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Google

How Google Works with the News Ecosystem

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Executive summary

People look to the news to make sense of their world and become more informed citizens. This means everything from understanding the latest facts and breaking news to analysis of how trends and decisions may impact regions and communities. Authoritative, quality journalistic plays a central role in educating the public in democracies. Yet readers in many countries are not accustomed to paying the full costs of supporting this kind of journalism. And the business models that once funded its production may no longer do so as news media businesses continue to evolve.

As governments take up the question of how best to support journalism, we should thoughtfully explore a range of ways to address this challenge. In this paper we aim to contribute to this conversation, share our own experiences, and put forward some constructive policy proposals.

What we are doing

To set the groundwork, we look to five core beliefs that underpin our work and our approach to the news ecosystem:

- **Quality journalism matters:** Quality news reporting and journalism content are essential to functioning societies. We want to ensure that users can readily discover it, and that news partners can benefit from creating it.
- **Financial stability requires innovation:** As they evolve their business models, our news partners are using cutting-edge tools to help them better understand and connect with their audiences, improve their products and power their technological infrastructure.
- **The digital news ecosystem should remain open:** Preserving an open digital ecosystem that balances the needs of publishers and consumers is good for everyone. It's good for journalists, who can be discovered by the greatest number of readers; and it's good for readers, who have access to quality information from a more diverse set of voices than ever before.
- **New technology presents new opportunities:** Changing news consumption habits require experimenting with new formats and innovative ways to distribute content that will generate reader engagement.
- **Collaboration is key to our mutual success:** We believe partnering across the public and private sectors with news organizations and others to stimulate innovation will create a better future for news.

Through our News and advertising products, efforts like the Google News Initiative, and our licensing programs (such as Google News Showcase), we've worked alongside the news ecosystem for decades. As a result of this collaboration, we drive more than 24 billion visits to news publishers' sites for free each month, and every year we pay out billions of dollars directly to the publishing partners in our ad network.

And via programs like the Google News Initiative, we've invested hundreds of millions in free training, tools and services we build expressly for journalists and news publishers.

Together, these commitments make Google one of the largest financial supporters of news organizations in the world. Our programs have positive direct impacts, and they've also taught us a lot about the challenges news organizations face in adapting to the internet era.

The changing face of the news industry

The internet has changed the news ecosystem, including the way readers read news, the way news can be produced and distributed (and by whom), and the way publishers make money. These changes build on those of the past 100 years, when what were then new media formats like radio, television and cable created additional competition for readers' attention. The internet has continued that dynamic while making space for new perspectives and diverse voices from historically underserved communities.

Advertisers now also choose to spend more of their money across digital channels, where ad campaigns have greater reach, more precision, and more measurable results. Additionally, print media has increasingly faced competition that has chipped away at its bottom line, from radio and TV to cable and satellite. The competition in online classifieds and the growth of niche outlets has drawn away readers of the "for sale," sports, business and fashion sections. Journalism — while important to society — is often harder to monetize, especially now, as an abundance of content and news providers compete for the same readers.

Much recent public discourse has focused on news organizations that have struggled to adapt their business models. Some take aim at Google, claiming we have either taken money that belongs to them, used their content unfairly for our own profit, or both. However, as noted in this paper, these arguments fundamentally misconstrue the facts on the ground. We do not use news content in this way, nor does it drive our revenue streams, and the shift of money away from newspapers is not a result of platforms like Google but is instead a function of the changing dynamics made possible by the internet at large. The technological limitations and market conditions that enabled news businesses to thrive 20 or 30 years ago have fundamentally changed and will likely continue to do so into the future. Business models will face continued adjustment, and instead of looking for ways to prop up or inject funds into indefinitely supporting legacy business models, we should direct our attention to the urgent problem of finding a durable path forward for quality journalism.

Innovation and experimentation are on the rise, and expert voices are encouraging new approaches ranging from subscription and nonprofit models to new organizational structures. An increasing number of success stories provide optimism about the future. We remain committed to our work in this space and encourage others to become involved.

How public policy can help

There is no single answer for how to best support a sustainable future for quality journalism that informs, galvanizes and builds communities, and elevates the essential stories in our lives. There are many areas of promise, and a variety of approaches may be required. At the same time, we must not be drawn into counterproductive approaches that merely shift money and do nothing to enhance quality, promote long-term viability, or benefit consumers and journalists reporting in the field.

In this paper, we propose a few basic ideas, based on our experiences, that may inform a richer debate. We are keen to come together with governments, civil society, academia, publishers, journalists, citizens and others to jointly support effective public policy.

To begin, we have seen the value in bringing together the interested parties and expert voices, and suggest governments can play the role of objective convenor. This approach can help to create a common understanding of the challenges and potential solutions, while focusing attention on the most relevant and impactful objectives. With this shared baseline it is then easier to look for ways to foster innovation, especially as the internet continues to change and enable news outlets to connect with their communities in new and impactful ways. Innovation funds or subsidies could buttress these new approaches. And lastly, as this work to establish new best practices progresses, we should also look to ways to improve the infrastructure and support that will enable existing organizations to transition to digital-friendly business models. This paper proposes some possible ideas for each of these three areas, but ours is just one contribution to a larger conversation.

Introduction

Over the last 30 years, the internet has brought sweeping change to societies and to industries. The internet dramatically expands access to information, to services and to diverse viewpoints, all at our fingertips. By enabling this vast, interconnected marketplace, the internet has changed where and how we access all kinds of information, offering diverse sources for everything from understanding issues to learning how to fix things to finding the best prices on products.

The internet has brought staggering changes to the news ecosystem in particular, some positive and some challenging. Amidst these changes, across society we have not focused on supporting the quality journalism that informs, galvanizes and builds communities, and elevates the essential stories in our lives. Now, at a point of serious need, many people across a number of countries are having a timely discussion this kind of journalism. Some have been working on finding a sustainable path forward for many years and have brought informed, forward thinking proposals or projects to the table. Others have sought quick solutions that might appear to present easy answers, and still others have used this important debate as a proxy to push unrelated agendas and try to harm competitors.

At Google, we have worked alongside news organizations for nearly 20 years. In the past decade we have continued to deepen this engagement and commitment by working to support the evolution and sustainability of a vibrant news ecosystem that serves the public interest. In this paper we describe some of that work and share what we have learned in the hope that our experiences may inform possible paths forward. We also address some inaccuracies that risk derailing the discussion.

We open with an overview of the beliefs that ground and drive Google's work with news organizations and our strong support for newsgathering and reporting generally. Next, in the section [The changing face of the news industry](#), we explore the history of the economics of news. In [How Google helps news and supports innovation](#), we delve into the approach behind Google's partnership and deep engagement with the news ecosystem. And we examine some of the ways we have enabled journalists and news organizations to find success in the digital world, including and beyond the 24 billion visits we drive for free each month to news publishers around the globe. As one of the largest financial supporters of the news ecosystem, we not only pay out billions of dollars annually to news publishers — and have committed over a billion dollars in licensing for Google News Showcase in the next three years alone — but we continue to partner closely with members of the news ecosystem to develop our products and build resources and tools for journalists and publishers. Finally, we conclude in [How public policy can help](#) with a deeper look at the current public policy discussion, addressing potential paths forward and ways that we can work to better support the future of quality journalism.

Journalism that serves the information needs of communities is essential to an informed democracy. Addressing today's challenges demands thoughtful and forward-looking solutions that ensure the news ecosystem of the 21st century is vibrant, diverse and sustainable and that it continues to serve that critical societal need.

Our approach to the news ecosystem

Underpinning our work is a set of beliefs, first articulated in 2018 when we launched the Google News Initiative.

- 1** **Quality journalism matters:** Quality news reporting and journalistic content are essential to functioning societies. We want to ensure that users can readily discover it, and that news partners benefit from creating it.
- 2** **Financial stability requires innovation:** As they evolve their business models, our news partners are using cutting-edge tools to help them better understand and connect with their audiences, improve their products and power their technological infrastructure.
- 3** **The digital news ecosystem should remain open:** Preserving an open digital ecosystem that balances the needs of publishers and consumers is good for everyone. It's good for journalists, who can be discovered by the greatest number of readers; and it's good for readers, who have access to quality information from a more diverse set of voices than ever before.
- 4** **New technology presents new opportunities:** Changing news consumption habits require experimenting with new formats and innovative ways to distribute content that will generate reader engagement.
- 5** **Collaboration is key to our mutual success:** We believe partnering across the public and private sectors with news organizations and others to stimulate innovation will create a better future for news.

OUR COMMITMENT

“

Google cares deeply about journalism.

We believe in spreading knowledge to make life better for everyone. It's at the heart of Google's mission. It's the mission of publishers and journalists.

”

SUNDAR PICHAI
CEO, GOOGLE

The changing face of the news industry

Many news organizations are struggling today. Headlines describing consolidations, layoffs and closures are common, and the current COVID-19 crisis has made the situation more challenging.

At the same time, there are also important examples of new and promising outlets, as well as journalists who have published independently; these emerging publications are connecting with communities, representing historically underserved voices, investigating essential stories, and driving a new sense of hope for the future of this kind of journalism.

To chart a path beyond the current financial and business challenges facing news organizations, it is helpful to understand the evolution of the news industry in the 20th and 21st centuries. This section highlights a few key takeaways:

1. Innovation, intense competition and a changing cast of leading news outlets have been regular features of this history.
2. Because much journalism is difficult to generate revenue from directly, its production has historically been cross-subsidized by more lucrative parts of newspapers (e.g., classifieds).
3. Newspapers for decades made significant revenue as a function of their central role in many citizens' lives. Beyond presenting the day's news, newspapers were often the best source for specialized sports, finance and arts content; announcements of department store, grocery store and automotive sales; obituaries; and more. This mix offered something to most readers. And advertisers — who lacked significantly better alternatives — paid handsomely to reach these readers.
4. Many news organizations did not adapt to the evolution brought by the internet. Sometimes their owners would even strip out their most lucrative assets — such as classifieds — and specialized sections were broken out as well.
5. These approaches include new reader revenue models, subscriptions, nonprofit setups and online advertising.

To address the underlying problem — that many societies have failed to sufficiently support quality news reporting and journalism as the landscape has evolved — and to chart a path forward for the sustainable reporting and production of news, we need to understand these dynamics and find durable solutions.

The evolution of newspapers

Early newspapers were focused on political issues and events. Publishers made money directly from consumers, by selling newspapers to them. Over time, newspapers evolved to include more types of information that would interest consumers. They not only informed readers about what was going on in the world, but also introduced them to new fashions and products that could be found in advertisements adjacent to the main content. Over time, other paid content like grocery coupons and job listings lined the pages, and newspapers went from covering exclusively political news to adding niche areas like sports, business, markets, food, entertainment, arts

and travel. Newspapers became a virtual town square, making them required reading and a magnet for local and national advertisers.

The newspaper businesses described above made most of their money from advertising,¹ with classified ads accounting for 40% of revenue on average.² And according to the Progressive Policy Institute, “the real price of newspaper and periodical advertising increased by more than 60%” from 1982–2007.³

Radio and television challenge newspapers as the primary source of news

In the 1920s and 1930s, “the emergence of radio threatened newspapers’ stranglehold of local markets.”⁴ In response, newspaper executives launched a campaign to limit competition from radio. Under the Biltmore Agreement, “newspapers would stop their campaign against radio and reinstate radio listings if the major radio networks would limit their news offerings to a couple of short bulletins a day from the newspapers’ wire services.”⁵ That agreement ultimately fell apart, paving the way for robust competition from news radio.

Television, which became widely available after World War II, began to siphon consumer attention and ad dollars from newspapers. Daily newspaper circulation per capita, as well as the number of daily newspapers, has been declining in the U.S. since the late 1940s — coinciding with TV’s rise.⁶

TV quickly became the leading ad medium, with spending growing more than tenfold from \$12.3 million in 1949 to \$128 million in 1951, and nearly another tenfold to \$1 billion in 1955.⁷

The popularity of TV affected news directly: TV became — and remains — the primary source of news for many.⁸ (See following section, [The current state of the news business.](#))

The internet enables more content and upsets the marketplace for classifieds

In 1994 the World Wide Web began to look like the beginnings of the online world we know today, with the founding of services like Yahoo! and the proliferation of consumer-facing websites and services.⁹ The internet spawned an explosion of content, growing from 3,000 websites in 1994 to more than 1 billion 20 years later.¹⁰ Consumers could access information from a wide range of online sources, and advertisers had more options in reaching potential customers.

The internet introduced more competition for traditional newspapers, both for news reporting and the special interest and classified sections that drove their revenue. Beyond broader accessibility for traditional content online, new types of publishers emerged, including online-only news, social media and dedicated mobile apps, as well as websites that were tailored to commercial listings and special interests. These types of content, which had been bundled in newspapers to drive revenue, became available online, at low (or no) cost to readers.

Websites like Craigslist in the U.S., Gumtree in the U.K., and AutoScout24 in many parts of Europe competed with newspaper classifieds.¹¹ As News Corp Chairman Rupert Murdoch said over 15 years ago: “Certainly I don’t know anybody under 30 who has ever looked at a classified advertisement in a newspaper. With broadband they do more and more transactions online.”¹²

In short, this is far from just a large technology company phenomenon. For example, recent research shows the majority of advertising revenue lost by Australian newspaper publishers since 2002 went not to platforms like Google but rather to online search classified companies like REA Group, Domain, Seek and Carsales.¹³ Further research conducted by Accenture has shown a similar trend in multiple countries around the world.¹⁴ As noted in the Australia report:

92% of the decline (in advertising revenue) was from the loss of classifieds, which contributed \$1.5 billion of newspaper revenues in 2002, but just \$0.2 billion by 2018. Most of these classified revenues have been captured by online pure plays: digital-only businesses that target specific niches such as job advertisements, second-hand goods, or real estate listings.

Some forward-looking news businesses built or invested in their own classifieds businesses, and some have profited significantly from these investments.¹⁵ Others have acquired key properties. News Corp (AU) owns realtor.com, the largest real estate listings site.¹⁶ Axel Springer (DE) owns Stepstone, the largest job site.¹⁷

Special interest sections of newspapers once also drew subscribers and advertising spend as part of a compelling, bundled product. However, the appearance of special interest websites further chipped away at the profitability of these sections in print.¹⁸ A feature of the early web, all-things-to-all-people portals (like AOL and Prodigy) also met challenges as the web matured and spawned thousands of editorial products focused on niche audiences. Consumers can now find sports news on The Athletic; recipes on Epicurious or Bon Appétit; real estate listings on Zillow, Trulia, and Redfin; cars on Autotrader, Carvana, and more; jobs on LinkedIn and Monster.com.¹⁹ And the list goes on.

As discussed below in [The current state of the news business](#), in spite of the substantial innovation that has occurred across the news ecosystem — including the proliferation of digital mastheads and highly specialized online publications — data shows that news consumers continue to engage with offline news sources to a substantial extent. For instance, researchers identified offline news sources (television, radio and print) as being the main sources of news for the majority (52%) of the Australian population in 2020. Notably, these numbers further increased during the global pandemic, with television becoming the main source of news for the majority of Australians (51%) and offline sources overall increasing in favorability to become the main sources of news for 59% of the population. Print media declined over the same period from 6% to 3%.²⁰

Advertisers move their money

The internet enables not only more sources of information for consumers, but also more and better ads for businesses. With the advent of digital advertising, the number of competing spaces available for ads increased many times over. Marketers could now go beyond a handful of print and TV outlets to a world of new options. An increase in supply led to a drop in prices. The technology behind internet advertising also enables better personalized ads that more effectively reach those who are likely the most interested consumers. And digital advertising technologies measure the efficacy of ads on the internet in ways that could never be achieved in a print newspaper or on broadcast TV. These dynamics mean that although these ads are more effective for most retailers — especially small businesses — they cost less than other formats.²¹

The Progressive Policy Institute estimates that for every \$3 spent on digital ads, one would need to spend \$5 on print ads to achieve the same impact.²² From 2010–19, the price for digital ads fell 42% while the price for ads for print, TV and radio went up. The benefits of these lower prices flow directly to advertisers and consumers, while opening up new opportunities for small businesses. Historically, only the largest, wealthiest companies could advertise beyond their local communities. Through the web, small businesses can reach a global audience and better compete locally with national brands.

Case study: Strider Bikes

Reaching customers all across the globe is no easy task, but we've used digital tools to find customers from South Dakota to South Korea. Since founding Strider in 2007, we have sold 2.5 million bikes in 78 countries. We've been a Google Ads customer for over seven years, both in the U.S. and to help us reach our international customers, and it has fueled 30% of our online traffic. We've developed such confidence in these tools that it's allowed us to take bold and confident new steps with our company, which is really a testament to how well they've worked for us and how important they are to our business.

- Ryan McFarland, Founder, Strider Bikes, Rapid City, SD

Case study: Studley Flowers

We're a locally owned store that is deeply rooted in our community. Google Ads has provided us with a cost-effective way to compete with the national flower delivery brands and their larger ad budgets. Additionally, it provides us with a way to make sure that when locals search for flowers, we stay top of mind against those larger brands. Our investment in Google tools has certainly paid off, and we're excited to see what's next.

- Molly Meulenbroek, Manager & Co-Owner, Studley's Flower Gardens, Rochester, NH²³

Signs of success and driving toward sustainability online

For many publishers, the prospects for print ad revenue and direct sales of newspapers to customers declined from the early 2000s to the present day, building on the long-run trend since the 1940s, described above. However, many newspapers continued to rely on legacy print business models without evolving to digital.²⁴ As Rupert Murdoch said in a 2005 speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors: "As an industry, most of us have been remarkably, unaccountably complacent. Certainly, I didn't do as much as I should have after all the excitement of the late 1990s."²⁵ Publishers who did not adapt left themselves particularly vulnerable to economic downturns. Former Buffalo News editor and current Washington Post media columnist Margaret Sullivan explained:

*The country's financial crisis and the recession that followed meant bad things for the [news] industry. Print advertising, our lifeblood and largest revenue source, dried up. Circulation, the second-greatest source of revenue, fell. And there was no workable strategy for the digital future. When the Internet came along, years before the recession, to change the news media forever, newspaper management nationwide moved far too slowly and made one tactical error after another. In Buffalo, our rarely updated website was free, and digital advertising didn't begin to make up for the loss of print ads. As it turned out, despite great — if misguided — hope, it never would.*²⁶

Yet, there are publishers who appear to be more effectively navigating the transition to digital. Examples include The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal and the Globe and Mail in North America; Financial Times, Le Monde, The Guardian, Telegraph, El Pais and Bonnier in Europe; Estadao and La Nacion in Latin America; MediaCorp and Times of India in Asia. Publishers like Schibsted in Norway succeeded by diversifying and investing in new digital revenue streams early on.²⁷ And we have seen a rise in successful digital-only or hybrid outlets including Spain's El Diario, The Berkshire Eagle and ProPublica in the U.S., Mediapart in France, Infobae in Argentina, and Dennik N in Slovakia.²⁸

Today, many publishers are successfully using a range of strategies to grow their digital revenue, including paywalled content, podcast advertising, hyperlocal advertising and more (See following section, [What's next for news?](#)).

The current state of the news business

Today, people get their news from a breadth of sources, including TV (network, cable, local), websites, dedicated apps, social media, talk radio, satellite radio, email newsletters, podcasts and more.

TV: TV remains the most popular source of news in countries like France and Germany.²⁹ According to a 2020 report from the Pew Research Center, 45% of Americans say they get their political news primarily through TV, compared to 25% through a news website or app and 18% through social media.³⁰ However, the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism reports that the internet is gaining on TV, and in the U.K., the smartphone is now the main entry point to news (28%) overtaking TV (27%).³¹ In the U.S., TV viewing time is declining.³² Networks are responding by expanding their coverage on over-the-top delivery systems like AppleTV and Roku.³³

Online: Readers access news businesses in many ways in a digital environment. According to a recent Pew study, 68% percent of U.S. adults get news at least sometimes from news websites or apps.³⁴ Websites are just one digital publishing mechanism used by news publishers, with many developing and promoting mobile apps and developing content delivered via publisher-operated social media accounts.³⁵ The remaining visits are referred from a variety of online sources including search engines and news aggregators.³⁶ Whether people pay for access to online news varies by country.³⁷ Even in those countries where paid access is common, the majority of people did not make news payments last year. However, the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism reports that most news payments are now ongoing, as opposed to one-time payments.³⁸

Some marquee publications have continued to evolve and grow their revenues in areas like subscriptions. For example, in the second quarter of 2020, The New York Times's digital revenue exceeded its print revenue for the first time. The Times has 6.5 million subscriptions, of which 5.7 million are digital-only. Digital-only subscriptions to The Wall Street Journal increased 23% and now account for 63% of total circulation revenue.³⁹ Some large publications like The New York Times are also experimenting with premium paid content offerings (e.g., food, parenting and games).⁴⁰

Newspapers: As one example of the evolving dynamics for how people access news, over 50% of U.S. adults prefer to get their news via digital sources — like news websites, apps, social media or podcasts — whereas only 5% prefer print newspapers.⁴¹ Print newspapers had already fallen behind social media in 2018 as a news source in the U.S., according to Pew.⁴² Newspaper chains in the U.S. face ballooning pension obligations, driving McClatchy to file for bankruptcy protection in early 2020; research shows that legacy outlets have such established overhead and liabilities that they are able to spend a mere 12–20% of their budget on the actual creation of journalism (compared to 75% for independent digital outlets).⁴³ In the U.S. and other countries, struggling newspapers are cutting costs and consolidating. For example, Switzerland in recent years has seen publishers merge and create centralized newsrooms.⁴⁴

Local: Local news has been especially hard hit. As Pen America recently concluded in its “Losing the News” report:

*Local newspapers, TV stations, and radio stations are being bought and consolidated by hedge funds and media conglomerates and often subjected to relentless cost cutting — leading to coverage that is more national, less diverse, and, in some cases, more politically polarized. . . . Many of the communities traditionally underserved by legacy local media — communities of color, low-income communities, and communities in rural areas — are those most affected by its decline. Finding meaningful, scalable solutions to the local news crisis presents an opportunity to revamp the industry to better represent, reflect, and serve all Americans.*⁴⁵

Still, innovative models like hyperlocal publications have emerged, profiting from event calendars and local advertisers.⁴⁶ Additionally, some of the most promising success stories come from digital upstarts who have returned to the roots of local media — delivering news coverage for people who know about and are invested in their local communities — combined with a savvy reclamation of certain classifieds and services like real estate listings.⁴⁷

Social: Messaging apps continue to be a growing medium for sharing news in many countries.⁴⁸ WhatsApp has become a key network for discussing and sharing news in countries like Brazil, Malaysia and South Africa. Facebook Groups about news and politics have been popular in Turkey and Brazil but less so in countries such as Canada and Australia, while Facebook is a popular destination for news in Malaysia and the Philippines.⁴⁹ Much news content is discussed on Twitter, and in recent years platforms like TikTok have emerged as places where news organizations build their brands and share stories.⁵⁰

Podcasts: As the Reuters Institute notes, podcasts have proliferated significantly in the past few years. And although the pandemic impacted some listening routines, “The net impact on consumption seems to have been neutral, with 31% accessing a podcast in the last month.”⁵¹ Podcasts have been the go-to channel for many direct-to-consumer brands, and, increasingly, traditional advertisers are moving into the space.⁵²

What’s next for news?

As this section shows, one promising way forward is through innovating and adapting to the dynamics made possible by the internet. Among publishers that are developing innovative business models, including digital and subscription strategies, there are encouraging case studies that show the opportunities available. Barriers to rapid evolution remain, but increasingly publishers are identifying and understanding the ways their businesses can shift, including how to harness new technologies to better understand and address the needs of their communities and readers.

How Google helps news and supports innovation

"Google cares deeply about journalism. We believe in spreading knowledge to make life better for everyone. It's at the heart of Google's mission. It's the mission of publishers and journalists."⁵³

– Sundar Pichai

In this section, we describe how Google's mission to "organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful" underpins our approach to news. Our products connect users to the news that matters to them. Indeed, Google is one of the main sources of traffic for many news organizations, as we send more than 24 billion visits each month to news sites around the globe, for free.

Much has changed about the internet in the nearly 20 years since we launched Google News. In order to help address the evolving needs of news outlets, we have worked — and continue to work — together with those outlets, with publishers and with journalists to imagine new solutions and update existing approaches. For example, our work alongside news publishers to develop the Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP) framework led to an open source solution that helped to drive lower latency and a better browsing experience for users.

Another important way we have worked to support news is through our products and tools that allow publishers to make money. From Google's ad technologies — enabling news outlets to **retain the vast majority of every ad dollar** — to industry-specific tools like Subscribe with Google and News Consumer Insights, we want to help develop the traffic we drive into sustainable revenue streams. We also regularly pay to license news content for new and innovative products like our work in audio news for digital assistants and Google News Showcase.⁵⁴

Of course, more work is still required across society to ensure quality journalism is sustainable, and through the Google News Initiative we are providing support. We conclude this section by describing some of our partnerships and projects aimed at quickly developing, building and iterating on solutions that might help to reimagine revenue streams, enrich relationships with readers and communities, and elevate a diverse set of voices engaged in quality journalism. As the preceding section describes, there is no simple solution to address this challenge, but we believe new approaches, combined with thoughtful policy engagement (described in the next section, [How public policy can help](#)) provide a strong path forward.

How Google helps people find news online

From the early days of Search, Google has played an important role in the online ecosystem. Guided by our founding mission, Google provides an easy and effective point of connection between people who want to find information and the site owners and content creators who hope to be discovered and meet that information need.

When it comes to the news ecosystem, we provide links to information and services people may find useful. In Google Search, that can include links to news publishers. It may also include the online classifieds, real estate

listings, startups, recipe blogs and other sites that news publishers have historically competed with for revenue. Google News operates differently to account for the speed at which news is produced and consumed. But it serves the same role as Search, linking readers to an array of news-focused publishers. These can include local, regional and international sources, legacy titles, startups and digital natives.

This approach means Google sends people to publishers' news sites more than 24 billion times per month. That free traffic represents an opportunity for publishers to increase advertising revenue as well as to engage audiences, build relationships and convert readers into paying subscribers. Aiding in the discovery of news content and connecting users to it is how Google's platforms function in keeping with the essential dynamic of the open internet. It's also an important way we provide value to the news industry and to all publishers in the internet ecosystem.

Google News

In the early days of Google, links to news articles were often returned among search results, and news results were featured in a box with links to important or relevant news. However, in the aftermath of the attack of September 11, 2001, readers struggled to find links to timely, trustworthy news and information in Google Search. People around the world were trying to comprehend what had just happened, and its implications to public safety, foreign policy, financial markets and their own lives. But when they searched for information about the Twin Towers, our algorithms offered travel recommendations and links to the city's history.

There was a fundamental problem: Fresh news lacked hyperlinks, and Google's ranking depended on these links from other authors on the web. Krishna Bharat, a Google research scientist, created a new way to rank news content based on the premise that if Google could compute how many news sources were covering the underlying story at a given point in time, we could then estimate how important the story was.

This clustering technique, which grouped articles based on common textual overlaps, such as mentions of similar names or phrases, increased Google's ability to find and index breaking news content and scaled well across different languages. It also allowed us to group news articles by subject, providing visual structure and giving users access to diverse perspectives from around the world all in one place.

Evolution of Google News

We've continued to evolve and invest in new innovations for Google News since its launch in September 2002. In 2006 we launched new personalization features⁵⁵ that added article links based on an individual's selected interests. Our first local news experience launched in early 2008, allowing readers to discover stories from their community on the front page of Google News alongside the global and national headlines.

As the product's features grew, so did its reach. We began to expand internationally from the beginning, and by 2009, Google News had grown to 72 regional editions across 30 languages. We also launched Google Play Newsstand, which gave users a centralized online storefront to subscribe to their favorite publications. These changes have helped to grow the traffic that Google sends to news publishers every day as people are better able to quickly discover and link to the stories that matter to them.

Accelerated Mobile Pages

Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP) stands out among the work of the past 10 years as an example of how we partner across the ecosystem to understand and probe news publishers' challenges and guide innovation that works to address them.

The challenge: People find new ways to access online content

With the rise of mobile devices, apps and social platforms in the early 2010s, many industries — and news publishers in particular — were seeing a dramatic shift in consumer behavior.

Digital publishers faced challenges in offering compelling mobile experiences — at the time, mobile web pages took an average of 19 seconds to open. People abandoned at a high rate and became reluctant to visit slow-loading sites. Publishers had to learn not only how to design content for mobile, but also how to evolve their business models to account for these behaviors. The simultaneous rise of social platforms increased demands on publisher time, splitting their focus between developing for the web and social.

Publishers partner with Google to create a standard approach

In response to these challenges and mobile users' changing expectations, new platform-specific content consumption formats emerged on news and social media platforms. While they allowed for consistent user experience on a particular platform, they didn't work across platforms and also raised questions for publishers related to business model control and branding.

Already strapped for resources, publishers told us they'd be unable to keep up if each company invented its own new format. We partnered with a group of publishers across the industry to develop an open standard that eventually became the AMP framework. In response to publisher pain points, AMP coalesced around three key goals: ensure the open web remains competitive with closed-network proprietary consumption experiences; ensure the control of branding and monetization for the publisher; and ensure that a broad range of publishers could be successful. This new approach would democratize great mobile experience by enabling all publishers, no matter their size, technical capabilities or budget, to ship highly performant pages that rivaled the best on the web.

AMP evolves to meet evolving needs

As with most technical innovations, AMP has evolved over time in response to feedback from the community that uses it. Early improvements to analytic and paywall support led to more ad networks adding AMP support. By 2020, 240 different ad networks and 80 analytics providers supported AMP. We also worked to find solutions to challenging questions. For example, we needed to handle publisher URLs in a way that was compatible with the privacy-preserving aspects of AMP. This led to work with browsers to enable sharing of canonical publisher URLs and a new technology called "signed exchanges" that could meet privacy and speed goals while hosting on publisher URLs. Some publishers complained that only AMP content could appear in the Top Stories carousel feature in Google Search. To address this, in 2018 we set out to bring everything we learned from AMP to the rest of the web, establishing web standards for the features we built into the AMP framework. This work culminated in our 2020 announcement around page experience signals that provides a path for all web content to be included in the Top Stories carousel.⁵⁶

In its first two years, AMP grew from a tiny open-source project with just two contributors to one with more than 700 individuals contributing over 10,000 code commits running on many millions of websites. As an open-source project with such broad impact, AMP required an alternative governance model. Born as a partnership with a number of news publishers, AMP was initially led by a Technical Steering Committee with representatives from Google and other companies that have committed resources to the project. We also established a separate Advisory Committee to represent outside constituencies, including the publishers and platforms who use AMP. In 2019, we transitioned the project out of Google to the OpenJS Foundation, which was selected because it could help maintain the project's identity, technical focus and product direction.

Expanded sourcing and original reporting

For some time, news publishers had to complete an application and undergo a guideline and content policy compliance review to be included in Google News products and services. This meant we missed some important outlets who may not have known about or completed the application process. In 2019, we were able to end this process as improvements to our rater guidelines and algorithms meant we could better detect authoritative, timely news content. Today, publishers don't need to proactively apply, which means we can include more small and local news outlets in Google News while continuing to maintain a high bar for relevance and authority.

Original reporting

A concern publishers have often shared with us was that they would spend time and money investigating and reporting on an important topic, only to see other outlets' later reporting of the same issue (sometimes even quoting from their material) rank higher in Search.

Indeed, in today's news landscape, original reporting doesn't always stay in the spotlight for long. Notable journalism generates follow-up coverage from other publications; this has long been the practice in the news industry, and journalists will continue to build on each others' work. But some players in the digital ecosystem simply rehash existing coverage. Trying to address this practice at internet scale is difficult. In more benign cases, many outlets cover a single news development, all publishing around the same time. This can make it harder for readers to find the reporting that broke the news.

To address this problem, in 2019 we made ranking updates and published changes to our search rater guidelines to help us better recognize original reporting, show it more prominently in Search and ensure it stays there longer.⁵⁷ This enables readers who want the latest news to find the story that started it all and benefits publishers by connecting more readers to their original reporting.

Google broadens opportunities for monetization and analytics

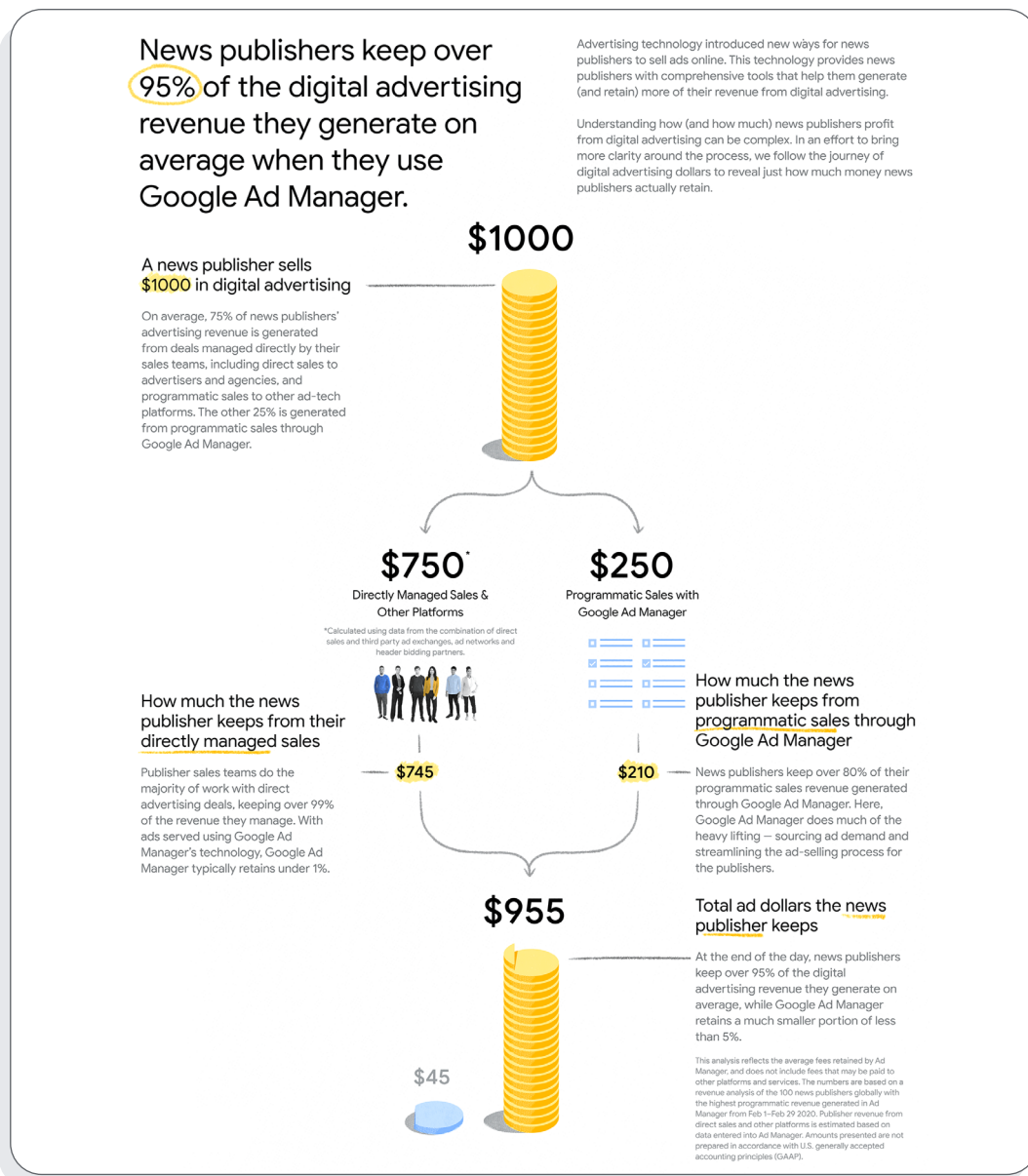
Beyond boosting our efforts to help people discover and visit news sites, we have also worked to augment the opportunities for news publishers to make money from this traffic and the relationships they form with their audiences. These include broad-use tools analyzing and monetizing traffic as well as those like Subscribe with Google that we designed specifically to serve the needs of news publishers.

As noted in [The Changing Face of the News Industry](#) above, while news organizations might have once been one of only a handful of options for advertisers, the internet has triggered growth in advertising opportunities and inventory. Google's cutting-edge advertising technology is used by news businesses to sell ads on their websites and apps to advertisers. This technology enables publishers to retain the vast majority of the digital advertising revenue generated from the sale of advertising inventory. Below we describe some of the details of these advertising solutions and the more industry-tailored tools that we believe can be a key part of publishers' success.

Advertising services

Every year, we pay out billions of dollars to the publishing partners in our ad network. Google advertising products and services help websites and apps of all sizes make money online. That includes thousands of news publishers around the world who use Google Ad Manager to run digital advertising on their websites and apps.

We work hard to ensure our platform helps publishers succeed. In terms of profitability for publishers, we recently looked at the 100 news publishers globally with the highest programmatic revenue generated in Ad Manager.⁵⁸ We then ran an analysis focused on the average fees retained by Ad Manager across those publishers' digital advertising businesses.



We found that, on average, **news publishers keep more than 95 percent of the digital advertising revenue they generate** when they use Ad Manager to show ads on their websites.⁵⁹ While the lion's share of the revenue goes to publishers, a large portion of the revenue that Google receives funds the cost of running, operating and improving the technology, including development and maintenance of data centers around the world, advancements in machine learning and product innovations that increase publisher revenue and contribute to the open web.

Publishers run their digital advertising businesses with Ad Manager in two primary ways: directly managed sales (including direct sales to advertisers and deals with other ad tech platforms) and programmatic sales with Ad Manager. The majority of news publishers' digital advertising revenue comes from ad sales managed by their own teams. When news publishers sell inventory via direct sales or other ad tech platforms, they can use our ad serving technology in Ad Manager to deliver the ad on their website. When ads are sold this way, news publishers keep over 99 percent of the revenue.

The other way Ad Manager helps news publishers is by enabling programmatic ad sales. Programmatic ad sales allow publishers to sell more ad space than ever before, to millions of advertisers, many of which they would not have access to without this technology.

When news publishers sell ad space programmatically with Ad Manager, they have access to robust tools that allow them to manage the ads that appear on their site. For example, publishers can input the minimum price of their ad space, control the brands that can advertise and indicate the types of ads they want to show, among other preferences. Ad Manager then finds the highest paying advertiser that meets the publisher's requirements. When an ad is shown programmatically through Ad Manager, news publishers keep over 80 percent of the revenue.

AdSense and other services

Google's AdSense is another product that offers a suite of monetization and analytics tools that help publishers maximize revenue opportunities. More than 2 million small and midsize publishers use AdSense to automate display advertising and monetize their traffic. Designed to remove the complexity from the digital advertising process, AdSense requires minimal effort to automatically fill ad inventory on both desktop and mobile and serve as an easy source of revenue for time-pressed publishers, allowing them to focus on producing quality journalism. At the same time, publishers retain control over the ads that appear on their sites. AdSense filters allow publishers to block entire ad networks, ad categories or individual advertisers.

Google Analytics

Although not designed for news specifically, Google Analytics is another tool publishers can use to get the most out of their online traffic. Google Analytics gives news publishers free tools to better understand how their audiences are engaging with content across their sites and apps. News publishers can use insights to take action, such as improving their website performance, optimizing their content or informing their advertising strategies.

Funding Choices

Funding Choices is a flexible messaging tool that publishers can use to communicate with their audiences to gather consent or opt-out requests as required by regulations like the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA). Publishers also use Funding Choices to show customized messages to readers using an ad blocker, inviting them to enable ads or choose another way to fund the content, such as signing-up for a subscription, to recover the lost revenue.

Subscribe with Google

Many of the Google tools publishers use were created for broad use across the web. But we also invest in products and services focused specifically on the needs of publishers. In 2017, we began working with publishers to design a better suite of tools for buying, managing and benefiting from news subscriptions.⁶⁰ Six months later, we launched [Subscribe with Google](#), a product feature that makes it easier for people to subscribe and maintain access to news publications through their Google account.⁶¹ By the end of 2020, 107 publishers in 28 countries had implemented these tools. Since launching in 2018, this technology has generated over 400,000 new paid subscribers for our news partners. In the six months leading up to March 2021, partners grew their subscription base by 100,000.

Subscribe with Google helps publishers drive critical consumer revenue by making it easier to turn casual readers into loyal subscribers. For these subscriptions, the publisher retains 95 percent of the revenue (85 percent when sold in the publisher's Android app). They also own the customer relationship so they can drive further engagement. Once subscribed, readers can access the eligible paywalled content whenever they're signed in to their Google account. In our news results on Search, we give greater prominence to relevant results from sources to which the user is subscribed, and we've seen a 25 percent increase in clicks to publishers' sites when the "From your subscription" module appears.

Case study: Grupo Reforma

When we first learned about Subscribe with Google, it felt natural for us to be a launch partner, as it fit with our previous innovations to meet users' demands and changing habits. We began implementing Subscribe with Google because the product makes it easier for our readers to become subscribers and stay engaged with our journalism. People who arrive at our hard paywall can subscribe in just a few clicks and avoid a lengthy registration process — all with a sense of confidence and security in the payment method. Those subscribers can also access our content more easily. As long as our subscribers are logged into their Google account, they can enjoy our journalism anywhere — whether they're switching from our mobile apps to our desktop site or searching for the latest news directly in Google Search.

In March 2019, we officially launched Subscribe with Google on our sites, and since then, we've been optimistic based on the new data we've seen. Over a third of all our subscriptions — 37% — come from Subscribe with Google. Subscribe with Google has dramatically simplified the overall subscription experience: 43% more readers become subscribers when using Subscribe with Google than when using our traditional process. We have also found that these subscribers read more of our journalism — they have 13% more pageviews on our sites, which we suspect is because they're able to easily stay logged in through their Google account.

— Juan Nava, Digital Circulation Manager, Grupo Reforma, Mexico

Case study: Le Monde

Subscribe with Google is now a key lever in our overall reader revenue focus. It's helped us improve our conversion rate and we believe our younger readers value Subscribe with Google features, especially the ability to get more Le Monde content on Google surfaces and the ability to use Google login.

— Julien Laroche Joubert, Chief Digital Officer, Le Monde, France

Content partnerships and licensing initiatives

In addition to partnering with news outlets to better support them through our products and revenue sharing (e.g., through ads and subscriptions) in many cases Google provides direct support. For example, in products like Google News Showcase we pay publishers to license their work, or for other added value, such as editorial curation and in some cases to give our users access to certain paywalled content. The payments in these commercial arrangements are a key way that we provide value to news organizations as they develop new experiences and connections with their readers. The focus of many of these deals are smaller and emerging publishers who are often highly invested in new technologies and discovering different ways to build relationships with their readers. We also work with large national and international publishers, who help lead on this kind of innovation.

The payments we make to publishers through our partnerships and licensing deals — like those described in this section — can help to address some of the immediate revenue challenges these organizations⁶² face. However, there is no single solution for sustainability; some organizations may benefit more from work we are doing to help small and midsize publishers develop key technology skills and approaches to make the transition to digital. Below we discuss some of these projects, which are focused on developing long-term sustainable approaches to revenue and growth.

Google News Showcase

In June 2020 we announced Google News Showcase, a program that benefits publishers and readers through an enhanced storytelling experience. Readers get more insight on the stories that matter to them with curated story panels across Google services that let them go deeper into more complex stories, stay informed and explore different issues and interests. Participating news publishers gain increased revenue through monthly payments from Google, including for access to certain paywalled content to provide our users free access to select stories.⁶³

Before the announcement we conducted significant pre-launch outreach and experimentation with publishers.⁶⁴ The program comprises two primary elements:

- We enable publishers to better present their editorial decisions and create a distinctive voice by giving them more control over the presentation and context of their articles previews in our products. This helps readers to identify and distinguish publications they like and engage with these more deeply.
- We pay publishers for this curation work, and pay them a license fee to give Google users access to a small amount of the publication's paywalled content. We hope that providing readers this access helps deepen their relationship with publishers whose editorial point of view they find compelling.

News Showcase does not involve payment in exchange for displaying links to publisher content — or for just the very short extracts of content such as you might find in a preview or headline. We have expressly avoided this because a system that involves negotiating payment for links or very short extracts would directly conflict with the public's interest in being able to discover the vast “knowledge potential [of] a search engine”⁶⁵ and for users to freely share that information with others, via link or quotation. (Indeed, journalists are well familiar with the linking-and-quoting method of information discovery and sharing both to direct readers to other stories and sources and to quote statements and facts.)

Payments made under News Showcase are made in exchange for publishers' valuable expertise, editorial curation of panels that are presented to users, and beyond-the-paywall access to certain premium content on the publishers' site. Showcase agreements are grounded in a commercial exchange of value.

News Showcase is backed by our recent \$1 billion investment in news around the world. Globally, there are now more than 800 news publications in News Showcase in over a dozen countries including Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, India, Japan, and the U.K., with discussions underway in a number of other countries. Over 90% of our publication partners are considered local, regional or community newspapers. As the program develops, we plan to expand the features and enhancements to help publishers engage readers in new and deeper ways.⁶⁶

Innovating for long-term sustainability

As discussed [previously](#), Google has for decades worked closely with the news industry to better understand how our platforms and products interact with online news. In building our products and licensing programs we have sought to provide the best and most useful experience both for news publishers and the people who use our products to find information.

We have also invested considerably in the future of news, working closely with our partners to support the evolution and long-term sustainability of the news ecosystem. We have experimented with different technologies and approaches while in some cases providing direct financial support and in others providing technical expertise, trainings or tools.

Our work has evolved over time to focus on three key areas:

- **Evolving business models:** Helping to improve financial sustainability of news organizations in a digital future through programs, products and partnerships focused on critical needs. These include reader revenue, advertising, data and emerging models for local news.
- **Elevating quality journalism:** Helping the news ecosystem in developing new skills and capabilities that enable newsrooms to create high-quality journalism, combat misinformation and build a more diverse, equitable and inclusive future for news.
- **Empowering news organizations through innovation:** Helping to build innovation culture in the news ecosystem by enabling news organizations around the world to demonstrate and test new ideas, and partnering with news organizations to expand their journalism to new formats.

Google News Initiative

Much of this work now falls under the umbrella of the Google News Initiative (GNI), which launched in 2018. Since then, the GNI has worked with more than 6,250 news organizations of all sizes from around the world. In the core area of sustainability and evolution of business models, programs such as our [Digital Growth Program](#) help publishers tackle specific business challenges, like digital subscriptions, advertising and data, while free tools like [News Consumer Insights](#) have helped thousands of newsrooms in nearly 130 countries grow their audiences online. In other critical areas, the GNI has worked with organizations such as Borealis Philanthropy to promote equity and diversity and First Draft to combat misinformation. To spur innovation, GNI has run six regional [Innovation Challenges](#),⁶⁷ funding [126 projects](#) in 40 countries.

Our [GNI Impact Report](#), which was published in late 2020 provides a view of our work so far, and includes regional and global data about GNI programs.⁶⁸ It also describes our learnings and some of our successes.

In this section we highlight a few examples for each of the pillars below, but please see the full report for a more comprehensive overview.

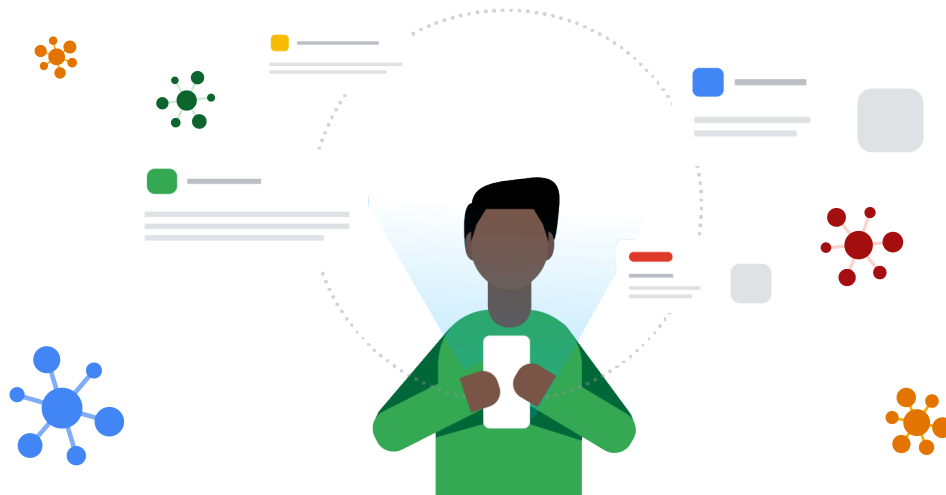
Evolving business models — digital-native news models for local

In 2019, the GNI launched the Local Experiments Project, partnering with news organizations to create new digital-only news sites in small to midsize communities with limited sources of local, independent journalism. With four sites launched in the U.S. and U.K. so far ([Mahoning Matters](#), [Longmont Leader](#), [The Oaklandside](#) and [Peterborough Matters](#)), these initiatives seek to test product approaches and business models that have been used successfully by digital-first innovators and validate whether they can be codified and replicated by others.

The Local Experiments program also seeks to turn its learnings into scalable technology solutions whenever they are shown to be beneficial and can be reproduced. The more tools that are available to support these effective ways of running a news business, the more likely they are to be broadly adopted. We continue to work with partners like Village Media and TownNews to develop technology platforms and tools that support the needs of local news publishers. For example, this year we committed an additional \$2 million in funding to Automattic (the makers of WordPress) to expand [Newspack](#), a fast, secure, low-cost content management system tailor-made to the needs of small newsrooms. This renewed investment will help expand the current cohort of partners beyond North America to Europe.

In addition, we've partnered with industry association LION Publishers and the University of North Carolina on [Project Oasis](#), a research effort to better understand the digital-native news landscape and study the emerging models and success factors for digital coverage of local news. To make this kind of learning as widely available as possible, we will use the results to develop tested, sustainable practices digital news entrepreneurs can use to strengthen their digital business models and inform their strategies. In January 2021, as a follow-on to this project, LION Publishers announced that the Tiny News Collective would aim to launch 500 new local organizations over the next three years via its all-in-one business and publishing platform. Google supports this goal by funding a Product Manager at LION, who will design the training and onboarding experience for new publishers.⁶⁹





Insights from responding to the COVID-19 pandemic

Journalism Emergency Relief Fund

In addition to investing in programs addressing the long-term challenges for news, we've also responded to moments of acute need for the ecosystem. In April 2020, we launched the [Journalism Emergency Relief Fund](#) (JERF) to help address the financial hardship that gripped local news ecosystems amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through this initiative, we provided \$40 million in funding to more than 5,700 newsrooms in 115 countries.⁷⁰

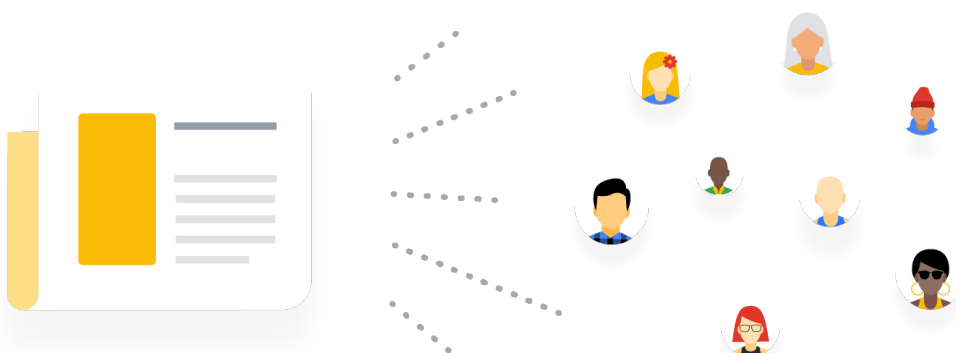
Recipients have applied these funds in diverse and creative ways, from ensuring basic reporting needs and providing emergency stipends to allow reporters to cover the crisis to driving audience engagement and generating subscriptions.

As part of these efforts, we uncovered several key insights about small and midsize news publishers:

- Advertising continues to be the sole source of revenue for most JERF recipients, with 50% claiming to be totally advertising dependent.
- Fewer than 30% of recipients operate some form of a paywall, while fewer than 18% rely on community contributions or memberships.
- 60% of recipients are planning to diversify their revenue streams by developing subscription, membership or contribution models.
- Around 20% of publishers told us they are prioritizing a need for cultural change that includes a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion as well as organizational and business management.

\$100M Direct Marketing Spend

Beyond the support via JERF, in March of 2020 we committed to a \$100 million marketing spend. And in June 2020 in partnership with the Local Media Association and Local Media Consortium, we launched a \$15 million marketing campaign to "Support Local News."⁷¹



Elevating quality journalism — focus on diversity, equity and inclusion

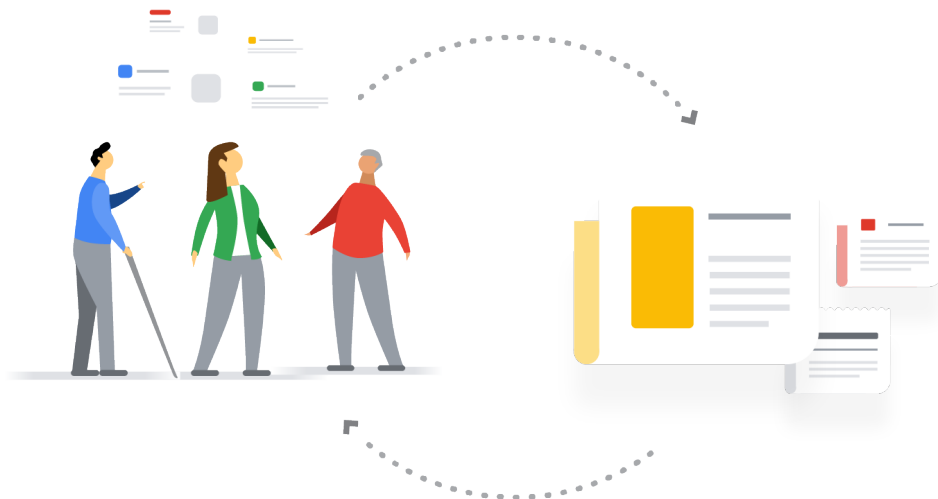
Every day, Google connects millions of people to news sources around the world. But as the proliferation of false or misleading information online persists, connecting users to authoritative information is both in the business interests of news organizations and critical to Google's mission. To this end, we've focused on ways to support news organizations in making this kind of journalism available to users, partnered with industry organizations to combat misinformation, and invested in efforts to improve media literacy.

Journalist trainings to-date

Through both in-person sessions and an online Training Center, we help journalists develop knowledge and skills in digital journalism across a range of topics — from harnessing large datasets to enhance storytelling to verification of videos and images to an introduction to machine learning. Since launching a global journalist training program through the News Lab in 2015, we've trained 415,000 journalists in-person, including:

- **1,440** news organizations
- **447** universities
- **2.2 million** online trainings through the GNI [Training Center](#)
- The GNI Training Center provides free online editorial training courses and resources for journalists. This list shows the number of people trained each year:
 - **2015:** 150K users
 - **2016:** 465K users
 - **2017:** 263K users
 - **2018:** 220K users
 - **2019:** 365K users
 - **2020:** 575K users
 - **2021 (Jan-June):** 321K users

(May 2015 – June 2021)



Media literacy

Across several key initiatives and partnerships, Google has contributed over \$45 million to support media literacy since 2018. Some examples of this work include:

- **In March 2018**, Google.org (Google's philanthropic arm) launched a global initiative to support media literacy around the world. Through this funding, we've supported efforts focused particularly on helping younger audiences discern fact from fiction. We've augmented these original Google.org grants with additional funding to support media literacy programs across the globe.
- **In April 2021** we helped launch DigiMENTE, a media literacy program for SPLatAm with support from the Google News Initiative, with a new curriculum targeting misinformation for teachers and students (age 12–17).
- **In March 2021**, Google [helped launch the European Media & Information Fund](#) to strengthen media literacy skills, support independent fact-checking and combat misinformation. The Fund is managed by the European University Institute, the European Digital Media Observatory and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, with Google exempt from all decision making.⁷²

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI)

The quality of news and information ecosystems depends on how well it serves the diversity of its audiences. We're committed to working with news and industry organizations to improve the availability of news for underrepresented groups and ensure that newsrooms and their storytelling reflect the communities they serve. As one example, we awarded nearly \$6 million in GNI Innovation Challenge funding to local media projects focused on elevating underrepresented audiences and promoting DEI within their journalism. We have also worked to help launch [Project Exponent](#), an incubator that collaborates with a partner alliance of private, public and government organizations to address worldwide issues through a gender lens.



Empowering news organizations through innovation

As we work with publishers to navigate challenges for elevating quality journalism and evolving business models, it's clear that innovative thinking and approaches will be vital in developing and scaling solutions for the digital future. We've confirmed in our learnings with partners what may seem obvious: The shift to digital can't happen overnight. It takes months and even years of hard work to attract and develop digitally minded talent, adopt data-driven thinking and build an audience-first culture.

Through the Google News Initiative, we've invested in efforts to accelerate innovation in the news ecosystem, enabling news organizations around the world to demonstrate and test new ideas and innovating technology to make quality journalism more sustainable. We've also partnered with news organizations to find ways to expand their journalism to new content formats. There is still significant work to do, but two examples highlight how we combine our own expertise with that of the newsrooms we hope to help.

Innovation Challenge

The GNI Innovation Challenge is an application-based program open to organizations of all sizes that look to produce original journalism. Since 2018, we've initiated six regional editions of the Challenges program, covering North America, the Middle East and Africa, Latin America and Asia Pacific. Each Challenge is designed around a region-specific theme, enabling diverse approaches that publishers have emphasized are needed to address unique needs in each region.⁷³

Concert Local

Informed by the challenges local news publishers face in attracting national advertising campaigns, the GNI partnered with Vox Media to develop Concert Local, an advertising marketplace that brings together trusted local news publishers for marketers. This new product offers national brands access to local news publishers' digital audiences at scale, while providing a new revenue stream to fund local journalism.

A key motivation behind the partnership is to iterate and improve Concert Local over time. We aim to share what is learned, so it can serve as a model for advertising innovation in local news.

How public policy can help

Throughout this paper, we have noted the critical role that quality journalism serves in an informed democracy. As described by Professor Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, director of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism: “independent, professional journalism helps people stay informed, take part in political processes, and engage with their local communities, just as it can help hold power to account and reduce corruption and malfeasance in both the public and private sector.”⁷⁴ This type of journalism is sometimes referred to as “public interest journalism,” a shorthand that we will use in this section. Without independent, public interest voices, we risk having harmful misinformation, as well as ill-informed or polarizing opinions, driving too much of our civic discourse. Without public interest reporting focused on serving communities’ needs, we also risk losing elements of a shared social fabric that underlies neighborhoods, towns and even larger metropolitan areas.

The sections above describe the changing face of the news industry and factors that have contributed to challenges for quality journalism today. We also outline some of the ways we have worked alongside journalists, editors and publishers to support their critical work. Through these engagements — and across myriad programs and efforts — we have learned that there is no single solution to this challenging problem.

Just as local conditions vary from country to country, so do the types of publishers and the opportunities to build out or grow new outlets. Transitioning existing outlets’ business models will require new approaches and may not always succeed. And while those transitions are underway, we must ensure that a new cohort of diverse voices can flourish along with reporting on underrepresented communities.

While there is no single solution, there are many areas of promise, and a variety of approaches may be required. In this section we share some learnings from our work partnering with publishers and other experts on the Google News Initiative and our products.

We hope these ideas may inform a richer debate, and we are keen to come together with governments, civil society, academia, publishers, journalists, citizens and others to support effective public policy.

Key principles

We believe that any public policy approach should acknowledge that **fostering a sustainable future for public interest news is a shared goal and responsibility**. Given the significant value that this kind of journalism provides to society as a whole — whether by informing the community about important developments and events, to holding democratic institutions to account — all of society’s key participants should be encouraged to support the continuing viability of the news ecosystem. This includes consumers and publishers, advertisers, the wider business and corporate sectors, civil society and governments.

Beyond that underlying shared responsibility, our experiences working with publishers have underscored some first-order questions that can help inform and shape policy development:

1. ***Will an intervention — or combination of interventions — better serve consumers through supporting quality journalism and public interest news?*** Measures purely designed to support specific companies, rather than journalism more broadly, could fail to address root causes of the traditional newspaper industry’s problems and, in doing so, fail to reverse the decline. Policy moves that are aimed at providing financial breathing space for publishers will be more effective when accompanied by measures that emphasize innovation and the development of new business models and enable news providers to better understand their readers.

2. ***Will a policy solution act in a neutral manner and avoid partisan outcomes?*** State action should not favor particular outlets that provide favorable coverage or amplify political messages; public benefits should come with public responsibility to avoid state action encouraging or requiring news media organizations to alter their reporting or coverage for partisan ends. Maintaining a free, independent and diverse press is an essential requirement to support healthy, functioning public interest journalism.
3. ***Will a policy have a generative impact, and, in particular, will it fuel change and innovation rather than act as a fund transfer that does little for long-term sustainability and innovation?*** To this end, it is important to consider whether interventions will support innovations that will help journalism evolve its business model and become independently sustainable in the future. A counterpart to this question is whether policy “fixes” will materially diminish the quality, breadth or scope of the ecosystem; it is imperative that in an effort to attend to the needs of some of the most powerful and vocal outlets, harm not be done to less-powerful or less-vocal sectors, such as small local publications or digital natives, or inadvertently cause more media consolidation and less diversity.
4. ***Does a policy solution undermine the mechanisms that make the web work as an open ecosystem?*** We need to bear in mind the context in which the news industry operates: namely, a wider ecosystem that has led to unprecedented innovation, a proliferation of diverse voices and viewpoints, and an ease and efficiency in access to information that citizens have never before experienced. Any “fix” that supports journalism and the news ecosystem should not undermine the engine of this progress (such as proposals to force payment for simply linking to news websites).

Avoiding counterproductive policy approaches

Some policy discussions today begin from an inaccurate premise that modern tech companies steal or use news publishers’ content in ways that undermine their businesses. When it comes to Google services, every news organization has control over whether and how their headlines and links appear in Google Search and Google News. Most welcome the fact that people can find links to their publications in Google search results — but if a news site (or any other site for that matter) doesn’t want to show up or wants to control what is shown on Google, they can choose to do so. They can do that whether their site is paywalled or free to view. Google does not “steal” or “use” news publisher content — we link to it. Publishers decide to be included in Google Search because they want to be found by a broader audience. In fact, publishers often raise alarm bells when policymakers propose outcomes that would actually limit the 24 billion visits a month that Google drives to publishers.

These same policy discussions often also allege that tech companies stole all or most of the advertising revenue that “rightfully belongs” to publishers, thus causing publishers’ current difficulties. Arguments that focus on the alleged theft of ads usually elide the more complete and accurate history outlined above in [The changing face of the news industry](#). This history shows — among other facts — that over time advertisers have chosen to spend more of their money advertising across digital channels, where campaigns have greater reach, more precision, and more measurable results. (At the same time, many companies request that their ads not appear adjacent to content that they feel may not be “brand safe,” a practice that if done with too broad a brush can keep their ads from showing on news content.⁷⁵) Additionally, news publishers have increasingly faced competition that has chipped away at their bottom line, from radio and TV to cable and satellite. The competition in online classifieds and the growth of niche outlets has drawn away readers of the “for sale,” sports, business and fashion sections. This leaves legacy news outlets with little beyond their core public interest journalism. While this reporting is important to society, it is harder to monetize now as other content and news providers draw away or compete for the same readers.⁷⁶

Lastly, building off of these shaky foundations, some advocate for seemingly simple approaches like extractive and counterproductive “link taxes”: forcing online services to pay for linking to news websites. An approach that involves negotiating payment for links or very short extracts directly conflicts with the public’s interest in being able to link freely and quote. Just as it would be absurd to require a person to negotiate a license to share a link to a local restaurant, this type of tax on a search engine makes no sense. Such a tax would harm users by limiting the breadth and type of content they could find to publishers who managed to strike deals with search engines. This is not just Google’s view. Many respected voices raised similar concerns about this type of approach. These include Sir Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the World Wide Web, who noted that link taxes are counter to public policy, “breaching a fundamental principle of the web by requiring payment for linking between certain content online.”⁷⁷ The Wikimedia Foundation also noted serious objections, explaining that a law that would “force some internet platforms to pay for linking to content by news publishers and displaying snippets thereof [. . .] directly contradicts a fundamental principle of the open Web.”⁷⁸

A path forward

Based on our experience, we offer a few areas for further discussion that we think could inform the public policy debate. We believe a hybrid model that touches several areas will be the most successful in working toward a sustainable ecosystem that supports public interest journalism, one that combines the convening power of government and facilitation of market-driven solutions, as well as innovation funding and durable financial support.

We’ve seen firsthand that collaboration, investment in innovation and embracing the benefits of the web can support publishers through this period of transition.

Convening power of government

Government could begin to help address the challenges discussed in this report by using its convening power to build institutions and systems that promote innovation and share good practice. The 2019 Cairncross Inquiry in the U.K. touched on this concept with its proposal for an Institute for Public Interest News.⁷⁹ While the specifics will vary by jurisdiction, through the [Google News Initiative](#) we have shown the potential for this kind of collaboration. Such centers of excellence have a number of important roles — in particular fostering support for and innovation in local news operations.

Providing an environment for sharing good practice

Sharing of best practice is especially important for the smallest newsrooms, where the limiting factor is often a lack of resources, not expertise, and pooling tips and techniques could be a great benefit to overworked journalists.

If this information and know-how is contained within local silos, the result is a massive overlapping of investment in capability-building and updated digital infrastructure. All news players have similar basic needs such as a Content Management System, a paywall solution or Customer Relationship Management. With government support, multi-stakeholder, national, regional or supranational institutions could provide a broader basis for sharing good practice across the industry — including existing open solutions — as well as facilitating experimentation and measurement.

Programs we have offered via the Google News Initiative have sought to address this need. Beyond GNI, groups like the [International News Media Association](#) (INMA), the [World Association of News Publishers](#) (WAN-IFRA), the [Local Media Association](#) (LMA) the [European Journalism Centre](#), the [Independent Community News Network](#) (ICNN), the [Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism](#), as well as NGOs like [Luminate](#), [Thomson Foundation](#) and [BBC Media Action](#) have shown how this kind of knowledge sharing and support can be very effective.

Academic and consumer research

Additional research will help to better understand the ways news businesses can adapt to changes in market conditions and changing consumer needs. Direct consumer research will help publishers better ascertain, for example, what citizens expect from journalism or what a successful subscription model might look like. This kind of research is at the heart of our News Consumer Insights and Realtime Content Insights tools, which are available for free via the Google News Initiative.⁸⁰

Beyond these, two other successful programs include Oxford University's [Reuters Institute Digital News Project](#) (which is funded in part by the Google News Initiative) and the U.S.-based Pew Research Center. Both have sought to understand and address issues around diversity, monetization and how to support reporters amid recent technological changes.

Business and journalism training

A neutral industry or government body could help develop, disseminate and share business and digital skills training and information. News organizations themselves emphasize the importance of this. We have worked to deploy these kinds of training via Google's [News Lab](#) (through the GNI), which has provided newsroom-focused training to a number of newspaper groups, and [GNI's Digital Growth Program](#), which aims to help with business-focused training.

Innovation funding and durable financial support

We have regularly heard that it will be essential to scale resources to foster the success of lean organizations.⁸¹ Proposals for the allocation of government funding could focus on promoting innovation. Whereas broader models of funding tend to support and maintain existing news outlets, innovation models focus on transformation and can help to develop solutions focused on a sustainable future. Funds like these could be combined with a targeted focus on areas with little or no current local news provision, for example. Such funding would be most effective when combined with goals and metrics and combined with an independent oversight board to ensure independence from political interference.

Our experience also shows that openness and speed of execution are key to successfully making a real world impact. Additionally, funding may be most effective if it is:

- Allocated according to a set of measurable and clearly defined criteria;
- Provided alongside clear goals and measurable metrics;
- Funded with a budget sufficient to make a difference but dispersed enough to support a diverse range of recipients;
- Geared toward fostering outputs that might benefit the entire industry rather than just specific publishers; and
- Subject to independent oversight.

News innovation funds

Whereas blanket subsidies can entrench the status quo, innovation funds can encourage and incentivize the kind of advances that are necessary for quality journalism to thrive. As one example, in France the Google-backed €60 million Fonds pour l'Innovation Numérique de la Press (FINP) — or Digital Innovation Press Fund — was created in 2013 through a collaboration with mainstream press stakeholders to finance innovative projects for IPG titles. Both publishers and the culture minister praised an application-and-follow-up process that helped to unlock innovation and generated new business model approaches (e.g., video strategy and a first [premium](#) model for Le Figaro, [La Matinale](#) news app from Le Monde to experiment with a new way of consuming news, etc.)

Governments and government inquiries in Italy, Sweden, Norway, Australia and the U.K. have created — or raised the possibility of creating — innovation funds. At a time of economic stress, innovation funding can be an important lifeline that provides existing publishers with the headroom to experiment and also gives new entrants the ability to enter the marketplace and introduce new ideas and approaches. The Nordic countries have an innovation element to their subsidy schemes, and this has already played a role in online news subscriptions in the region being well above the global average. A Dutch Journalism Fund has evolved over time to become platform agnostic and features programs for research and regional coverage enhancement with plans to build out support for investigative reporting.

Insights from the DNI Innovation Fund

At Google, our [DNI Innovation Fund](#) — launched in 2015 and inspired in part by the [FINP in France](#) (see above), which financed 139 projects in the country — has worked with more than 5,000 publishers who applied to the fund, selected 662 projects in 30 European countries over three years and delivered more than €141 million.⁸² Funding has been spread across Europe for the past five years. Central lessons from the Innovation Fund elaborate on the general observations noted above, and include:

- Clear demarcation into individual rounds of funding (potentially with specific themes). In the beginning, the DNI Fund was about innovation in general; based on market feedback, later rounds focused on the theme of Reader Revenue and Revenue Diversification. A specific theme allows for more focus but potentially at the cost of more serendipitous idea generation. Interestingly, the original open-ended nature of the DNI Innovation Fund showed that there were topics of common interest across the industry including 'battling misinformation', 'telling local stories' and 'boosting digital revenues.'
- Clear goals, milestones and metrics as part of individual projects, with a clear way of measuring success, lessons learned and potential means of developing the projects further.
- A variety of different funding recipients, in terms of size, age of publisher, target audience and medium, amongst other things.
- Forums in which to share information, lessons learned and good practice.
- A diverse and independent oversight council.

Accelerator models to scale up innovation

Accelerator programs are models that have been adopted globally to help startups to scale up within strategically important industries. They take a targeted incubation and acceleration approach to specific initiatives, providing seed funding, guidance and resources to position participants for success. Y Combinator is one example, among many others.⁸³

Such an approach could be adopted in news, focusing intensive support on approaches that have been identified as particularly successful or scalable in the course of an Innovation Fund. This infusion could enable rapid development and focus on scaling outputs. The Village Media model has succeeded in delivering profitable local news in parts of Canada — and the U.S. as of early 2021 — and is the kind of program that could be given the resources and expertise to scale more widely.⁸⁴

Case study: Village Media

In January 2021 Google Search and Google News sent over 5 million sessions to our sites from organic search and Google News, generating 17 million page views. Our owned and operated network generated over 46 million page views. So Google alone generated more than one-third of our page views that month, at no cost.

If we valued a click at just five cents — which would be exceptionally low — if we had to pay for those clicks then we would have had to spend about \$260,000 to buy that traffic.

Another way to assess the value of these referrals is to ask what its monetizable potential is. We often use a generalized measure of \$20RPM (revenue per mille or thousand page views), which allows for a variety of methods of monetization. By that measure, the value of the page views we got from Google referrals would be about \$340,000.

— Jeff Elgie, CEO Village Media

In December 2020, LION Publishers and UNC's Hussman School of Journalism and Media, along with the Google News Initiative, announced the GNI Startups Lab in North America.⁸⁵ Our combined research helped identify a common concern among startups regarding the lack of reliable support systems to overcome shared obstacles. The Labs involve a six-month experience that will provide a group of news founders with coaching and capital to evolve their news products and accelerate their companies on the path to sustainability. Next year, we will introduce global extensions of the program available to news entrepreneurs in Latin America, Asia Pacific, Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Direct funds for journalism

The most straightforward way public policy can be used to help journalism would be through a direct state subsidy to public news organizations (or to existing public broadcasters to expand their role — from TV, online and radio — to include newspaper publishing).

Direct government subsidies in the mold of programs like those in France or the Nordic countries are one way to provide a predictable stream of support — especially to outlets that focus on underrepresented communities — but they risk merely propping up struggling outlets if they don't also drive toward sustainability. Proposals that are based on agreed upon principles of transparency, accountability and sustainability as well as an understanding of the local landscape and challenges may lead to more enduring outcomes.

Focused funds for public interest journalism or journalists

Governments might regard certain kinds of public interest journalism, such as reporting on courts or local democracy, as being a public good that is not typically profitable in a stand-alone manner (that is, without the subsidies previously offered by profit drivers such as classifieds). In such a circumstance, governments might look to either directly fund journalists working on particular kinds of public interest journalism or look to support this kind of reporting through grants or benefits. This was a recommendation of the Cairncross Inquiry in the U.K., and it appears to be a likely path forward for New Zealand in 2021.⁸⁶

One example of this type of initiative is Report for America, which describes itself as “a national service program that places journalists into local newsrooms to report on under-covered issues and communities.”⁸⁷ Although Report for America is not government funded — and instead relies on donations and foundational support — it placed over 200 journalists in newsrooms across America in 2020. Host newsrooms apply and demonstrate the need for this kind of intervention and then journalists apply for the placements, which last one or two years.

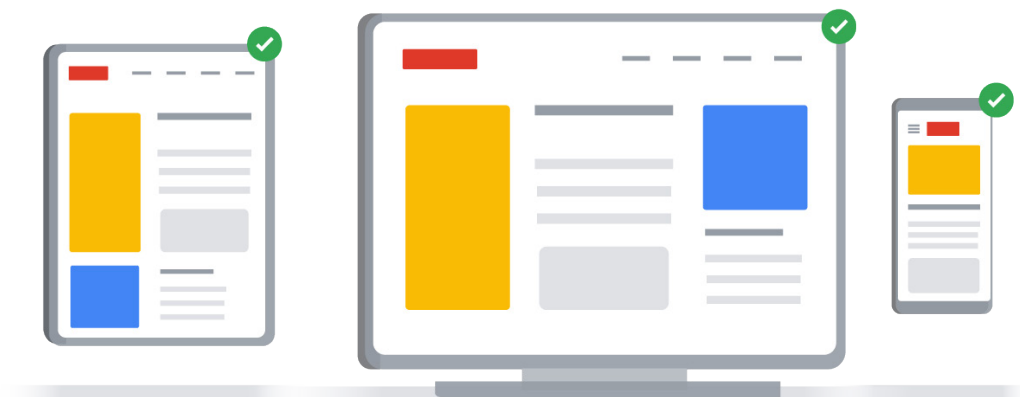
Another option for public support of journalism is to provide funds specifically for hiring journalists. A strong example of such a model is the [BBC's Local News Partnership model](#). The scheme pays for 150 Local Democracy Reporters, with the specific role of reporting on councils and public services. It also provides a forum through which these reporters can easily share best practices and tools. Over 100 news organizations are now part of the program. A small version of this scheme, the Local Democracy Report Pilot, was launched in New Zealand in 2020 and is expected to continue into 2021.⁸⁸ Canada has funded a similar program through its Local Journalism Initiative, which allocates \$50 million CAD over five years to support local and civic journalism for underserved communities.⁸⁹

The International Fund for Public Interest Media (IFPIM) is a cross-border variation on this approach. Through investment and partnerships with government, the private sector and philanthropies, the Fund aims to “increase support to independent media to enable their development, sustainability and independence — especially in resource-poor and fragile settings.”⁹⁰

Extending COVID-crisis funding for journalism

A number of countries, including Norway, Austria and Canada, have stepped in to provide direct financial aid to newspapers hit hard by the impact of COVID-19 on revenues. Many have argued that simply making such a scheme permanent would assist the news ecosystem. Maintaining a blanket crisis fund would, however, have similar difficulties to blanket subsidies (see above). The pandemic and associated lockdowns have in some instances increased community feeling and the desire for community information, which could provide an opportunity for nimble and innovative local media. Utilizing stimulus funds as a way of encouraging citizens to take out a local news subscription (through a local news credit, for example) could be an effective way of building on this reconnection with local communities. Subscription models could also play a part in delivering such an approach.

We deployed our own COVID crisis fund in 2020 — the [Journalism Emergency Relief Fund](#) — through which we provided funding to over 5,300 newsrooms around the globe. The process revealed key insights among the recipients who cited “growing audience” and “growing revenue” as the greatest needs, in spite of the fact that one-third of those we surveyed reported having no reader revenue model.



Support to evolve business models through the digital transition

A key focus of the work of the GNI has been to help evolve news business models to improve financial sustainability. As the learnings from the JERF show in the section above, this can include basic needs like audience and revenue growth in a new paradigm. Digging into these areas, we see a strong appetite for subscription models and local advertising growth as parts of a strategy to diversify revenue. We describe some of these efforts in the preceding section.

Beyond this, some news outlets see benefits to becoming nonprofit entities, while others would welcome toolkits to navigate human resources, tax and other complicated areas. (Indeed, we have invested significantly in creating tools to address these challenges and supporting those who are developing them.) Governments may also look to the tax system to support public interest journalism. This might be through direct measures to help newspapers cut the cost of sales or subscriptions; fiscal measures to encourage innovation; or measures to assist newspapers to move to alternative business models.

Enabling smaller news organizations to gain benefits of charitable or nonprofit status

In the U.S., some publishers, particularly at the local level, have started to shift towards nonprofit status, with such a move offering a range of tax benefits and enabling publishers to develop a broader subscription model and gain access to philanthropic cash. For these news outlets, nonprofit status would reduce costs and provide new sources of income. In localities where profit-making journalism is difficult, not-for-profit journalism represents a key step towards eliminating news deserts.

Some long-standing newspapers, such as The Philadelphia Inquirer, which had been struggling in the for-profit sector, have benefitted from the move towards nonprofit. Berkleyside and The Texas Tribune are both examples of successful news organizations founded on the nonprofit model.⁹¹ Making the switch easier has been the focus of a number of public policy proposals in recent years. The U.K.'s Cairncross Review, for example, called on charities legislation to be amended to include public interest journalism, whilst not requiring total political neutrality (currently the Charities Act requires charities to be nonpolitical).

Tools to ease the transition to digital

Smaller, resource-constrained publishers may not be well positioned to consider alternative business structures and revenue models or to pursue nonprofit classification. Beyond any shift in policy, governments could consider supporting business development toolkits and services, similar to those offered to smaller businesses operating in other sectors (providing for example, advice regarding qualification for a particular tax status, guidance on fund raising or editorial limitations, or assistance with HR-related paperwork). Traditional or larger news organizations may not require these kinds of tools but may also benefit from them.

The GNI Innovation Challenge has over time worked with a number of newspapers to help make the transition easier. This includes working with The Salt Lake Tribune to help build out a critical set of technologies, tools, policies and procedures to increase and diversify revenue. This model will be shared with others seeking a sustainable path forward for local journalism, including a playbook for how a newspaper can make the move to nonprofit status. Such playbooks would be most beneficial in other countries if they were tailored to the relevant local rules and landscape



Reduction or equalization of sales taxes

The removal of sales taxes on physical newspapers has been a common recommendation in a number of international government inquiries into the future of news. In some jurisdictions, sales taxes on physical newspapers are already zero.⁹² This approach or that of postal service subsidies to support home delivery for physical newspaper subscription models have also been mooted. Clearly such policy moves could be helpful to the publishing industry, but their utility could be of limited long-term use, especially as reader habits move away from physical, printed newspapers to digital news experiences online or through apps.

Beyond print, many have suggested extending a zero-rate exemption to digital news sites, especially where subsidies exist for print-based subscriptions. Removing price tariffs that do not go directly to fund the news ecosystem can allow publishers to either charge a slightly higher rate to increase margins, or provide a lower price for consumers in the hope it will increase consumption.

Subscription subsidies or tax breaks for citizens

Governments have considered using the tax system to incentivize people to take out subscriptions to news services. Similar incentives could be used to encourage citizens to take up a physical and digital bundle. Canada, for example, has introduced a tax credit for citizens who take out news subscriptions, and the French government recently announced a similar scheme.⁹³ Such changes offer a twin advantage, both incentivizing consumers to take up a subscription and encouraging news organizations to develop attractive subscription models. The publicity accompanying such a scheme could also aid take up. Nevertheless, they would still face the barriers of a potential lack of price elasticity in consumer demand for news products.

Tax breaks for innovation

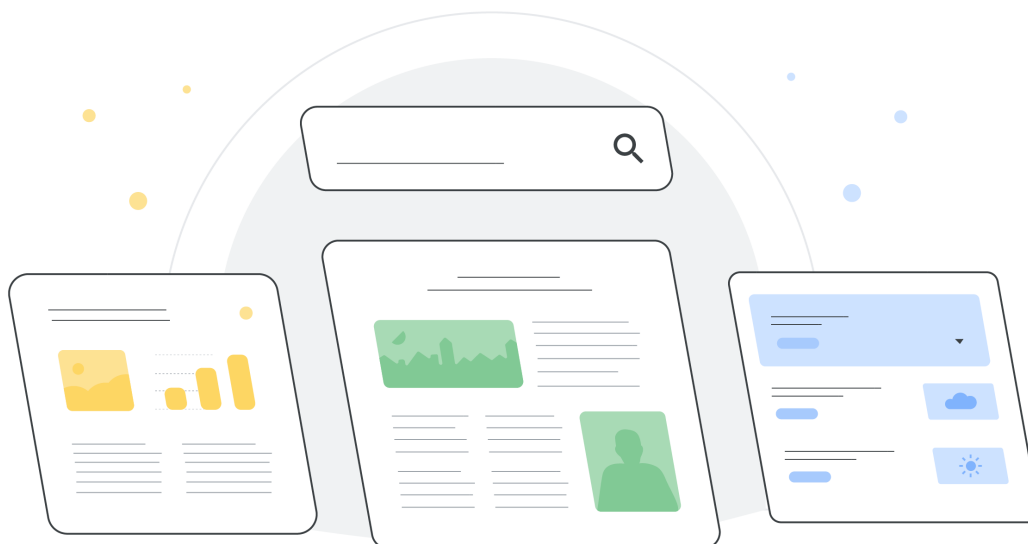
In line with the shift in some countries towards funds explicitly targeting innovation, it is also possible to aim tax breaks more explicitly at investment in innovation, rather than merely providing blanket exemptions for news publishers. An equivalent of Research & Development (R&D) tax credits for newspapers could be developed that would provide tax breaks for companies that have specific and measurable projects aimed at innovation. Similarly, tax holidays linked specifically to innovation-related income or tax relief on innovation-focused expenditure could also incentivize R&D. Such tax relief has proven effective in some geographies in encouraging R&D in manufacturing, for example.⁹⁴ However, some commentators have also pointed to the complexity of both running and policing such a scheme.

Conclusion

We have a shared responsibility to ensure that quality journalism — and, in particular, quality public interest journalism — has a sustainable future in societies around the world, from coverage of small communities and municipalities to the largest national and international news desks. Google has for nearly 20 years worked to support journalism, both driving large amounts of online traffic to news outlets and helping to develop innovative paths forward that evolve business models and the thinking about community coverage.

There is still significant work to be done. And we must not be sidetracked as some of the loudest voices in these debates promote misleading narratives that suggest easy fixes. We must address the industry's fundamental underlying challenges and support the evolution of news media businesses along with new and emerging players, and not look merely to indefinitely propping up legacy business models.

In this paper we have laid out a comprehensive background of the current set of problems, while highlighting some of the key work we've done through our products and programs to help support quality journalism and the news outlets that create it. The experiences and lessons we describe in this paper would not have been possible without the valuable input we've received from the news partners we have worked with and learned from over the years. While there may be no simple solution, we are eager to listen, learn more and help drive innovation to support a successful public policy approach that results in a vibrant journalism ecosystem.



BY THE NUMBERS

GOOGLE NEWS SHOWCASE

\$1B

\$1 billion committed to support the news industry and Google News Showcase partnerships.

800+

800+ news publications have signed onto News Showcase as of July 2021.

GOOGLE NEWS INITIATIVE

\$300M

\$300 million committed to the news industry, with \$189 million spent in 118 countries over the past two years.

\$40M

\$40 million for GNI Innovation Challenge and YouTube Innovation Funding programs covering 213 news organizations.

REVENUE AND TRAFFIC FOR PUBLISHERS

\$B+

Every year, we pay out billions of dollars directly to the publishing partners in our ad network.

400K

Subscribe with Google has created over 400,000 new, paid subscribers for news partners — 100,000 of those in the last six months.

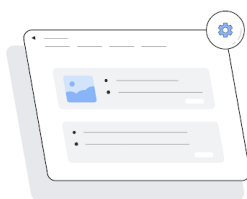
24M

24 billion clicks per month (9,000 clicks per second) from Google Search and Google News results to publishers' websites — estimated by [Deloitte](#) to have a value of between 4-6 Euro cents (5-7 U.S. cents) per click.

\$100M+

Over \$100 million in Google marketing investment committed to news organizations globally in 2020.

Facts about Google & news



News websites are in control

Google Search and Google News provide links to useful and relevant news stories to help you find the information you're looking for about current events.

Every news organization has control over whether and how their headlines and links appear in Google Search and News. Most welcome the fact that people can find them in Google search results — but if a news site (or any other site for that matter) [doesn't want to show up](#) or wants to [control what is shown](#) on Google, they can choose to do so. They can do that whether their site is paywalled or free to view.

Google does not “steal” or “use” news publisher content. We link to it. Publishers decide to be included in Google Search because they want to be found by a broader audience.



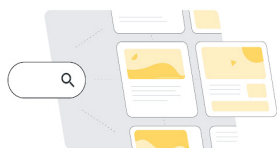
We don't make money from Google News

There have been [wildly inaccurate assertions](#) about the value of news to Google. News websites are a small slice of the information on the internet. In the past year, news-related queries on Search accounted for under 2% of total queries on Google Search globally.

We don't show ads — or make money — on the vast majority of searches. And we don't run ads on Google News or the news results tab on Google Search.

Nearly all of the ads people see on Google are on searches with commercial intent like “sneakers,” “t-shirts,” or “plumber,” and generally not from news-seeking queries. And we only make money if ads are useful and relevant, as indicated by your click on the ad.

Although we don't run ads on Google News or the news results tab, we do help news organizations show ads on their websites, apps and videos. Many news publishers use our advertising tools and platforms. Every year, we pay out billions of dollars directly to the publishing partners in our ad network.



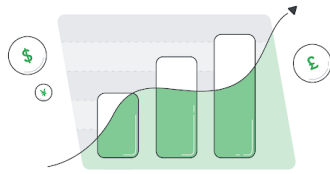
We pay for content

With [Google News Showcase](#), we have committed \$1 billion over the next three years to pay publishers to produce editorially curated content experiences and for limited free user access to paywalled content.

News Showcase is made up of panels that give news organizations the ability to package the most important stories of the day for readers, providing deeper storytelling and more context through features like timelines, bullets, related stories and a list of important articles. This content currently appears in Google News and Discover, bringing trusted news to readers all over the world.

More than 800 publications across more than a dozen countries are part of News Showcase today, spanning global, national, regional, metro and local publications.

We look forward to partnering with even more publications for News Showcase.



Google generates traffic and revenue for news publishers

Each month, people click through from Google Search and Google News results to publishers' websites [more than 24 billion times](#) – that's over 9,000 clicks per second.

By sending free traffic to news sites, we generate significant monetary value for publishers. For example, [Deloitte](#) estimated the value of each click or visit we send to large EU publishers to between 4-6 Euro cents (5-7 U.S. cents) as publishers monetize this traffic by showing people ads or offers to subscribe or donate to the publication.

Publishers use Google's advertising tools to make money

For many years we've helped publishers make money by providing tools and technology that help them run digital advertising on their websites and apps.

Our ad technologies enable news organizations to sell their ad space to millions of advertisers around the world – including advertisers they wouldn't have access to without these services.

When publishers choose to use our advertising services, they keep a significant [majority of the revenue](#) that's generated. Every year, we pay out billions of dollars directly to the publishing partners in our ad network.

Publishers use Google's subscription tools to make money

[Subscribe with Google](#) helps publishers drive new subscribers and engage existing subscribers across the web. Since launching in 2018, this technology has generated over 400,000 new paid subscribers for our news partners. In the last six months alone, partners have grown their subscription base by 100,000.

Publishers control how they deploy Subscribe with Google on their own sites, and keep 85% to 95% of the revenue, while also owning the customer relationship.



Supporting the future of news

Through the [Google News Initiative](#) (GNI), we collaborate with the news industry in creating, testing and implementing new ways to reach readers in the digital age.

Thirty years ago newspapers were one of the only sources of information in their communities.

But now they must compete with thousands of new sources of information, while classified revenue and circulation have plunged. This has necessitated the development of new business and distribution models and new techniques to produce news.

The GNI works directly with news organizations of all sizes on developing new products, programs and partnerships to help news publishers grow their business. It includes a \$300 million funding commitment to news organizations.

Since 2018, the GNI has supported [more than 6,250 news partners in 118 countries around the world](#). We've provided training for over 400,000 journalists on skills including digital verification, data visualization, and machine learning through in-person trainings. And journalists have completed 1.7 million online courses through the GNI Training Center.

Many news publishers have successfully used technology and tools to diversify business models, and find growth and new revenue. The GNI is intended to support these efforts.

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