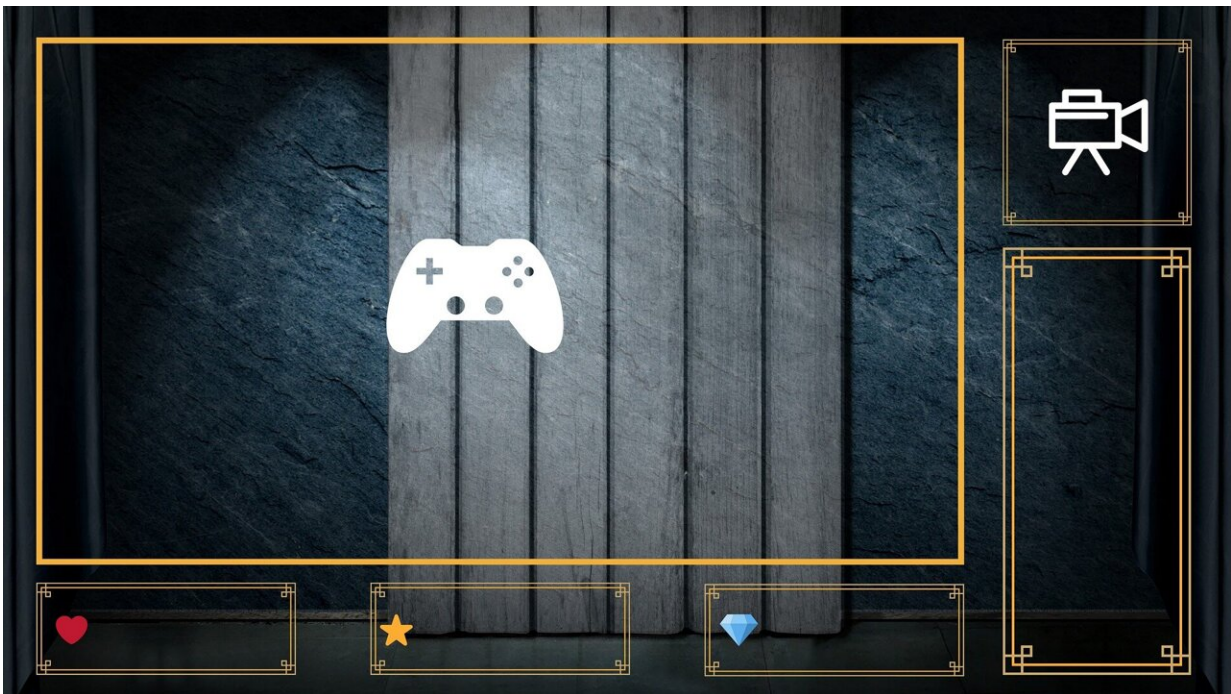


Twitch app is redefining journalism as it moves into news coverage, says study

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The popular app Twitch, created to livestream video game action, is redefining journalism as it becomes a source for news, University of Oregon research found.

Established news groups and digital-age influencers are competing on Twitch in creative ways to draw users who expect to participate in

coverage, said Maxwell Foxman, a media and game studies professor whose research on Twitch was published in the journal *Digital Journalism*.

"Twitch could be a boon to traditional news organizations for additional income and audience engagement," Foxman said. "Our research shows journalists could embrace new practices that are increasingly important to build public trust."

In "[Recasting Twitch: Livestreaming, Platforms, and New Frontiers in Digital Journalism](#)," Foxman and co-authors Brandon C. Harris, who earned a doctorate in media studies at the UO in 2022, and William Clyde Partin said the app evidences "novel relationships between [live streaming](#), entertainment, and reporting," providing robust public engagement but requiring unusual journalistic methods to earn popularity and revenue.

Observations from Foxman and co-authors include:

- Platforms Twitch, YouTube and TikTok are redefining what "live" news is, in ways that are "incredibly important" to the future of journalism, Foxman said.
- Digital-age streamers are "defying journalistic conventions to engage deeply with audiences, 'co-constructing' truth and trust away from traditional news organizations," said co-author Harris.
- Given the prospect of a close presidential election in November, news organizations should recognize that younger audiences on Twitch and other platforms will be courted by candidates, consuming news from streamers with a particular slant—and could swing the vote.

Twitch is a major player among live video platforms with 1.6 billion hours of content produced monthly, much of it by users age 25–34. That

content is mostly livestreamed gameplay, but the app is an increasingly common distributor of news and information, said Foxman, an assistant professor in the School of Journalism and Communication and expert in game studies, esports and virtual reality.

Working with Harris and Partin, who received his doctorate from the University of North Carolina, Foxman explored how Twitch affects journalism practices by examining three channels on the platform: The Washington Post, which represents traditional journalists' work with Twitch; Hasan Piker, a left-leaning political influencer; and Patriots' Soapbox, a pro-QAnon site that operates around the clock.

The trio reviewed roughly 1,000 hours of content from June 2020 through June 2021, during which Twitch news coverage included President Donald Trump's first impeachment and the Capitol riots.

One differentiator, Foxman said, was how the three channels managed audience interaction. Twitch users relish communicating live with each other and the streamer through a text-based chat room.

That "liveness" redefines the concept of "live news" in that the content producer and audiences parse news together in real time, each contributing content or sources and together analyzing information. This relationship forced the three channels to make operational decisions toward balancing engagement with editorial independence.

Piker welcomed the dynamic, addressing in his on-air commentary, in real time, questions posed by viewers in chat. This interplay is popular with viewers and a financial incentive for streamers like Piker; advertisements, subscriptions and "Bits," which are similar to donations, are based on the interplay and increase revenue for the platform and streamers. Piker grosses around \$65,000 a month, Foxman said.

Patriots' Soapbox took Piker's approach a step further, occasionally recruiting fans to host the channel. Viewers were thus positioned as both media consumers and producers while affirming their shared values with Patriots' Soapbox, Foxman said.

Only The Washington Post separated their hosts' video presentation from audience dialogue in the chat room. A reporter monitored and responded in chat, but hosts did not respond on air.

Foxman said that's an opportunity for better engagement. In social media, host-audience interplay is increasingly important to building [public trust](#), and that can reach users put off by the [traditional model](#) in which journalists deliver news and audiences can decide only whether they choose to consume it.

The Washington Post also produced content on Twitch seemingly at odds with its place as a traditional news organization. In a segment called "Playing Games with Politicians," U.S. congressional representatives such as Matt Gaetz played video games like Madden NFL with newspaper hosts while fielding their questions about politics. That was the newspaper's most popular stream, far outpacing content modeled on traditional journalism, such as political commentary and talk shows.

The Post has long explored novel storytelling, Foxman said. With "Playing Games," the paper recognized that games have always been a fixture in media, from daily newspaper crossword puzzles dating back 100 years to the overwhelming popularity of The New York Times game apps today.

Foxman says. "Games and the news may seem like they are disconnected, but often economically, socially or culturally, they interact."

More information: Maxwell Foxman et al, Recasting Twitch: Livestreaming, Platforms, and New Frontiers in Digital Journalism, *Digital Journalism* (2024). [DOI: 10.1080/21670811.2024.2329648](https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2024.2329648)

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