

WIRED, TIRED AUG 21 BY [VICTOR TANGERMANN](#)

Wired and Business Insider Accidentally Published AI-Generated Slop Articles by Seemingly Fake Journalist

The internet is drowning in AI slop.

[/ Artificial Intelligence/ Ai Journalism](#)



Renowned publications including *Wired* and *Business Insider* have been caught publishing what appears to be AI slop.

As [Press Gazette reports in a fascinating investigation](#), numerous outlets have removed features published under the byline of "Margaux Blanchard" after suspicion emerged that the stories were fictionalized and AI-generated.

After *Press Gazette* reached out to the non-profit Index on Censorship over an article by the same author, for instance, the publisher concluded that the piece "appears to have been written by AI."

It's an especially galling situation for *Wired*, a publication that routinely features excellent coverage about how generative AI is [slowly drowning](#) the internet in uninspired slop, often [undermining human creativity](#) in the process.

It's unclear how much money the person behind the ruse got away with, but considering that *Wired* sometimes pays [thousands of dollars for in-depth, long-form reporting](#), it could be a considerable sum.

One thing's for sure: the incident is very much a sign of the times. As AI tech progresses, chatbots are becoming incredibly adept at generating believable-sounding copy. In this case, human editors at reputable publications appear to have fallen victim to a scammer.

We've already come across [many examples of publications](#) falling for similar traps, and even media conglomerates accelerating the trend by [pumping AI slop into newspapers](#) firsthand.

Unsurprisingly, both *Business Insider* and *Wired* moved swiftly by deleting the offending content from their websites.

"The essay 'Remote work has been the best thing for me as a parent but the worst as a person' was removed because it didn't meet *Business Insider*'s standards," [reads an August 19 editor's note](#) where the article used to be.

And an [editor's note](#) where *Wired* had previously published "They Fell in Love Playing Minecraft. Then the Game Became Their Wedding Venue" cautions that the story was taken down as it "does not meet our editorial standards."

In many ways, the title of the piece perfectly meshes with *Wired*'s usual coverage, making it a suitable pitch for the tech publication — a quirky and otherwise harmless love story taking place inside a digital world.

A quick [perusal of an archived version](#) of the since-deleted article reveals a tidily written piece about two individuals falling in love while playing the iconic video game. However, a closer look reveals several telltale signs of the piece having been generated by an AI, [including already familiar sentence structures](#).

The piece also references a 34-year-old ordained officiant in Chicago who doesn't appear to exist.

The story continued to spread online. *Wired*'s piece was aggregated by several other publications, including *Mashable*, whose associate editor, Tim Marcin, characterized it as a "charming feature" in a [commentary piece](#) that has since been [replaced by a similar editor's note](#).

Meanwhile, *Business Insider* published two personal essays under the same byline, just two days apart. One of them, an extremely generic piece about becoming a parent that was first published in April, is [still available on the Dutch localization](#) of the news site.

"If there's one thing I've learned, it's this," the alleged author wrote. "There is no perfect time to become a parent. There is only the time that life gives you and what you choose to do with it."

Dispatch editor Jacob Furedi told *Press Gazette* about his own experience of being pitched by the same author. The pitch, an intriguing story about a rural town in Colorado that was repurposed into the "world's most secretive training grounds for death investigation," turned out to be impossible to independently verify.

The pitch raised alarm bells for Furedi, who found no evidence of the town's existence. While "very convincing," Furedi was convinced Blanchard was "bullshitting," he told *Press Gazette*.

Several other magazines have also been caught publishing articles under the alleged writer's byline, including music publication *Cone Magazine* and even *SFGate*, an award-winning Californian news publication with [tens of millions of monthly readers](#).

An article about how superfandom of Disneyland goes from "hobby to an obsession" [remains live](#) on *SFGate*'s website at the time of writing. The article mentions a TikTok content creator named Kayla Reed — with "over 100,000 followers" — who doesn't appear to exist.

Though the impacted publications have been acting responsibly by taking down the shoddy articles, the stakes for the future of journalism are enormous.

For one, trust in what we read online is actively being eroded by the tech. Last year, a [study by researchers at the University of Kansas](#) found that when readers know AI was involved in news production, the trust and credibility they hold in the source falls.

Separate [research](#) by the independent organization Trusting News found that AI disclosures by newsrooms can hurt trust as well.

Furedi told *Press Gazette* that he's already being inundated by "pitches which are clearly written by ChatGPT."

It's a "terrible" trend, he said, that's "symptomatic of the direction that certain types of journalism are going in."

JUL 17, BY [VICTOR TANGERMANN](#)

AI Is Slitting the Throat of the Journalism Industry

Google is doubling down on AI -- and publishers are starving.

[/ Artificial Intelligence/ Ai Overviews](#)

In the latest instance of Google discouraging users from clicking on links, the search giant has launched a new feature that uses AI to summarize trending news stories.

As first [reported on by TechCrunch](#), the AI summaries are appearing for users in the US inside Google's main mobile search apps on iOS and Android under the main Discover news feed. Tiny logos of publishers appear in the upper left-hand corner, haphazardly reminding users of where the information actually came from. Underlining the janky nature of the tech, large text under the summary warns that it was "generated with AI, which can make mistakes," seemingly in an attempt to preempt blowback of the type that Apple received after it rolled out a similar news-summarizing feature that [turned out to hallucinate wild misinformation](#). A Google spokesperson confirmed to *TechCrunch* that the change represented an official US launch, and will focus on trending lifestyle topics, including sports and entertainment.

However, in *Futurism*'s own testing, the feature eagerly summarized a story about two merging supermassive black holes, which decidedly doesn't fall under the "lifestyle" category. We reached out to Google for clarification, but didn't receive a response by press time. It's a worrying development for the news industry, which is already reeling from greatly reduced traffic from the search giant. Last month, the *Wall Street Journal* [reported](#) that news sites are being starved by Google's AI Overviews feature, which effectively eliminates the need to click on links in search results by paraphrasing content within search results.

While some publications have opted to sign lucrative partnerships with AI companies such as OpenAI, the industry is already feeling the hurt as the AI industry ingests its work and feeds it back to users with a disregard for accuracy, copyright, and media revenue. In that context, the publishing industry's woes could soon take a turn for the worse now that Google is actively dissuading users from clicking through to human-written journalism inside the Discover feed.

With plummeting referrals, business models such as relying on display ad revenues and user subscriptions are on shaky ground. Could we be standing at the precipice of what *The Verge*'s Nilay Patel [called "Google Zero"](#): a point at which Google gives up sending traffic to publications altogether by answering all questions with AI?

The news industry is already being starved of traffic, forcing publications to scale down significantly. Case in point, *Business Insider* was forced to [lay off 21 percent of its employees](#) earlier this year, with CEO Barbara Peng citing "extreme traffic drops outside of our control." Making matters worse is the tech's tendency to hallucinate factual claims. Google has repeatedly caught flak for its AI Overviews feature, which has [consistently misled users](#) and given [head-scratching answers](#) that can seem to be [plucked from a parallel universe](#).

In other words, it's almost certainly only a matter of time until Google's Discover feature will bungle facts and mislead users about what's happening around the world — a predicament the tech giant seems to be painfully aware of, even as it doubles down on the tech at all costs.

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