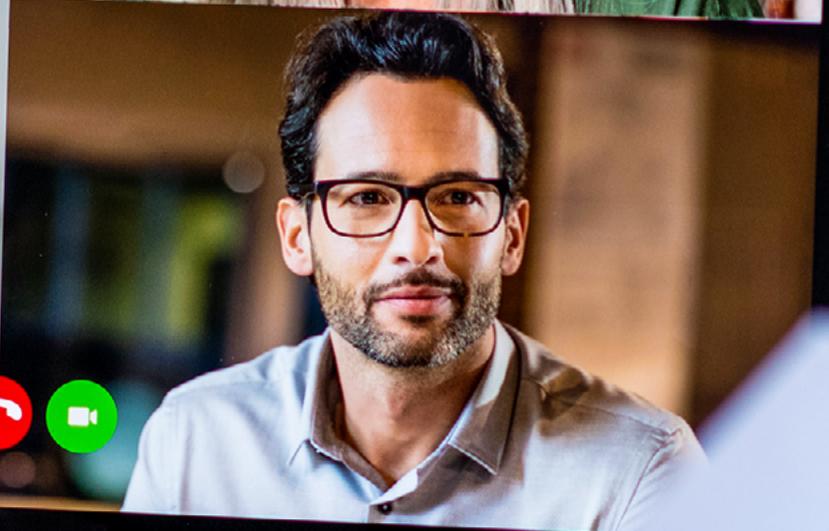


Publishing during a pandemic

Gearing up for a hybrid future as we move into a post-Covid world **AUGUST 2020 UPDATE**



FIPP
Connecting
Global Media



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Looking beyond Covid-19

FIPP's first two 'Publishing during a pandemic' Covid-19 reports mapped publishers' initial response to the coronavirus pandemic. [The first analysed the immediate impact](#) of realities such as the loss of newsstands, a slump in ad spending and limitations on content creation. The [second report](#) then looked at how the industry was standing up to the early challenges.

With the benefit of hindsight - and with many knee-jerk responses having now played out

- publishers are starting to understand what the long-term impact of Covid-19 on their industry might be. While this third report - '**Publishing during a pandemic: Gearing up for a hybrid future**' - continues to shed light on early lessons learnt, it's main focus is on how publishing might look in the future.

Some chapters continue to make for grim reading (we cannot ignore the dismal facts), but there are also pleasant surprises and many examples of innovation and

informed predictions - including what the new workplace may look like and how we will now approach networking.

By keeping track of the impact, response and, ultimately, our industry's survival strategies, FIPP is not only recording the process of dealing with this crisis but also mapping a way to overcome future challenges. FIPP's belief remains that by sharing thoughts, experiences and learnings during such a time enables the entire industry to learn, and survive, together.

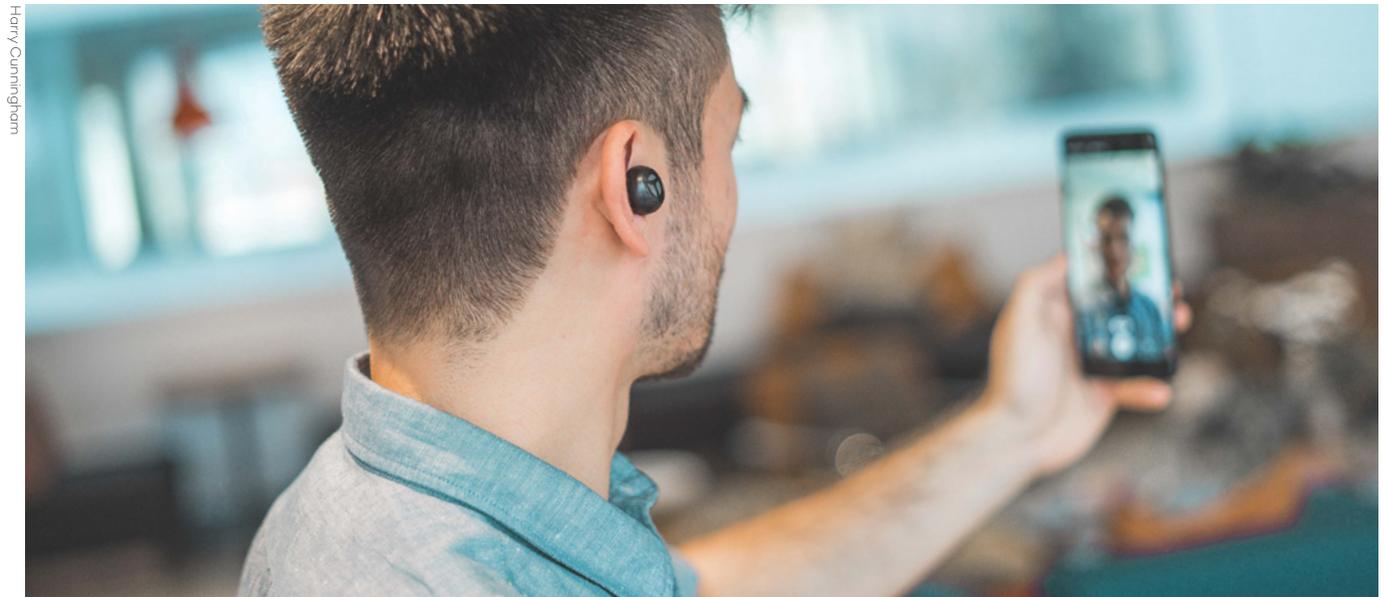
01

Clocking in: a hybrid workplace

As lockdowns start to ease in many countries and publishers allow employees to slowly head back to the office, how much of the new work practices adopted during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic should be retained?

When the Covid-19 pandemic forced newspapers and magazine workers to head for home offices, publishers hoped things would get back to normal as soon as possible. However, with companies increasingly finding effective ways for their staff to work remotely, many in the industry believe it would be foolish not to hang on to some of the new coronavirus work practices as lockdowns start to ease.

“The question people are asking is - are we now all going to be on a beach



Harry Cunningham

in Tahiti or are we going back to the offices?” said **Jonathan Wright**, Global Managing Director for Dow Jones, speaking during a FIPP Insider Webinar hosted by FIPP President and CEO, James Hewes. “From my perspective it would be a shame if things went back to normal. We’ve got some great learnings (during the lockdown) – in some instances some of our processes and approaches have actually improved.

“I think we are going to take some very interesting things from this and apply it to our future way of working. There will be a hybrid approach where there is an office somewhere where you go to collaborate rather than sit at the computer every day and I’m very excited to see how that works.”

Learning on the job

According to Wright, operating during lockdown has presented a “steep learning curve” - but one that has

brought out the best in the company’s workforce. “Our ability to get our products to our customers has gone without a blip and there have been enhancement and developments along the way,” he explained. “The first offices we had to close down were mainland China and Hong Kong and we saw it as this experiment of working from home and how it would work.”

“It’s not just the bare basics of getting things working, but thinking smartly and putting customers at the centre of what we are doing. You have to garner a huge base of expertise to make this run smoothly and that’s a testament to the contingency planning we did.”

Part of the Dow Jones approach during lockdown has been to reassign resources. “We’ve looked at our coverage and how our newsroom operates,” explained Wright. “We have repurposed tools as well as resources. For instance,

the product and news team were working on some really good tools for the upcoming US election and we repurposed some of them and have brought them forward – like Q&A tools, which are now running on the site.”

At travel media content creators Ink, the Covid-19 outbreak has prompted a new way of producing in-flight magazines and online content for its large stable of airline clients including American Airlines, United Airlines and easyJet.

“We are undergoing a restructure to change the way we work – to be more collaborative and flexible,” said **Kerstin Zumstein**, the company’s Editorial Director. “We are streamlining our processes by encouraging each content creator to work across accounts and channels rather than just focus on one title or medium. The key here is tightening our communication loops to ensure we stay nimble and

HIGH ANXIETY

Not everyone agrees that getting back to the office will be as easy as anticipated. Industry players say getting out of the office was the easy bit. Going back is the problem, with social distancing a speed limiter.

AdNews.com reported working in high rise buildings will present its own set of challenges because fewer people will be allowed in lifts at any one time because of coronavirus regulations. By the time everyone is at their desks, after waiting their turn to ascend, it's time to leave the building.

Some media companies and agencies have staged a part return, a day or two a week at the office, a voluntary process to limit the number of people in a building at any one time, ensuring everyone can stay the recommended distance apart.



adaptable to meet our clients' changing content needs."

Embracing remote working

Most publishers have found during the past few months that remote work and flexible working arrangements can work, with some even attesting to the fact that staff have become more productive.

According to **Brian Chen**, Co-founder and CEO of workplace design company ROOM, there will eventually be a migration to a hybrid workplace, where a significant portion of the employee workforce is going to resume working from home because it's proven to be effective.

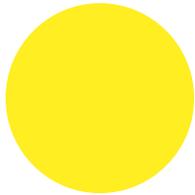
"There will be certain parts of the workforce that will go into the office because that's the best place for them

to be productive or because they have a purpose for it or they simply need to have physical presence in the office," he told FIPP.

In this hybrid office space, there will be an increased demand for privacy and a greater demand for video conferencing space.

"We think that the need for the kind of modular private spaces... will only increase in demand," Chen added.

For many, achieving a balance between working from home and working from an office will be the best outcome – for productivity and creativity. According to a recent report in *The Economist*, several studies suggest the benefits of working from home only materialise if employees can frequently check in at an office in order to solve problems. "Vibrant public spheres foster creativity," the publication suggested.



“Clear communication is vital to our success and nothing beats being face-to-face. When brainstorming ideas, we riff off each other in a way video conferencing simply cannot facilitate”

Favouring face-to-face

Even though Ink embraced remote working while weathering the Covid-19 storm, having staff back on site will play a big part in the company’s future success.

“Clear communication is vital to our success and nothing beats being face-to-face,” said Kerstin Zumstein. “Being flexible and quick to respond is one of Ink’s strengths so we are introducing weekly stand-ups to ensure we know who needs support with what.”

“For this form of ‘live’ collaboration, it will be necessary to come together in the office. Especially when brainstorming ideas, there’s a collective buzz and



Kerstin Zumstein,
Editorial Director
at Ink

we riff off each other in a way video conferencing simply cannot facilitate.

“But I’m keen for the team to have at least one day a week to work from home: To focus on more singular tasks and have a break from commuting.”

A safe work environment

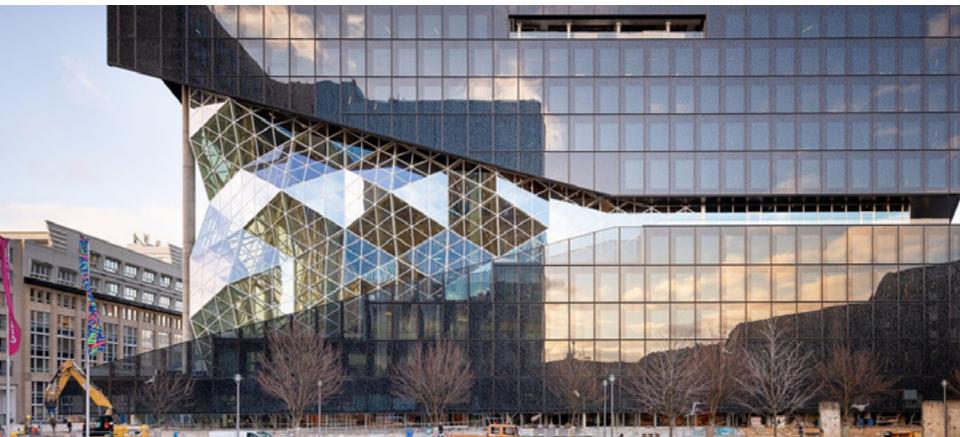
In Germany, where the virus has been in retreat, Axel Springer started returning 50 per cent of its workforce to the office from 1 June - with extensive protective measures put in place.

While the publisher of newspapers like *Die Welt* and *Bild* has invested in new premises in Berlin that can accommodate 3,500 employees, the

company is open to a flexible work environment in the future.

“The extent to which Covid-19 will accelerate the development towards more flexible work at Axel Springer is an ongoing process,” Jan Bauer, Junior PR Manager at Axel Springer, told FIPP. “Certainly, on-site presence will become less important for many of our employees.

“With the opening of the new Axel Springer building we will introduce new working methods, which aim to achieve more mobility and flexibility for the individual employees: Flexibility with regards to increased options to choose your workplace within the new building; and increased mobility by means of a more focused implementation of mobile



working. In many of our departments, this is already common practice, so the discussion about new work at Axel Springer – which due to the corona crisis has recently gained traction in public discourse – has already been anticipated to a certain extent.”

“Naturally, we are assessing which learnings to deduce from our adaptation to the corona crisis and which practices to retain. In the future it will continue to

Axel Springer’s new HQ in Berlin has space for 3,500 workers - although the publishers are looking to continue with a hybrid approach to office work

be essential for us to strike a balance between the physical presence in our buildings and the individual organisation of working hours through mobile working.”

A mental adjustment

In a recent report released by the World Economic Forum, the Swiss-based NGO stressed that a pivot to remote working requires leaders to “embrace organisational change management to reimagine the future of their organisation and how employees can work and collaborate”.

“It requires an institutional mind-shift to a platform mentality, which involves identifying what assets are critical and what are contextual,” added the report by **Kristine Stewart**, Head of Shaping the Future of Media, Entertainment and Culture, and **Anil Menon**, Managing Director, World Economic Forum. “As the Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated, preparing for a variety of scenarios, and

then being able to move as quickly as possible in an agile and adaptive manner, is required.”

When it comes to employees, hybrid working seems to be an increasingly popular option. According to recent study carried out by the Adecco Group across eight countries, 77 per cent of employees would prefer hybrid working, whilst 79% thought it was important that their company implemented more flexibility in how and where staff can work.

The findings also showed that, while employees would prefer an even split of working from home and in the office, many felt their company would expect them to work from the office more than two thirds (66 per cent) of the time.



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02

Innovation: the only way out

Whether it's going online, becoming subscriber-based, closing down magazines or outsourcing your editorial services, publishers have had to take some radical decisions to absorb the huge impact of the Covid-19 outbreak

Covid-19 does not respect brand names. From iconic lifestyle magazines to award-winning newspapers and niche titles, the pandemic has not spared any publication, forcing the entire industry into survival mode over the last few months.

While some publications have survived by going online or suspending their print run, there have been some major casualties in the media's ongoing battle against the virus.

In late July, Bauer Media made the shock announcement that revered music magazine Q would close down after 34 years as the publisher failed to find a new buyer. The final issue was published on 28 July.

Publications that have survived Covid-19 have had to find new ways of putting editions together



Press Gazette reported that Bauer is also closing car magazine *Modern Classics* on 29 July while it has sold the magazines and websites of *Sea Angler*, *Car Mechanics* and *Your Horse* to Kelsey Media. The company was unable to find equivalent new owners for *Q* and *Modern Classics* and decided to cease publication.

“These tough decisions were made to help us recover and rebuild through the Covid-19 crisis,” said Bauer’s Chief Executive of UK Publishing, **Chris Duncan**.

Having greeted the bad news with the tweet: “The pandemic did for us and there was nothing more to it than that,” *Q* editor Ted Kessler said in his final editor’s letter the closure was “an eventuality that nobody could’ve predicted as recently as March. We’ve been a lean operation for all of my tenure, employing a variety of ways

to help keep our head above water in an extremely challenging print market. Covid-19 wiped all that out.”

In June, Bauer brought the curtain down on *Planet Rock*, “true-life” magazine *Simply You*, and *Practical Photography*. It also closed the print and digital editions of *Mother and Baby* to focus instead on the brand’s flagship awards event, while *Golf World* was lost as a standalone brand after more than 40 years as it merged with *Today’s Golfer* magazine.

Bauer said these titles were “unlikely to be sustainable” after the Covid crisis and that the closures would “protect the long-term health” of the business.

The allure of online

As far back as March, Playboy Enterprises announced that, because of disruption of the coronavirus to content production and the supply chain, it would stop printing its famous glossy after

almost seven decades and adopt a new ‘digital-first’ approach.

While the Covid-19 outbreak sped up the publisher’s decision to go digital, *Playboy* had already started to increase its online presence before the pandemic struck.

“This past year, our focus has been on meeting audiences where they are,” **Ben Kohn**, CEO, Playboy Enterprises, explained in an open letter on *Medium*. “We gained over 4 million new Instagram followers and saw over 50 per cent growth in engagement on our social channels in the past 6 months, grew our digital video subscriptions by almost 30 per cent year-over-year and acquired a direct-to-consumer commerce operation that serves almost 1M active customers every month.”

Playboy’s move to digital follows a decision in 2019 to take its magazine



“While the stories we produce and the artwork we showcase is enjoyed by millions of people on digital platforms, our content in printed form reaches only a fraction of our fans”

from a monthly to a quarterly publication - a change that further hastened its online transition.

“We are immensely proud of our revamped quarterly magazine that is inarguably one of the most beautifully designed print offerings on the market today,” Kohn said in March.

“But it’s no surprise that media consumption habits have been changing for some time - and while the stories we produce and the artwork we showcase is enjoyed by millions of people on digital platforms, our content in its printed form reaches the hands of only a fraction of our fans.”

The magazine’s move to digital doesn’t mean it’s turning its back on print. “In

2021, alongside our digital content and consumer product launches, we’ll bring back innovative print offerings in a variety of formats - through special editions, partnerships with provocative creators, timely collections and more,” Kohn added. “Print is how we began and print will always be a part of who we are.”

Rocked by the virus

Another celebrated title that’s been rocked by the Covid-19 outbreak is *Kerrang!* - a heavy metal bible since 1981. The magazine was forced to stop printing in April because the national lockdown in the UK made it “virtually impossible” to distribute a weekly magazine effectively.

“The closure of several local newsagents and the decrease of sales at travel

points have both affected what we do, along with the understandable decision taken by supermarkets to prioritise the delivery of groceries,” the magazine said in a statement. “Equally, the idea of telling our audience to visit a shop during a period of high contagion seems irresponsible. The widespread cancellation and/or postponement of major festivals, tours and album releases also means that we are unable to deliver key pieces of coverage in May and June.”

Kerrang! initially planned to return to newsstands on 8 July but, with the ongoing suspension of live gigs and disruption at newsstands affecting circulation and advertising revenues, has decided to not print for the foreseeable future. Instead the music magazine has poured its resources into reaching

THE SECOND WAVE

Despite its best efforts to retain staff, a number of media organisations have had to implement job cuts

SOME OF THOSE who stood strong as the first wave of pay cuts, furloughs and layoffs crashed over media worldwide earlier this year, are now starting to succumb to continued pressure.

In mid July, Vox Media sent a memo to employees announcing it was laying off six per cent of its staff, many of them staffers that had been furloughed earlier in the year.

Digiday reported that days later Guardian News & Media announced it would eliminate 180 jobs, 70 of them editorial, citing a \$31 million shortfall in revenue.

The BBC announced it was trimming another 70 jobs of its own, months after stating it was laying off 450 people at regional newsrooms. Then US publisher McClatchy announced that

84 of the 115 employees it furloughed in April would now be laid off.

Newsrooms have lost over 11,000 jobs through the first half of 2020, which is on pace to smash the record 14,000 newsroom job losses posted in 2008, according to research conducted by outplacement firm Challenger, Gray and Christmas.



The empty office chair has become a sad reminder of the challenges faced by the world's media because of Covid-19

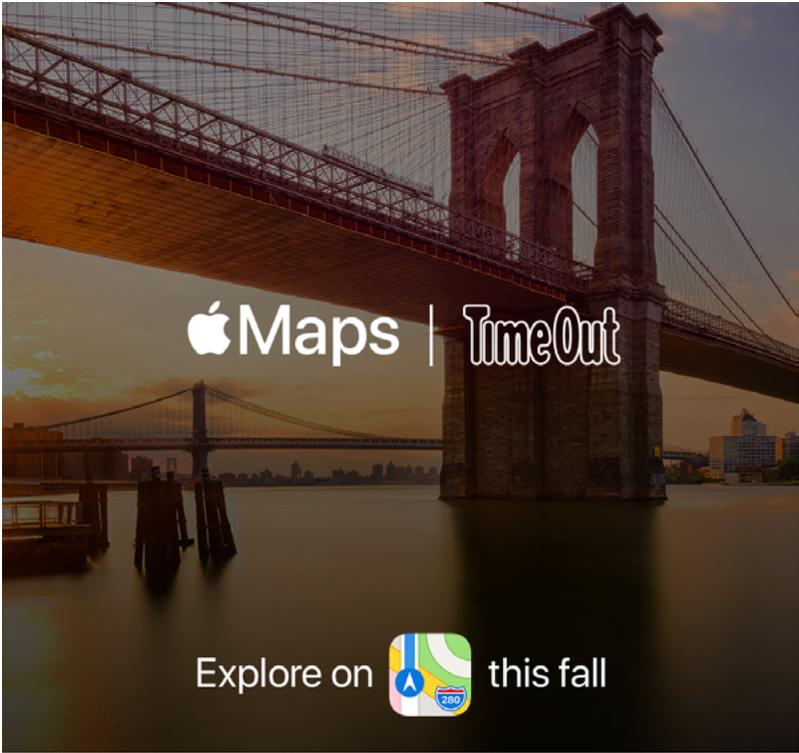
Laura Davidson

rock fans through its website and social channels. “*Kerrang!* has always aimed to deliver the best rock music coverage anywhere in the world,” the magazine said in a statement in July.

“Throughout the severe disruption caused by Covid-19 we have continued to do that through *kerrang.com*, through our video programming, and across our social channels – meaning that we now reach over 40 million music fans around the world each and every month.”

A new connection

Publications that thrive on its readers tapping into the culture of bustling city centres have had to box clever as Covid-19 emptied streets across the world. Free magazines *Time Out* and *Stylist* both temporarily stopped their print editions – with the former rebranding itself as ‘Time In’ and going digital-only for the first time since it launched in London in 1968.



Time Out is staying connected to its loyal readership with initiatives such as curated content for Apple Maps

Because of “slowing” advertising revenues, *Time Out* was also forced to temporarily close all six of its food markets in Lisbon and North America in March with the Portuguese capital’s

market only re-opening on 1 July and Montreal on 8 July.

Finding new ways to connect with its readers, the Time Out Group announced in June that it will be providing curated content to Apple Maps through a new feature on iPhone, iPad, and Mac later this year. Apple Map users will be able to tap into *Time Out* ‘custom collections’ of recommended food, drink and cultural experiences in cities around the world.

“We are excited to work with Apple to launch Apple Maps curated Guides this fall, allowing us to expand exposure of our incredible content to an even larger engaged consumer group,” Time Out Group Chief Marketing Officer, **Sumindi Peiris** said. “As cities reopen and people hope to go out again, we look forward to helping them navigate and explore the new cultural landscape in this ‘phygital’ era.”

Home grown

While a resurgence of the virus in Australia coincided with Bauer Media Australia closing eight titles – including *Harper's Bazaar*, *Elle*, *NW* and *OK!* – the outlook for its local media industry is not all bleak. *AdNews* reported in late July that News Corp Australia is bringing back three community newspapers as demand from advertisers, particularly in real estate, is rising.

Despite the resurgence of these three print titles, News Corp's overall focus is the creation of local and regional digital subscription titles. The company aims to launch more than 50 digital-only titles over the next three years with a focus on local and regional journalism. The move, according to *The Australian*, comes weeks after the publisher said it would move the bulk of its community papers to online-only as a shrinking advertising market made newspapers unsustainable.



Grim reading

Since April, The Poynter Institute has listed the newsroom layoffs and closures caused by the coronavirus in the US. According to the latest list the *LA Times* and *California Times* closed three community newspapers and laid off 14 staff members; *The New York Post* cut 5% of its staff and *The New York Times* cut 68 jobs, mostly in advertising.

www.poynter.org

In the face of falling advertising revenues, News Corp hopes to build as much as 90 per cent of the new titles' revenue from subscriptions and the remainder from advertising.

The Australian government has also been doing its bit to assist publishers. In the

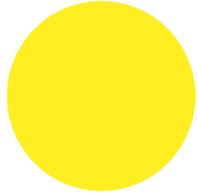
last week of June, the government began contacting applicants who responded to a funding offer by a federal government scheme to help media companies deal with "catastrophic" declines in advertising revenue.

A total of 107 applicants, including 100 regional newspaper publishers, will share €50m (\$60m) in funding available for regional news services over the next 12 months.

How can we help?

Several countries are looking at ways to support their ailing news sectors, particularly local press. Canada, as one example, is now considering raising the tax credit on digital news subscriptions from 15 to 50 per cent in an effort to encourage more people to support media outlets.

Meanwhile, French MPs have already



“As cities reopen and people hope to go out again, we look forward to helping them navigate and explore the new cultural landscape in this ‘phygital’ era”

voted to grant a tax credit to anyone taking out a new subscription to a current affairs newspaper or magazine. The vote came in response to an argument that the sector was “suffering enormously” from the coronavirus crisis.

Deputies voted to allow a one-off deduction of up to €50 to households subscribing for the first time – and for at least 12 months – to a newspaper, magazine or online news service which was “providing news of a general or political character”.

News publishers around the world have been hit hard by the crisis, hindered from printing, distributing or selling paper copies and devastated by a collapse

in advertising revenues while obliged to continue paying fixed costs such as office rents and staffing.

Most have placed staff on furlough and many – particularly those that are not part of a big group, have not developed a strong digital business and are heavily reliant on advertising and print – are unlikely to survive or have already folded. US newspapers are said to be facing an “extinction-level” crisis.

In countries where there has been no government assistance, even large media conglomerates have succumbed to the pressure. In South Africa the country’s largest publisher, Media24, swung the scythe, closing several

magazines, taking other newspaper and magazine titles online only and outsourcing editorial production for almost a dozen other magazine titles.

Referring to the “devastating” impact of Covid-19, CEO **Ishmet Davidson** announced in early July that five magazines, two newspapers and a selection of community newspapers will close. *DRUM* magazine will become digital only while the Hearst portfolio of titles – *Men’s Health*, *Women’s Health*, *Bicycling*, *Runner’s World* – are closing completely.

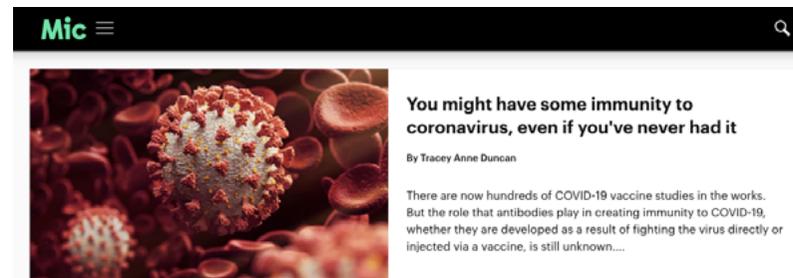
03

Content: words with purpose

The Covid-19 outbreak has changed what people want to read, prompting publishers to have a rethink about the content they run - both now and in the future

The coronavirus crisis has not just transformed the way people work and socially interact, but also how they consume magazines and newspapers. Over the last few months readers have depended on the media to keep them informed during the pandemic - with publishers adjusting their content accordingly.

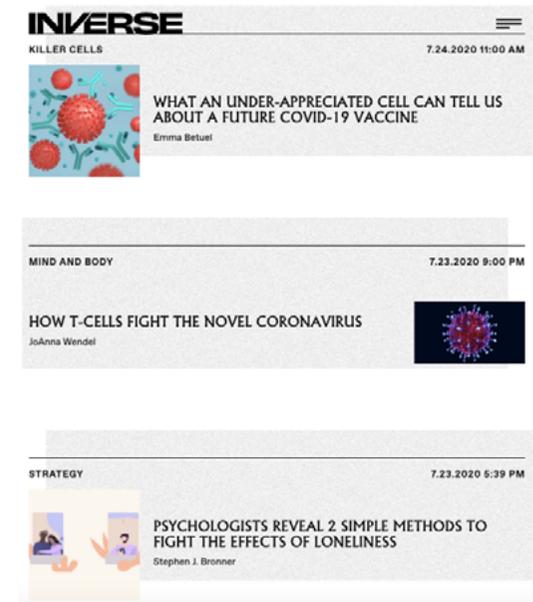
The Bustle Digital Group's "audience-first" website *Mic*, and sister brand, *Inverse*, leaned into becoming a resource, not a news source - whether it be understanding Covid-19 or

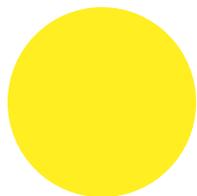


advising readers how to protect themselves from infection.

Additionally, the two sites focused on producing content that helped readers escape the glut of Covid-19 coverage that was everywhere.

Bustle Digital Group's websites *Mic* and *Inverse* have become a valuable resource during the Covid pandemic





“There’s a real fatigue in seeing the horror that is there. [Audiences] are looking for a take that isn’t just a big splashy headline”

“None of our sites were ever doing breaking news,” **Nicole Dalessandro**, Director of Content Operations told *Folio*. “So figuring out how and where people were going in order to get away from that [content] really helped our sites.

“We recognised, much like our writers, there was a group of people looking for something else. Awareness is more important than ever, but distraction is important for health and well-being. There’s a real fatigue in seeing the horror that is there. [Audiences] are looking for a take that isn’t just a big splashy headline.”

Money matters

Covering Covid became much more than a health story. Looking beyond

the news reporting of the politics - and how politicians coped with the virus - financial publications spotted numerous fresh opportunities.

For their July edition, *Money* magazine teamed up with American financial author, television personality and motivational speaker **David Bach** for a special edition: a guide to financial recovery during Covid-19.

With Bach stating that lockdown “can be a time to survive or a time to thrive”, the guide speaks to issues such as cost-cutting, refinancing debt and looking into forbearance plans for mortgages, rent, car payments and credit cards, building an emergency account and seeking out new financial opportunities across stocks, bonds and real estate.

Even before the special edition, *Money* was a bright example of turning the Covid-19 and related lockdown into innovative content, with stories about ‘nap time’ advice for Zoomed-out workers, tips on social distancing when returning to work, the best printers when working from home or how to prepare for the day when government Covid relief programmes come to an end. It even ran a story about the race by marketers to get company logos on face masks.

Covering all bases

According to **Katie Vanneck-Smith**, Co-founder of the ‘slow news’ start-up *Tortoise*, they realised early during the outbreak that Covid-19 was not going to be the great leveller. “It was going to compound the inequalities



Taking a fresh approach to the crisis, *The New York Times Magazine* ran fictional stories in its 12 July issue

we see in society,” she pointed out. “So we have aimed to make our journalism reflect as many voices as possible. We have a wide and diverse membership base and we have brought in what we called the Unheard Voices – people whose experiences are typically ignored – and Letters from Lockdown written by members.”

Dennis Publishing, announcing a nine per cent increase in subscription rates across all titles during the pandemic, said it implemented engagement campaigns to get new subscribers to the titles, with huge success. For example, subscriptions to *Cycling* magazine rose by 39 per cent since January, as people focused on exercise as a way to manage the quarantine. Other lifestyle titles, including Dennis’ automotive offerings, have also done very well.

“Although drivers were asked to use the roads for only essential journeys during

lockdown, it didn’t stop the nation’s car enthusiasts from wanting to keep up with the passion,” the company said. “*Auto Express*, *Evo* and *Octane* all saw their subscriber bases grow, and helped to keep that excitement alive while we were all stuck indoors.”

Stranger than fiction

In what is an example of thinking outside the box during the crisis, *The New York Times Magazine*, for the first time ever, turned its entire issue over to fiction in order to make sense of reality.

“When reality is surreal, only fiction can make sense of it,” explained the coverline of the magazine’s 12 July edition.

According to *MediaPost* the issue, which is sub-labelled “The Decameron Project,” was inspired by Giovanni Boccaccio’s *The Decameron*, which was written as the plague ravaged Florence in the 14th century.

Could punk spirit signal rebirth of 'small hubs of excellence' ?

Content innovation comes in many forms – and sometimes from unexpected places.

During the lockdown, a 10-year-old schoolboy from Bath, Arlo Lippiatt, launched a print magazine called *Pint-Sized Punk*, for which he secured

interviews with Manic Street Preachers and Super Furry Animals. The story was unearthed by Ben Lawrence, commissioning editor at *The Telegraph*. He writes that he dreads the “death of Britain’s magazines”, describing it as potentially “a national tragedy”.

Pint-Sized Punk has received orders from as far as Australia, with bands already queuing up to be interviewed. The cottage magazine industry, said Lawrence, has a long history, and he hopes we will again see the “slow re-emergence of small hubs of creative excellence”.



Bandcamp

The project features new short stories by 29 authors including Margaret Atwood, Tommy Orange, Edwidge Danticat, David Mitchell and others.

Flights of fancy

With an increasing number of airlines making use of coronavirus ‘air bridges’, publishers who create in-flight magazines and online content for the aviation industry have been assessing what kind of stories passengers want to read in a post-Covid world. And while the tourism landscape has changed dramatically over the last few months, the desire for inspirational features has not, according to Ink.

“A good story is a good story - that will never change, regardless of format or platform,” Kerstin Zumstein, Ink’s Editorial Director, told FIPP. “Right now, people are returning to expert advice for inspiration and well-researched features on travel truths.

“Plus the airlines’ responsibility to inform their passengers about the current travel etiquette has renewed the magazines’ importance as an information tool. Passengers need reassurance as they start travelling again, so they look for familiar experiences to normalise that process. Seeing the in-flight magazine in the seat pocket has been described by many as a welcome, comforting distraction right now.”

A matter of trust

Whether it’s travel stories, health articles or news features, it’s clear that the Covid-19 crisis has caused a desire among readers for quality, trusted journalism.

In May, American public relations and marketing consultancy firm Edelman released its Trust Barometer Spring Update which showed that a search for reliable information related to the pandemic had driven trust in

news sources to an all-time high. Traditional media was up 7 points and owned media 8 points.

Conversely, people were worried about fake news, with 67 per cent of respondents saying they were concerned about false and inaccurate information being spread about the virus.

“There is a lot of information out there from a lot of sources, but now more than ever you need accurate, balanced, ethically generated content from brands that put journalism at the heart of what they do,” Jonathan Wright, Global Managing Director at Dow Jones, told a recent FIPP Insider Webinar. “People are definitely more discerning about where they are getting their information from and we have seen a flight to quality news. It’s a trend we saw before Covid-19 but it has absolutely been accelerated.”



Jonathan Wright,
Global Managing
Director, Dow Jones

Dow Jones has seen subscriptions across the group increase by 10 per cent while *The Wall Street Journal* traffic is up an eye-catching 74 per cent.

While a proven track record for providing trustworthy content is important when readers pick their news source, the way media groups have made their reports available also plays an important role.

“It’s not a decision all publishers have made but *The Wall Street Journal* decided to make its coronavirus coverage free,” Wright pointed out. “We believe professional journalism is the cornerstone of democracy and plays a very important part in society. That fed into the decision to make the coverage free and front and centre. That has led to more discovery of our content and allowed us to engage with whole new audiences.”

A new dawn?

The perpetual search for quality journalism and a renewed trust in media could, many believe, herald a new purple patch for publishing. “The corona crisis has shown that users deeply care about the quality, truthfulness and reliability of the source their content comes from,” said Jan Bauer, Junior PR manager at Axel Springer. “With regards to publishing, the crisis may end up acting as an accelerant of existing developments and catalyse innovations.”

04

Networking: a virtual reality

While people were stuck at home unable to mingle, publishers came up with online solutions to event and networking challenges that are so ingenious, they will outlive Covid-19 for decades to come

If a hybrid model for working from home - and the office - is on the cards post Covid-19, then it's even more true for events and networking. Events experts say many - and certainly the best - of virtual engagement innovations are here to stay.

According to **Joanna Lambert**, Head of Consumer at Verizon Media, the online options for video and virtual entertainment have become limitless in the relatively short time that people have been stuck at home. This is because it became much more



competitive for publishers to “break through the noise”. It forced media companies to develop new personalised, real-time engagement to grip audiences.

And while real life activities, such as events are now slowly coming back into the mix, Lambert told *Digiday*, the virtual habits that were formed during the pandemic will remain. Verizon Media, for one, has been prioritising augmented reality development because it’s “well suited to amplify shoppable video content, journalism, virtual events, concerts, classrooms and more”.

Filling in the gaps

This view is being echoed by **Sadie Hale**, author of FIPP's insight report '[Virtual events: How to thrive in the new normal](#)'. She said while many people will argue they value conferences more as an opportunity to network than listening to speakers, several apps to mitigate the loss of face-to-face networking have now been developed.

Savvy event organisers have started to use apps such as OnAIR, Swapcard and Deal Room. These digital aids not only fill in the gaps left by the lack of physical engagement, it actually creates fresh opportunities.

Swapcard, for instance, goes beyond imitating event matchmaking, it algorithmically analyses the profiles of attendees and exhibitors and then suggests the most relevant people to 'meet'. It creates valuable hookups as opposed to randomly bumping into



Edie Lush, Executive Editor,
Hub Culture

another congress goer. Other features include a business card scanner, real-time analytics, and the possibility for sponsors and exhibitors to record interactions and sync data with their CRM system.

Deal Room is a similar platform, specialising in online networking, offering a fast setup and features like one-on-one meetings, multi-speaker streaming, online round tables, and

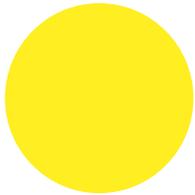
visibility for sponsors and exhibitors. Attendees can add information under "Offer" and "Seek", similar to how an "Ask me about ..." lanyard works in person.

Democratising the workspace

Once people return to physical events, it would be wise to continue the best of these features, whether event participants are in the building or engaging from afar.

According to **Edie Lush**, podcast host, communications trainer and Executive Editor at innovation-led social networking service Hub Culture, online events have offered an exciting chance to democratise the events space. Visas can be expensive and difficult to obtain if you don't have the "right" passport, and costly travel is off-limits for many people.

Online events also lessen accessibility concerns for both organisers and attendees. Those with underlying



“It’s almost like you’re producing the Academy Awards. You need to factor in the elegance of the technology and getting the brand integration moments right”

health conditions, disabilities, or family commitments may welcome the chance to gain access to expertise, experiences, and information that they otherwise couldn't. For this reason alone it will make sense to offer offline services to make it possible for people to participate in the physical events of the future.

One app specifically developed for hybrid events, is OnAIR, which won this year's Gold Stevie Award in Innovation in Technology Development in Computer Industries. Developed almost overnight by events management specialists EventsAIR, OnAIR delivers an online framework that empowers professional event organisers to curate complex content and deliver virtual and hybrid events with ease.



New app OnAIR acts as a bridge between virtual events during the Covid-19 pandemic and live conferences that will take place in the future

The app combines a management platform with data sets that contain attendee, exhibitor, sponsor, and speaker data. This data and content are surfaced in an online timeline, presenting a virtual attendee user interface that can be used for virtual or hybrid events. The OnAIR solution covers the short-term need for purely virtual events due to Covid-19

restrictions, and has been designed to transition to hybrid and enhance live events when the events industry gets back to business.

The app's ability to manage hybrid events was one of the reasons FIPP chose it to manage this year's 43rd FIPP World Media Congress, incorporating the Digital Innovators' Summit, which will take place online from 2 to 30 September.

Don't lose the elegance

But, those who think online events are cheap to produce with higher income potential are getting it wrong, warned event experts. Group Nine CRO **Geoff Schiller** says the cost of online events can pile up for publishers looking to go beyond a panel discussion.

“We have to make sure we set expectations,” he told *Digiday*, adding that having a participatory event that’s able to integrate the brand’s products is a stronger selling point than pure scale.

Schiller said he and his team went into virtual events programming thinking that it “would be higher margin, cheaper and more cost effective,” like it is for publishers “who do very straightforward, panel-like events”.

Instead, his team found that the company’s virtual events costs were comparable to its offline ones.

“There wasn’t a windfall of cost savings,” said Schiller. “It’s almost like you’re producing the Academy Awards. You need to factor in the elegance of the technology and getting the brand integration moments right in a way that is commensurate to the white glove service that we promise our clients.”

How to replace the power of the schmooze

Networking may be hard or near to impossible for an extended period of time due to Covid-19 and the increasing use of Zoom meetings. If forecasters are correct, argues media veteran **Bo Sacks**, founder of the Precision Media Group and publisher of America’s longest running e-newsletter, Bo Sacks Media Intelligence, those industries that can now work mostly from home will continue to do so. That puts a strain on making new industry friends and makes it harder to share industrial knowledge.

“In-person meetings and in-person conferences may, in large part, be a thing of the past,” he said. “If that is so, it strikes a dagger in the ability to network. The loss of networking is a loss to both the industry and our careers. There is no technical replacement for the power of the schmooze. And that is a loss not only to each individual but to the totality of

the industry. Cross-pollination of ideas happens when people schmooze and make new career friends.”

“We will see many changes in the near and far future due to the pandemic effect on humans and on businesses. It is a cliché by now, but there will be a new normal and by extension perhaps a new way to effectively network and, more importantly, to schmooze.”

Sack’s concerns are being echoed by **Alex Simpson**, Head of Programmatic (Advertising) Activation at News UK. He told *Digiday*: “Chemistry is hard to establish with new people over video... if you’re presenting a deck to a full room it’s difficult to keep their attention. People mute, turn off the camera or check their emails, it’s much harder.”

Craving the personal touch

In some sectors, there will always be a desire to congregate in person no matter

how efficient new digital solutions are. In the world of diplomacy, for instance, meeting face-to-face is an essential part of the job and has prompted the likes of *Embassy* - the London-based magazine and events company - to continue with socially-distanced physical events if/when allowed by the UK government while incorporating new digital advances.

“Diplomats attend our events, not only for the information they receive, but also for the personal connections they make, because building relationships is so valuable in international diplomacy,” said **Elizabeth Stewart**, Editorial and Programme Director at *Embassy*.

“But the safety of our community is our top priority and confidence is key. So one option is to host hybrid events, combining smaller, shorter live events where people will feel it’s safe to attend, while migrating the large plenaries, panel discussions and focused breakout sessions online.”

The show goes on(line)

The events app that FIPP has partnered with to manage and host its first ever virtual [World Media Congress](#) in September this year, **OnAIR**, allows delegates to attend online sessions hosted by worldwide media leaders and network with one-on-one meetings.



FIPP President and CEO **James Hewes** (left) says one of the big lessons FIPP has learnt this year while hosting online events is that getting the technology right is crucial. “There’s no right or wrong, but make sure it’s one that you trust and is user-friendly, and corresponds to your business objectives.”

FIPP teamed up with EventsAir because the technology is scalable and secure and manages everything from mid-size meetings to global events – all on one platform. It is used in over 50 countries, covering government congresses such as G20 APEC and ASEAN to sporting events, including the Olympic Games.

05

Revenue: evolution to revolution

The need for publishers to diversify revenue streams was not brought about by Covid-19 – the digital disruption kick-started this more than a decade ago. The pandemic simply acted as an accelerant and a crass catalyst to innovation



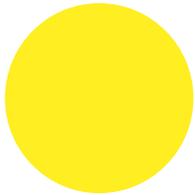
The big future,” said Axel Springer CEO **Mathias Döpfner** in May, “lies in paid content and digital subscription, because more and more people are realising how important it is to have trustworthy, truthful information.”

Predicting a “historical golden moment” for digital journalism, Döpfner’s words at beBETA – the digital conference for publishers of the BDZV (the association for digital and newspaper publishers) – came at the height of the Covid outbreak in Europe as concerns grew about the decimation of advertising

spend during a time when brands – and their budgets – batted down the hatches for lockdown.

Long before the onset of Covid-19, the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (RISJ), found that 50 per cent of digital leaders identified reader revenue as their major income focus for 2020. But no-one would have predicted that they would need to fine tune this focus as early as March.

For print titles, the pandemic caused advertisers to drastically cut budgets,



“We’re already seeing more flows into digital as it reduces costs. That’s set to continue the more brands build up e-commerce”

putting further pressure on a shrinking print advertising market, which weakened even further as readers moved online.

Even the strongest of the high-end luxury titles have not been spared. In June *businessoffashion.com* reported that high-end brands have slashed ad budgets by 30 to 80 per cent, according to digital-marketing agency Digital Luxury Group.

“Nobody knows if luxury brands will go back to investing in print ads as much as before the pandemic,” Digital Luxury Group Chief Executive **David Sadigh** told *Bloomberg*.

“We’re already seeing more flows into digital as it reduces costs. That’s set



Digital subscription package Cosmo Unlocked, which launched in early July, offers users plenty of perks

to continue the more brands build up e-commerce and as they seek more direct return and measurable results from media.”

Then there is also the move to e-commerce impacting luxury advertising, such as Swiss watchmaker Breitling’s shift away from glossy print ads to focus on digital marketing during the lockdown.

Diving deeper into paywalls

Within this environment, many publications were forced to pitch their titles as higher-priced, consumer-driven products. Following this trend, Hearst Magazines started dabbling into diving much deeper into paywall models. Over the past few months, the magazine publisher has been testing membership programmes and metered paywalls at some of its titles, with “the latest guinea pig” being *Cosmopolitan*, reported the fashion-industry’s trade journal, *Women’s Wear Daily (WWD)*.

The American monthly women fashion and entertainment magazine, first published in 1886, launched Cosmo Unlocked in early July. The digital subscription package includes unlimited digital access and an exclusive

newsletter for \$2 a month. The brand told readers in a blurb on its website they could get all website content, the printed magazine and newsletter and various other perks for \$20 annually. Without the digital subscription, readers will be able to access four free articles a month.

Meredith Corp's *Traditional Home* announced that from fall this year it will, once again, sell subscriptions. Readers will have the option to purchase a \$20 annual subscription to the quarterly magazine, which carries a \$12.99 cover price at newsstands.

To “commemorate the shift”, reported *foliomag.com*, Meredith is rebranding its Special Interest Media division – which produces numerous one-off special interest publications each

year as well as consumer-revenue-focused titles – to Meredith Premium Publications, a name which the company says “emphasises the unit’s focus and commitment to producing the highest-quality, premium magazines from a content and packaging perspective.”



The Week and The Week Junior have raked in subscribers since the lockdown

Circulation growth spurt

The evidence that Meredith's move makes sense is Dennis Publishing's recent announcement that subscription rates across all its titles have increased by nine per cent during the lockdown and ongoing pandemic. It is being interpreted as proof that an informed good long read is gaining in popularity.

Dennis said in a statement it decided early on (during the pandemic) to unlock free digital access to all subscribers, to ensure the mail delays – experienced during early lockdown – wouldn't cause readers to lose interest. At the

same time, they implemented new engagement campaigns to reach new subscribers ... with great success.

“*The Week Junior* has seen a large increase in subscribers with the circulation growing by 23 per cent since the lockdown began in March,” the statement continued. “The brand launched a new digital app so that subscribers were able to access all the content even when Royal Mail was struggling to deliver the printed magazine. It was downloaded over 20,000 times in the first month alone.”

Responding to these trends, **David Pilcher**, Owner and President of Freeport Press in New Philadelphia, said publishers have learnt a lot in fast motion about subscriptions during the Covid-19 crisis, and readers are responding well.

“This is especially true when the publisher can pivot quickly to the

TRUST FUNDS

As e-commerce grows in importance as a revenue stream for publishers, product testing and accreditation will become a vital way of standing out as they build trust with audiences and commercial partners, says Hearst UK.

Hearst UK is building a huge testing facility – The Hearst Institute – in London to enhance its product testing and accreditation capabilities.

Hearst's Chief Financial, Operations and Data Officer **Claire Blunt** told *What's New In Publishing* that accreditation will boost the e-commerce side of business and enhance relationships with commercial partners.

The 750m² site will contain office workspaces, video production facilities, meeting rooms, a

warehouse, and category-specific testing areas.

The Covid crisis has delayed the launch of the Institute, but it has been in the works for a number of years and Blunt says the company remains committed to the "vital" facility.

"The opportunities that existed prior to Covid continue to exist," she said. "The Good Housekeeping Institute has been in operation for a number of years and has been a success. It seemed eminently sensible to expand that to other brands."

changing needs of their readers and provide content that becomes essential to their life during lockdown," he said.

Mixed success

No matter what form these new innovations take, some publishers have been more successful than others when it comes to weathering the Covid-19 storm.

Press Gazette reported that Future is on track for its 2020 financial year to be towards the top end of expectations with adjusted earnings for the year ending 30 September of between £86.3m and £91m. That's a significant increase from last year's earnings of £54.5m.

Future announced towards the end of July that it will pay back its furlough money from the government because it expects to grow profits

this year. The company put this down to strong digital audience numbers helped by an increased consumer shift to digital media during the Covid-19 lockdown (alongside "strong cost control" and the "acceleration of synergies" following its buyout of fellow magazine publisher TI Media.

The Spectator magazine and *The Telegraph* newspaper made similar announcements in June, saying strong subscription performances had helped mitigate the financial hit from the pandemic, which many more advertising-reliant media businesses have faced. They will both pay back money they have received from the government's job retention scheme.



FIPP
Connecting
Global Media

● What we do

FIPP – Connecting Global Media represents content-rich companies or individuals involved in the creation, publishing or sharing of quality content to audiences of interest. FIPP exists to help its members develop better strategies and build better businesses by identifying and communicating emerging trends, sharing knowledge, and improving skills, worldwide.

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