

'AI is never a substitute for critical thinking'

'AI is never a substitute for critical thinking', says Harvard University-Neiman Foundation for Journalism fellow Jaemark Tordecilla

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Harvard University Neiman fellow and former GMA News Online editor-in-chief Jaemark Tordecilla leads the forum titled Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Community

Journalism held in a hotel in Cebu City as part of the 32nd Cebu Press Freedom Week. The event is organized by STET Women in Media. | Morexette Marie Erram

CEBU CITY, Philippines — With the rise of generative artificial intelligence (AI) and threats of deep fakes, journalists here — including aspiring ones — are reminded not to abandon critical thinking.

This was the message of Harvard University-Neiman Foundation for Journalism fellow and former GMA News Online editor-in-chief Jaemark Tordecilla during the *AI and Community Journalism* forum on Friday, September 20.

The event, held in a hotel in uptown Cebu City, was attended by members of Cebu's press, and the academe from communication schools and colleges.

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Tordecilla led a series of discussions and workshops tackling deepfakes, including how to spot them when gathering information for news.

Attendees also had the opportunity to learn more about generative AI tools such as openAI's ChatGPT to supplement news gathering, sourcing and production.

While these tools could help productivity, Tordecilla, however, emphasized the need for journalists and communicators to always treat it as a tool – and not a substitute for critical thinking.

“(AI tools) help free up journalists to do more productive work. When you have all that free time, you can devote your time to other projects,” he said.

“(But) we should not be passive receivers. Don't use it as a source of information... AI should not be a substitute for critical thinking,” he added.

Dr. Leilani Echaves-Paredes of STET Women in Media, the lead organizer of Friday's event, said she was glad present and new generations of journalists had the chance to learn more about the impact of disruptive technologies like generative AI on media and information.

"We should not surrender our critical thinking. Because AI as a tool can make us really lazy and before we know it, when we are trying to beat the deadline... and then we forget our supreme duty of being in the work of journalists which is... rules and ethics," said Paredes.

AI in Community Journalism is organized by STET Women in Media, it formed part of the week-long celebration for the 32nd Cebu Press Freedom Week (CPFV).

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