

# “Every tool is better than nothing”?: The use of dashboards in journalistic work

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## Abstract

In this paper, I shall be drawing upon a series of ethnographic studies of journalists and technology evaluations undertaken during the European project PHEME, to examine some of the assumptions that get made about how dashboard-type systems might support journalists and the problems that can arise. In particular I shall be discussing the ‘clustering problem’, its ramifications, and how it constitutes one of the main challenges for future technology development in this space. The clustering problem refers to the thorny issue of how to assemble appropriate materials for journalists to work with that are meaningful and intelligible at the point of use. Whilst this resonates strongly with a number of long-standing issues in computer science, I shall focus here upon how it illuminates a gap between expectation and provision that is leading to a magpie-like proclivity for journalists to download the latest tool, try it once, then set it aside.

## Biography

Peter Tolmie is a Principal Research Scientist at the Universität Siegen in Germany. He has conducted ethnographic studies across numerous settings (e.g. retail banking, music production, the TV and film industries, journalism, etc...). Most recently, he has collaborated on the PHEME project, which is focused on establishing the veracity of claims in the internet.

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