

Collaborative and Experimental Cultures in Virtual Reality Journalism: From the Perspective of Content Creators

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Abstract : Virtual Reality (VR) content creation is a complex and an expensive process, which requires multi-disciplinary teams of content creators. Grant schemes from technology companies help media organisations to explore the VR potential in journalism and factual storytelling. Media organisations try to do as much as they can in-house, but they may outsource due to time constraints and skill availability. Journalists, game developers, sound designers and creative artists work together and bring in new cultures of work. This study explores the collaborative experimental nature of VR content creation, through tracing every actor involved in the process and examining their perceptions of the VR work. The study builds on Actor Network Theory (ANT), which decomposes phenomena into their basic elements and traces the interrelations among them. Therefore, the researcher conducted 22 semi-structured interviews with VR content creators between November 2017 and April 2018. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques allowed the researcher to recruit fact-based VR content creators from production studios and media organisations, as well as freelancers. Interviews lasted up to three hours, and they were a mix of Skype calls and in-person interviews. Participants consented for their interviews to be recorded, and for their names to be revealed in the study. The researcher coded interviews' transcripts in Nvivo software, looking for key themes that correspond with the research questions. The study revealed that VR content creators must be adaptive to change, open to learn and comfortable with mistakes. The VR content creation process is very iterative because VR has no established work flow or visual grammar. Multi-disciplinary VR team members often speak different languages making it hard to communicate. However, adaptive content creators perceive VR work as a fun experience and an opportunity to learn. The traditional sense of competition and the strive for information exclusivity are now replaced by a strong drive for knowledge sharing. VR content creators are open to share their methods of work and their experiences. They target to build a collaborative network that aims to harness VR technology for journalism and factual storytelling. Indeed, VR is instilling collaborative and experimental cultures in journalism.

Keywords : collaborative culture, content creation, experimental culture, virtual reality

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