shows that cybersecurity is not only a technical problem but also a media ethics problem that

is exacerbated by a lack of education, language barriers, and social discourse. Empirical findings show that many people overestimate their abilities and thus underestimate risks in the digital space. Digital naivety thus poses an independent security risk and hinders the development of effective protection strategies. The text calls for targeted educational measures and greater reflection on media ethics in security communication.

Anna Sophie Kuschezki: (In)security on the Internet. An Exploratory Study on Individual, Editorial, and Legal Measures Against Digital Violence Towards Female Journalists

Based on guided interviews with affected female journalists, the study explores how editorial offices deal with gender-specific digital violence, what personal strategies those affected use, and whether legal action is taken against perpetrators. The empirical study was conducted with eight German female journalists from different media outlets, career stages, and employment types and evaluated using qualitative content analysis. The study shows that female journalists primarily cope with digital violence through personal coping strategies, but perceive the support provided by their editorial offices as satisfactory. Legal measures prove to be particularly difficult for freelance journalists.

Marlis Prinzing: Stress-proof and Crisis-proof. Security and Empowerment as the Key to Ethical Action in Crises

Crises and general challenges to internal and external security mean a double responsibility for journalism—in terms of how such topics are reported on and in terms of work routines. Key questions include: How do journalists cope with stress, provide information in exceptional situations, organize themselves, interact with those affected, and strengthen their coping skills? Qualitative interviews with journalists and psychologists were conducted to determine the current situation and identify deficits. The findings indicate that there is a need for individuals and organizations to catch up on basic knowledge about difficult security situations - for example, ethical considerations, warning chains, and stress management. In many cases, there is a lack of structures and concepts for how more psychological knowledge in these areas can strengthen stress and crisis management skills.

Birgit Stöber: Greenland in the Hybrid Media System. Visual Staging of Security

This article focuses on security policy reporting from Greenland, which has increased significantly since 2025 in response to interventions by the US. The focus is on analyzing news images and their iconographic significance, as well as the complex interplay between political actors and a hybrid media system, which poses challenges in terms of media ethics.

Felix Krebber: Responsibility in Strategic History Communication. The Conflict Between Scientific Standards and Client Interests

Professionals in the field of strategic history communication in companies (often historians themselves) face a conflict between, on the one hand, wanting to fulfill (historical) scientific ethical standards and, on the other hand, having to communicate corporate history from the perspective of the company. Based on 25 qualitative guided interviews, this study clarifies which principles and actors practitioners feel responsible towards and in what way. These are compared with criteria from the relevant field ethics in order to discuss which normative requirements and practical recommendations arise from this for strategic history communication.

Ingrid Stapf/Jana Hecktör: Digital Wellbeing of Children. Ethical Perspectives on the Social Media Debate in Light of Current Developments in AI

This article discusses the current debate on banning social media from a media and AI ethics perspective and argues for a more nuanced approach. It is necessary to determine not only what social media is and what image of childhood is being used as a basis, but also what the goal of the measures is and what undesirable consequences and repercussions they may have. The core thesis of the article is that existing regulations must be differentiated, and law enforcement must be ensured. In addition, media regulation, that is more child-centered and empowerment are needed. This refers not only to media or AI skills, but also to digital maturity and digital wellbeing skills.

Michael Jäckel: A Calculable World. Religion, Reason, and the All-Encompassing

During and following the Enlightenment, different views have been expressed concerning the advantages of demystifying the world. The expansion of knowledge was supposed to open the world to people. However, this opening was also seen as overwhelming. Reactions to the consequences of “free world exploration” were discussed. This article takes up this contradiction and illustrates how this pendulum swing affected the relationship between religion and reason and the perception of growing social differentiation. The need for orientation in a “Great Society” (John Dewey) also brings the role of communication into play.