



Create, organize and follow your stories

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Abstract

Scribe is an online environment created for the future investigative journalist that makes it easier to communicate a story more interactively, while at the same time better organize its information. Besides, *Scribe* makes use of different innovative modules to increase the lifespan of a story.

Introduction

The media industry, especially the branch of journalism, is currently in the middle of a big shift towards the online environment (OECD 2010). The way the contemporary journalist consumes and produces information has changed dramatically. Digital publishing tools are used extensively throughout the whole field and substitute former methods such as going on the street with just a pen and paper. Using these digital publishing tools, the journalist is constantly connected with people from all over the world and has access to lots of information. This raises the following research question:

How can the future investigative journalist communicate a story more interactively, while at the same time better organize its information, making sure the lifespan of a story increases?

The digital publishing tools team at MediaLAB Amsterdam created a solution for this in the spring semester of 2015 called 'Scribe'. This tool organizes all the information flows of the contemporary journalists, but also makes use of different modules that makes sure the lifespan of a story increases. Within this project it's decided to focus on the future investigative journalist instead of the reader. (Freelance Writing, <http://www.freelancewriting.com/articles/different-types-of-journalism.php>)

Method

Design

At first, it was very important to fully understand the working method of the contemporary journalist. Ten interviews have been conducted with journalists at *Algemeen Dagblad*, *de Volkskrant*, journalism students and freelance journalists, in order to understand the working method and flow of information of journalists. To easily compare the results, structured interviews have been conducted. The interview questions have been divided in bigger themes: the daily workflow, collecting and publishing information, the process of writing an article, the process of publishing an article, the tools that journalists use, the citizen journalist and the relationship with the professional journalist, the interaction between the reader and the citizen journalist and the future of journalism.

Iterative design process

To develop *Scribe* an iterative design has been used, starting with paper prototyping which helps defining the final navigation better. Thereafter the prototypes has been translated into wireframes. To give the *Scribe* more its own identity a matching look and feel has been designed. The final design of *Scribe* is available as a clickable prototype in HTML.

User testing

The user testing was divided in two parts. For the first part, journalist of the editorial office of AD participated. The second part four user tests at the UsabilityLAB of

the Applied University of Amsterdam have been conducted. To test *Scribe* in the various design stages, eye tracking was used. Eye tracking has become a key method to test the usability of software. We used Tobii software (Tobii Pro, <http://www.tobii.com/en/eye-tracking-research/global/products/hardware/tobii-x2-60-eye-tracker/>), which provides researchers and practitioners with indisputable, objective and convincing data describing user behavior, user interaction and usability problems. Eye tracking is also used to study user interaction with mobile devices and physical products. Invision App (Invision, <http://www.invisionapp.com/>) has been used to create a clickable demo for the users to accomplish different tasks.



Figure 1: Making use of eyetracking on one of the prototypes

Results

The main goal of the interviews was to understand the way the contemporary journalist works, what tools they use, understand their vision on the future of journalism and lastly the interaction that journalists nowadays have with their readers. Based on the output of the interviews, it has been decided to focus on the editor function, the social feed, statistics and different modules with innovative techniques, making sure it could all be integrated within one tool, while at the same time could still be flexible and easy to adapt for the future journalist. Based on the output of the user testing, a simple navigation with calm colours and a solid design was created. In the end, *Scribe* combines all above elements within an online environment where the journalist can create, organize and follow their stories, in order to increase its lifespan.

System Requirements

With regards to the future, the journalist would like to have a tool that:

- Keeps them up-to-date
- Combines both writing an article as showing the social feed/statistics that they can personalize to their preferences.
- Combines all the different information sources
- Helps them to keep all their information organized
- Helps them to collaborate with readers and colleagues
- Helps them to process information of the crowd
- Helps the journalist to get closer to other journalists or to the main source

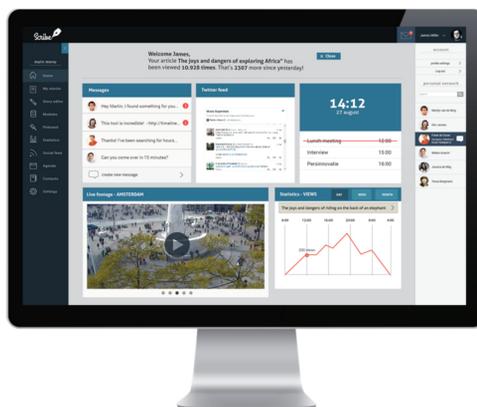


Figure 2: The homescreen of Scribe

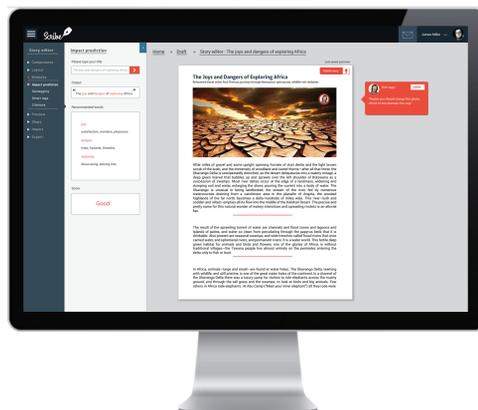


Figure 3: The story editor of Scribe

Conclusion

A solution to the earlier addressed research question is *Scribe*. *Scribe* is a tool for any freelance journalist who is not committed to a certain company, but can be used for any journalist. It combines the traditional features of the work of a journalist with innovative techniques in the format of modules. By using such innovative modules like sentiment analysis, automatically tagging and language translation, it helps the future investigative journalist to communicate a story more interactively, while it organizes their information better and helps to increase the lifespan of a story. Some examples of these modules are:

- an audio to text converter that automatically translates audio to text
- a geotagging feature that adds a location to your story
- a feature that predicts the impact of your article
- a system that gives suggestions for title improvement.

Next steps

The results of the research can be implemented in a tool that is fully programmed. At the moment, *Scribe* is a clickable prototype that is not fully translated to HTML. However, with the design manual that has been created, it is possible to program the whole dashboard. Furthermore, we would like to extend the different modules that are used within *Scribe* and do some more user testing within our target group. With the feedback gathered from this, we want to create more extended versions.

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