

The Information Ecosystem Depends on News

Today's information environment is complex, interconnected and constantly evolving – like an ecosystem. Much of this ecosystem depends on news reporting as a foundation for understanding current events. Let's take a closer look at the news-driven ecosystem and how high-quality journalism sustains it.



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The News-Driven Ecosystem

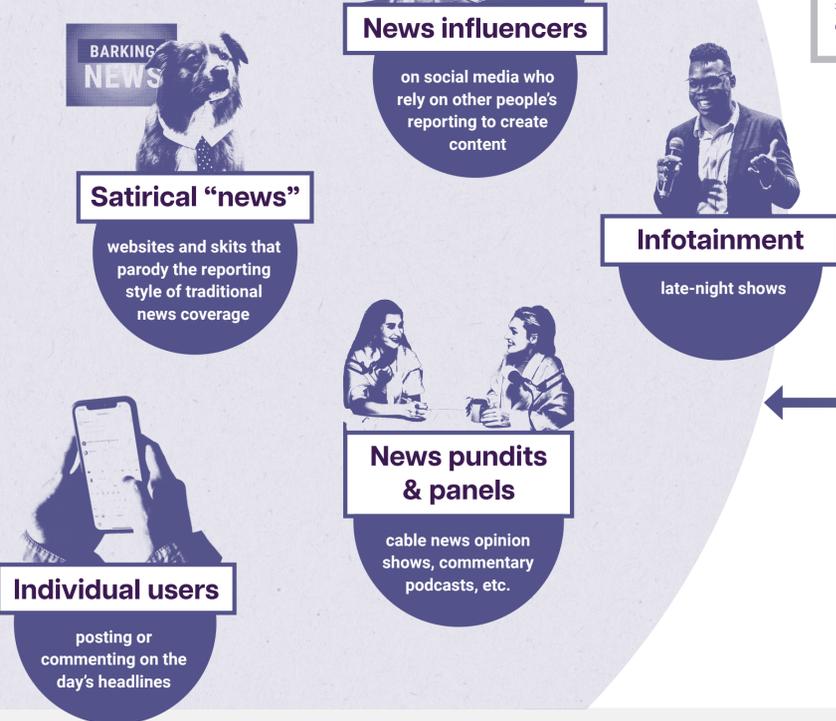
INFORMATION WEB

The news-driven ecosystem is made up of different chains of information flows that form a web of connections. This web shows how information about current events flows through different parts of the ecosystem.

Content about news

A lot of what people casually refer to as "news" isn't actually news – it's content about news. People often get information about what's going on in the world from standards-based journalism, but they also sometimes learn about current events through sources that create content based on facts originally reported by journalists.

Content about news can help keep you informed, but it can't replace the journalism it relies on. This includes:



The public



News gets to people via different platforms – like apps, TV, newspapers and social media – each of which shapes the coverage and our experience of it.



Journalism

The "News Tree"

Think of news like a tree anchoring this ecosystem.

WHAT IS NEWS?

The primary purpose of news is to inform through independent, honest and open-minded inquiry.

REMEMBER

- Different information sources have different purposes and play by different rules.
- Using "news" as a catch-all term can obscure big differences across the information ecosystem.
- Understanding these differences helps you stay informed and make up your own mind about current issues and events.

Original reporting happens at the roots, where journalists gather and make sense of raw information. Everything in the news-driven ecosystem relies on information verified at the roots of this tree through the practice of journalism. Doing this work takes A LOT of time and money – including journalists' salaries and the resources they need for reporting – often much more than simply commenting on the news.

Raw information goes everywhere: It reaches the public directly over social media, gets commented on by influencers and is an important source for journalists.

Raw information:

The raw materials of news include:

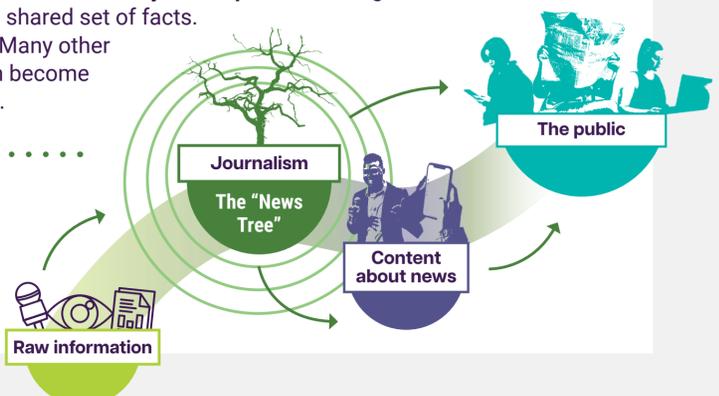
- Observation
- Interviews with experts, officials, eyewitnesses
- Data
- Raw video, audio and documents
- Public records
- Studies

When journalism disappears, the ecosystem suffers

In the information ecosystem, journalism is the keystone species, holding communities together by providing people with a shared set of facts. Losing this creates a ripple effect: Many other parts of the information ecosystem become less healthy or wither away entirely.

What are keystone species?

Keystone species play a critical role in an ecosystem. Without them, an ecosystem can drastically change or even collapse.



What makes an ecosystem healthy?

Healthy ecosystems are balanced and diverse. They also depend on the survival of keystone species.

What would a healthy ecosystem look like?

- Strong press freedoms and protections for journalists.
- Diverse news and information sources.
- Fair access for everyone to trustworthy information.
- Public demand and financial support for high-quality journalism.
- Respectful discussion and disagreement based on shared facts.



Everyone has a part to play to keep the information ecosystem healthy.