

Is the internet destroying traditional print journalism?

The internet is no longer avoidable for journalists; instead, it is an essential tool that they must utilise in their day-to-day jobs. Gemma Cockrell finds out how three magazine editors feel about the industry's shift towards embracing the online realm.

Jeremy Pound, 50, has been the deputy editor of *BBC Music Magazine* since 2004.

"When I started, the website was absolutely nothing. It was just a page on a company website. Whereas these days, we're updating it daily," he says.

He predicts that his role will continue to revolve more around the website in the future, something that he thinks will be "quite joyless" because of the lack of creativity that it involves.

"A lot of it is just playing around with SEO optimisation," he says. "It's almost clinical. But whether we like it or not, that's where the money is going to come in. It's as simple as that."

Lisa Wright, 34, features editor for *DIY* magazine, believes that the internet is making things harder for magazine journalists.

"Artists are prioritising doing things like Chicken Shop Date with Amelia Dimoldenberg on YouTube, which is going to get way more traction than doing a feature with a print publication," she says.

"Before, we got a couple of days on the road with someone, but now it's just a Zoom call, with no original photos to use."

Before she joined the *DIY* team, she worked at *NME* for six years. When their print magazine folded, she took a year out due to feeling disillusioned with the industry.

"I didn't know whether I wanted to be a journalist if things were going to be entirely online. I think I thought that the internet was the devil, the enemy of proper journalism," she says.

"Everyone's attention span was getting shorter, and I thought you wouldn't be able to publish anything unless it was less than 80 words and in bullet points. But I ended up realising that I actually really missed it."

She has noticed recently that the shift to digital has impacted the roles that are available within her team, with the introduction of an online editor and a social media manager.

"Now, we really need someone that's super focused on social media, rather than it just being an extension of what we do on the website, where we're creating very specific content for each platform," she says.

"But everyone on the team is expected to jump on and do a bit of scheduling – I think everyone that I know is a writer, slash, podcast host, slash, presenter... you have to be a bit more ambidextrous now."

Sophie Gargett, 35, editor of independent titles *The Dilettante* and *LeftLion*, doesn't remember a time before print and digital co-existed.

"But I did grow up with print," she says, "and that is what made me fall in love with magazines. I always wanted to make a print-first magazine. But then, I am a bit of a traditionalist!" she laughs.

Writing digital content adds to her workload and she admits that it can sometimes "feel like a chore." This is made harder by the fact that independent magazines have "surprisingly small teams."

She adds: “Doing social media is basically a job in itself so I find it hard to keep up with that alongside writing and design, whereas most bigger magazines would have a whole team creating posts and reels and digital campaigns.”

She recognises the benefit of being able to share your work to a wider audience, with the potential for virality, but “things just move much faster in the online world, and there's a lot more rubbish and clickbait to cut through.”

Much like Pound, she has a dislike for SEO due to the lack of creativity that can be expressed when choosing headlines for articles.

“In the past headlines could be witty, whereas today they need to be more focused on keywords, which I think takes away a little of the creativity and character of an article,” she adds.

Despite this, she thinks there will always be space for print magazines. “It's a different experience, much less tied up with all the other functions of digital. As with vinyl, there's always scope for revivals and people to begin viewing print with a little more prestige,” she says.

“We've had around 15 years of people talking about the 'death of print' and yet we're still seeing print magazines crop up.”

With the rise of AI, she imagines that there will be less and less trust in digital writing going forward, which may lead people back to investing in print.

“I feel like there's something special about independent print magazines that mainstream magazines might not be able to tap into – the design and the community aspect. I think commercial magazines often focus on churning out content without being able to properly connect with their audiences or produce work that is high quality,” she says.

“With *The Dilettante*, I'm seeing people buy the current issue and then come back to check out back issues, so hopefully it will become something people are interested in collecting, which was the aim originally.”