The Council for Mass Media publishes dictum on the use of algorithms in journalism

IRIS 2020-1:1/2

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On 30 October 2019, the Finnish self-regulatory body for the media sector, Council for Mass Media (CMM), agreed on a historical dictum regarding algorithmic journalism. The dictum concerns news automation and personalisation, that is, newsbots, voting aid applications, and targeted recommendations, among others. The utilisation of algorithms as such is seen as a dispensable means to produce (more) quality content in an increasingly efficient manner. However, the news rooms should know the logic behind the algorithms they use. The dictum also aims to ensure transparency and accountability in the utilisation of algorithms in journalism.

The dictum refers to sections 2, 7, and 9 of the Guidelines for Journalists. Respectively, these concern the duty to make content-related decisions according to journalistic principles and the accompanying ban to outsource editorial decision-making outside the editorial office as well as the duties to obtain information openly and indicate sources. The dictum sets out that news automation and personalisation always involve journalistic decisions, such as what is published and to whom. These decisions must be made journalistically, without transferring decision-making power to outside programmers, among others. The editorial office must sufficiently understand the logic behind the algorithms it uses and make sure that developers of digital media services follow the guidelines for journalists in their independent decision-making. The editor-in-chief is ultimately responsible for the activity.

The CMM gave two recommendations: news media must inform their public of the use of automation and relevant data sources when publishing essentially machine generated content, and their public must also be informed of the personalisation and data collecting related thereto. The information must be provided transparently and in an intelligible manner. The dictum was prepared by a working group which included, among others, the chairman and several members of the CMM, the editors-in-chief of the major Finnish newspapers, as well as the director of Yle News Lab. Moreover, the CMM had conducted a survey among news media in order to map both the use of algorithms in the media sector and the need for a dictum.

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Lausuma uutisautomatiikan ja personoinnin merkitsemisestä 2019. Hyväksytty 30.10.2019.

http://www.jsn.fi/lausumat/lausuma-uutisautomatiikan-ja-personoinnin-merkitsemisesta-2019/

Dictum on designating news automation and personalisation.

JSN hyväksyi historiansa ensimmäisen algoritmien journalistista käyttöä käsittelevän lausuman

http://www.jsn.fi/uutiset/jsn-hyvaksyi-historiansa-ensimmaisen-algoritmien-journalistista-kayttoa-kasittelevan-lausuman/

CMM accepted its first dictum regarding journalistic use of algorithms

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