

WORLD MEDIA CONGRESS 2025 MADRID

Global media leaders gathered in Madrid to mark
FIPP's centenary and shape the future of media



FIPP
Connecting
Global Media

DECEMBER 2025

Introduction

How much of this report do you think was created with the help of AI? And how much will you silently judge us for it? Because you really shouldn't . . .

If FIPP World Media Congress taught us anything this year, it's that those who don't work with AI won't just fall behind – they'll be left out of the future entirely.

The future isn't human *versus* machine – it's human *plus* machine. Creativity paired with smart data. Insight paired with intelligence. That's how we create content (and this report) that resonates, builds trust and actually serves audiences, instead of just trying to hack the algorithm.

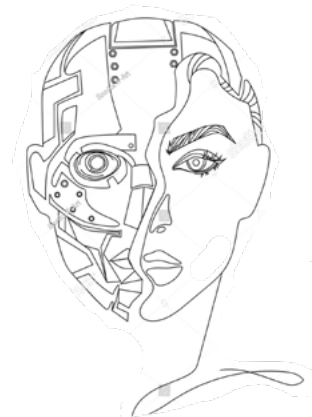
So, do you trust us?

For 100 years FIPP has been sharing knowledge, insights and sometimes harsh realities. Media isn't always an easy industry. But it's one we are passionate about. And we know you are too.

As Alastair Lewis, FIPP COO, said in his opening speech, FIPP has always been more than a trade association: "It's a community that shares the same passion, who are here to learn

from and be inspired by one another, to find new ways to grow and new partners to do business with. This is what makes FIPP truly special."

This year's Congress, held on 22–23 October, brought that message to life. Madrid – the city where FIPP began – felt like the perfect place to mark its centenary. More than 500 C-suite media leaders from 40+ countries gathered in the iconic Círculo de



Bellas Artes for two days of insight, conversation and collaboration. With both delegate passes and sponsorship selling out, Congress once again proved why it remains the global meeting point for the people shaping the future of media.

That sense of community echoed through every corridor, bar and rooftop. Delegates kept returning to the same points: the quality of the conversations. Real exchanges. Real ideas. Real connections with some of the biggest names in media.

The speaker roster reflected this, bringing together leaders from Time, The Atlantic, Hearst, Condé Nast, Semafor, The New York Times, Immediate Media and more, each offering perspectives on building resilient, innovative media organisations in a moment of profound change.

Across the sessions, several themes dominated. AI, unsurprisingly, sat at the centre – not simply as a technology, but as a structural shift reshaping products, workflows, business models and organisational culture. As Juan Señor, President, INNOVATION Media Consulting, warned: “As we move firmly into this AI age, everything is at stake... it’s going to be an existential moment.”

Running alongside this was a renewed focus on trust, increasingly positioned not as sentiment but as strategy. Trust in technology, trust in journalism and trust in each other. Time, The Atlantic and others showed how human-centred journalism now underpins their long-term business models. Product thinking featured strongly too, from audience-led

development to multi-format, endlessly reusable content systems. Licensing, rights and diversification emerged as major growth levers, with publishers treating content as data and scalable IP. And cutting across it all was the reminder that community and human connection remain the one advantage AI cannot replicate.

There was a lot to absorb – and plenty to act on – over the two days. FIPP Chair Yulia Boyle offered one piece of advice that everyone could take home: “Choose one improvement – in price, format or workflow – and leave Madrid with that on your timeline. Prototype something small and measurable with a new partner. Share one page of your playbook to accelerate progress across our global community.” ●



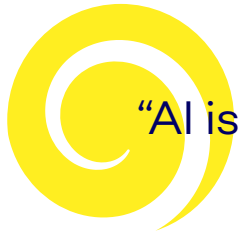
The sense of community echoed through every corridor, bar and rooftop . . .



AI

Friend,
foe or
frenemy?





“AI isn’t a department – it’s becoming the operating system of how we work.”

Mark Howard, Chief Operating Officer, Time

IF YOU WERE AT LAST YEAR’S Congress wondering, “What on earth do we do with AI?”, this year’s vibe was very different. Now the question is, how do we make it pay?

The bots may still hallucinate, but the reality is the AI revolution won’t be won by whoever has the best prompts. It’s all about planning, partnerships and recognising media’s power.

That’s right. Power. As FIPP CEO, Alastair Lewis, stated in his keynote speech, the media industry needs to embrace the challenges and opportunities presented by the rise of AI.

“We need to come together, collaborate, and recognise the real threads that bind us: human-curated quality content, trustworthiness, and the power to engage and inspire audiences with real value.”

Innovation: the highest form of protest

This theme of empowerment continued when Time’s COO, Mark Howard, took the stage. His message was clear. “Don’t let AI happen to you – let AI happen for you.” §Putting their money where their mouth is, Time went on the offensive, cutting



**FIPP CEO
Alastair Lewis**

smart, strategic deals with OpenAI, Perplexity and Amazon to protect IP and shape how its journalism is used, cited and monetised.

Mark Howard, Chief Operating Officer of Time, told Congress: “There were essentially three paths that you could take as a media company. You could litigate, you could negotiate,

or you could do nothing and be a passive observer and wait to see how things shake out. We did not view the third option as an option at all.”

Time’s leadership is building the rails for the future: putting IP on the blockchain, tracking crawlers, insisting on citations, link-backs and fair compensation. “Having a seat at the table is the only way forward.”

Time isn’t alone. Across the industry, this proactive mindset is spreading fast. Bauer Media rebuilt its entire workflow on an AI-first system because, as CPMO Digital Stefan Betzold admitted, “Legacy tools held us back.”

Hearst Magazines International is moving in the same direction. According to its VP, Media Licensing Sales Joe Martin, while search remains a key part of Hearst’s strategy, reliance on external



Mark Howard,
Chief Operating
Officer, Time

platforms is no longer viable. “Building a business model that’s reliant on a partner for distribution is an unreliable long-term strategy.”

Engineer and economist Claudio Feijóo, Professor at the Technical University of Madrid, added a broader warning: “Governments have a plan. Big Tech has a plan. The question is – do we? You need a long-term goal, but great flexibility to adapt.”

AI is no longer a side an experiment. It’s the new foundation – and the publishers who treat it as such will be the ones defining the rules of the next media era.

Howard captured the moment best: “AI isn’t a department – it’s becoming the operating system of how we work.”

The Atlantic is using AI on an operational level to identify archive pieces, target and segment, and on their paywall. They even have a microsite called the Atlantic Labs which he described as a “playground” to test AI ideas.

That doesn’t mean robots in the newsroom. It means intelligent systems running quietly in the background – transcribing interviews, tagging archives and auto-summarising research. OpenAI’s Tom Rubin echoed the same sentiment: “AI is enhancing newsroom and back-office efficiency – from research and workflow automation to audience insight – enabling journalists to focus on creativity and accuracy.

Meanwhile, the ever-candid Ricky Sutton (founder of Future Media) and Chris Duncan (founder of Seedelta and formerly CEO of Publishing at Bauer Media) stated that AI is much more than a new tool – it's a new infrastructure.

It's already changing how content is created, distributed and monetised. Publishers who adapt fast will thrive; those who wait will be re-platformed without consent.

"AI is affecting everything," said Sutton in their Scotch and Watch session. "It's a re-platforming of our industry. It's exciting – if we can be on the right side of that future." The message was consistent: don't wait for change – architect it.



Tom Rubin, Chief of Intellectual Property and Content, OpenAI

Half human, half machine

If strategy is the bones of this transformation, creativity is the beating heart.

No one at Congress believed that machines should replace journalists – but almost everyone agreed that AI can (and should) amplify them. As Claudio Feijóo stated, creativity is no longer binary. "The old world said you were either original or you

were copying. The new world is a spectrum – part human, part machine. We've moved from black and white to infinite shades of creativity."

Media outlets must focus on a strategy of synergy between human creativity and data-driven insights, creating authentic, high-value content that prioritises the audience experience and builds trust, rather than trying to "trick" the system.

That blend of human insight and machine speed is exactly what media group A-lehdet has tapped into. Their Finnish lifestyle brand, Kotona, now publishes globally through AI-assisted translation – but the soul of the stories remains human, insists Maija Koski, Director of New Business and Partnerships.

"AI can translate words – that's the easy part. But journalism is storytelling, nuance, trust, playfulness and culture."

"Publishers must unite to... build a new business model for the AI age."

Paul Gerbino, Creative Licensing International



Maija Koski,
Director, New
Business &
Commercial
Solutions,
A-lehdet

Stefan Betzold announced Bauer Media's 'Tony OS', an AI-first publishing system that streamlines newsroom workflows and restores creativity – and even fun.

Gone are the clunky CMS fields that feel like filling in tax returns. Instead, editors open a clean, write-first screen, supported by AI agents that can extend copy, adjust tone, optimise SEO, or even draft a first version.

As Betzold said: "Give editors a blank sheet of paper and let the creativity flow. Free up time to create better stories and take off the not-value-creating tasks."



Stefan Betzold,
CPMO Digital,
Bauer Media

At The Atlantic, Chief Growth Officer Megha Garibaldi drew a hard line: "You will never find a piece on The Atlantic written by AI. There will always be a human behind it."

Meanwhile, at The New York Times technology is being used not to replace journalists, but to make them more human. The paper now uses AI to narrate stories aloud, making its reporting accessible to anyone, anywhere, any time. But the bigger goal is emotional connection – using tech to bring readers closer to the people behind the bylines.

"News is becoming more communal,"

said Jordan Vita, VP Product and Storytelling. "It's not a solitary action anymore – people want to discuss, share, and debate immediately after consuming it."

The New York Times is building safer, smarter spaces for that participation – from redesigned comment platforms that foster dialogue to cultural features that invite readers to share their own takes on books, films, and food.

"We're reimagining how people can participate in the news – to build trust, connection and a sense of belonging," Vita added.

The rallying cry from the Scotch and Watch podcast was that the age of faceless media is over. "Publishing must humanise itself – people follow people. Show your journalists' faces, voices and opinions."

The attention paradox

According to Axios, AI-generated websites rose by 700% in 2024, with half of all online articles now produced by machines.

Take a moment to absorb those figures. Then take a breath. Then try not to panic.

“Search may be dying, but discovery is thriving – and trust is the new SEO,” stated Hearst’s Joe Martin. He told delegates that reader trust in an article drops by 50% if people even suspect it was AI-written – and purchase intent drops by 14% for ads placed beside machine-made content.

“Esquire, Harper’s Bazaar, and Good Housekeeping carry credibility that algorithms can’t replicate – trust that drives both audience loyalty and advertiser confidence,” said Martin.



**Joe Martin, VP,
Media Licensing,
Hearst**

It’s not just about trust – it’s about resonance. Brady Brim-DeForest, CEO of Kudu, warned that the industry’s obsession with attention metrics has blinded it to what truly drives value. “It’s less about volume and surface area – and more about depth, resonance, and the ability to reliably create an emotional outcome.”

He called this the Attention Paradox – the idea that as algorithms increasingly shape consumption, attention itself becomes scarce. The publishers that will thrive are those that move beyond counting clicks to cultivating credibility and meaning.



**Brady Brim-
DeForest, CEO,
Kudu**

As A-lehdet’s Maija Koski reminded everyone, “Half of all content now published is made by AI. The value of expertise, authentic voices, and storytelling has never been greater.”

Even Rubin agreed from the tech side: “Readers should get their information from the sources they rely on – that’s what we want to enable.”

This emphasis on authenticity underpins The Economist’s strategy for navigating the rapid drop in Google referral traffic – what they call the “three Ds”: differentiation, direct relationships, and discoverability.

President Luke Bradley-Jones explained that differentiation means “leaning into that artisanal, premium nature of our journalism,” while direct relationships come from deepening engagement through The Economist app and personalisation tools. Discoverability, meanwhile, now demands far greater investment in brand marketing. “Visibility will be critical in our post-search world.”

Amid these sparks of ideas came Juan Señor, who didn’t sugar-coat what many see as a reality now – that “the internet is dying in front of our eyes – in slow motion.” Traffic from platforms and search is collapsing and publishers must plan for zero clicks: “Platform traffic is gone. The direction of travel is irreversible.”

The solution? Rebuild around direct reader relationships. Intimacy with audiences is the new currency. You can sell more with a verified, engaged

audience than you ever could with cheap CPMs. “Tomorrow’s goldmine is first-party data,” Señor told delegates.

And when it comes to AI, he believes publishers hold the leverage. Yes, that’s you. “We are 30% of what goes into the mix. OpenAI just ranked us AAA. They need trustworthy content – and they’re willing to pay for it.”

The future belongs to those who defend the worth of their words. “The past was built on links,” Señor stated. “The future must be built on answers.”


In a world drowning in sameness, truth, tone, and transparency are the only lifejackets. Just remember to secure your own before helping others around you...

The new global order

The elephant in every AI discussion is ownership – of content, data and the systems that shape information. Congress didn’t dodge it.

Rubin from OpenAI tackled it head-on, insisting publishers can opt out: “No one is forced to have their content used,” he said, adding that OpenAI is building systems to support subscriptions and fair monetisation.

Publishers pushed back hard. Claudio Feijóo argued that “previous works must be recognised – acknowledge where the models were trained.” Hearst’s Joe Martin criticised Google’s AI Overviews, which he said “takes your content, rewrites it, and publishes



“Publishers have an exceptional opportunity as a high-value, high-trust medium.”

Jacqueline Loch. EVP Strategy and Revenue, AZURE

it on Google.com – the reader reads that and leaves.” And Juan Señor was emphatic: “No content without consent. Cite or attribute – and if they don’t, this should be a red line.”

Ricky Sutton suggested the power balance is already shifting. Big tech has relied on two shields: fair use (“we can take anything we want”) and Section 230, the 1997 law classifying them as platforms, not publishers. “But that ends if AI Overviews continues like this. If it takes your content, rewrites it and publishes it on Google.com as a commercial product, it’s a publisher,” he said. And once it’s a publisher, liability follows.

There is bipartisan support to reform Section 230, Sutton noted: “They’re going to have a cold wake-up call when they realise what defamation feels like.” Meanwhile, CDN-level opt-outs (Cloudflare, Akamai, Fastly) will enable “pay-per-crawl” rules,



Henry Zhang,
General Manager,
CNKI

finally giving publishers control over whether – and how – they’re scraped.

“The legal tide is turning,” Sutton said. “Pay-per-crawl models will soon give publishers the power to decide if and how they’re scraped.” But unity will be essential.

Zooming out, Feijóo reminded delegates that copyright is just one front in a far bigger fight over information sovereignty. “AI is the new oil – but it flows through algorithms, not pipelines.” Nations are competing not just on AI capability, but on control of infrastructure, data and regulation. “Control over

AI’s physical infrastructure is the modern geopolitical battlefield.”

From China, Henry Zhang, General Manager, CNKI, described how the country is weaving AI into journalism, academia and education as a matter of national strategy. Sutton called the resulting landscape the rise of the “Splinternet”: “Imagine if we had 150 different versions of GDPR – how do we publish?”

For publishers, the old open internet is gone. What’s coming is a maze of gated ecosystems – demanding new alliances, new negotiation tactics, and new cultural fluency.

Surviving this era will take flexibility, diplomacy and, above all, collaboration.



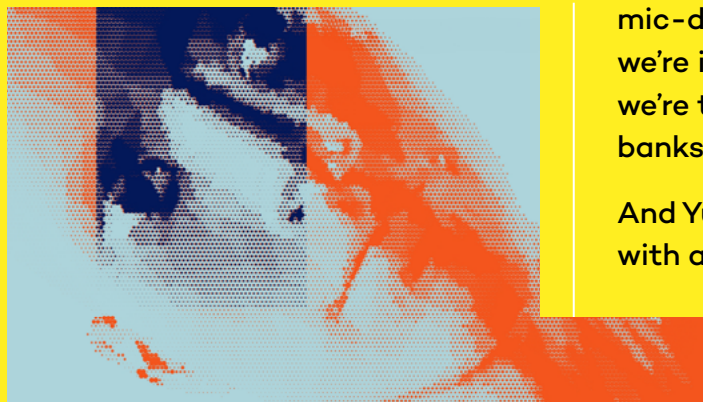
The power of partnership

Amid all the talk of sovereignty, supremacy, and survival, one message united the room: collaboration beats competition.

Tech policy expert Claudio Feijóo called it “the Chinese lesson”, stating that “unity is key – agreement on plans and shared navigation through AI’s rapid evolution is essential.”

From the platform side, Rubin echoed that sentiment: “We want to create a healthy, mutually beneficial ecosystem with publishers.”

Hearst’s Joe Martin took a more pragmatic view – warning that publishers who rely on platforms for distribution are building on borrowed ground. The solution? Independence through collective strength. “Building a business model



reliant on a partner for distribution is an unreliable long-term strategy.”

That call for shared leverage resonated with Bauer Media’s Tony OS platform, which will be opened to selected media houses. “We’re opening this up to collaborate and build better tools for editorial work,” said Stefan Betzold.

Scotch & Watch delivered the

mic-drop moment: “Individually we’re indignant ants; collectively we’re the bigger elephant. Big Tech banks on us not organising.”

And Yulia Boyle opened Congress with a call for delegates to “tune, prototype and share” to shape the next century of global media collaboration.

Across every session, the conclusion was clear: the future will be written by alliances. The companies that collaborate – on standards, ethics, data exchange, and innovation – will be the ones defining how AI works for media, not on it.

If the past decade was marked by silos, this one must be defined by coalition.

The rise of the product mindset



“A media platform is where sellers meet buyers or buyers meet sellers – and they solve problems together”

Sharon Roessen, COO, Terrapinn

IF AI IS REWRITING THE RULES of content creation, the product mindset is redefining how media companies build, test and deliver it. Borrowing from the playbooks of tech giants, publishers are getting comfortable with three words that once wouldn't have made it out of an editorial meeting: customer obsession, experimentation and agility.

Today, every touchpoint – from a headline, to a newsletter, to a live event – is part of the product experience. And as multiple speakers reminded us in Madrid, the new competitive edge isn't who publishes fastest. It's who iterates smartest.



**Laura Cushing,
Product Director,
Immediate Media**

From content teams to product squads

Across the industry, the traditional line between editorial and tech is dissolving. Immediate Media's Product Director Laura Cushing summed up the shift perfectly: “We solve user needs, not organisational needs.”

Her previous experience at Amazon is shaping how she leads at Immediate. Her teams operate like Amazon-style product squads – cross-functional, insight-driven and accountable to shared KPIs across editorial, technology and marketing. And everything begins with a “working backwards” approach: start with the reader problem, then design the product that solves it.

“We've stopped guessing what audiences want – we ask, test and build around their needs.”

In Germany, Burda Verlag has gone through a similar cultural

shift. “Product culture is change management in disguise,” Chief Digital Officer Martin Weese reminded delegates. The transformation isn’t just structural; it reshapes identity.

Brazil’s Grupo Globo rebuilt its organisation around audience journeys – streaming, web portals and social platforms – reframing every interaction as part of a product ecosystem. “When you see every touchpoint as a product, the company becomes a lab,” said Head of Marketing Eliseu Barreira Junior.

And at Bauer Media, the shift to product thinking goes deeper still. With Tony OS at the core, the company has rebuilt around audience journeys rather than legacy titles. As Stefan Betzold put it: “The product is no longer the magazine – it’s the entire user journey.”

On the commercial side, Mark Judd of CDS Global added the missing



Martin Weese,
Chief Digital
Officer, Burda
Verlag

link: partnership. “Collaboration is at the heart of it. Real value comes from working together across teams and across the globe.”

In other words: product thinking is as much about people as platforms.

Designing around the user

At The New York Times, product thinking now shapes the entire newsroom – not to generate more output, but to create moments of connection. This thinking has fuelled a constellation of habit-forming products – Wordle, Cooking, The



Mark Judd,
President
International,
CDS Global

Athletic, Wirecutter – each reinforcing the core subscription model. “Our hope is to have a dynamic and interconnected product experience that strengthens relationships, reinforces trust and improves our essential value,” said Jordan Vita.

Hearst is following a similar path, turning subscriptions into personalised memberships built around exclusive content and experiences. “We really listen to what each audience engages with,” said Rosie Percy – and build from there.

Condé Nast’s Vogue España and GQ Spain have made the same



Daniel Borrás,
Head of Editorial
Content, GQ
Spain

pivot, swapping legacy routines for audience-led ones. As Daniel Borrás explained, today's users expect brands to reflect their values; the result is content that behaves like a product – shaped by insight, tailored to platforms, designed for how people actually consume.

Commercial strategy is shifting in the same direction. Mark Judd reminded publishers that loyalty only shows up when readers feel real value: flexibility, control, and perks that matter.

That's why bundled print-and-digital packages or membership tiers like Empire VIP work – they

offer something distinct, something worth belonging to. His advice: keep testing, keep iterating, and don't be afraid to offer experiences money normally can't buy.

Experimentation / innovation

As Justin Smith of Semafor reminded delegates, real innovation starts with diagnosing the problem: you can only pivot with purpose when you're solving a specific, unmet audience need.

Semafor is built on that idea. The three-year-old startup has more than a million newsletter subscribers, a third of them C-suite. Their success rests on a simple observation: readers need products they aren't getting elsewhere.

The same spirit is reshaping legacy giants. The Economist has transformed into a multi-product intelligence brand – podcasts, video, newsletters,



Justin Smith,
co-founder and
CEO Semafor

data – stretching a centuries-old identity into modern form.

Japan's Kodansha, publisher of Manga, offered a reminder that such innovation requires organisations to leverage their own experience and strengths. "What we have learned is that we should try things even if they're totally new. Only such continuous attempts will increase the organisation's adaptability," said Yoshinobu Noma, President and CEO.

Harvard Business Review has embraced that logic too. "We're always testing tools," said Editor Maureen Hoch – not for novelty's sake, but to

improve how editors, producers and subscribers experience the brand.

At Immediate Media, experimentation is the norm. “If you’re not running experiments that fail, you’re not learning,” said Laura Cushing. Break things, learn fast, fix fast – without losing sight of quality. And as Cushing noted, great content collapses if the product experience doesn’t hold up: “Whether it’s a push notification or a print magazine, it’s the whole ecosystem that customers care about – one bad experience, one friction point can stop them coming back.”

Asia added another dimension through Angie Byun of K-Content and J-Content: in their world, every creative hit becomes a scalable



Clare Bolton,
Chief Content
Officer, Law
Business
Research

ecosystem – streaming, gaming, events, merchandise – all shaped by a tight feedback loop between creativity and data. “Great IP is born when creative meets data.”

Throughout the discussion, Mark Judd kept grounding the room in the commercial reality: retest pricing, challenge assumptions, and offer flexibility. Monthly renewals, smarter bundles, unexpected perks – whatever keeps people choosing to stay.



Mel McVeigh,
Strategic Digital
Advisor, PPA

Turning content into products – and products into systems

Clare Bolton, Chief Content Officer at Law Business Research, described the quiet revolution underway: content is no longer the final output – it’s the raw material. Once it’s structured, tagged and connected, it becomes endlessly reusable: a newsletter segment here, a membership perk there, a micro-course, a commerce module, a licensing feed or a data layer powering something entirely new.

Strategic Digital Advisor Mel McVeigh pushed this thinking into the wider ecosystem. We no longer live on



“We need to promote diversified revenue streams to increase our resilience.”

Borja Fernández, C de Comunicación

“one internet,” she argued, but many – each platform with its own logic, economics and rules of engagement.

That means creating the content once, but designing multiple ways for it to earn: paid partnerships in one environment, lead generation in another, community content somewhere else. The goal is no longer to master every channel,

but to own the relationship with the customer wherever they are.

This mindset isn’t limited to newsrooms; it’s reshaping events too. Terrapinn explained how they flipped their model from organising audiences by roles – sponsors, exhibitors, delegates, VIPs – to needs. “A media platform is where sellers meet buyers or buyers meet sellers – and they

solve problems together,” Terrapinn COO Sharon Roessen told Congress.

By reframing events as problem-solving ecosystems, they unlocked new products, new revenue layers and new data flows.

In their words: “We’re flipping it on its head... and then we build different media products around it.” ●

Build it and they will come

- Across every sector represented in Madrid – news, fashion, B2B, events, entertainment, IP – the message was the same: Product thinking is not a department. It is the operating system.
- It is how teams work. How decisions get made. How audiences are understood. How value is delivered.
- And crucially, how organisations stay



adaptable in a world where attention fragments, platforms multiply, and AI accelerates everything.

Where the first digital pivot was about publishing more, faster, to more places, this next one is quieter but more profound: Publish less. Learn more. Iterate constantly. Build what people actually need.



Trust

[The foundation
of transformation]





“In any kind of relationship, trust is essential.”

Akiko Nakakoshi, JMPA

THE PACE OF TRANSFORMATION in the media industry has never been faster. Where digital transformation once unfolded over years – or even decades – AI is compressing that timeline into months, sometimes weeks.

In this era of rapid change, trust is the foundation that enables organisations to adapt, innovate, and maintain credibility with audiences, ensuring that speed doesn’t come at the cost of integrity or connection.

As FIPP Chair Yulia Boyle reminded delegates, the future belongs to media that are “highly curated, deeply specialist, deeply expert,



**FIPP Chair,
Yulia Boyle**

extremely credible.” Trust, in other words, is not a by-product of transformation, but its starting point.

Trust as strategy – not sentiment

Over and over, speakers at Congress reframed trust not as a warm, fuzzy ‘nice to have’, but as the core asset that makes transformation viable.

At Time, Mark Howard was very clear: the brand’s 102-year history isn’t just nostalgia – it’s capital. “Our mission has always been to be the most trusted, influential media brand in the world.”

Dropping the paywall as part of CEO Jess Sibley’s Time 3.0 plan wasn’t a gimmick; it was a trust move. In a year of “40-plus meaningful elections” and rising misinformation, Time decided its journalism should be freely accessible – and that its commercial future would be built on deep, B2B partnerships who value that credibility.

He captured their strategy simply: “We are making TIME the best version



of itself every single day. We don't chase old trends and we don't chase other people's models." Trust – in the brand, the archive, the mission – is what allows them to innovate without becoming unrecognisable.

The Atlantic echoed the same principle through a subscription lens. Megha Garibaldi, Chief Growth Officer, noted that subscribers consistently tell them "they get enough value for the price they're paying – or more value than what they are paying." That perceived value is trust – and it gives The Atlantic permission to raise prices without eroding loyalty.

She stressed that reader motivation isn't only about access: "If I told you that if you didn't pay, we may not be in existence, it completely changes [their perspective]."

In other words, subscribers aren't just buying articles; they are choosing



Megha Garibaldi,
Chief Growth
Officer, The
Atlantic

to sustain and support a brand they respect and trust. The takeaway is simple: transformation – new formats, new revenue lines, new distribution models – only works if audiences want you to survive.

Credible media doesn't just help publishers – it underpins advertising efficiency, civic stability and even GDP growth. When trust erodes, everything built on top of it becomes more expensive, more fragile and more chaotic.

And from the AI and platforms side, the Scotch & Watch session made a similar claim another way:



Ricky Sutton,
Founder and
Podcast Host,
Future Media

"Everyone is on our side. The turning point has already happened. You're not feeling the benefits yet... but the direction of traffic is towards you," said Ricky Sutton, Founder and Podcast Host, Future Media.

Why? Because after 20 years of big tech extracting value, regulators and governments are finally recognising that trusted journalism is a public good.

Trust, in other words, is the strategy – not a bonus once the product is built.

Keepin' it real

In a world where AI can churn out content faster than you can say ChatGPT, human touch has never been more in demand. One of the clearest shifts across the sessions: audiences are increasingly trusting people more than institutions. Transformation that ignores this will feel cold and generic.

The Atlantic has leaned into this. Their differentiator in the age of AI, is not just “quality journalism”, but human connection with writers: “Readers want to connect with a writer, feel close to them,” said Megha Garibaldi.

Trust is built on history and principles – “there has to be excellent journalism, wonderful writing, and principles that will not be shaken” – but it’s also built through direct encounters with humans. When the “Signal-gate” story broke, they didn’t just publish; they opened up.



Jordan Vita,
VP Product and
Storytelling, The
New York Times

“We realised that people really wanted to hear from Jeff Goldberg, so we immediately arranged for a Zoom event with him... we had about 20,000 people just log in just to listen to him,” Garibaldi told Congress.

The New York Times is seeing the same shift. Jordan Vita, VP Product and Storytelling, put it simply: “We are also really trying to become more human.”

Younger audiences “want to hear

from a person and not a faceless brand”, so the New York Times is investing in “reporter-on-camera” explainers, richer reporter profiles and journalists engaging directly in the comments. The goal is to “create authentic human interactions, helping people see the rigor, the care, and the people behind our journalism.”

Vogue España and GQ Spain echoed this from a culture and lifestyle angle. For them, trust is inseparable from cultural relevance and human judgment: “No algorithm can replicate the judgment, the curiosity and the passion of our work,” stated Inés Lorenzo, Vogue Spain.

Today’s audience “isn’t passive... you can’t cheat with your audience.



‘Human first’ is essential in a digital world.”

Lulu Skantze, Publisher, Storytime

They expect brands to reflect their values,” Daniel Borrás, GQ Spain, added. Trust is built when readers see themselves – and their world – reflected with nuance and respect.

Hello! and Hola! remind us that trust also lives in the relationship between journalists and the people they write about. Their famous decision to buy paparazzi photos in order not to publish them, protecting Princess Diana’s privacy, is still part of their origin story.

“It really is a story that epitomises the magazine’s prioritisation of kindness and relationships with the people that we write about. It’s a strategy that pays off,” said Sophie Vokes-Dudgeon, Chief Content Officer at Hello!.

RocaNews offers a Gen Z version of the same principle: radical clarity, community and accountability. “We have a lot of very engaged followers...



Sophie Vokes-Dudgeon, Chief Content Officer at Hello!



Billy Carney, Co-founder, RocaNews

they message us if we slip up... we’ll retract a story and put out a statement like, hey, maybe we messed up a little bit here,” said Co-Founder Billy Carney.

For Gen Z, trust isn’t abstract – it’s earned through behaviour: admitting mistakes, citing primary sources and avoiding manufactured outrage.

Entrepreneur, author, and technologist, Brady Brim-DeForest pushed the idea further, arguing that the future of media will be shaped more by credibility and meaning than by reach. “It’s less about volume, it’s less about surface area and more about depth... credibility, authenticity, resonance, meaning – creating those emotional paybacks for an audience.”

In his words, we need to “inject humanity into the machine.” That starts with trusting – and foregrounding – human talent.

Trust in membership and data stewardship

The most interesting transformations aren’t chasing scale; they are redesigning the business around intimacy, clarity and belonging.

At the New York Times, the entire

product universe is organised around a trust metaphor. “Our core news product is the sun, the gravitational center... Our lifestyle products orbit the sun, powered by the trust and authority of our core journalism,” explained Vita.

Games, cooking, The Athletic and Wirecutter deepen connection “through joy, reliability, expertise and utility” – but they all draw their power from the core news brand. Trust in journalism powers everything.

Hearst UK made a sharp distinction between subscriptions and memberships: “Subscriptions are transactional. Memberships are emotional. Subscribers pay. Members participate. Subscribers buy. Members belong,” Rosie Percy told delegates.

“We develop memberships per brand, per audience to really listen to what each individual audience engages with and then we develop it from there.”



Rosie Percy,
Audience
Development
Director, Hearst

Crucially, data is treated as sacred, not a commodity. “It’s a [privilege] when someone’s chosen and trusted to give you their data. For me, that’s making sure that we’re delivering value at every single touch point,” Percy said.

That line could sit on the wall of every product team. Inbox access, according to Percy, “is a privilege, not a right.”

Juan Señor’s stated that media has been “obsessed with programmatic volume for too long. Intimacy with audiences is the new currency.”

“You can sell more with a verified, engaged audience than you ever

could with cheap CPMs. Tomorrow’s goldmine is first-party data – and that means registration,” he added.

In the Scotch & Watch session, Seedelta’s Chris Duncan argued that we’re entering a post-traffic, post-retail world. Scale from platforms is unreliable; newsstand distribution is declining. That forces a shift to direct, high-trust relationships: “We have to be a direct-to-consumer product.”

Newsletters are one of the richest trust engines. Sutton, a former news editor on News of the World, contrasted anonymous mass audiences with his the intimacy of smaller numbers: “I had 60 million readers, but I didn’t know my readers. I’ve got 18,000 subscribers to the newsletter. I know all of them.”

American news website Semafor uses its format to turn the product itself into a trust-building device. There is a clear separation of news, context and

opinion so readers can see where facts end and interpretation begins. “Trust is clarity – the format is the integrity,” said co-founder Justin Smith, also former CEO of Bloomberg Media.

For print. UPM’ argument is that in a hyper-digital, AI-scraped world, print is becoming a rare trust anchor. Print creates cognitive depth and emotional resonance: “It is a form of inspiration... you get inspired by the magazines you read,” Kati Murto, VP Brand, Marketing, Communications and Sustainability, told delegates.

It also performs commercially. According to UPM, print advertising has an ROI of £6.36 per £1 invested, while recall is 78%, much higher than digital. The future is not print versus digital – it’s trusted ecosystems where each strengthens the other: “Print and digital together are more powerful than print or digital alone,” said Murto.



**Kati Murto, VP
Brand, Marketing,
Communications
and Sustainability**

Across all these examples, the pattern is the same: products that perform are products that keep faith with the audience.

Inside out

You can’t win the trust of your customers or audience if you don’t create trust at home. It starts inside your organisation – in how teams work,

how decisions are made and how you treat the communities you serve.

DC Thomson’s talk made that clear. Transformation, CEO Rebecca Miskin argued, is not a neat roadmap – it’s millions of messy, emotional decisions made by real people.

“Change takes time. It is multiple decisions by every single employee, every single colleague, every single day... Transformation is a team sport. We must trust our colleagues. And we must trust the process.”

What enables that trust? The “most neglected and vital foundation” of transformation is shared measurement. “Measurement is the foundation of



“Be human and care. It’s a competitive advantage.”

Rebecca Miskin, DC Thomson

transformation. If you can measure, you can assess. If you can assess, you can learn. Without learning, you repeat the same mistakes.”

Ricky Sutton reminded publishers that trust between organisations also matters, as Big Tech has repeatedly exploited the industry’s inability to act collectively.

But the most radical thing you can do amidst the chaos and uncertainty of rapid transformation? “Be human and care. It’s a competitive advantage,” stated Miskin.

Transformation built on trust isn’t just about audiences trusting brands. It’s about teams trusting each other enough to experiment and share failures. Functions trusting shared metrics and shared purpose. Publishers trusting one another enough to collaborate, lobby and negotiate from a position of strength.

Trust and tech

One of the clearest messages at Congress was this: technology only strengthens journalism when it is anchored in trust.

Megha Garibaldi stated: “Our journalism is by humans, for humans. AI works only behind the scenes – for efficiency, discovery and experimentation – but you will never see an AI-written piece in The Atlantic.”

Their dedicated Atlantic Labs ensures any AI testing happens outside the core product, protecting the integrity of their



journalism. That kind of accountability matters even more now that platforms are experimenting with AI-generated summaries and synthetic content.

When intermediaries rewrite, reframe or obscure the original source, publishers don’t just lose traffic – they risk losing the trusted relationship they have earned

with their audience.

That’s why many speakers at Congress argued that the long-term answer lies in direct, first-party relationships and complete transparency about what is human-produced, what is AI-assisted, and how data is handled.

As Ricky Sutton told delegates: “Public sentiment is already a little bit unsure about where AI is going to go, and I think the opportunity for publishers is to clearly position ourselves as a completely separate entity.”



Beyond the page:

Media as ecosystem



“We’re not in publishing; we’re in audience experience.”

Cristina Martín Conejero, Hearst España

FROM THE ECONOMIST TO TIME, Vogue, RocaNews and HELLO!, the strongest brands at Congress weren’t talking about magazines or websites. They were talking about worlds.

Print still matters. So do newsletters, podcasts, TV, TikTok, apps, awards, school programmes and B2B platforms. And much more. But diversification for its own sake isn’t the point. The future belongs to brands that feel coherent wherever you meet them – a unified ecosystem of content, community, commerce and experience.

As FIPP Chair Yulia Boyle put it, the

media that will thrive are “highly curated, deeply specialist, deeply expert, extremely credible.” In other words, the brands that can build *worlds* – not just websites.

One brand, many doors

Speakers repeatedly stressed that the ecosystem only works if everything is anchored in a clear editorial identity.

At The Economist, that identity is a single, recognisable voice moving across channels. What began as a weekly print magazine is now a tightly integrated network: print and

digital editions, a fast-growing app, podcasts and video, subscriber-only series such as Economist Insider, and a thriving events business. While an AI Lab, launched early 2025, is exploring new ways for audiences to interact with content – but always on the brand’s terms.

“Acquiring new customers has changed how we think at The Economist. It led us to focus on three things, what I call the 3Ds: differentiation, direct relationships and discoverability,” said Luke Bradley-Jones. President of The Economist Group.

In a “post search world”, how do you make sure that your brand is discoverable? “Good old fashioned brand marketing” says Bradley-Jones. Despite its 182-year legacy, The Economist has increased its brand marketing “by quite a bit this year”, with plans for further spend in 2026.

TIME is following a similar logic. CEO Jess Sibley’s 3.0 plan reframed TIME from a magazine to a global platform, with live franchises such as TIME100, a growing TIME Studios film unit, global editions, educational products, newsletters and a deep archive that now powers new products and partnerships. “Jess wrote the 3.0 plan as an opportunity to come in and really take back control of the Time brand globally,” Mark Howard, Chief Operating Officer, told Congress.

With the paywall taken down, focus shifted from chasing a few dollars a month from individual subscribers to



Eliseu Barreira Junior, Head of Marketing, Licensing and Advertising, Grupo Globo

“building much deeper, multifaceted relationships with global brands who view us as more of a partner.”

Globo in Brazil perfectly illustrates this ecosystem mindset. Once ‘just’ a broadcaster, it now positions itself as a unified system of TV, streaming, digital portals and social – all tied together by the Globo brand. “We integrate all of those channels with this robust digital ecosystem featuring leading portals for news, eSports, entertainment and more. At the heart of this ecosystem is Globoplay, where Brazilians spend more time per day than Netflix and YouTube combine,”

said Eliseu Barreira Junior, Head of Product Marketing, Licensing and Advertising Formats at Grupo Globo.

Publishing remains central, not peripheral. “Publishing is not dead in Brazil. For us, it is the front door to our entire ecosystem,” Barreira said. “Those publishing products are our primary funnel... This is where we build our most strategic asset: over 142 million registered users. This first-party data is what connects the user journey across our platforms and allows us to personalise their experience.”

As Juan Señor reminded delegates, “Tomorrow’s goldmine is first-party data.” Globo’s ecosystem is a live example of that principle at national scale.

Whether you are reading The Economist in print, watching a Vogue Spain TikTok, or opening El País on a PressReader-powered app in a

hotel lounge, the principle is the same: many doors, one world.

From page to stage

One of the clearest signs of true ecosystem thinking is how brands treat events. They are no longer ‘nice-to-have’ marketing extras. They are core products – and often the most AI-resistant, high-trust touchpoints a media brand owns.

In the Beyond the Page panel, Storytime, Ananda Vikatan and Hearst España all described events and experiences as central to both impact and revenue.

Storytime has moved far beyond its origins as a children’s magazine, becoming a multi-format storytelling universe: print issues, audio stories, teacher toolkits, digital activities and school events. Much of this



Lulu Skantze,
Co-founder
and Publisher,
Storytime

content is licensed into education and tech – often to partners who, as founder Lulu Skantze put it, “have no idea how to create content” but desperately need it.

India’s Ananda Vikatan has expanded from regional magazines into TV production, over 100 events a year, major awards franchises and even a wealth management platform born from its personal finance journalism. “We are trying to see how we can grow revenue opportunities using the community... and the credibility that we have achieved from that,” said Srinivasan Balasubramanian, Managing Director at Vikatan Group.



**Srinivasan
Balasubramanian,**
Managing
Director,
Vikatan Group

For him, live gatherings are a strategic moat: “Events are probably the one thing which is keeping us kind of AI-proof. Physical events, getting communities to interact and creating some value both for the celebrities as well as for the attendees.”

However, Balasubramanian warns this ecosystem would hold less value without the magazines. “In like karma; you get karma from the magazine and then you give it back to the magazine, because the magazine cannot survive on its own. You need to make the money from the events to give it back to the magazine to have more awards that are coming in from the magazine.”

Hearst España uses events with the same strategic clarity. CEO Cristina Martín Conejero explained their events all have a purpose: “Visibility, consciousness or celebrating someone important to the community. They’re a source of revenue, but also a way of linking to the community and creating buzz. We become the news. It’s how we move from storytelling to story-living.”

She explained that advertisers increasingly want experiential formats, and events provide a new way to connect: “Experiential is becoming significant. It’s a different way of linking with advertisers and enlarging the community.”

Across Sifted, Politico, Spainmedia and others, the pattern was the same: events are the live nodes in the ecosystem, feeding data, stories, memberships, sponsorships and community. From page, to stage, to platform and back to the page again.



Cristina Martín Conejero, CEO, Hearst España

From readers to participants

If the trust explains *why* audiences choose a brand, the ecosystem explains *what happens next*. In a true media ecosystem, audiences stop being passive recipients and start becoming participants.

RocaNews is a clear example. Built for young people who “don’t read news articles online” and who view much legacy coverage as “biased, partisan, inflammatory and hard to relate to”, the founders designed their ecosystem backwards from how Gen Z actually behave.

Instead of pushing traffic to a website, they start where the audience already is: Instagram. Stories finish in-feed. Polls, quizzes and Q&As turn every update into a conversation. Those who want more move into newsletters and then a gamified app where reading earns XP and leaderboard status.

“We just built news for the way we’d want to read it. We treat news as a two-way street, and I think that’s gone a long way in building trust,” co-founder Bill Carney said.

The myth that “young people won’t pay for news” also fell apart. “Let’s just try it,” the team decided – and were “blown away” by the response. The issue wasn’t willingness to pay, but the absence of a brand they trusted enough to pay for.

Clare Bolton at Law Business Research showed the same pattern in B2B: a shift from publishing

specialist information to building an ecosystem of reports, rankings, data tools and events, designed to move people “from reader to client”.

Nation Media Group’s Monicah Ndung’u offered a third variation. Instead of treating archives, photos and regional content as static resources, they reframed them as raw material for new products. “Most of these products are based on what I call ‘hidden gems’. They’re often in plain sight – we just need to think differently about how to use them.”

Those hidden gems now underpin everything from reader revenue bundles to content syndication, education products, brand licensing, gaming, puzzles, think tanks, events and marketplaces. “You look at your content, you look at what audiences are saying, then you look at how you can repurpose it or create something new,” Ndung’u said.



**Monicah Ndung’u,
Chief Corporate
Affairs and
Partnerships
Officer, Nation
Media Group**

The message is simple: every touchpoint is a chance for participation – and every act of participation strengthens the brand.

When stories become worlds

Some of the most advanced ecosystem models at Congress came from companies that think in IP, not issues. Kodansha’s Manga playbook is a masterclass. Once seen as a niche Japanese art form, Manga has become a global entertainment engine – projected to hit \$63B worldwide by 2033.

“Almost all Manga series originate from Manga magazines,” Yoshinobu Noma, President and CEO of Kodansha, explained. “Editors watch readers’ reactions closely and feed that back to the creators.” From there, the ecosystem is created.”

The original Manga becomes Anime. From there it expands into movies, games, merchandise, fashion and theme attractions. Kodansha describes this simply as “one source, multi-use.”

“We have been executing this ultimate strategy over many years and we will continue to challenge ourselves to deliver IP in various forms so that more fans can enjoy it,” said Noma.

The results are compelling: “Our global licensing revenue is steadily growing – last year’s sales were approximately three times those of five years ago.” They are equally bold about experiences, both physical and virtual.

A recent exhibition attracted over 20,000 visitors in 20 days, with fans asking them to repeat it in other cities.

“Having IPs, a brand and human resources that are used to engage with readers are our strengths, and there are not many other companies that can catch up to us easily. It is important to leverage these strengths in interactive exchanges with fans and aim for mutual prosperity,” Noma told Congress.

This “story as universe” logic is not unique to manga. The K-Content and J-Content examples referenced elsewhere at Congress – from K-pop acts to shows like Squid Game – show how powerful IP can be when it moves effortlessly across music, film, gaming, merchandise, events, VR and fashion. “A story is IP when it lives beyond its first format,” stated Noma.



Yoshinobu Noma,
President and
CEO, Kodansha

TIME’s franchises – TIME100, Next Generation Leaders, Person of the Year – operate on similar lines. They began as editorial constructs and have become live events, film projects, educational materials and branded partnerships. The Economist’s Insider and specialist verticals reflect the same shift: it’s no longer just a weekly edition, but an ecosystem readers can enter and navigate across newsletters, podcasts, data and analysis.

Don’t just spray and pray

Behind all of this sits an invisible architecture: the data and distribution “spine” that connects every touchpoint.

Few brands can match Grupo Globo. Their platforms reach 68 million people daily, over 160 million monthly, and almost 200 million annually – nearly the entire Brazilian population. With numbers that large, the challenge is depth, not reach. First-party data stitches the user journey together, allowing Globo to personalise experiences across products.

“The key learning is that our portals are massive funnels,” said Barreira. “They act as the main entry point –

“If you’re not running events, you’re not in the game.”

Deb Gallagher, MIT Sloan Management Review

directing a huge engaged audience and potential subscribers to the other products in our ecosystem.”

Social media is treated not just as distribution but as a cultural amplifier. “Our content becomes a national phenomenon... it creates a powerful cycle of relevance that discovers new digital talent and drives audiences right back into our ecosystem,” Barreira added. “Social media is for building communities – creating conversations with formats and language tailored to each platform.”

At Hearst, after years of relying on search and social, the focus has shifted to direct relationships and memberships. Cosmopolitan Club, Harper’s Bazaar Privé, Good Housekeeping Live and enthusiast experiences across Men’s Health, Women’s Health, Runner’s World and Bicycling all contribute to that deeper engagement.

“The other thing we love about membership – beyond reliable, recurring revenue – is that it increases our gathering of first-party data,” said Joe Martin, VP Media Licensing. “The more we know about a customer, the better we can serve them in experiences, commerce and advertising.”

That shift demands refreshing evergreen content, consolidating duplicates, standardising canonical URLs, improving core web vitals. “We can produce some of the best content available, but if we provide a bad experience, people are not going to stick around,” Martin warned. They’ve even built SEO playbooks and checklists for all 200+ global editions.

PressReader × Prisa demonstrated how partnerships can extend this spine beyond a single brand. Since 2011, PressReader has been Prisa’s technological partner, distributing El

País and other titles globally across B2B and B2C channels – from airlines to hotels. Features such as multi-language translation and audio listening have helped print-native readers transition smoothly to digital.

“We have a lot of good quality content, but we need to connect the right content with the right reader,” said Zaida Calvete Norell, Senior Manager, Content Partnerships and Projects.

The ecosystem lens turns distribution from “spray and pray” into a coherent pathway – a connected journey where every touchpoint brings people closer to the brand instead of losing them to the platforms.

In an ecosystem world, the question is no longer “What’s our magazine or site?” but “What world are we inviting people into – and how easy is it for them to live in it?” ●



Congress 2025

CAN'T WAIT







- CREATORS
- COMMUNITIES
- CO-CREATION

The new power dynamic



“The audience is already in the creator economy. It’s a party that classic media now has to gate-crash.”

Lucy Küng, Professor, Advisor, NED and Author

IN AN ECOSYSTEM WHERE audiences move across platforms, formats and fandoms, creators have become one of the most powerful forces in media. They are no longer an ‘adjacent economy’ or side hustle.

“Creators are the clearest sign of the new power shift. Specialism, curation and credibility travel everywhere,” said Yulia Boyle, FIPP Chair in her opening welcome.

Just don’t call it ‘UGC’

A consistent theme at Congress was that successful creators are not



Lucy Küng:
Professor and
author

amateurs filling up platforms with user-generated content. They are highly efficient media operators.

The most successful creators run what are essentially micro media companies. Lucy Küng described these businesses as “super simple value chains” that find a niche and then scale with minimal overheads.

In contrast to the “massively bloated institutions”, creators operate with speed, focus and direct accountability to their audiences.

The language around UGC came in for particular criticism. Küng’s line was deliberately provocative: anyone inside a media organisation still calling this “user-generated content” hasn’t understood the power shift and “needs to get out of the building.” You can’t partner with people you fundamentally view as hobbyists – they are peers in the same market.

The rise of generative AI only sharpens this divide. As Andrés

Rodríguez quipped in the opening session with Yulia Boyle, “Gutenberg is as important as Zuckerberg” – and AI is now giving every creator the production capacity of a newsroom.

Küng argued that the creator economy and AI are compounding forces: AI has obliterated many of the old barriers to producing ‘good enough’ content. That makes the direct, personality-led creator model even more potent – especially when set against slower, more process-heavy legacy media.

Media firms are not special

One of the clearest insights across sessions was that the real distinction is not “creators versus publishers.” Many creators are media companies; many media companies are trying to behave like creators. The deeper divide is philosophical: are you audience-first, or institution-first?



**Jacob Donnelly,
Founder, A Media
Operator**

Jacob Donnelly, Founder of A Media Operator, argued that audience attention has shifted to creators “because they’re creating content that people actually want to consume.” Many publishers stopped doing that. They optimised content for machines, not humans. Traffic became the north star; SEO, Discover and programmatic CPMs dictated editorial decisions.

This shift extends well beyond creator culture. Hearst’s Joe Martin noted that even large publishers are moving away from chasing raw scale and towards “highly engaged communities.” It mirrors the creator-economy logic: relationship not reach is the real prize.

Donnelly summed it up neatly: “Media companies are not special. We put out content, build an audience and monetise... but every publisher thinks they are a wonderful, unique organism.”

The only practical distinction he noted was this: legacy publishers tend to be run by the head of sales; creator businesses are run by the head of content.

Creators are media

This philosophical flip has led to a very different power dynamic. Küng captured this new reality succinctly: “The most successful creators are very large media businesses now. They don’t need us – we need them.”

Legacy publishers increasingly need creators’ niches, trust and communities – their cultural fluency and access to younger or harder-to-reach audiences.

The opportunity here is not to drag creators into old structures, but to offer services they genuinely value: legal protection, brand safety, commercial infrastructure, analytics, global distribution and cross-format production. Publishers can become the infrastructure layer that helps creators scale. The days when creators were expected to be grateful for logo association are over.

A great face for social

Across Congress, one message was clear: journalists and editors need to behave like creators. As Juan Señor put it, “People follow people, not just brands – especially Gen Z and Gen Alpha.” Legacy outlets are responding by pushing talent to the front. The Economist still has no bylines in print, but its podcasts and Insider video series put named journalists on camera, building



Juan Señor,
Innovation Media
Consulting Group

personal followings and a level of connection an AI engine can't replicate.

Hello! and Hola! take this even further. Their royal editor sends voice notes directly to the Hello! Royal Club; roving reporters share updates before stories publish; podcasts and events make editors feel like characters audiences actually know. The brand becomes a living community rather than a distant storyteller.

Publishers are increasingly developing this talent internally. Immediate Media is upskilling staff who want to be on camera; others are building creator networks inside their brands. The

logic is simple: younger audiences follow people first. As Küng noted, you can't nurture creators inside rigid hierarchies and long approval chains.

This creator logic is also reshaping organisations like Hearst. Its clubs, events and memberships – from Cosmo Sleepovers to Men's Health run clubs to Harper's Bazaar Privé – let audiences do the brand together, not just read it. These experiences deepen loyalty and generate first-party data that fuels future products and partnerships. As Joe Martin put it: “Engagement is everything – a disengaged audience won't act.”

Audience participation

Roca News is one of the clearest examples of a creator-style outlet turning its audience into part of the editorial process. Roca began where its audience already was – on

Instagram – with a tone and visual style native to social platforms. But its most radical shift is treating the community as a distributed newsroom.

More than 40,000 ‘Roca Reporters’ act as guides, fixers, sources and collaborators. When Billy Carney and his co-founder travel for reporting they meet local readers who shape the story. The audience also acts as a real-time bias check. Roca has retracted stories not because facts were wrong, but because readers felt a missing perspective mattered. It’s a fundamental shift from the days when a letter to the editor was the only feedback loop.

Chinese National Geography shows

that co-creation doesn’t have to happen on social platforms to be powerful. Through photography contests and expeditions, readers become contributors whose images and discoveries feed directly into storytelling. Editors and scientists act as KOLs with large followings. Projects like “China’s Most Beautiful Roads” invite citizens to shape how their landscapes are represented.

As Liu Jing, Content Director, puts it: “We transform content into multidimensional experiences.” It’s a seventy-five-year-old brand functioning as a creator community.

Kodansha applies the same principle at industrial scale. Manga magazines

function as live R&D labs where creators, editors and readers iterate together. The “one source, multi-use” model – where a manga becomes anime, games, merchandise and events – only works because fan enthusiasm shapes which stories win.

As president Yoshinobu Noma stated: “Fan enthusiasm is the new raw material – our job is to shape it with them.”

Experience counts

The creator economy is also reshaping how organisations think about business models. Hearst’s Joe Martin described a shift away from pure scale and programmatic volume and towards highly engaged communities. Instead of chasing “more,” their brands are building layers of membership, where members pay four-figure sums for intimate, luxury

“Creators use content to build their brand... while traditional media is still trying to make all its money from the content itself.”

Lulu Skantze, Publisher, Storytime

experiences. Enthusiast titles such as Men's Health and Runner's World are using their subject matter to build experiences and benefits. "The more we know about a customer, the better we can serve them in terms of experiences," said Martin.

These experiences are editorial, commercial and communal at once. They create content, offer sponsors authentic activation spaces and deepen loyalty. They also generate first-party data that informs more tailored content, commerce and advertising.

The underlying logic mirrors the creator economy: reach is no longer the prize – relationship is. As Martin puts it: "Engagement is such a focus because a disengaged audience isn't going to take any kind of action."

Human stories with heart

Across the sessions, the message was: the creator economy is pushing media back to first principles.

Content must be either genuinely useful or genuinely human. As Katja Eggert, Head of Strategic Development at Immediate Media, noted, anything in the "wishy-washy middle" won't survive an AI-saturated world. Practical tools earn their keep; so do stories rooted in a clear human perspective. The generic, interchangeable stuff can be generated by machines.

Human storytelling and service remain the true differentiators. Strategic Digital Advisor Mel McVeigh argued that what will continue to pay are the things that AI can't imitate: emotional intelligence, lived experience, curiosity and judgement. This was echoed by Hello!'s Sophie Vokes-Dudgeon, who told Congress a real story is a "human



Katja Eggert,
Head of Strategic
Development,
Immediate Media

story with heart, that AI can't tell."

"Humans have been telling stories since the beginning of time. They're the foundation of society and we will tell stories forever, which should be good for business," she stated.

If the creator economy has taught media anything, it's this: technology may shift the distribution, but human stories still drive the connection. ●

Nobody rates rate-cards

The creator lens is also reshaping how publishers work with advertisers – who now want co-designed stories, real-time content and access to creators.

AZURE's Jacqueline Loch offered the example of Audi asking her to send not just an editor to Milan for a concept-car launch, but one who was also a creative – filming, posting and producing content in real time.

Loch's team rebuilt the workflow overnight: they bought a new iPhone, trained the editor to shoot with a stabiliser, set up a live asset feed back to the art desk, and published from the event in real time. It wasn't on any rate card, but it won high-value business and positioned



Jacqueline Loch,
EVP Strategy and Revenue, Azure

them as one of only two Canadian publishers able to deliver it.

Time Out's partnership with Maybelline followed the same pattern. A speed-dating event at Time Out Market New York became a shared cultural moment: Maybelline's on-site studio, Time Out's multi-platform coverage and



Gregory Cornelius,
Associate Editor, DestinAsian

participants' own content creation.

DestinAsian's Gregory Cornelius even argued that advertisers should be "treated more like subscribers" – buying ongoing content development and distribution rather than one-off campaigns, mirroring the creator economy shift from transactions to relationships.



Purpose

Sustainability

Performance



“We needed a north star to outshine our craving for the familiar.”

Rebecca Miskin, DC Thomson

TRANSFORMATION ISN'T ONLY powered by technology – it's powered by people. Whether organisations endure or unravel comes down to the humans making decisions – and acting on them – in uncertain times. At the heart of this lies a set of human questions: why we work, who we serve, and how we keep going when the ground never stops shifting.

Purpose provides direction. Sustainability builds systems (and people) that last. Human performance drives adaptability. And community turns it all into lived experience.



Charlotte Ricca,
performance
psychologist,
Kinda Brilliant

Purpose as a north star

Purpose emerged as the stabilising force in a volatile industry. It showed up not just as branding, but as identity, responsibility and direction. At DC Thomson, Rebecca Miskin grounded their transformation in purpose: “We are purpose-driven... we seek to be a force for good.”

Purpose became the reason to endure the messy middle of change, where uncertainty is inevitable and there are “thousands of people making different decisions every day”.

“We needed a north star to outshine our craving for the familiar,” said Miskin. “So we set up a mantra that everyone could unite behind: protect profits, diversify revenues.”

This concept of purpose as a north star was echoed in a session on ‘Sustainable performance in a chaotic world’, with performance psychologist Charlotte Ricca and The River Group’s CEO Nicki Murphy. However, the focus

was on the individual, rather than the organisation. Purpose was talked about in terms of your values, an internal compass that helps you stay grounded when outcomes are uncertain. If you know your values, Ricca argued, you can withstand pressure, chaos and discomfort – because purpose answers the question, “Why am I doing this?” long before success or failure does.

Purpose was also expressed as civic duty. Sarah Thompson, Executive Managing Director at Classroom, reminded the room that media’s purpose is inseparable from democracy: holding power to account, protecting local identity and ensuring cultural continuity – a reminder that purpose is often larger than the organisation itself.

Hello! and Hola! framed purpose through emotion. Their mission since the beginning was “to bring joy... the froth of life.” Kindness and integrity



Nicki Murphy,
CEO, River Group

are not soft values in their world; they are operational principles, dictating which stories should be told and how relationships are protected. Vogue and GQ Spain added another layer: a purpose rooted in culture, curiosity and human aspiration – “our brands were born to make people dream,” said Inés Lorenzo, Head of Editorial Content at Vogue Spain.

Even Kodansha’s Manga playbook tethers its global strategy to a clear, almost poetic purpose: “Inspire impossible stories”. From poetic to pragmatic, Immediate has embraced Amazon’s “working backwards”



Inés Lorenzo,
Head of Editorial
Content,
Vogue Spain

discipline – introduced by Laura Cushing – reframing purpose around one principle: solve real customer problems. Who is this for, and what difference does it make?

In the AI sessions, purpose emerged as the non-negotiable. The Atlantic was unequivocal: “Our journalism is about humans for humans and by humans.” Purpose, in this sense, wasn’t just aspiration – it was a boundary.

Henneo framed purpose as a system: it only works when governance, finances and long-view strategy are aligned. As President Fernando

de Yarza put it, that's what turns purpose from a slogan into something you can actually act on.

Across all these sessions, purpose emerged as the north star guiding creativity, community, innovation and integrity – especially when the path ahead feels so uncertain and often unstable.

Sustainability = people, planet, community

If purpose sets direction, sustainability is about building the systems that make the journey possible. And the message across Congress was clear: sustainability is bigger than carbon footprints or cost lines. It's about systems that allow humans, businesses and cultures to thrive.

Human sustainability ran through the transformation sessions.



**Fernando de Yarza,
President,
Henneo**

“Transformation is a culture shift, not a dashboard,” Miskin said – a reminder that change relies on the capacity of people, not on cold calculations. Sustainable performance requires emotional awareness, care and systems that reduce friction rather than add to it.

Sustainability also meant economic and structural resilience. Thompson highlighted the real consequences of unsustainable ecosystems: job

losses, news deserts, identity erosion and weakened democracy. Time Out's AI session made the same point through the language of rights: control, credit and compensation are not luxuries – they are the foundations of a sustainable digital economy. Without them, the industry risks repeating the mistakes of the social media era – giving away content and traffic to platforms without securing value in return.

Environmental and cognitive sustainability came into focus through UPM Communications Papers. Print was framed not as nostalgia but as a necessary counterweight to digital overload – a medium that supports comprehension, focus and attention in ways screens simply can't.



“The leaders we need now are entrepreneurs – people willing to disrupt the very businesses they run.”

Martin Weese, Chief Digital Officer, Burda

UPM's Kati Murto stressed that their environmental commitments – from biodiversity to carbon reduction – reflect a deeper truth: sustainability is long-term responsibility, not just operational efficiency. And the hidden carbon cost of digital activity was a pointed reminder that “digital” is not the same as “sustainable.”

Burda Germany offered the organisational mirror to Murto's environmental argument: sustainability is about learning to live with uncertainty while still funding the future. Balancing immediate profitability with long-term adaptability is now a precondition for survival. A key element of this, Martin Weese stated, is an entrepreneurial mindset. “When uncertainty is high, optimisation isn't enough. The leaders we need now are entrepreneurs – people willing to disrupt the very businesses they run.”

The result? Lean, decentralised teams and agile tech infrastructures where teams can act fast, test fast and live the brand.

AI added another dimension: sustainability as workload management. The UK Parliament's use of AI to reduce duplication, automate checks and support accessibility showed how technology can ease cognitive strain rather than intensify it. “Digital twins” – AI companions that read, check and prompt – illustrated how sustainable systems might look when humans and machines complement one another rather than compete.

Henneo President Fernando de Yarza closed the loop: sustainability is not only structural but strategic. Governance, financial discipline and cultural humility allow organisations to innovate from a place of strength instead of desperation. Paper and

digital together, he argued, form a more resilient ecosystem than either alone.

Human performance in a chaotic world

The conversations during networking made it clear that chaos is not a temporary inconvenience, it's the operating environment. The question people were asking was, how can humans perform inside it?

Miskin took the reins: “We need pioneers, curiosity, grit and patience.” Resilience meant adaptability, not endurance. Charlotte Ricca brought this to life in the sustainable performance session, introducing her GRIT model – Grounded in values, Recognise what you can control, Iterate and adapt, Take Action: values give direction, controllables create focus, iteration drives learning, and small steps build momentum.

In the same session, Nicki Murphy's observations on burnout reinforced the human cost when organisations forget this. People don't fail because they're weak; they fail because they lack support, clarity, conviction or psychological safety. Sustainable performance depends on behaviours that encourage learning and responsibility rather than fear or avoidance.

Immediate's Laura Cushing explained how the product mindset requires teams to experiment, "break things," and learn fast – but also to maintain high standards and protect users. Psychological safety was essential, and MVP thinking was not just about product development; it was a way of reducing pressure on people and creating space for reflection.

Kati Murto added a cognitive dimension: print supports slower thinking and deeper comprehension –



**Maureen Hoch, VP
Digital Content,
Harvard Business
Review**

an antidote to digital overwhelm. In a world of distraction, the ability to focus becomes a performance advantage.

GQ and Vogue's session described the emotional and cognitive load of modern editorial roles, which demand multiple hats. Inés Lorenzo's stressed that the more complex the environment, the more valuable human creativity, judgement and contextual understanding become.

"Our job is to deliver the magic our brands were born to create. It's built from enthusiasm, emotion, creativity, culture and above all, community," she said.

The AI in Action session confirmed this. Adoption isn't a technical challenge but a human one. Transformation requires humility, curiosity, experimentation and real learning-by-doing. As Maureen Hoch from Harvard Business Review explained, AI fundamentally reshapes leadership because "you have a decision-making machine in front of you at all times." That makes top-down management harder, increases pressure and raises expectations about speed and clarity. AI literacy becomes part of wellbeing – a way to reduce anxiety, regain agency and work *with* these tools.

From Manga to Henneo, the same behavioural qualities kept emerging: bravery, humility, talent density and the willingness to try things. Sustainable human performance is not about perfectionism; it is about adaptability, learning and the courage to act in uncertainty. ●

Community and connection

COMMUNITY was the thread running through almost every session – not as a marketing add-on, but as the environment where purpose, sustainability and human performance become real.

Miskin articulated this perfectly: “We live and breathe the communities that we serve.” Hello!’s Sophie Vokes-Dudgeon showed what this looks like in practice – communities guiding editorial decisions, shaping language (Kate vs Catherine), and creating a three-way relationship between brand, contributor and audience.

Their “three Cs” – community, communication and connection – capture a deeper truth: community is a value that guides decisions, not a marketing ploy.

Vogue España and GQ Spain took community into the civic realm. Their hyperlocal strategy didn’t



just grow readership; it helped shape Madrid’s cultural identity. “Supporting local talent is building community,” said GQ’s Daniel Borrás – and that community, in turn, helped shape the city itself.

Thompson’s session followed the civic theme: when local media disappears, communities lose not just information but identity, belonging and voice. Whether it’s fashion titles shaping a city’s cultural life or

newsrooms sustaining democratic life, community is civic infrastructure – and media sits at the heart of it.

RBA’s Elsa Esparbé pushed the idea further: community at the industry level. Her call for publishers to act collectively against AI giants reframed community as strategic necessity, not sentiment. “We are lost, but we are together,” she said – a powerful counterpoint to decades of fragmented competition.

And this loops back to where Congress began – with Yulia Boyle’s reminder that FIPP itself is a century-old community of specialists: “It worked for 100 years because people cared about their craft and shared their playbook.”

Media organisations thrive when they build, serve and belong to communities – and when they act as communities themselves.



Media, tech and society

A new social contract



“We’re not competing with each other anymore – our competition is the tech companies. We need to join them on this journey as partners...”

Tim Hudson, Director of International, Licensing & TopGear Magazine UK

THE GROUND IS SHIFTING faster than the rules can keep up with. Search is turning into ‘answer’; synthetic content is flooding the web; scrapers and LLMs are ingesting journalism at industrial scale; while attribution, rights and value lag far behind. The imbalance is widening – a distribution system rewritten without a corresponding rewrite of responsibility.

Across FIPP Congress, speakers from every corner of the ecosystem converged on a single point: we’re entering an “agent web” era, where machines – not humans – are the primary consumers of content, and AI assistants increasingly shape

what people see, know and trust. In that world, relying on tacit norms or platform goodwill is untenable.

The next phase requires an explicit social contract between media, technology and society – one that defines access, value exchange, provenance, accountability and the human role in an AI-mediated information system.

A Google Zero world

For two decades, the implicit deal between media and platforms was simple: optimise for search

and social, get traffic back. That model has now fallen apart.

OpenAI’s Tom Rubin outlined the core shift: the primary interface for information is no longer a browser and a set of “blue links”, but an AI assistant sitting between the user and the web.

Two weeks before Congress, OpenAI announced its software development kit (SDK), which they claim could be the solution for publishers. As Rubin explained, it allows publishers to build fully branded, interactive apps inside ChatGPT, ensuring their content isn’t reduced to a few unattributed sentences.

“Instead of plain-text answers, your content becomes the experience,” he said. In a world where AI assistants increasingly sit between audiences and information, the SDK becomes a doorway – a way for publishers to exist inside the interface rather than be displaced by it.

In theory, this creates new “platform real estate”, spaces where publishers can develop richer experiences, gather leads and engage users without relying on referral traffic. But this shift still reflects a dramatic loss of distribution power.

Innovation analyst Juan Señor put it bluntly: “We’re moving from a search engine world, built on links, to an answer engine world.” Those answers, he warned, are “designed to replace visits to our sites.” His advice was clear: prepare for a “Google Zero world”, a model that assumes no meaningful organic traffic from platforms at all.

Mark Howard of Time illustrated what this looks like inside a global newsroom. A piece with modest traffic on Time.com might be hugely influential elsewhere – in Apple News, in an AI-generated briefing, or inside corporate tools – but that value is mostly invisible.

The old contract is broken. What replaces it must be a negotiated framework – one that treats content as critical infrastructure, not free fuel.

Artificial stupidity

Speakers at Congress rejected the idea that journalism is just a pile of pages to be scraped.

Señor noted that high-quality journalism now makes up an estimated 30% of LLM training data, and is considered “AAA data” by some AI companies – as vital as .gov or .edu domains. Without that layer of verified, contextualised work, he warned, “you don’t get artificial intelligence, you get artificial stupidity.”

This reframing matters. In the social-media era, publishers were treated as interchangeable suppliers feeding infinite feeds. In the AI era, the accuracy, diversity and integrity of models depend directly on the quality of the content. That gives publishers leverage they never exercised during Web 2.0.



“Publishers must unite to protect their IP, challenge Big Tech and build a new business model for the AI age.”

Paul Gerbino, Creative Licensing International

Real-world examples reinforced the point. Hearst's Joe Martin showed how authoritative editorial can change real-world behaviour: a bar in Asheville was "overwhelmed overnight" after Esquire named it one of America's best – a single editorial endorsement that changed tourism patterns (they took out an ad campaign in Esquire), local revenue *and* the bar's future. "Intimacy with audiences is the new currency," he said. "We've been obsessed with programmatic volume for too long."

On the buy-side, Sarah Thompson of Classroom was explicit: "I don't need a synthetic audience buying a synthetic piece of content and clicking on a synthetic opportunity." Her clients need real people in trusted environments, not AI slop. Her economic impact study showed that media and advertising in Canada supports nearly 200,000 jobs and contributes C\$22.6 billion to GDP – "bigger than the automotive sector".



Sarah Thompson,
Executive MD,
Classroom

She added boldly: "Stop talking about journalism as if it's some sort of charity or that your business is some sort of charity that doesn't work anymore."

Chinese National Geography's Liu Jing added another dimension: media as a platform connecting citizens with science, culture and place. Over 75 years, their mission to "open the door to nature and reveal the essence of human culture" has evolved into scientific expeditions, public lectures and national competitions. "We've brought scientific spirit to millions of Chinese," she said.



Liu Jing,
Content Director,
Chinese National
Geography

These examples remind us that media is part of the civic and cultural infrastructure of societies. AI cannot treat it as an unpriced externality.

Control, credit and compensation

If content is infrastructure, the next question is simple: on what terms are AI systems allowed to use it?

Tim Hudson, Director of International, Licensing & TopGear Magazine UK offered a clear framework. When he

asked ChatGPT how publishers should approach AI licensing, it gave him three words he's been repeating ever since: Control, credit and compensation.

"Firstly, we need control over where and how our content is appearing. Secondly, we need credit, which is attribution of our content. And thirdly, and arguably most importantly, we need compensation for it as well."

Tom Rubin emphasised that OpenAI wants to offer "choice and control", respecting robots.txt and not breaching paywalls. But he also acknowledged that the legal landscape is murky. US courts have called LLM training "transformative", but ongoing disputes – such as News Corp's complaint about Perplexity – focus on outputs that over-quote or cannibalise articles.

Credit matters because in an answer-driven world, users need to know



Tim Hudson,
Director of
International,
Licensing
& TopGear
Magazine UK

where information comes from. Time is addressing this through branded apps inside ChatGPT and a site-wide AI bar that allows users to summarise, translate or listen to articles while staying inside a Time-controlled environment. The Economist has pursued a similar idea through formats such as the Insider, which offers "premium video content that can't be replicated or served by an AI aggregator".

Juan Señor was clear: "No index to all articles unless we've got a deal" – and no use of content without clear markers of origin.

Compensation is likely the element most neglected during the social media era. Ricky Sutton said what many at Congress were thinking when he told Rubin in the Q&A: "As your business grows \$500 billion and beyond, we'd like our businesses to grow with you." Rubin didn't commit to a payment model, but said publishers choose whether to participate, and that any payment model depends on value – adding that "all options that support a healthy, mutually beneficial ecosystem should be on the table."

Traffic is no longer an acceptable form of payment.

Power to the people

If the principles are becoming clear, the method remains contested. Most speakers who touched on AI deals stressed that when publishers negotiate alone, platforms hold

all the power. Elsa Esparbé, Head of Global Business Development, RBA, compared the moment to the Napster crisis in music. The industry only stabilised when labels united behind licensed platforms like iTunes and Spotify. “They united and they could win the battle. We are lost, but we are together.” Publishing lacks its equivalent of Spotify.

Tim Bulley, International Director, Time Out Group, was even more direct. In the social media boom, he said, publishers “fought each other” while Facebook and Google “stole our lunch”. He believes AI firms are “banking on us negotiating separately” again.

“It is crucial that we come together. We’re not competing with each other anymore – our competition is the tech companies. We need to join them on this journey as partners and not as suppliers,” he pleaded with Congress.



Tim Bulley,
International
Director, Time
Out Group

Several potential avenues are emerging: developing shared formulas for valuing scraping, common standards for bot access, and template contracts for AI licences. UK Parliament’s Paul Thompson floated a simple but powerful idea: “a destination where we will all put our content... and at least act collectively to make sure the gatekeeping is done with some rules we all agree with.” In other words, a premium corpus that AIs can access under shared, transparent conditions – instead of scraping the open web piece by piece.

Collective action is also cultural. Esparbé explained that RBA’s

transformation started by “managing your ego... accepting you are lost”, experimenting openly and sharing knowledge with peers. Humility and transparency may prove as critical as legal frameworks.

New rules

As AI mediates more of daily life, speakers drew a sharp line between two webs. The human web is the world publishers know – sites, apps, magazines, newsletters, podcasts, videos and events. It’s where brands build identity and community. Time, The Economist, Hearst, Chinese National Geography, Henneo and Prisa are all doubling down here through memberships, premium print, video, exhibitions and local editions.

The agent web is the fast-growing layer where bots, crawlers and AI agents fetch, process and remix

content on behalf of users. Today it's dominated by uncontrolled scraping and opaque training. TIME's Mark Howard called it "a game of whack-a-mole against companies with infinite engineering firepower" – a fight publishers can't win.

The consensus: the agent web needs its own rules. That means structured feeds, MCP-style servers, standardised metadata and clear pricing for different uses – from training to live inference. Howard argued that regulated access "must become easier and cheaper than covert scraping." HBR is already preparing for organisational LLM access, and The Atlantic has built Atlantic Labs to test future AI experiences safely.

The principle is simple: the human web is for humans; the agent web is for machines – and it must be governed, priced and documented properly.



Zaida Calvete-Norell
Senior Manager,
Content
Partnerships and
Projects,
PressReader

Platforms as connectors

A more hopeful model came from PressReader and Prisa, showing what it looks like when platforms act as connectors rather than extractors.

PressReader's partnerships in "captive environments" – airlines, hotels, cruise ships – put high-value content in front of readers who are actively seeking it. Publishers not only see strong engagement inside PressReader but also more direct subscriptions. "It drives circulation," said Zaida Calvete-Norell.

Their iPad migration story showed a more human approach to digital shift: a US publisher, with print subscribers aged around 65+, offered iPads and training to help with the transition and saw revenue rise and loyalty strengthened.

Prisa's paywall evolution reinforced the same idea. The PDF version of the magazine, once available to all subscribers, is now a premium feature enriched with translation, audio and accessibility tools – turning a legacy product into a loyalty driver.

In this model, tech handles discovery and distribution while pushing value back to the publisher. As Calvete-Norell put it, "It's win-win on both sides."

Internal affairs

If publishers want platforms to play fair, they need to start by doing the same internally – in how they govern, how they treat their people and how they adopt AI. External strength depends on internal clarity.

Henneo's transformation began with governance reform – consolidating ownership so decisions could be taken quickly. Talent was also central. “The key to Henneo's growth is that all the members of my team were much better than me,” Fernando de Yarza said – a reminder that during major change, the strength of an organisation rests on the talent it brings in.

It's not just about employing the

right people, it's also about creating the right culture for them to thrive. The AI in Action session showed this principle in action. At Time, leaders use AI themselves – “we have to learn by doing,” said Mark Howard – and have introduced tools like Glean to embed AI in everyday work. Teams are building task-specific ‘agents’ that automate repetitive tasks, with adoption spreading organically.

The Atlantic's sandbox approach allows staff to experiment safely. Harvard Business Review is testing tools that support editors, producers and subscribers. In the UK Parliament publishing team, AI is being used to build resilience in a very human-centred way.

“Digital twins” of key staff are being trained to spot anomalies in overnight production, while small language models turn dense order papers into interactive, more accessible tools for MPs and their staff, including those with visual impairments.

All of this adds up to a healthier internal contract: AI as a companion and co-worker, leaders modelling curiosity and caution, and staff helping to design tools that remove drudgery while preserving judgement and craft.

A new social contract

“Don't let AI happen to you” could be the strapline for Congress.



“The future of media isn't about letting technology lead our decisions, but about people, creativity and purpose — with technology as the tool.”

Lulu Skantze, Publisher, Storytime



Engineer and economist Claudio Feijóo framed the global AI race as a struggle for supremacy, not simply leadership. His question – “Do you have a plan?” – resonated. With markets, laws and technologies in flux for decades to come, stability will come from purpose and values, not fixed rules.

The outlines of a new social contract are taking shape: fair payment from AI companies for the value journalism provides; shared technical standards for safe, transparent machine access; stronger governance inside media organisations; a renewed focus on talent and culture; and a simple human promise that journalism remains made by people, grounded in ethics, diversity and courage.

This contract will not be presented in one neat document. It will be shaped through licensing deals, legal decisions, product standards, newsroom policies and the choices readers make about

trust. Crucially, it will also depend on how editors and journalists are treated – whether they have the support and conditions they need to do rigorous, responsible work.

But the industry is no longer naïve. It knows what happens when content is traded for traffic. It has seen what mendicant media looks like. As Henneo’s Fernando de Yarza stated: “We have to be realistic – the scale of this disruption is unlike anything we’ve seen. I’ll never forget sitting in Copenhagen, looking at the faces of the Google team. They were worried. And if Google is worried, you know the tsunami is real.”

The task now is to turn shared awareness into shared structure – to co-write a contract between media, tech and society that protects the infrastructure role journalism plays, before any more of that ground erodes beneath our feet. ●

Soul power

AI will always hallucinate. Even with error rates below one per cent, that is still too high for serious journalism. The space between 'close enough' for machines and 'credible enough' for public trust is where human reporting, editing and judgement must sit.

Juan Señor urged publishers to draw a line. "AI doesn't have something to say. It has something to say about what others have said." He warned that AI will rapidly consume all generic, commoditised content – the kind that can be reconstructed from what already exists online. What it cannot replace, he argued, is original, reported, courageous journalism: the "soul and spine" of the industry.

"The soul is the opinion, the style, the voice of the editor, her approach

to the story, her eyes through experience and so on. And the spine is to be willing to move beyond slop and have something to say. That means we need uncompromising editorial publications."

Provenance will be vital in a world that Paul Thompson described as "a rolling river of stuff". Signals of authenticity – watermarking, labelling, source disclosure – are essential. If left solely

to tech companies, those standards will privilege scale over accountability. Media must help define them.

The AI in Action session confirmed that adoption is a human, not technical, challenge. As Maureen Hoch said: "You have a decision-making machine in front of you at all times." AI literacy becomes part of wellbeing – a source of agency rather than anxiety.



PRINT REIMAGINED

The high-value, high-trust medium



“Print is haute couture, digital is prêt-à-porter – and trust in strong brands has never mattered more.”

Andrés Rodríguez, President of ARI Spain

FOR THE LAST TWO DECADES, the story around print has sounded monotonous and bleak: circulation down, ad revenue down, “print is dead”. What emerged in Madrid was a very different narrative. Yes, print is smaller than it was. But it is also more valuable. It has shifted from being the default mass distribution channel to being the premium, high-trust, high-attention expression of a brand.

Across sessions a new pattern came into focus. Print isn’t competing on quantity anymore, but on quality and impact.

From mass commodity to premium ritual

Jordan Vita from The New York Times recalled the original “news product”: the printed paper. For generations, this was “the essential morning ritual”. She evoked the familiar rustle of pages, the feel of newsprint in your hands, and the shared experience of seeing the same headline repeated across a subway carriage. That routine, she argued, “really fostered a natural sense of authority, trust and community.”

Then everything changed. “The internet shattered the central role

of a single newspaper,” she said, replacing it with “a chaotic flood of overwhelming information from countless sources.” By 2009, after the financial crisis, print advertising had collapsed by nearly a third. The business model broke even as the need for independent journalism intensified.

When the Times asked itself, “How do we become essential again?”, the benchmark it reached for was not a clever new feature in the app, but that original print habit: “How do we replicate that essential ritual of the morning paper?” Print became the reference point for what “essential”

looks like – daily, habitual, trusted – even as the product around it became inseparably digital.

A similar story unfolded at The Economist. Around two-thirds of its subscribers are now digital-only, but roughly a third take both print and digital. For that group, “the print edition is their main way of consuming our journalism.” When asked if print would still exist in ten years, Luke Bradley-Jones, The Economist President, didn’t miss a beat: “I wouldn’t bet against it.”

In fact, he argued that as we “head into an ever more AI-dominated news landscape”, the physical magazine itself becomes a differentiator, offering a reading experience that feels fundamentally different from “an AI digital aggregation experience”.

Print has moved from being the default way to distribute everything to being the premium way to experience



Luke Bradley-Jones, President, The Economist

something. It is no longer expected to carry the entire commercial load, but it remains the benchmark for what deep, habit-forming journalism feels like.

High-trust, high-attention media

UPM put hard numbers behind what many editors already sense. People learn and retain information better on paper than on screens. Almost half of Europeans still prefer magazines in print, with even stronger preferences in markets like France. There is a clear gap between magazines and newspapers: relatively

few people insist on newspapers in print, yet a substantial proportion still choose print magazines.

On the advertising side, Kati Murto, VP Brand, Marketing, Communications & Sustainability at UPM Communications Papers, noted that print remains highly effective. On average, print advertising returns more than £6 for every pound invested, with recall close to 80% – far higher than most digital formats. In UPM’s framing, print has “superpowers”: high recall, strong trust, curated and brand-safe environments, standout visuals, long shelf life, and a proven ability to lift digital performance when the two are combined.

In other words, print is the opposite of the distracted, endless feed. It is finite, edited and physically bounded. You cannot open twenty tabs in a magazine. That constraint is turning into an asset.

This theme surfaced again and again. Time still leans heavily on the authority of its iconic red border. Mark Howard, describing Time's ambition to be "the most trusted, influential media brand in the world", pointed out that this identity is rooted in print. When Time launches in new markets, print is almost always part of the discussions. Local partners want the physical magazine on shelves because it signals presence, seriousness and status in a way a website alone does not.

At DC Thomson, home to The Scots Magazine (published since 1739) and the Beano universe, heritage print titles are not treated as quaint museum pieces. They anchor the company's role as "advisors, advocates and connectors for the communities we serve." In the messy, non-linear process of transformation that their Chief Strategy and Transformation Officer Rebecca Miskin described, print brands provide something solid to cling to.



Mark Howard,
Chief Operating
Officer, Time



Rebecca Miskin.
Chief
Strategy and
Transformation
Officer, DC
Thomson



Elsa Esparbé,
Head of Global
Business
Development,
RBA

RBA, which publishes National Geographic España and many other titles, were even more direct: "Paper is still crucial and fundamental for our business," stated Elsa Esparbé, Head of Global Business Development.

Some of their print magazines are now more profitable than they were in the heyday of mass newsstand distribution. For a core of subscribers, particularly around brands like National Geographic, the printed magazine is still the primary, most cherished expression of the brand.

As Andres Rodríguez reminded delegates, in an age of "too much information, fake news, a lot of propaganda, people trust in brands." Digital may be where audiences first encounter you. Print is increasingly where their attention is deepest and their trust is strongest.

Print as R&D labs

Trust and attention are one side of the story; culture and IP are the other. Several sessions underlined that print is often where culture is made, not just documented.

From Condé Nast Spain, the editors of Vogue and GQ talked about their brands as creators of “magic” – and that magic is still anchored in print. Their titles are hyper-local and hyper-global at the same time. Putting Rosalía or a rising footballer on a Vogue or GQ cover is both a local act, rooted in Madrid’s creative boom, and a global statement. A cover remains a form of cultural endorsement – a point of view captured in a single, collectible image. “Our brands were born to make people dream,” they said.

TikTok has exploded their reach and both Vogue and GQ Spain are now among the biggest magazine accounts

on the platform worldwide. Yet when they talk about true validation and status, they still talk about the print cover. Talent might crave the Instagram clip, but they need the cover.

The Manga session showed this dynamic at industrial scale. Almost all major Manga series originate in print magazines. Creators debut and serialise their work there. Editors watch reader reactions closely; they decide what continues, what ends and what gets expanded, based on the intimate feedback loop that only a highly engaged readership can provide.

Many global hits – from Sailor Moon to Attack on Titan – were born through this process. In Japan, digital Manga is growing fast. But in overseas markets, around ninety per cent of Manga consumption remains in print.

Manga magazines, in other words, are the R&D labs of a multi-billion-dollar

IP business. The print serial is where habit forms, worlds are tested and fandom crystallises. The collected print volumes then become premium artefacts: the definitive source from which anime, games, films, stage shows and merchandise emerge. When fans truly care, they want something to hold, keep and display.

Print archives also have latent cultural power. RBA told the story of a long-running gossip magazine that now functions as a historical dataset. Spanish government researchers are using its pages to study how women’s roles in society have changed over the last century.

What started as ephemeral entertainment has become a unique record of social history that no AI model can reconstruct from scratch. DC Thomson’s comics and magazine archives play a similar role in Scotland and the wider UK: a living

memory bank in ink and paper.

Even the way organisations choose to mark their own milestones confirms this pattern. The Spanish association CONEQT celebrated its centenary with a book, in both print and digital, chronicling how it navigated dictatorship, recessions and the pandemic.

FIPP marked its hundredth year with a 200+-page magazine: “a stunning piece of work”, as the CEO described it, “packed full of stories, features and insight”, printed on premium UPM paper. It is both a look back and a forward-facing innovation issue. When something really matters, the instinct is still to reach for print – to create an object that feels weighty, archival and permanent.



FIPP's specially commissioned commemorative print magazine celebrated past, present and future

Magazine karma

DC Thomson now has over 400,000 subscribers, contributing to “the highest reliable recurring revenues in our history.” Many of those subscriptions still include print. In turbulent times, those regular payments, anchored in physical products, are a stabilising force.

RBA explained that some of their magazines are more profitable today than they were during the mass-

market era. Subscribers are willing to pay a premium for specialised content – in decoration, health, travel and other niches – delivered beautifully in print. The company then multiplies that intellectual property: binding issues into collectible volumes, turning serials into books, licensing material into other markets, or using print features as the basis for podcasts and events. If you know how to repackaging print, it becomes a renewable resource rather than a one-shot product.

The licensing panel reinforced this. Immediate Media talked about how print brands such as BBC Good Food or their children's titles underpin lucrative endorsement deals, events and awards. Print is the mark of credibility: "Good Food approved" on a product, or "GQ Man of the Year" on a stage, carries weight precisely because readers know those brands through a carefully edited, physical magazine.

Those endorsements can be sold to retailers, sponsors and partners. The resulting events and campaigns feed back into the magazine with new stories, photography and interviews, creating a loop of content, sponsorship and community.

Srinivasan Balasubramanian, Managing Director at Vikatan Group, referred to this as "magazine karma", because the magazine cannot survive on its own. "You need to make the money from the events to give it back to the

magazine to have more awards that are coming in from the magazine."

Print in this context is less about selling millions of copies and more about giving the brand something solid and trusted that can be leveraged across many channels.

The hidden cost of "digital only"

One of the most provocative challenges came from UPM Communications Papers: going all-digital is not automatically the greener choice.

Publishers are under intense pressure from readers, advertisers,

regulators and investors to cut emissions and protect biodiversity. It is tempting to assume that abandoning print solves the problem. The reality is more complex.

Kati Murto laid out UPM's own sustainability credentials. The company re-plants four seedlings for every tree felled, which works out at around a hundred trees per minute. It is working towards a goal of reducing emissions to 100 kilograms of CO₂ per tonne of paper by 2030, with detailed carbon roadmaps for each mill. It ranks in the top one per cent of companies assessed by EcoVadis, with a Platinum rating.

Then came the twist. To illustrate the carbon cost of "invisible" digital



"Print isn't dead – it's desirable."

Peter Houston, Media Voices

activity, Murto described asking ChatGPT about its own footprint. Running just 43 AI queries in two days produced an estimated 1.5 grams of CO₂ per query – roughly equivalent to driving a petrol car 100 metres or powering a 10-watt LED bulb for six and a half hours. The exact numbers may be debated, but the point stands: digital infrastructure, especially in an AI-driven world, consumes a lot of energy.

For publishers, this opens up a more nuanced sustainability story. Responsibly produced print, with traceable forestry and aggressive decarbonisation, can be part of a credible climate strategy rather than something to be ashamed of. Hybrid models, where print and digital are both used thoughtfully, can be optimised for both impact and emissions rather than defaulting to “digital equals good, paper equals bad.” As Murto put it, “Our customers expect

action – real progress in climate and biodiversity, not just reporting.”

Twin-track strategy

None of the speakers in Madrid were nostalgic for an all-print era. The most interesting work is happening where print and digital are being designed deliberately to complement each other.

UPM showed that print and digital together outperform either channel alone – print “boosts digital”. The New York Times uses print as the reference ritual, but has reinvented its news product as a real-time, multimodal destination, with live blogs, visual explainers, audio and video. The Economist runs a deliberate twin-track strategy, serving loyal, long-form readers in print while catering to younger audiences with audio, video and personalised app experiences. FIPP’s own centenary



FIPP CEO Alastair Lewis presented CONEQTIA's José Enríquez with FIPP's centenary magazine

magazine was distributed physically at the event, via post for those who preferred not to carry it, and alongside a full digital layer of recordings and transcripts on FIPPTV.

The closing session captured this pragmatically. FIPP CEO Alastair Lewis joked that he didn't want to force a 200-page magazine into every delegate's hand luggage. So people were given choices. They could pick up a physical copy if they

wanted the artefact. They could scan a QR code and have one mailed later. Or they could rely on the digital content: videos, transcripts and summaries. In that design, print is treated as the premium, optional keepsake; digital is the utility layer that guarantees frictionless access.

What is print now?

Taken together, the Madrid sessions suggest a clear reframing. Print is no longer the everyday container for everything. It is the high-value, high-trust, high-attention expression of a brand, deployed where it makes the most impact.

It is a ritual and a relationship, like the early morning paper on the kitchen table. It is a trust mark and a differentiator in a landscape filled with synthetic content. It is a cultural artefact and a status symbol: the

cover, the volume, the centenary book. It is an IP engine and testing ground – the Manga serial that becomes a global franchise, the puzzle magazine that builds a devoted community. It is a stable revenue base and a platform for licensing and endorsements. It can even be part of a serious sustainability strategy. And, more than anything, it is a keepsake that works alongside digital, not against it.

In an age of infinite feeds and AI-generated text, a well-made magazine or book does something quietly radical: it ends. It has a first page and a last page. It asks you to slow down, to choose, to pay attention. That, more than anything, may be print's greatest superpower in the next hundred years. ●

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