

## CONTENTS

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<i>Acknowledgments</i>	vii
<i>Prologue</i>	xi
Introduction	1
Chapter 1. From Circulation Numbers to Web Analytics: Journalists and Their Readers in the United States and France	15
Chapter 2. Utopian Beginnings: A Tale of Two Websites	36
Chapter 3. Entering the Chase for Clicks: Transatlantic Convergences	54
Chapter 4. The Multiple Meanings of Clicks: Journalists and Algorithmic Publics	75
Chapter 5. The Fast and the Slow: Producing Online News in Real Time	102
Chapter 6. Between Exposure and Unpaid Work: Compensation and Freelance Careers	125
Conclusion	152
<i>Appendix: A Fly on the Screen? Behind the Scenes in the (Digital) Field</i>	163
<i>Notes</i>	179
<i>Bibliography</i>	221
<i>Index</i>	247

## Introduction

We live in a world of data. Our work, as well as how we stay informed and interact with others, increasingly takes place online. Our activities on the internet generate a tremendous amount of information about our social networks, financial records, shopping preferences, and geographical movements, all of which are recorded, stored, and analyzed by the very websites we spend time on. Our data is valuable. In what is sometimes compared to a new “oil rush,” companies gather and mine this information to determine algorithmically what we see when we browse the web. Think of Google, which personalizes its results based on our search histories, or Facebook, whose newsfeed decides which friends and brands are relevant for us. Our online histories overwhelmingly shape our future options in the brave new world of digital platforms.<sup>1</sup>

It is not only as individual consumers that we are being tracked, quantified, and analyzed: it is also as workers and employees. In domains as varied as healthcare, finance, education, insurance, transportation, advertising, or criminal justice, organizations now draw on a trove of digital data to monitor what their employees are doing. This is particularly true for the people who create the online content that we consume every day. For many “digital laborers,” as these workers are sometimes called, work has become inextricably intertwined with the platforms that put them in touch with potential clients and the metrics used to assess their outputs—whether in terms of clicks, rankings, or stars. Even workers who used to be protected from quantitative evaluation are now confronted with a flurry of data assessing their daily performance.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, the impetus to put numbers on things, people, and ideas is not new. The current avalanche of digital metrics is only the latest wave in a much longer history. From the birth of public statistics in seventeenth-century Europe to the ruthless system of slave accounting on American plantations in the nineteenth century, the rise of Taylorism in the 1930s, or the growth of cost-benefit analysis in the 1980s, there have been multiple waves of quantification—the transformation of qualities into quantities—of the social world. Yet the scale, granularity, and circulation of data accelerated dramatically with the development of ubiquitous computing and the automated collection of individual information that came with it.<sup>3</sup>

In this book, I examine how this multiplication of digital metrics, analytics, and algorithms is reconfiguring work practices and professional identities. I focus on the case of journalism, a field that has been profoundly

## 2 • Introduction

changed by digital technologies. When we think of journalism, images of paper-filled newsrooms and reporters conducting interviews with notebooks and pencils often come to mind. Yet newsrooms do not look much like this today: from group chats to social media platforms and content management systems, digital tools are omnipresent in the gathering, production, and diffusion of information on the web. The business models of news organizations are also rapidly evolving. As people started accessing information on the internet, the demand for print advertising plummeted. News organizations began relying on online advertising and digital subscriptions as their primary source of revenue. In parallel, a new market emerged for “web analytics,” or software programs tracking the behavior and preferences of internet users. Editors and journalists are now provided with a constant stream of data about their audience. They receive increasingly detailed information, often in real time, about the number of visitors, comments, likes, and tweets that their articles attract. What began as tools to track reader behavior and optimize news placement gradually turned into a means to measure workers’ performance: many newsrooms now consider traffic metrics when deciding on hiring, promotions, and layoffs.<sup>4</sup>

To date, most practitioners and scholars have judged the increasing importance of web analytics to be a negative development for online news. Media experts criticize the frantic rhythm of real-time information on news websites; they describe journalists as mindlessly running on a “hamster wheel” of continuous updates, tweets, and blog posts.<sup>5</sup> They condemn “clickbait” articles as degrading the provision of quality information, and frequently hold the short news cycle responsible for the disappearance—or at least lesser prominence—of “shoe leather” reporting and investigative journalism.<sup>6</sup> These criticisms increased after Donald Trump’s election in 2016: people blamed news organizations, along with cable television, for their continuous coverage of Trump’s provocations, which provided him with a free platform in the name of attracting more page views. According to these commentators, it is the traffic-oriented business models of online news organizations, together with their reliance on algorithmically fueled social media platforms, that bear the responsibility for everything that went wrong in the public sphere.<sup>7</sup>

Contrary to the idea that digital metrics have solely negative consequences on news production, in this book I examine how metrics are discussed, contested, and put to a variety of uses. I argue that metrics are transforming journalism in unintended and sometimes paradoxical ways by comparing web newsrooms in the United States and France, two countries with markedly different journalistic traditions, relations to the mar-

ket, and regimes of state regulation.<sup>8</sup> Between 2011 and 2015, I conducted in-depth ethnographic fieldwork at offices of news websites in New York and Paris. During that time, I followed web journalists and editors in their daily work. I sat with them and asked them about their careers and compensation. I observed how they made sense of traffic numbers and tried to understand their relationships with their online audiences.

Based on this ethnographic material, I find that the chase for clicks took strikingly different shapes in the United States and France, with significant consequences for the kind of news being published. Contrary to the idea that the digital transition necessarily leads to a standardization and impoverishment of journalistic production, I document how American and French journalists reproduced cultural differences at a time of economic and technological convergence. Beyond the case of journalism, the book provides a new framework for understanding the contested meaning of digital metrics and what they entail for work practices and professional identities in the algorithmic age.

### **Algorithms as Contested Symbolic Resources**

Over the past decade, multiple overlapping terms have emerged to describe the complex technologies of quantification that sustain the digital ecosystem, including “big data,” “metrics,” “analytics,” and “algorithms.”<sup>9</sup> *Metrics at Work* focuses on the effects of algorithms and metrics on news production. “Algorithms” can be defined as sequences of logical operations providing step-by-step instructions for computers to act on data. In practice, algorithms are typically software programs that perform specific computational tasks.<sup>10</sup> “Digital metrics” and “analytics” (I use the terms interchangeably) refer to the quantitative outputs provided by algorithmic software programs for the benefit of online users. Digital metrics are typically displayed through data visualizations such as dashboards, rankings, lists, graphs, and maps.<sup>11</sup>

To date, much of the coverage of algorithms and digital metrics has split between technological utopianism and dire warnings. On the optimistic side, advocates tout the benefits of using “smart statistics” to make more informed, efficient, and objective decisions. In Silicon Valley and elsewhere, many praise the higher intelligence and formidable computational capabilities of algorithms in order to address long-standing social issues, from disease prevention to crime prediction. Computer scientists and engineers are not naïve: they agree that algorithms are far from perfect. Yet they strongly believe that the issues affecting algorithmic systems

#### 4 • Introduction

are primarily technical. As these systems become more sophisticated, advocates argue, the remaining issues will be fixed. It is only a matter of time before algorithms can help create a better world.<sup>12</sup>

Pessimists fundamentally disagree with this analysis. For them, algorithms are first and foremost social constructions with problematic political effects. Thus, critics analyze the discriminatory impact of algorithms, emphasizing how computational technologies can reproduce and even reinforce social and racial inequalities because of the training data and models they are built on. They criticize the lack of transparency of machine-learning algorithms, which they compare to “black boxes” that amplify the lack of accountability and power imbalance of existing political and commercial institutions. They argue that algorithms function as a form of surveillance—a subtle but deeply asymmetrical type of control that gives us the illusion of choice while monitoring us from a distance. For critical scholars, algorithmic systems are worrisome because they hide discriminatory outcomes under a patina of efficiency and objectivity that make biases even more difficult to address.<sup>13</sup>

These discussions between advocates and critics raise essential questions about the good and bad effects of “smart machines” in the contemporary world.<sup>14</sup> Yet the current debate remains too limited. In particular, existing discussions often take the efficacy and power of algorithms for granted: they tend to pay more attention to how algorithmic instruments are constructed rather than study how they are implemented in the social world. In the process, they underestimate the role of users and their practices in shaping the effects of algorithms—what I have called “algorithms in practice.”<sup>15</sup> Whether focusing on the technical potential of computational tools, or criticizing the “tyranny” of metrics and algorithms, advocates and critics err on the side of technological determinism, attributing changes in society to changes in technology.<sup>16</sup>

*Metrics at Work* is not about the tyranny of metrics, even though metrics are ubiquitous in the world of web journalism. Instead of technological determinism, I conceptualize digital metrics as symbolic resources that can be negotiated, contested, and used in different ways depending on their institutional context. Metrics always come with a symbolic potential. As such, they can accomplish much more than the increased efficiency sought by their proponents or the discrimination and surveillance diagnosed by their critics. Like other complex symbols—ideas, art, values—metrics are never *just* metrics: they always stand for something larger.<sup>17</sup> Metrics can reorganize social worlds around them, bending themselves to many different kinds of relational activities. Such a perspective provides

a much richer view of metrics than the deterministic approach.<sup>18</sup> In particular, focusing on the strategic uses of metrics reveals significant gaps between the intended and actual effects of technologies of quantification: people always find ways to manipulate or transform digital metrics in order to fit local priorities, as I examine in the case of journalism.<sup>19</sup>

### **Web Newsrooms between Editorial and Click-Based Evaluation**

In this book, I analyze how journalists use and make sense of audience metrics. I find that metrics are highly contested symbols in most newsrooms, where they are intertwined in broader debates about journalistic quality and the role of publics in the digital age.<sup>20</sup>

First, metrics become mobilized within two competing modes of evaluation. On the one hand, web journalists argue that the primary criteria for assessing journalistic excellence concern the internal qualities of one's articles: being a good journalist means writing articles that document something new about the world. Key terms in this view include original reporting, fact checking, innovative angles, and earning the respect of fellow journalists. I call this set of justifications the *editorial* mode of evaluation. On the other hand, many writers—occasionally even the same people who evoke the editorial definition—also describe their work in quantitative terms. For them, being a web journalist is primarily about maximizing diffusion and promoting one's content by creating a “buzz,” “going viral,” or “trending” on social media platforms. In this view, the worth of an article depends primarily on its online popularity, which is primarily measured through web analytics. This constitutes the *click-based* mode of evaluation.<sup>21</sup>

In an ideal world, all good articles in terms of editorial content should score well in terms of clicks; conversely, all popular articles should have a strong editorial value. Yet this is rarely the case. As web journalists know all too well, editorial and a click-based evaluation often clash. An in-depth investigation of state corruption in Syria may score high on the editorial scale but will probably attract fewer clicks than a piece about Kim Kardashian, which in turn may not have high editorial value, even if it is entertaining to read. By making different categories of articles commensurable on a single, quantitative scale, clicks have transformed hierarchies in web newsrooms: many sections that have little prestige from an editorial perspective receive a new visibility because of their high traffic

## 6 • Introduction

numbers. Hence, most journalists in New York and Paris experience an acute sense of conflict between editorial and click-based definitions of their work.<sup>22</sup>

It is worth noting that the tension between editorial and commercial evaluation is not new in the media world. As a French editor-in-chief once told me: “An editor cannot always act as he would prefer. He is often obliged to bow to the wishes of the public in unimportant matters.” He was quoting from a play written by Henrik Ibsen in 1882.<sup>23</sup> Clicks are, in some ways, merely the latest instantiation of the economic pressures that have shaped journalistic production for the past century and a half. The chase for clicks—and the obsession with traffic numbers that comes with it—is part of the longer trend of already commercially oriented journalistic fields towards market forces and corporate logics.<sup>24</sup>

Yet web analytics differ from previous manifestations of market pressures because of their individualizing focus. Contrary to circulation figures for print newspapers or audience ratings for television, analytics software programs provide fine-grained data about the popularity of each writer and each article in a given newsroom. Clicks not only individualize market forces, they also function as profoundly ambiguous symbolic objects in the digital world that web journalists inhabit. This is because metrics are never *just* metrics: they always represent something else. In web journalism, I argue that clicks stand for the complex and contested entities that I call algorithmic publics. These publics in turn take on strikingly different meanings in the United States and France.

### Algorithmic Publics in the United States and France

Digital workers operate in an increasingly globalized and connected environment: they use the same technological tools, share the same platforms, and face comparable business constraints around the globe. This applies to journalists: in newsrooms across the world, staff writers and editors work on the same brands of laptops, use the same social media platforms, sit on the same types of chairs, and look at the same web analytics software programs.

Such similarities raise important questions about the relationship between global forces and local cultures. Are cultural differences being effaced in the digital age? To date, two main perspectives have emerged in studies of offline phenomena. The “Americanization” or “McDonaldization” approach answers in the affirmative: local cultural specificities and media representations are being destroyed by the cultural imperialism of

Introduction • 7

the United States. In contrast, the “hybridization” perspective answers negatively, focusing instead on the appropriations and “bricolages” between different cultural forms that take place on the ground.<sup>25</sup> To investigate what is changing with online technologies, one needs comparative and transnational studies of digital phenomena across national contexts. Yet most existing research on digital work focuses on the United States. From analyses of early blogs to the study of online marketplaces, “methodological nationalism,” as it has been called, still reigns in the study of digital technologies.<sup>26</sup>

Here, I rely instead on a comparative perspective to examine the effects of digital metrics on news production in the United States and France. To compare the structures, norms, and histories of journalism in the two countries, I use the concept of national journalistic fields. In the framework of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, fields are configurations of positions—and sites of tension over what the field is about—that possess some degree of autonomy from the broader social structure. Thus, journalistic fields are structured by an autonomous logic (e.g., the quest for professionalism and prestige) on one hand, and a heteronomous logic (e.g., commercial pressures or political constraints) on the other hand.<sup>27</sup>

As media scholars often emphasize, the tension between professionalism, market forces, and political approval is always central in journalistic fields.<sup>28</sup> Yet there is variation between countries in the level and kind of heteronomy at stake. Nowhere is this clearer than when comparing U.S. and French journalism. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, journalists in the United States and France developed strikingly different definitions of their professional autonomy, relationships to market forces, and norms about their public role. In the United States, journalism underwent an early professionalization process and faced strong market pressures beginning in the nineteenth century. In contrast, in France, journalism was long protected from market forces by the state. It became professionalized later, and remained driven to a greater extent by civic goals. Starting in the 1980s, journalists in both countries experienced growing market and financial pressures, leading to heated debates about the role of audience preferences in news production.<sup>29</sup>

Writing about print newsrooms, communication scholar James Carey described the public as the “god term of journalism . . . , its totem and talisman.”<sup>30</sup> As is the case for many talismans, however, the perception of the public among journalists has always been ambiguous. From the definition of the press as the “fourth estate” to the belief in the virtues of “watchdog” journalism, publicity has long been praised as the lodestar for American journalism, in print and online.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, in France, journalists



## 8 • Introduction

have long defined themselves as “intellectuals” in charge of shaping public opinion. Yet journalists in both countries traditionally avoided paying attention to the actual preferences of their audience. Research in print newsrooms showed that journalists in the two countries typically ignored the opinions of their readers: they dismissed letters to the editors as “insane,” refused to read marketing reports, and relied instead on idealized representations of their audience.<sup>32</sup>

Given the multiplication of analytics in web newsrooms, one might expect a rationalization of the relationship between journalists and their publics.<sup>33</sup> Yet in spite of the increasingly fine-grained data they receive, I found that journalists still could not reliably predict what would be popular: in online news, as in other sectors of intellectual and artistic production, “all hits are flukes.”<sup>34</sup> Overall, traffic analytics always stand in for broader and more elusive entities—what I call *algorithmic publics*, publics that are mediated *and* represented in web newsrooms through computational software programs. Web analytics mediate the relationship between journalists and their publics, materializing these online collectives through dashboards, metrics, and dials on their computer screens. When journalists look at digital metrics, they see in one place the complex and distributed communities of online readers that come from Facebook, Twitter, Google, and other algorithmic platforms.<sup>35</sup>

These algorithmic publics in turn remained deeply ambiguous objects in the web newsrooms I studied. In New York, journalists primarily interpreted audience metrics as indicators of market pressures: they understood the publics these numbers stood for as fragmented and commodified readers—as “eyeballs” that could be counted, targeted, and priced.<sup>36</sup> In contrast, journalists in Paris understood audience metrics as a complex signal of a writer’s relevance in the public sphere. This came with an ambivalent understanding of algorithmic publics as collective entities that had both commercial value and civic potential. As we will see, such representations were shaped by the longer history of the national journalistic field within which web journalists were embedded; they also came with important ramifications on the news being produced in the United States and France.

### Comparing *TheNotebook* and *LaPlace*

In this book, I focus on two news websites: *TheNotebook* in New York and *LaPlace* in Paris. The two publications have much in common. The journalists who founded both websites believed that they could take ad-

Introduction • 9

vantage of the internet to transform journalism. They had big ideas, eager funders, and an enthusiastic staff of writers dedicated to the cause. During their first years of existence, they attracted praise and prizes, including prestigious journalism awards. Editors from the two websites also knew each other: the French editors consciously imitated the U.S. website when developing their website, and the publications had an informal editorial partnership for a while. Both sites relied from the beginning on advertising as their main source of revenue. Over time, they realized that they needed to attract more traffic in order to survive in an increasingly competitive market. This led them to rely heavily on analytics and audience metrics for editorial and managerial decisions.

Between 2011 and 2015, I followed the journalists and editors of *TheNotebook* and *LaPlace* as their editorial dreams were confronted by new realities in the market for online news. Moving back and forth between New York, close to my PhD program, and Paris, where I was born and grew up, I conducted more than a hundred semi-structured interviews with journalists, in English and in French. I asked them questions about their careers, their writing routines, their relationships with their colleagues, what they thought of their readers, how much money they made, and what it meant for them to be journalists at that point in time. I also conducted ethnographic observations in order to better understand their professional practices and to contrast what they told me during the interviews about their work with what I saw when I spent time with them.<sup>37</sup> I spent several days per week in the newsrooms, sitting in the middle of open-space offices and following their online and offline activities. I kept track of their traffic numbers and asked them how they made sense of those metrics. I attended the conferences where they were speaking, read the articles they published, joined their coffee breaks and lunches, and observed some of their romances and clashes on Twitter and in real life. In parallel, I collected quantitative data about the content they published online.

*TheNotebook* and *LaPlace* occupy a hybrid position in the world of online news: founded by print journalists, they operate exclusively online. This provides a rare opportunity to examine the transition from print to web journalism in the two countries. While *TheNotebook* and *LaPlace* are at the center of the story told in this book, they are only a part of the larger digital news ecosystem in New York and Paris that I studied for this project. In addition to these two websites, I examined so-called legacy news organizations (news organizations founded before the advent of the internet), traffic-driven news aggregators, and specialized websites.

## 10 • Introduction

The methodological appendix of this book presents the data collection process and includes more information about why I chose the websites, how I got access, and how I gathered a mix of online and offline data for this analysis.

A note about anonymization: readers may have noticed that the names of the publications and journalists studied in this book have been changed. They may wonder why the author would bother with anonymization in such a name-driven industry. I realize that anonymization may appear frustrating, or worse, pointless. Ethnographers have noted the difficulty of anonymizing prominent political figures, intellectuals, and one-of-a-kind institutions. One could add that anonymizing news organizations and writers whose main ambition is to be visible online is an even more fruitless exercise.<sup>38</sup> And yet, there are important reasons for doing so. Anonymization provides a layer of confidentiality protecting the organizations and individuals who agreed to participate in this project, give me detailed accounts of their conflicts with their superiors, and tell me about their salaries, all under the condition of confidentiality. I am respecting my promise here. I use pseudonyms and have also removed or changed pieces of information that would have immediately revealed the unique features of the individuals and organizations under consideration.

In spite of these efforts, some readers will be able to identify the names of the journalists and publications. I think that they should try to forget those names as much as possible. One benefit of anonymity is to enable us to think in analytic terms instead of relying on vague reputations. It forces us to focus on organizational features and field-level processes instead of brand names and knee-jerk reactions when trying to understand when and why online publications act the way they do. Such a careful approach is essential to understand why news websites are struggling in the digital economy and to come up with new ideas about what can be done about it.

## The Argument

Based on this material, *Metrics at Work* documents a process of difference within convergence. On the convergence side, I show that in spite of their different locations, *TheNotebook* and *LaPlace* went through strikingly similar phases over time as the market for online news became more competitive. At first, they had high editorial ambitions and low expectations of making a profit. At about the same time, however, the two news-

Introduction • 11

rooms entered the chase for clicks. Editors and journalists then started using the same analytics tools, developed similar traffic-related expertise, and relied on the same editorial formats to attract more page views. Over the years, both *TheNotebook* and *LaPlace* became characterized by an acute tension between editorial and click-based definitions of journalism.

In spite of this process of convergence, *TheNotebook* and *LaPlace* also developed strikingly different uses and understanding of audience metrics. At *TheNotebook*, web analytics were understood as unambiguous signals of market forces. Editors relied upon them to make decisions about the editorial line of the website; however, the staff at *TheNotebook* understood traffic as a technical game—one that was important economically but did not affect their professional identity, which in turn depended primarily on their professional reputation among their peers. In contrast, everybody at *LaPlace*, editors and journalists alike, displayed deeply conflicted feelings with respect to traffic numbers. Though they criticized clicks as indicators of market pressures hostile to their journalistic mission, editors and journalists also fixated on metrics in their daily work, interpreting them as signs of their professional value and relevance as public intellectuals.

To make sense of these differences between *TheNotebook* and *LaPlace*, I rely on the concepts of *bureaucratic* and *disciplinary* power. In the New York newsroom, a strong division of labor, hierarchical stratification, and clear symbolic boundaries between click-based and editorial evaluation prevailed—a structure in line with previous definitions of bureaucratic firms. In contrast, the Parisian newsroom relied on a flatter hierarchy, weak specialization, and fuzzy internal boundaries to organize its production process, keeping click-based and editorial goals constantly intertwined. Journalists internalized pressures to be productive and “disciplined” themselves to get more clicks—a process that resembles previous definitions of how disciplinary power operates.<sup>39</sup> The relationship with the websites’ audiences, the production of news, compensation systems, and even the careers of the journalists and bloggers working for the two websites were affected by the distinct infrastructures put in place to manage the tension between click-based and editorial priorities.

*Metrics at Work* analyzes these differences using a multilevel theoretical framework. I find that the internal cultures of the hybrid websites I studied were shaped by the distinct trajectories and structures of their national journalistic fields.<sup>40</sup> The editors and journalists who founded the two websites—many of whom had spent most of their careers working for print newsrooms before starting these digital projects—reproduced

## 12 • Introduction

what they knew best when trying to figure out the dilemmas of online news production. At *TheNotebook*, journalists drew on a long tradition of professionalization, peer evaluation, and a marked separation between marketing and editorial functions when organizing their digital production process. As a result, the New York newsroom developed a bureaucratic system for handling traffic concerns, keeping them strictly separate from editorial goals. By keeping traffic metrics at bay, the journalists reinforced an understanding of their algorithmic publics as fragmented, commodified, and irrelevant for professional evaluation.

In contrast, the French editors and journalists did not develop such compartmentalized organizational forms. Instead, they inherited an understanding of journalism as a form of intellectual production geared towards the public sphere. In addition to monetized eyeballs, the French journalists conceptualized their publics as a civic collective endowed with political will—a unitary, durable, and authoritative entity whose opinions mattered.<sup>41</sup> Consequently, they took traffic metrics to heart, interpreting them both as commercial signals *and* as indicators of a civic public. This meaning of metrics, together with the relative absence of division of labor in the Parisian newsroom, resulted in a disciplinary system in which journalists internalized the pressure to maximize traffic. These different priorities percolated through the editorial production and compensation practices of the two organizations, affecting the journalists' professional identities and the kind of news published by the two websites.

Overall, these findings show how digital metrics can be put to strikingly different uses depending on their institutional contexts—here, the national settings, professional fields, and organizational structures in which journalists were embedded. In the process, *Metrics at Work* reveals how cultural difference can be reproduced at a time of economic and technological convergence. Digital metrics and software programs spread across national borders, usually with the ambition to provide one-size-fits-all solutions. Yet what happens on the ground often differs from these grand intentions as people find ways of putting metrics to work.

### Book Outline

The book is structured into six chapters. The first chapter provides the structural and historical background for the rest of the analysis, retracing the distinct relationships and quantitative modes of representation that developed between journalists and their publics over the course of the past

century and a half. It relates these developments to the different trajectories of the journalistic field in the United States and France.

The second chapter turns to the early days of online news, before profit, traffic, and metrics-based imperatives became key concerns. It focuses on the first years of *TheNotebook* and *LaPlace*, two publications that started as innovative, playful, and collaborative editorial projects. Even though they shared similar utopian beliefs, they also had distinct political and editorial identities. In particular, in spite of its explicit imitation of *TheNotebook*'s editorial project, the French website was more countercultural, participatory, and politically engaged than its U.S. counterpart from the start.

The third chapter examines how the two websites entered the chase for traffic. At about the same time, *TheNotebook* and *LaPlace* realized that they needed to attract more online readers to survive. In spite of their distinct political and editorial identities, they developed the same editorial and organizational strategies to increase their traffic over time: publishing more, faster, and tracking the behavior of their online readers more closely than ever before. Both websites started experiencing an acute tension between editorial and click-based modes of evaluation, which affected the kind of content they published.

The fourth chapter focuses on the uses and interpretation of web analytics at *TheNotebook* and *LaPlace*. The two publications used the same software programs to track the preferences of their online readers, but they made sense of the metrics provided by these programs in strikingly different ways. In New York, traffic soon became an imperative for the top editors in charge of managing the publication, whereas staff writers refused to embrace the tyranny of metrics. In contrast, journalists in Paris were simultaneously deeply critical of traffic numbers *and* obsessed with clicks. This chapter shows how metrics do more than function as market indicators: they also reveal the journalists' representations of their algorithmic publics.

The fifth and sixth chapters explore the consequences of these distinct understandings of metrics on two key aspects of the daily life of news organizations: editorial production and compensation systems. In the fifth chapter, I analyze the editorial routines associated with online news production. Though both *TheNotebook* and *LaPlace* faced a similar tension between "fast" and "slow" news, they handled it differently: in one case a strong division of labor prevailed, whereas in the other porous boundaries and versatility dominated. Building on the previous chapters, I contrast the bureaucratic and disciplinary dynamics that structured the daily

14 • Introduction

life of *TheNotebook* and *LaPlace* respectively. These differences reveal distinct strategies for handling the tension between click-based and editorial modes of evaluation.

The sixth chapter explores the ramifications of these conflicting systems of evaluation by turning to the thorny question of compensation. *TheNotebook* and *LaPlace* faced the same dilemma: how to get people to work without enough money to pay all contributors a decent wage. In both places, traffic became an important criterion for deciding whom to pay, and how much to pay them. Yet the two organizations relied on distinct strategies to decide how much to pay their flexible workers. The chapter examines how this affected the identities and careers of freelance journalists in the two countries. It analyzes why, overall, American journalists were less conflicted about using metrics-related criteria than their French counterparts.

In the conclusion, I examine the implications of this work for further studies of digital metrics beyond the case of journalism. At a time when nearly every domain is affected by analytics and algorithms, *Metrics at Work* provides an overview of what kinds of changes we might expect—and what should not be taken for granted—whenever metrics take over.

## INDEX

.....

- academia, 159–60, 170  
advertising: compensation tied to, 137–39;  
decline of, in newspapers, 31; in France,  
28; in French newspapers, 23; in history  
of American journalism, 18; on *LaPlace*,  
64; online, metrics of, 31–32  
Alexandre, 93; on journalists and bloggers,  
136; after *LaPlace*, 152; on trolls on  
*LaPlace* website, 50; on writing for  
*LaPlace*, 113, 119  
algorithmic publics, 8; current power of,  
158–61; for *LaPlace*, 98–100; online  
readers as, 76–77; perceptions of, 77–78,  
100–101; for *TheNotebook*, 96–98  
algorithms: definition of, 3; as social  
constructions, 4  
Americanization approach to culture, 6–7  
analytics: definition of, 3; differing  
interpretations of, 156  
Anderson, Benedict, 21, 76  
André, 92, 165; articles published by, 115;  
compensation for, 134; on financing for  
*LaPlace*, 64; in founding of *LaPlace*,  
44–46; Gabriella on, 51; Jean on, 50;  
after *LaPlace*, 152; after sale of *LaPlace*,  
66  
Angwin, Julia, 31  
ARPANET, 39  
*Atlantic Monthly*, 125–26  
*Atlantico* (website), 64  
audiences: publics distinguished from, 76.  
*See also* readers  
Beuve-Méry, Hubert, 27  
Beyoncé, 174  
blogs and blogosphere, 37, 45–46;  
compensation for bloggers, 135–36,  
138–39; journalists and bloggers,  
136–37; on *LaPlace*, 67–68; published  
in *LaPlace*, 113; short articles in  
*TheNotebook* as, 104, 110–11  
Bly, Nellie, 19  
bots, 33  
Bourdieu, Pierre, 7, 55, 90–91, 143  
Bruni-Sarkozy, Carla, 136  
bureaucratic power, 119–22, 121, 155;  
compensation and, 139–40  
*Business Insider* (website), 55  
*BuzzFeed* (website), 55, 70  
Cambridge Analytica (firm), 153  
Carey, James, 7  
Celia, 137–39  
Chartbeat (software), 15–17, 33–34,  
157, 166; dashboard of, 16; used by  
*Gawker*, 82; used by *LaPlace*, 83–86,  
90–91, 95, 98–99; used by *TheNote-*  
*book*, 77–80, 87  
Coates, Ta-Nehisi, 125–26  
Collins, Randall, 52  
compensation, 125–28, 149–51; in  
bureaucratic and disciplinary types,  
139–40; for freelancers, 149–51;  
for freelancers working for *TheNote-*  
*book*, 128–33; at *LaPlace*, 133–39;  
performance-based, 82  
Comscore (software), 77  
cookies (tracking software), 31, 33  
Cressard Law (France; 1974), 147  
culture, coverage of, 81, 97  
Darnton, Robert, 24  
dating websites, 158  
de Gaulle, Charles, 27  
Dezalay, Yves, 48  
digital ethnography, 163  
digital metrics, definition of, 3  
DiMaggio, Paul, 69  
disciplinary power, 119–22, 121, 155;  
compensation and, 139–40  
division of labor, 155; among journalists,  
95–96; in *LaPlace*, 114–18; in *TheNote-*  
*book*'s office, 108–9; in traditional  
journalism, 102, 108  
Dreyfus, Alfred, 22  
Dreyfus Affair, 22  
Duffy, Brooke Erin, 58  
e-commerce, 158  
editorial meetings, 94



- editors, 102; in division of labor, 95–96;  
at *LaPlace*, 115; at *TheNotebook*, 108  
editors-in-chief, 102  
email, 39  
Emma, 97; on compensation for writers,  
130–31; long-form articles by, 107;  
after *TheNotebook*, 152; on web traffic  
numbers, 79  
Esther: on click chasing, 111; on compen-  
sation for writers, 129; on highbrow  
and lowbrow culture, 81; on search  
engine optimization, 60–61; after *The-  
Notebook*, 152; as *TheNotebook*'s  
culture editor, 40–43  
ethnography, 163; internet studied in,  
170–71; interviews and Twitter in,  
173–75; large data sets in, 175–77;  
observation in, 171–73  
Facebook, 1, 55, 158; *LaPlace* on, 68;  
misuse of data from, 153; *TheNote-  
book*'s presence on, 61, 62  
Foucault, Michel, 95, 120, 141  
Fowler, Mark, 26  
France: algorithmic publics in, 6–8; his-  
tory of journalism in, 18; journalists  
and intellectuals in, 21–23, 35, 156;  
newspapers in, 26–29; status of  
freelancers in, 146–51  
freelancers, 127–28; career strategies for,  
140–46; compensation for, 149–51;  
status of, in U.S. and in France, 146–51;  
working for *LaPlace*, 133–39; working  
for *TheNotebook*, 128–33  
*FrenchMag* (website), 174  
Gabriella: on compensation at *LaPlace*,  
133–34; on freelancer's life, 146–47;  
after *LaPlace*, 152; on *LaPlace*'s first  
employees, 51; on *LaPlace*'s lack of  
structure, 118–19; on launching of  
*LaPlace*, 49; on sale of *LaPlace*, 66, 67  
Gael, 50, 68; on Chartbeat, 78; on compen-  
sation for bloggers, 135; after *LaPlace*,  
152; tweet by, 174  
Gans, Herbert, 24, 102, 108  
Garth, Bryant, 48  
*Gawker* (website), 55, 57; imitated by  
*LaPlace* and *TheNotebook*, 70;  
performance-based compensation  
system at, 82  
*Gawker Media* (firm), 57  
Geertz, Clifford, 32  
Gieryn, Thomas, 108  
gig economy, 127  
Google, 1, 59  
Google Analytics (software), 77, 78  
Hallin, Daniel, 23  
Hamilton, Jay, 102  
Hicks, Mar, 60  
*Huffington Post* (website), 55–56, 59,  
104; bloggers suit against, 135; French  
version of, 64; imitated by *LaPlace*  
and *TheNotebook*, 70; short articles  
published by, 113  
hybridization approach to culture, 7  
Ibsen, Henrik, 6  
“immediacy imperative,” 102  
institutional isomorphism, 69  
intellectuals, 36–37; in France, 21–23  
internet: ethnographic study of, 170–71;  
history of, 36; web analytics of, 32–34  
interviews, 173–75  
invisible work, 59  
Jane: on blog posts in *TheNotebook*, 111;  
on cheating strategies, 89; on “contrar-  
ian” editorial line, 42; on sideshows on  
website, 88; after *TheNotebook*, 152;  
on *TheNotebook*'s competition, 55–56;  
on *TheNotebook*'s sub-sites, 57  
Jerolmack, Colin, 164  
John: in beginnings of *TheNotebook*,  
38–40, 43; as freelancer, 142; named  
“Editor of the Year,” 54; personal  
branding by, 148  
journalism: academic, 160; analytics  
software products for, 33–34; digital  
transformation of, 2; editorial evaluation  
of, 72–73; in France, 21–23, 27–28; in  
France and United States, 7, 18; on  
internet, 36–37; in post–World War II  
United States, 23–26; sensationalism  
and professionalism in, 18–21, 35  
journalists: academics and, 170; bloggers  
and, 135–37; compensation for, 125–28;  
as digital pioneers, 36–37; division of  
labor among, 95–96; French unions  
of, 22–23; hostility towards, 41; as  
muckrakers, 18–19; prestige and

- reputations of, 143–44; *sociétés de journalistes*, 27–28, 66
- Khan, Shamus, 164
- Lamont, Michele, 149
- LaPlace* (website): absorbed into LeGroupeMag’s website, 152; algorithmic public for, 96–98, 101, 159; beginnings of, 37–38, 44–46; bureaucratic and disciplinary power in, 120–22, 155; compensation at, 133–40, 149–51; convergence of *TheNotebook* with, 69–71; data set of articles published in, 176–77; division of labor within, 95–96, 114–18; early years of, 52–53; editorial evaluation in, 71–74; fieldwork at, 165, 166, 168; financial problems in, 63–65; formats of articles published in, 113–14; growth of, 48–52; hierarchy in, 11, 12; homepage of, 117; increased traffic on, 67–68; number of articles published in, 70, 71; offices of, 116; opportunism of, 75; organizational changes within, 123; sold to LeGroupeMag, 65–67; staff on audience metrics used by, 89–95; structure lacking in, 118–19; *TheNotebook* compared with, 8–10; web analytics used by, 78, 83–86; website for, 46–48
- large data sets, 175–77
- LeGroupeMag (firm), 99; *LaPlace* absorbed into, 152; *LaPlace* sold to, 65–67
- Le Monde* (French newspaper), 27
- letters to the editor, 8, 25
- Levi-Strauss, Claude, 217
- Lippman, Walter, 20
- Madrigal, Alexis, 102–3
- Malinowski, Bronislaw, 171
- Mamet, David, 82
- Marc, 91–93, 115
- Margaret, 110, 131–32, 143
- Marie, 142, 144, 145, 148
- Marina, 91–93; on Chartbeat, 83–84, 99; on editorial values at *LaPlace*, 85; on finances of *LaPlace*, 65; after *LaPlace*, 152; on normalizing process at *LaPlace*, 63
- marketing departments, 23
- Marshall, Josh, 45
- Mediapart* (website), 64
- men, as journalists, 169
- mimetic isomorphism, 69–70
- muckrakers, 18–19, 23
- news, 102; legacy news organizations, 157; after U.S. election of 2016, 153
- newspapers: American, history of, 18–20; French, history of, 21–23; French, state, public, and, 26–29; hierarchical structures in, 102
- Newspapers Inc., 43–44; *TheNotebook* under ownership of, 54–56
- New York Review of Books*, 143
- New York Times*, 19, 143
- Noah: on coverage of television, 81, 97; fast and slow articles by, 105–6; on layoffs of writers at *TheNotebook*, 57–58; on pagination of articles, 88; on performance-based compensation, 82; on social media promotions, 62–63; after *TheNotebook*, 152
- observation, as ethnographic technique, 171–72
- Ochs, Adolph, 19
- Omniure (software), 77, 86–87
- online news, 29–32; division of labor in, 102; after U.S. election of 2016, 153
- OWNI (website), 64
- Padioleau, Jean, 27, 28
- personal branding, 147–49
- Philippe, 93, 165; articles published by, 115; on atmosphere at *LaPlace*, 51; on Chartbeat, 83, 84; on compensation for bloggers, 136, 138; on editorial values, 85; on finances of *LaPlace*, 65; in founding of *LaPlace*, 44–48; on *Huffington Post* style of articles, 113; after *LaPlace*, 152; on *LaPlace*’s lack of structure, 119; on opportunism on *LaPlace*’s website, 75; after sale of *LaPlace*, 66
- Pickard, Victor, 23
- pirate radio stations, 51
- poetry, 132
- Porter, Theodore, 82–83
- Powell, Walter, 69
- power, bureaucratic and disciplinary, 119–22, 121, 155

- professionalism, 27, 35; in American journalism, 18–21; in French journalism, 27–28
- prostitution metaphor, 118; used for personal branding, 148; “whore’s spot” as, 75–76, 84–85
- publicistes*, 21
- publics, 76; journalists’ perceptions of, 7–8. *See also* algorithmic publics
- quantification, history of, 1
- readers (audience): as algorithmic publics, 76–77; Chartbeat data on, 15–17; of *LaPlace* (website), 49–50; metrics available on, 166; of post–World War II newspapers, 25–26
- Roberts, Sarah T., 59
- Rosen, Jay, 36–37
- Sam, 39–40, 42–44, 165; on compensation for writers, 129, 133; connections with *LaPlace*, 47; as editor-in-chief, 56–58; on fast and slow articles, 106–7; after *TheNotebook*, 152; web analytics used by, 77–79, 81
- Sarah, 66, 93, 94, 138–39
- Sarkozy, Nicolas, 49, 64, 136
- Schudson, Michael, 19
- Sean: on audience traffic, 86–87; at beginnings of *TheNotebook*, 40; on compensation for freelancers, 131–32; on freelancing, 140–41; on search engine optimization, 89; after *TheNotebook*, 152
- search engine optimization (SEO): at *LaPlace*, 68; at *TheNotebook*, 59–61
- self-employment, 127
- sensationalism, in American journalism, 18–21
- Shirky, Clay, 36
- Sinclair, Upton, 18
- social media: importance of following on, 144–45; *LaPlace* on, 68; *TheNotebook* on, 61–62; after U.S. election of 2016, 153; visibility on, 58. *See also* Facebook; Twitter
- sociétés de journalistes*, 27–28, 66, 100
- staff writers, 95–96, 102; at *LaPlace*, 115
- Star, Susan Leigh, 59
- Starkman, Dean, 103
- Strauss, Anselm, 59
- Syndicat de la Presse Indépendante d’Information en Ligne (SPIIL), 51
- Tarbell, Ida M., 18
- Tavory, Iddo, 166
- TechCorp, 38–39, 43–44
- television, coverage of, 81, 97
- testimonies, 114
- Thayer, Nate, 125, 126
- TheNotebook* (website): algorithmic public for, 96–98, 100–101, 159; bureaucratic and disciplinary power in, 120–22; bureaucratic hierarchy in, 11, 12; compensation for freelancers working for, 128–33, 139–40, 149–51; competition for, 54–56; content volume increased in, 56–58; convergence of *LaPlace* with, 69–71; data set of articles published in, 176–77; division of labor within, 95–96; early years of, 52–53; editorial evaluation in, 71–74; fast and slow articles in, 103–8; fieldwork at, 165, 166, 168; finances of, 42–44; founding of, 37–40; homepage of, 112; *LaPlace* compared with, 8–10; launching of, 40–42; number of articles published in, 70, 71; offices of, 109; online visibility of, 59–63; in partnership with *LaPlace*, 47–48; perceptions of audience for, 77–78; stable organizational structure of, 123–24; staff on audience metrics used by, 86–89; subscribers to, 152; symbolic boundaries in staff of, 108–12; web analytics used by, 78–83
- TheNotebook.fr* (website), 165
- Thévenot, Laurent, 149
- Timmermans, Stefan, 166
- trolls, on *LaPlace* website, 50
- Trump, Donald, 2
- Tuchman, Gaye, 102
- Turner, Fred, 37
- Turow, Joseph, 32
- Twitter, 55; author discussed on, 167; as ethnographic tool, 173–75; importance of, 144–45; personal branding on, 148; *TheNotebook*’s presence on, 61–63
- unions: of French journalists, 22–23; Syndicat de la Presse Indépendante d’Information en Ligne, 51

Index • 251

- United States: algorithmic publics in, 6–8; history of journalism in, 18; international cultural influence of, 48; post–World War II journalism in, 23–26; sensationalism and professionalism in journalism in, 18–21, 35; status of freelancers in, 146–51
- Usher, Nikki, 102
- Vicente, 90, 92–93, 95
- visibility, 58–59
- web analytics, 2, 32–34, 77–78, 166; organizational structures reinforced by, 123; used by *LaPlace*, 83–86; used by *TheNotebook*, 78–83, 97
- Wells, Ida B., 18
- “whore’s spot,” 75–76, 84–85
- Whyte, William H., 126
- women: as journalists, 169; low-status assignments given to, 75–76; working on online publications, 60
- Wu, Tim, 59
- yellow journalism, 19
- Zelizer, Viviana, 75
- Zola, Emile, 22
- Zuboff, Shoshana, 32, 34, 153