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Digital assistant for citizen reporters: Google-sponsored project explores new ways of content creation and online advertising for free sheets

The joint project of Westdeutsche Verlags- und Werbegesellschaft (WVW), Gogol Publishing and textOmatic was awarded fundings by the Google Digital News Innovation Fund (DNI). The project is based on the long experience and expertise of Gogol Publishing and WVW with citizen reporters. A tool for automated text production supports users without any prior journalistic experience in creating sub-local content, which forms the foundation for new revenue streams.

Since 2015, the Google Digital News Innovation Fund has been funding journalistic projects in Europe. In this year's application process, a joint project by WVW, Gogol Publishing and textOmatic was awarded fundings. The project benefits from the considerable experience of Gogol Publishing with user-generated content. Today, a total of over 500,000 citizen reporters, about 100,000 of them with WVW, use the Gogol platform to report about sub-local topics in their region.

On-site reporting made easy: assisted text production for citizen reporters

Thanks to new possibilities of assisted text production, the innovative project furthers the creation of so-called sub-local content, viz. articles about the writer's immediate environment. Citizen reporters do not have to write long texts anymore in order to contribute to their region: Basic data can easily be entered into the system. Based on the delivered data, texts are generated automatically. For example, information and results of regional football games can be entered into the system, and at the touch of a button an article is created right from the sideline of the game.

New revenue streams for free sheets: content sponsoring

Although readers appreciate sub-local articles in particular, free sheets can only cover a fraction of the potential regional content. "The unique combination of automated text production and user-generated content will extend our supply of sub-local content," says Thomas Knackert, editor-in-chief of WVW. This wide array of local topics also opens up new forms of online advertising for free sheets. "By sponsoring this content, local businesses are now able to present themselves as an authentic supporter of the local community", Knackert continues. Thus, the joint project of WVW, Gogol Publishing and textOmatic offers great potential to win regional readers while tapping into new sources of revenue.



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association with the Ostruhr-Anzeigenblattgesellschaft (ORA), distributes numerous free sheets with a weekly circulation of over 5 million in North Rhine-Westphalia. The associated citizen reporter platform www.lokalkompass.de provides local articles and information about the area from the Lower Rhine to the Rhur region and to the Sauerland. Over 100,000 citizen reporters contribute articles to the online platform.

About Gogol Publishing: Gogol Publishing and its affiliate company multicom offer a broad range of tools for print and online publishing from a single source. In the German-speaking area, over 600 newspapers, magazines and online platforms are produced with these systems, making Gogol and multicom one of the leading providers of multimedia publishing solutions. In addition, Gogol Publishing is one of the market leaders in user-generated content. Today, over 500,000 citizen reporters use the online platforms by Gogol Publishing to write about sub-local topics in their region. Important daily newspaper publishers such as the DuMont Mediengruppe, mh:n Medien, die Rheinpfalz etc. are among our customers. The № 1 publishers of free sheets in Germany (FUNKE) and Austria (Regionalmedien Austria) as well as numerous small and medium-sized free sheet publishers put their trust into the Gogol system. 33% of all visited free sheet online platforms in Germany are customers of Gogol Publishing.

About textOmatic: textOmatic was founded in Dortmund in August 2015. The start-up company is sponsored by Google and provides a large number of media companies with international data, statistics and analyses. textOmatic specializes in so-called robot journalism. In Germany, the Handelsblatt, Berliner Morgenpost the Burda-Verlag are currently using the textOmatic technology. Furthermore, a weekly magazine is about to test the uses of textOmatic system.

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