



Monthly newsletter: April 2017



Message from Keith

Greetings,

Artificial Intelligence is all around us. Self-driving cars are now being tested on the streets of some American cities. “Fetch” bots can assist warehouse workers taking heavy items off shelves. Super-smart computers have managed to beat humans at chess and the board game Go.

And earlier this year, a robot named Xiao Nan (小南), or Little South, managed to write a 300-character article about the annual Chinese New Year travel crush for which train tickets sold old, published in the Guangzhou-based newspaper *Southern Metropolis Daily*.

Should journalists be worried that intelligent, note-scribbling robots may soon be taking over their jobs?

The fear is not entirely far-fetched. Just look at the disruption already wreaked on the industry by the ongoing digital transformation. Print subscriptions and the old advertising-based business model have collapsed. Newsrooms have been hollowed out. And a lot of the old-style reporting of shoe leather, door knocking and meeting sources in car parks has been replaced with mass emailing, crowd-sourcing and data sifting.

It's really not too much of a stretch to think the day is coming when an army of Xiao Nans may soon be churning out reasonable journalistic copy, delegating the last of the ink-stained wretches to the history books—and the unemployment rolls.

But count me an optimist. Yes, AI is coming to journalism, and it will alter the way we journalists produce news—the same as it will change the way we drive, shop, play and get medical care. But it will actually make journalists and journalism better, not worse. Rather than reacting like curmudgeonly luddites, we would be wise to embrace it.

In fact, AI is already a feature of a lot of journalism. We just don't realise it yet.

Facebook made news last autumn when the company announced it was going to start shifting totally to algorithms to produce its Trending topics section, and laying off the humans who used to do the curating. Less noticed was an announcement earlier last year from The Associated Press, that it would begin relying on an automated system to cover more than 10,000 minor league baseball games every year, using a program called Wordsmith that produces natural-sounding language.

A team in London is also working on a new tool, called JUICE, aimed at helping reporters make better stories. The program is designed to aid a journalist on deadline by spotting trends, conducting automatic searches, and running “ramification” scenarios—exploring future consequences under various circumstances.

So Artificial Intelligence is going to become an increasing feature of journalism. Instead of viewing it as a threat, we need to prepare for it, welcome it, and recognise that it will make our journalism smarter and more comprehensive, and consumers much better informed.

Algorithms can take over all the current, mundane daily chores of newsrooms, like compiling stock market activity, company listings and sports results. AI will be able to create appealing visualisations from raw data with the push of a few buttons. And bots will soon be

there to help reporters sift through mountains of data, finding linkages and spotting trends in nanoseconds.

But those are all just tools. It will be human reporters who supply the context, provide the nuance, conduct the interviews and seek out the reaction. Robots can sift through data and spot trends. Human reporters will track down the sources, ask the tough questions and follow-ups, and bring a healthy dose of skepticism; robots may have AI, but they will not have the BS detector of a cynical hard-nosed news reporter.

I'm also betting the intelligent robots have a long way to go before they can write lively engaging narratives. Xiao Nan could turn out a pro forma article on Chinese New Year train ticket sales, but it will be a long time before a bot can write like George Orwell.

Keith Richburg
JMSC Director

Highlights last month

JMSC curriculum and development day

Members of the JMSC faculty and staff met at Hong Kong's Shatin racecourse conference centre on 24 March for a [curriculum review and development day](#). Industry partners from AFP, CNN, Quartz, Storyful and The Splice Newsroom also joined for part of the day—read about what they look for in journalism graduates [here](#).



Students join FCC as contributors in maiden project

The JMSC and *The Correspondent*, the official publication of The Foreign Correspondents' Club, Hong Kong, are putting together a programme where students from the JMSC will report on issues related to



journalism and the media under the guidance of JMSC faculty and editors from the magazine. Read more [here](#).

New partnership to bring Facebook's Blueprint for Journalists to JMSC students

The JMSC has developed a new partnership with Facebook to bring the company's Blueprint for Journalists to all BJ and MJ students—read more [here](#). JMSC staff also visited Facebook's HK office—photos [here](#) and [here](#)—and the JMSC Facebook page, now with over 31,000 followers, was [officially verified by Facebook](#) last month too.



JMSC joins First Draft News' Academic Partner Network

First Draft News' Academic Partner Network was launched on 8 March and the JMSC is proud to be one of the first schools to join this exciting new global academic partnership in the fight against fake news. Read more about the network [here](#).



Reflecting on a career as a foreign correspondent—an interview with JMSC director Keith Richburg

Current MJ Marta Colombo sat down with JMSC director Keith Richburg to discuss his [career of more than 30 years as a foreign correspondent](#) for *The Washington Post*.



Would you give your life to tell the story? Whatever your answer, JMSC professor teaches students to be ready

Not many professions ask you to put your life in danger. Journalism is one of them, and Kevin Sites, Associate Professor of Practice and former war correspondent, wants his students [to be ready](#).



Chinese whiskers: photographing Hong Kong's shop cats

Dutch photographer Marcel Heijnen spoke to Honorary Lecturer Kees Metselaar's undergraduate Advanced News Photography class about photographing animals in Hong Kong and his book *Hong Kong Shop Cats* on 3 March. Read more [here](#).



JMSC summer course helps filmmaker net prize at international film festival

A JMSC summer course on documentary filmmaking has helped a filmmaker from the Philippines win an award at an international film festival, with a documentary about the life of her 105-year old grandmother. Read more [here](#).



MTR Corporation visit to new JMSC studio

Representatives from Hong Kong's MTR Corporation visited the JMSC studio in Eliot Hall on 22 March in a visit organised by HKU Online Learning. More photos [here](#).



Reporting Global Affairs guest speakers

MJs taking the Reporting Global Affairs course heard from [Australian Acting Consul-General in Hong](#)

[Kong, Janaline Oh](#), and [Ivan Watson](#), CNN's senior international correspondent on 23 March.



Ramy Inocencio shares his broadcast experience

Ramy Inocencio, Bloomberg TV anchor and reporter in New York, [visited Eliot Hall on 1 March](#) and spoke with JMSC students about his career and what it's like to be an anchor.



MJs hear from HK composer and musician

Hong Kong composer and musician Vicky Fung [spoke to students](#) taking Honorary Lecturer Vivienne Chow's Culture Journalism class on 2 March.



FleishmanHillard talk about careers in PR

Patrick Yu of communications firm FleishmanHillard [spoke to students](#) about possible careers in communication and public relations on 13 March.



Career opportunities at the JMSC

The JMSC is [recruiting for a range of academic roles](#) to commence on 1 July 2017 or as soon as possible thereafter. The Centre is looking for professionals who love to teach and are passionate about training the



next generation of journalists in this exciting part of the world at this exciting time.

HKU Ditch Disposable campaign kicks off

The [Ditch Disposable campaign](#) kicked off on 22 March and aims to reduce plastic waste by targeting single-use plastic water bottles and other disposable containers across the HKU campus.



Articles, publications and presentations

RightsCon 2017 Brussels

Doreen Weisenhaus, Director of the Media Law Project and Associate Professor, spoke at [RightsCon 2017 Brussels](#), an annual gathering of the tech industry, academics, lawyers and advocates to discuss the latest legal and technical developments on the internet. Weisenhaus' talk was titled "Digital Rights Litigation in Asia" and was part of the Digital Rights Litigation Network session. The conference [also displayed](#) and promoted Weisenhaus' latest book, *Media Law and Policy in the Internet Age*.



RightsCon
BRUSSELS
MARCH 29-31, 2017
BROUGHT TO YOU BY accessnow

Suibin Zhou, Project Manager of Hong Kong Transparency Report, also spoke at two sessions during RightsCon this year: ["Strengthen the Effectiveness and Connectivity Between Corporations' and Civil Societies' Transparency Report"](#) and ["How to Talk So Companies Will Listen, and Listen"](#)



[So Companies Will Talk: Doing Company Advocacy and Research"](#)

Verifying News in a Post-Fact World

Lecturer Anne Kruger and alum Gloria Cheung (BJ 2015) spoke on [a panel](#) hosted by Google News Lab and First Draft titled "Verifying News in a Post-Fact World" on 27 March.



As the 20th anniversary of the handover to China nears, Hong Kong artists meditate on space, memory

In a busy month for art and culture reporting, Vivienne Chow looked at how HK artists are increasingly commenting on the world around them in [this piece](#) for Quartz, and reviewed [the 10 Best Booths at Art Central Hong Kong](#) in an editorial for Artsy. Chow also wrote [several pieces for Variety](#) in March, and reported on how [Hong Kong Canto-pop duo Tat Ming Pair are making headlines ahead of their 30th anniversary shows](#) for the *SCMP*.



New Criticism | Digital Media and Cultural Journalism

Vivienne Chow was the moderator for [this discussion](#) (full video) with speakers from the BBC, Facebook and Emblematic Group at Art Basel. Chow was also co-moderator for this panel at the art show: [Does Political Art Matter? | A Discussion](#)



Getting "art smart" on social media

Vivienne Chow was filmed for [this BBC Culture report](#) about how a new generation are learning about art through social media. Chow also spoke on BBC World Service's [The Cultural Frontline](#) (from around 15:30) about how China's censorship laws are impacting creativity.



Trump's media war: straight from the playbook of communist China

The US is losing the moral authority to speak out the next time a journalist is arrested, a newspaper

shut, or foreign correspondent deported, [writes Keith Richburg](#) for the *SCMP*. Richburg was also quoted in this *Guardian* article on 13 March: [Despots are embracing Donald Trump's 'war on the media' with open arms](#)



Hong Kong leader Leung Chun-ying seeks 'exemplary' damages in defamation suit against legislator Kenneth Leung

Doreen Weisenhaus was quoted in [this report](#) from the SCMP about how outgoing Hong Kong leader Leung Chun-ying is seeking damages from an opposition lawmaker who he is suing for defamation.



Hong Kong's new chief executive starts on a tightrope

Carrie Lam must balance calls for more democracy with Beijing's interests, writes Keith Richburg in [this article](#) for Nikkei Asian Review. The JMSC director also wrote [Trump's North Korea credibility crisis](#) for the publication, looking at how tough talk on Pyongyang by the US president is falling flat as domestic scandals linger.



Has Xi Jinping Gotten His Crown?

David Bandurski takes a look at what Xi Jinping's banner term as a leader of the Chinese Communist Party might be in [this article](#) for the China Media Project. The CMP also published [A Quick Scan at the NPC](#) last month.



Better transparency needed to protect privacy and free speech in cyberspace

An [update on privacy protection and freedom of speech in cyberspace](#) from JMSC project Hong Kong Transparency Report. Benjamin Zhou, HKTR Project Manager, also wrote [this piece](#) for Hong Kong Free Press, analysing information on government user data and content removal requests to ICT companies in 2016, which was released earlier in the month.



The Killing of Kim Jong Nam: Malaysia Probes Firm for North Korea Sanctions Violations

Tom Wright, Journalist-in-Residence at the JMISC, co-wrote [this article](#) for *The Wall Street Journal*. Wright—whose team’s reporting on the 1MDB scandal won the 2016 Gerald Loeb Award for international reporting and was a Pulitzer finalist—also co-wrote this piece earlier in the month: [The U.S. Is Preparing to Charge Financier Jho Low in Malaysian 1MDB Scandal](#)



Student news

BJs attend forum with CE candidates

First year BJ students got the chance to practise covering a live event on 10 March when they attended the Hong Kong Journalists Association forum with 2017 chief executive candidates Mr Woo Kwok Hing, Mr John Tsang and Ms Carrie Lam. Lau Lok Yi Phoebe took [these photos](#) at the event.



BJ works with SBS reporter on HK stories

Third year BJ Eric Cheung worked with reporter Katrina Yu on these stories for Australia's SBS News: [Hong Kong residents urge new chief executive to act on public housing](#) and [Time running out for asylum seekers who sheltered Edward Snowden](#)



BJ and MJ stories published by Reporting Health & Medicine

Health and medicine reports written by a variety of BJ and MJ students this semester are being published on the Reporting Health & Medicine website. Visit the site [here](#) and follow the team on Twitter [here](#) for daily updates.

Reporting Health & Medicine

Exploring America on my own two feet

Natalie Lung, third year Journalism and

Computer Science student, [has been exploring the US](#) during her exchange semester at the University of Missouri.



Exchange dispatches from Denmark

BJ Koel Chu, on exchange at the Danish School of Media and Journalism, filmed and edited [this video report about a hip-hop event](#) in Aarhus on an iPhone 6. Chu was also the reporter for [this story](#) about an innovative food and social project.



BJ student one of HKU's top public speakers

First year BJ student Joy Pamnani made the Grand Final of HKU's annual undergraduate public speaking competition, co-hosted by CAES English Language Support and HKU Toastmasters. Watch a video of the 2017 Grand Final highlights [here](#).



Asia's Five Most Corrupt Countries

MJ Tanvi Gupta looks at [the five most corrupt countries](#) in Asia by bribery rates, according to Transparency International, for Forbes Asia as part of her internship with the company.



At Hong Kong Film Fest, Hope for a Booming Cambodian Film Industry Lingers

MJ Nov Povleakhena [reported from](#) the Hong Kong International Film and TV Market, known as FILMART, the largest event for film and television sales in Asia, for VOA Khmer.



“Bhumika Can Speak For Herself” using AI technology

MJ Tamsyn Burgmann reported on [an innovative media project](#) for J-Source. The article also includes quotes from Lecturer Darcy Christ.



Alumni highlights

Japanese sushi chefs on the low

Haruka Nuga (Bachelor of Journalism and Psychology 2014), TV News Producer for Reuters in Tokyo, looks at how the domestic sushi industry in Japan is trying to reel in more chefs in [this video report](#).



"Take the punch, solve the problem!"

Wendy Zhou (MJ 2015) writes about what she learned from Associate Professor of Practice Kevin Sites' Reporting Global Affairs class in [this Chinese article](#) for FTChinese.



How three women are influencing data journalism and what you can learn from them

Yolanda Ma, MJ 2010 and one of the instructors for [MOOC, Data Journalism Fundamentals](#), is one of the three women featured in [this piece](#) by the Data Journalism Awards.



Meet the smart spin doctor of John Tsang

Ben Kwok (MJ 2003) wrote [this article](#) for EJ Insight about Julian Law Wing-chung (MJ 2003), who has been praised for his work as a political assistant to John Tsang in the recent Hong Kong chief executive election.



Me and the Media: Freelance business writer George W. Russell

George Russell, MJ 2016 and now JMSC Editor-at-Large, shares some of his experiences as a journalist and freelance writer in [this interview](#) with the FCC.



Uncorked: Fongyee Walker MW

Natalie Wang (MJ 2012), Online Editor for *the drinks business* Hong Kong interviewed Fongyee Walker MW, the first master of wine based in mainland China. Read the interview [here](#).



MJ covers CPPCC and NPC meetings with

Facebook Live from Beijing

Jun Mai (MJ 2010) covered China's annual National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and the National People's Congress (NPC) meetings with [this Facebook Live video](#) for the *South China Morning Post*. Mai also wrote [several reports](#) for the *Post* about the two sessions.



Sports reporting from Iran

Dan Pordes (MJ 2010), editor of *AFC Quarterly* magazine, [reported from Tehran](#) on a World Cup qualifier between Iran and China. A [video](#) taken by Pordes inside the stadium has also been shared widely online.



Transamazonica – The Frail Frontier

The [trailer](#) for this new adventure/environmental series by Pip Stewart (MJ 2010) and world record holding cyclist Reza Pakravan is now out. The pair cycled along the Trans-Amazonian Highway and took boats along the river to raise awareness of deforestation and how it impacts indigenous tribes.



Photographing Art Basel, on an iPhone

Photos of Art Basel by Alex Hofford (MJ 2012) were featured by *The Guardian* in their [picture report](#) on the art show. Hofford [used an iPhone to take the photos](#), making the shots even more impressive!

the guardian

MJ on TV in Afghanistan

Matin Sarfraz (MJ 2013) was [interviewed by TOLO TV](#), a general entertainment channel in Afghanistan, and spoke about his studies at the US National Defense University and how they can help the security system in Afghanistan.



Video: Meteor spotted above Metro Vancouver

Tammy Kwan (MJ 2015), Staff Writer at the *Georgia Straight* in Canada, [captured a rare sight](#)



on her car dashcam and the video has been trending online.

Coming up this month

Dialogue with Filmmakers (11 to 24 April)

A series of screenings and discussions with documentary filmmakers from this year's Hong Kong International Film Festival (HKIFF) will be held from 11 to 24 April. All events are free and open to the public. Conducted in English (with Cantonese simultaneous interpretation) or Mandarin (with English simultaneous interpretation). Read more [here](#).



STAKK Factory: Original creativity goes viral

Christina Lo, CEO of STAKK, a digital media company delivering content, technology innovation and services will be giving a talk on 25 April, 4.30 p.m. Meng Wah T1.



FCC Journalism Conference 2017: Journalism in the Era of Fake News & Tweeting Presidents

The Foreign Correspondents' Club Hong Kong's second journalism conference will take place on Saturday 29 April and the JMSC will be well represented by staff and alumni. Read more [here](#), and the full programme for the day can be found [here](#).

