

Axiom News Explores New Ways of News Making



Lisa Coppin recently spent a couple of days at the Axiom News office in Peterborough, Ontario. Pictured above, Lisa with Peter Pula of Axiom News.

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Axiom News generative journalists experiment with both new media and new ways of writing stories. Together with clients, the use of short movies and recorded skype interviews is being explored. Generative journalists aim to connect stories to the broader narrative of the systems they work in and bring their shared wisdom into every single story.

These are exciting times for journalists. As the world speeds up and the amount of

information increases, we face the challenge of making our stories stand out and add value even more than before.

Image and sound are not intended to replace written stories, but to complement them. “Some messages are best transferred in a written story, others are stronger when brought with images,” says Axiom News’ youngest recruit and media expert, Amber Pula. “For example, when different members of the organization react to criticism from outsiders or give more explanation about an event or decision.”

The referenced media source is missing and needs to be re-embedded.

As generative writing journalists, we have always tried to be as faithful as possible to the voices of the people we interview, sometimes even adapting our vocabularies to theirs when we write. We influence the content of our articles by the questions we ask (and don’t ask). We choose our questions carefully, making them inquiring, appreciative and focused on success, hope and dreams. We then build our stories on elements a person mentioned during the interview.

But what if we can actually make a person’s message stronger or more relevant by adding elements to the story? Elements that complete, expound or connect the message to a broader context, thus making it a part of a broader narrative?

Axiom News journalists can often do this because they know a lot about the topic or the system the person is talking about.

“Most of us have been working for many years on topics such as community building and sustainability,” says Jennifer Neutel, Axiom News generative journalist. “We have listened to and rendered the stories of a lot of inspiring people, thus building up knowledge on both specific topics and the systems we are working in.” A journalist can also connect the wisdom of different client systems, thus tapping into a broader narrative than the interviewee.

It may also happen that a journalist has talked to the interviewee before and knows more about his or her views than expressed in a specific interview. Bringing this

larger conversation into the story can enrich it and bring more clarity.

In other words: thanks to their specific perspective, journalists can add a dimension to a story making it more powerful and layered. Thus journalists might be able to express what the person really *means* rather than what the person actually *said*.

This is a provocative stand for sure. “It is not so much about getting the voice of the journalist more into the story. Our aim is not to write about our own views,” says Axiom News founder and CEO Peter Pula. “The change is about including the knowledge and background that journalists have accumulated by talking to hundreds of engaged and inspiring people. Technically this means we less frequently attribute quotes to one single person. Instead we try to bring the wisdom of the whole system in our stories.”

During my two-day visit to Peterborough late May, I was briefly a part of this exciting exploration. I was thrilled to talk about what it means to write and rewrite stories in this specific way. In Belgium we face similar challenges and are also exploring what gives our storytelling strength. Connecting with my overseas colleagues on this shared exploration gave me inspiration and strength to try new things back at home and to continue this exploration together!

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