

Income struggles to surpass the 20,000-yuan threshold, big data-related skills are most sought after, and the post-print version of the portrait of new-generation media professionals has been released.

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Abstract

A recent report released by PR Newswire, titled *The 2017 Survey on Career Development Status and Work Habits of Chinese Media Content Producers* (hereinafter referred to as “the Report”), examines the current state of media content producers in China. The findings reveal that data visualization has become the most sought-after professional skill, while big data and live streaming exert the greatest influence on content production. However, salaries remain stubbornly capped below the 20,000 RMB th...

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Preamble

A recent report released by PR Newswire, titled *The 2017 Survey on Career Development Status and Work Habits of Chinese Media Content Producers* (hereinafter referred to as “the Report”), examines the current state of media content producers in China. The findings reveal that data visualization has become the most sought-after professional skill, while big data and live streaming exert the greatest influence on content production. However, salaries remain stubbornly capped below the 20,000 RMB threshold.

Technology Penetration in Content Production: Data Visualization Takes the Lead

Artificial intelligence is increasingly shaping the trajectory of journalism, with its infiltration into content production deepening continuously. According to

the Report, the majority of surveyed media professionals believe that big data (42%) and video live streaming (41.8%) will have the most significant impact on their work. In reality, this trend first emerged as early as 2011. Research from the Dyclub Data Journalism Research Center at Wuhan University shows that in 2011, Sohu News launched its “Digital Path” column, marking the beginning of data journalism in China. Within a year, all four major portals—Sohu, NetEase, Tencent, and Sina—had established data journalism initiatives. Since then, major Chinese news organizations have successively embarked on data journalism creation and experimentation.

From an audience attention perspective, by the end of December 2015, Baidu Index had created an entry for “data news,” indicating that search volume for the term had reached a substantial scale. This transformation in content formats is also driving a structural shift in journalists’ knowledge bases. Learning to leverage new technologies for quality content production has become paramount. The survey makes it evident that skills in emerging domains such as data visualization and VR/AR scene-based journalism significantly outpace traditional journalistic techniques. Among these, digital visualization ranks first, with 45.1% of content producers identifying it as the professional skill they most hope to acquire in the future.

Complementary Strengths: “Algorithm + Human” Yields Optimal Results

As technology sweeps through content production, is algorithm-driven content truly more popular with readers? In which domains is this approach currently most prevalent? Wang Qiong, director of the Dyclub Data Journalism Research Center at Wuhan University, explains that machine participation in news production began with sports, finance, and weather reporting, and has recently expanded into entertainment. While compelling content originates from talented authors, algorithms can indeed improve efficiency, though not necessarily emotional resonance.

The survey indicates that differentiation may become the mainstream competitive strategy: most media professionals believe human editors will maintain advantages in producing in-depth investigative reports (77.4%) and opinion pieces (56.7%), while algorithmic machines will outperform humans in news briefs, data-driven journalism, and trend analysis. Regarding content distribution, nearly half (49%) of journalists report that a recommendation approach combining human curation with algorithmic assistance delivers the best reading experience, underscoring the growing importance of algorithmic technology in news consumption.

The 20,000 RMB Ceiling: Salary Remains a Central Concern

For media professionals, compensation remains a persistent concern. Yet compared to 2016, content producers' incomes have not shown significant improvement, with only 3.3% earning more than 20,000 RMB monthly. How to increase earnings has become an industry priority. Many believe self-media (self-operated platforms) might offer a solution—particularly after self-media figure Mi Meng revealed in an interview earlier this year that her assistant, just two years out of college, was earning 50,000 RMB monthly. However, does self-media income truly meet expectations? In fact, among the 1,167 surveyed media professionals, one in three operates a self-media platform, yet fewer than 2% derive substantial income from it.

Additionally, numerous journalists are transitioning to technology companies seeking change. Following *The Guardian* data journalist Simon Rogers' move to Google, *The New York Times* senior software architect Jacob Harris joined 18F, a U.S. government digital services agency. According to the Reuters Institute's *2017 Digital News Report*, 54% of audiences prefer algorithmic recommendations, a tendency more pronounced among smartphone users (58%) and those under 35 (64%). LinkedIn data reveals that among journalists changing jobs, 21% have moved to internet and high-tech sectors, with professional service firms (such as PR and advertising agencies) accounting for 18%. Developing data skills may prove crucial in such transitions.

Note: This report was released by PR Newswire, with data visualization produced by Dydata (www.dydata.io). The Dyclub Data Journalism Research Center is based at Wuhan University, connecting rich data and media resources to break down technical barriers in data journalism, enhance understanding and use of open data, and promote fact-based observation. In this process, it discovers and enhances the value of corporate data. The center has also developed Dydata (www.dydata.io), China's first data-centric writing and sharing community.

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

Source: ChinaXiv — Machine translation. Verify with original.