

# INJECT: “Give me three minutes – I’ll give you a better news story”

While data engineers have been developing tools based on language recognition for almost 15 years, media companies had until recently not taken full advantage of the possibilities the technology offers. Now media organisations, scholars, and developers are working closely together to perfect INJECT, a tool for journalists that enhances their creativity and productivity.



The most recent INJECT Project Team meeting was held in entrepreneurial hub A-Lab in Amsterdam.

Journalists increasingly feel the pressure of having to produce stories for an ongoing news cycle; maintaining quality and doing original reporting have become more challenging. More than ever, reporters must select, verify and account for their facts. And “churnalism,” filter bubbles and fake news only complicate matters.

Funded by the European Horizon 2020 programme, 14 journalism and technology partners in six countries (including WAN-IFRA through its Global Alliance for Media Innovation) are developing a digital creativity tool that aims to answer those challenges.

Professor of Digital Creativity and Project Leader Neil Maiden (from City, University of London) says INJECT “is the first tool that seeks to integrate productivity and creativity support directly into the digital work of journalists. It builds on successes in other domains to deliver key in-

novations in journalism.”

INJECT (which stands for “Innovative Journalism: Enhanced Creativity Tools”) helps journalists quickly find unexpected angles for stories and allows them to start building articles instantly, without the need to switch between documents or browser tabs.

The goal is to enhance the creativity and productivity of journalists in a digital world, so they can continue to perform their crucial role in open societies.

Media Studies professor Lars Nyre (University of Bergen) says INJECT could be of great relevance to journalism: “For overworked and busy journalists, it is crucial that unexpected idea connection happens quickly.”

INJECT supports this process by sparking ideas for new angles that are surprising and fun, but most of all relevant for the development of original stories.

## Journalists join the project: “Engaging audiences in new ways”

INJECT’s promise to help journalists do their work even better within a shorter amount of time seduced three Norwegian local newspapers and two Dutch freelance networks to join the project.

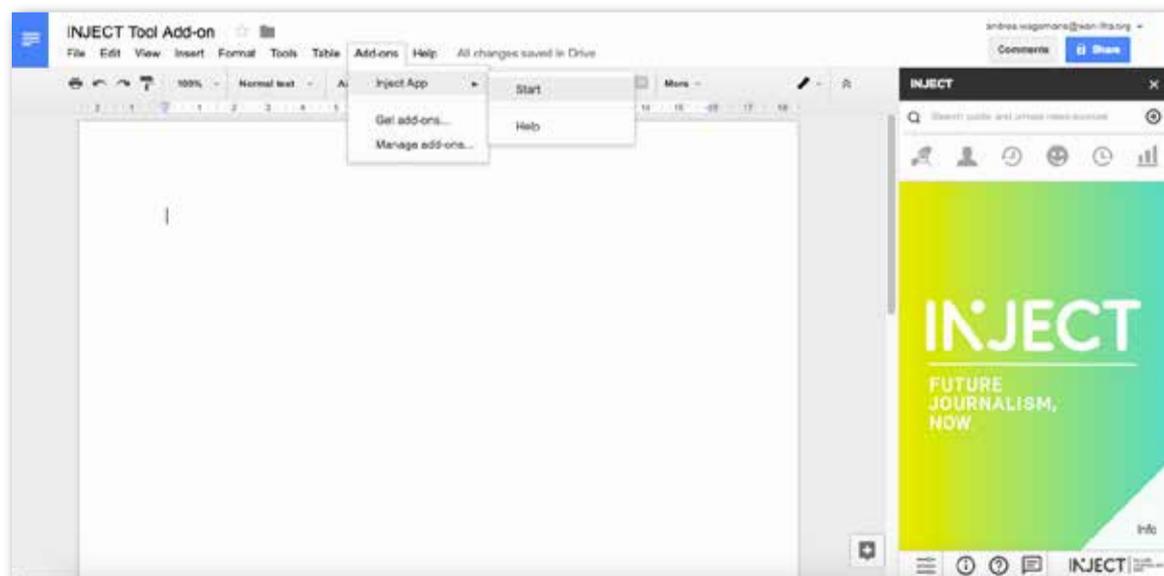
As Editor-in-Chief Magne Kydland (Sunnhordland newspaper, Norway) explains: “Our biggest expectation was that INJECT would develop tools that could make our working life as journalists easier and more efficient. We also expected the tools to provide journalists with new and maybe unexpected angles to stories that could engage readers in new ways. This is important for us, because, we – like many newspapers and media organisations around Norway and Europe - have to do more and more with fewer people. A tool like this might help us on a very busy day.”

VersPers (Netherlands) Editor-in-Chief Geesje van Haren believes INJECT could open up journalists’ thinking patterns, as it “finds exactly what they are not looking for,” allowing them to quickly discover new and original angles while under increasing time pressure.

## The inspiration tool for journalists

Exploring the ways in which technology can support journalists’ work, INJECT uses creativity techniques based on Natural Language Processing (NLP). The toolkit includes a creative search engine that reporters can use to search relevant databases for new angles, and to investigate deeper into the background of the stories they are working on.

“There are clearly some outcomes of computer science research that exceed current human abilities,” Maiden explains. “One of these is search. Digitalisation enables the effective search of large volumes of information much more quickly and accurately than people can.



Screenshot of INJECT running as a Google Docs add-on.

Search is important in journalism, to discover data, the back story, human angles and the underpinning causes – the long read.”

INJECT also scans texts for keywords and automatically links them to additional information in the form of interactive fact cards. In order to make it easy for journalists to integrate the toolkit into their work practices, the software will be built directly into content management systems already in use in the different newsrooms. The tool already runs on GoogleDocs, WordPress, as a TinyMCE plugin, and as a standalone web application.

#### First Norway, then the Netherlands

The Norwegian and Dutch journalism partners have been providing feedback in the early stages of development and are the first ones to pilot the INJECT tool in their daily work. This will allow the tool to be fine-tuned to better meet real-life situations.

Since there is not one type of journalism, INJECT is working with local partners to develop context-specific versions of the tool.

For Norway, this means the tool works in Norwegian and searches the archives of the Norwegian partner newspapers. Finding new and exciting angles may be particularly relevant for covering recurrent events, like Christmas, May 17th and Vossa Jazz. At the center of this Norwegian ecosystem are local newspapers Sunnhordland, Hordaland and Hallingdølén, the University of Bergen, and M'Labs.

Next will be the Netherlands, with at the core of the local ecosystem the Dutch partners VersPers, VJMovement and the University of Groningen. For a freelance network, INJECT could offer added value “if it succeeds to connect the diversity of journalists that are part of our network in terms of creativity and efficiency,” says van Haren. “This connection should lead to exploring the boundaries of journalism and ultimately to better storytelling. It could enable journalists to surprise their audiences with information that was previously inaccessible.”

#### Discovering new data

The experiences of the beta testers so far have been mainly positive. INJECT works well during the research phase to find new angles and it proves good at extending a story if it is missing background information, as journalist Olav Røli (Sunnhordland) explains: “I wrote an article about someone who was in court, and then sentenced to prison for fraud. She had been cheating on social benefits. When using INJECT, I was able to find facts about that quite easily, like regional and national figures.”

It took journalists as little as three minutes to find an idea or new angle. They found how researching one news story can lead to another interesting angle for producing yet another story. And mixing news sources with internal archives helped journalists to look further than their local “filter bubbles.” The tool works best with feature stories, since they leave more room for journalists’ creative input, and less well with short news articles. It also supports the planning of new stories, as long as the planning is not too far ahead.

#### Making news archives smart

One of INJECT’s biggest assets is that it finds news stories from own archives that journalists should know about: “A newspaper’s digital archive is in fact a treasure for making future stories. But today we do not make enough use of this opportunity. So we were really looking forward to using this new tool to do this,” says Kydland.

Journalist Ingvild Siglen Berger (Hordaland Avis) explains how INJECT helped her gather facts for a news story from their internal archives: “A lot is used from the story I found through INJECT. I felt that I saved time using INJECT, because it was a complicated lawsuit formulated in a 57-page document, and using the story from our archive through INJECT made me understand how the previous journalist formulated and understood the case, and helped me to write my story.”

News archives are often hard to access, but they contain a richness of information for journalists writing a story, both in terms of data and ideas for angles. As the news is moving faster and the turnover in newsrooms becomes higher, journalists are challenged when it comes to staying on top of the news as much as anyone else is. Even something as simple as being on holiday or sick for a few days when a story was written makes that journalists are not always aware of every single article published by their news organisation.

In the case of the article about a lawsuit between two local companies in Norway, Berger admits, “I should have known that the story was in our archive, but I didn’t. It was perfect, since the story came up in the INJECT search result.”

#### Collaborative innovation

INJECT is a collaborative innovation project joining journalists, researchers, developers, and professional organisations. The innovative strength of this multidisciplinary and international team is in its inherent creativity, but also in the consortium’s explicit wish to engage new partners in the development of the tool.



## 14 partners in six countries

INJECT is a European journalism and technology project, uniting 14 partners in six countries: City, University of London, Explaain, Hallingdolen, Hordaland, Institute of Communication and Computer Systems, Interlink Academy, M'Labs, SciencesPo Paris, Sunnhordland, University of Bergen, University of Groningen, VersPers, VJMovement, and WAN-IFRA through its Global Alliance for Media Innovation (GAMI).

## At the Expo

At DCX Digital Content Expo in Berlin, 10-12 October, inquiries about INJECT can be addressed to Arend Jan van den Beld from Dutch freelance network VJMovement, a consortium partner, who will be representing INJECT at the Start-up Park. The Start-up Park, a GAMI initiative, is an exclusive new business platform that allows the next generation of tech entrepreneurs and start-ups to meet and engage with the global network of media executives.

Journalists both inside and outside the consortium are doing beta testing and providing feedback. By integrating journalists’ input directly into the development process, INJECT aims to ensure the tools are helpful and easy to use in the newsroom.

Moreover, editors and journalists see possibilities for the tool beyond what was initially imagined by the consortium. During a visit to their newsroom, editors at Der Spiegel in Germany pointed to the potential of INJECT to support the morning editorial meeting by generating story ideas based on the topics discussed. INJECT was used that way at Hordaland, and they also saw a potential use for it.

In addition to journalists, Volda University College in Norway recently joined the consortium to develop a spin-off around journalistic visualisations that could be integrated into the Norwegian version of INJECT. Talks with various partners in the Netherlands, Germany, the UK and Italy are surfacing new ideas in similar ways.

In the end, the goal is to make European journalism stronger by including as many partners as possible, who together will form context-specific ecosystems and develop different versions of the INJECT tool to support journalistic work all over Europe.

**Article by Andrea Wagemans, INJECT Project Coordinator for WAN-IFRA's Global Alliance for Media Innovation (GAMI).**

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