

Blockchain in Journalism

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ABSTRACT

A blockchain is a decentralized, cryptographically secured ledger that records transactions and data across a peer-to-peer network in an immutable, chronological, and transparent manner. The integration of blockchain into journalism represents a paradigm shift in how we establish trust, verify authenticity, and value intellectual labor in the digital age. Blockchain technology could revolutionize journalism by creating untamperable records of content provenance, facilitating micropayments directly between audiences and journalists, and establishing decentralized autonomous organizations to govern editorial standards. Blockchain as an underlying technology and a paradigm innovator for journalism has more potential than the Internet for improving mass media. This paper explores the diverse applications of blockchain in journalism and critically evaluates the challenges that impede its widespread adoption.

KEYWORDS: *blockchain, distributed digital ledger, logistics, journalism, journalists, immersive journalism, news, news media.*

INTRODUCTION

Journalism faces an existential “perfect storm” characterized by a severe crisis of public trust, the proliferation of generative artificial intelligence (AI) and deepfakes, rampant misinformation, copyright infringement, unsustainable monetization models, and the collapse of traditional ad-supported business models. To navigate this “perfect storm,” the media industry is actively investigating decentralized ledger technology—commonly known as blockchain—as a foundational infrastructure to restore digital trust, secure intellectual property, and bypass predatory intermediaries. Blockchain technology has emerged as a promising structural remedy. At its core, a blockchain is a distributed, peer-to-peer cryptographic database that maintains a shared, immutable ledger of transactions or data entries. When applied to journalism, this technology can serve as a secure registry for content metadata, an immutable record of editorial changes, a mechanism for source protection, and a framework for direct peer-to-peer monetization [1].

WHAT IS BLOCKCHAIN?

Blockchain, a type of distributed digital ledger technology (DLT), is a relatively new and exciting way of recording transactions in the digital age. It is a decentralized and distributed digital ledger technology that securely records and verifies transactions across multiple computers or nodes in a network. Basically, it is a chain of blocks in which each block contains a list of transactions. The symbol of a blockchain is depicted in Figure 1 [2]. The blockchain technology was created as the foundational basis for Bitcoin – a digital currency in which secure peer-to-peer transactions occur over the Internet. It is expected that the spending on blockchain solutions worldwide would grow from 4.5 billion USD (2020) to an estimated value of 19 billion USD by 2024 [3].

Originally developed as the accounting method for the virtual currency Bitcoin, Blockchains are appearing in a variety of commercial applications today. Blockchain technology is a type of distributed digital ledger that uses encryption to make entries permanent and tamper-proof and can be programmed to record financial transactions. It is used for secure

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transfer of money, assets, and information via a computer network such as the Internet without requiring a third-party intermediary. It is now being adopted across financial and non-financial sectors. As a catalyst for change, the Blockchain technology is going to change the business world and financial matters in major ways.

The first Blockchain was conceived in 2008 by an anonymous person or group known as Satoshi Nakamoto, who published a white paper introducing the concept of a peer-to-peer electronic cash system he called Bitcoin [4,5]. Bitcoin and Ethereum are the first two mainstream blockchains. Other modern blockchains include Namecoin, Peercoin, Ether, and Litecoin. Figure 2 shows different components of blockchain [6].

Blockchain combines existing technologies such as distributed digital ledgers, encryption, immutable records management, asset tokenization and decentralized governance to capture and record information that participants in a network need to interact and transact. As illustrated in Figure 3, a complete blockchain incorporates all the following five elements [7]:

- *Distribution*: Digital assets are distributed, not copied or transferred. A protocol establishes a set of rules in the form of distributed mathematical computations that ensures the integrity of the data exchanged among a large number of computing devices without going through a trusted third party. A centralized architecture presents several issues including a single point of failure and problems of scalability.
- *Encryption*: BC uses technologies such as public and private keys to record data securely and semi-anonymously. Completed transactions are cryptographically signed, time-stamped, and sequentially added to the ledger.
- *Immutability*: The blockchain was designed so these transactions are immutable, i.e. they cannot be deleted. No entity can modify the transaction records. Thus, Blockchains are secure and meddle-free by design. Data can be distributed, but not copied.
- *Tokenization*: Value is exchanged in the form of tokens, which can represent a wide variety of asset types, including monetary assets, units of data or user identities.
- *Decentralization*: No single entity controls a majority of the nodes or dictates the rules. A consensus mechanism verifies and approves transactions, eliminating the need for a central intermediary to govern the network.

Bitcoin and its underlying blockchain technology increasingly impact all facets of society. Bitcoin's status as digital gold is merely the tip of this technology. Figure 4 shows Bitcoin [8], while Figure 5 shows how blockchain works [9]. Although blockchain technology will for all time be associated with Bitcoin due to their common genesis, it has broader applications. Cryptocurrency will increasingly become a factor in family law issues as well.

A blockchain is a tamper-proof, distributed database that stores blocks of information for cryptographically bound transactions via peer-to-peer networks. At the heart of blockchain's functionality is cryptographic hashing. Each block in a blockchain contains a cryptographic hash of the previous block, creating an immutable chain of blocks. If anyone attempts to tamper with the data in a block, it would alter the block's hash. This would disrupt the entire chain, making it virtually impossible to manipulate. The security feature ensures data integrity and prevents unauthorized changes [10].

In a nutshell, blockchain technology involves three basic concepts [11]: (1) It is a system for recording a series of data items (such as transactions between parties); (2) It uses cryptography to make it difficult to tamper with past entries; (3) It has an agreed process for storing copies of the ledger and adding new entries (also called a consensus protocol).

Blockchain is a novel decentralized infrastructure and distributed computing paradigm that uses a chained data structure for verification, storage, and distributed consensus algorithms to generate and update data. Decentralization is a key feature of blockchain technology, which refers to the distribution of power and decision-making across a network of nodes or participants rather than being controlled by a central authority or system. It provides robustness while eliminating many-to-one traffic flows to avoid delays and single points of failure. Figure 6 shows the decentralized property of blockchain [9]. The advantages of decentralized property of blockchain network include the following [9]:

- The decentralized property of blockchain makes it less prone to failure and more expensive for hackers to attack the network.
- There is no third-party involvement; therefore, there is no added risk.
- Every change made in the network is traceable and concrete.
- Users maintain full autonomy of their properties and are not dependent on third parties to maintain and manage their assets.

- It provides enhanced security.

BLOCKCHAIN IN JOURNALISM

The digital era has brought journalists a great deal of fresh possibilities as well as new troubles. It challenges journalism in a lot of ways, yet it also offers new solutions. Reports by organizations such as Reporters Without Borders (RSF) indicate that media freedom is deteriorating in nearly two-thirds of surveyed nations, driven by government censorship, corporate consolidation, and legal harassment of journalists. In authoritarian regimes, governments frequently order Internet service providers to block news websites or force publishers to delete politically sensitive archives. Simultaneously, the economic foundations of journalism have been hollowed out. To survive this hostile environment, journalism requires a technological paradigm shift. Blockchain technology—a decentralized, distributed, and immutable ledger system—presents a promising infrastructural solution. Originally designed to enable trustless financial transactions, blockchain's core mechanics can be applied to verify content provenance, secure publishing channels against censorship, and establish direct, intermediary-free economic relationships between journalists and their audiences. By shifting from a model of “assumed trust” to one of “verifiable transparency,” blockchain equips news organizations with the tools necessary to combat the existential threats of the generative AI era [1]. Figure 7 shows a representation of blockchain in journalism [12], while Figure 8 depicts five things one should know about the impact of blockchain technology on news media [13].

APPLICATIONS OF BLOCKCHAIN IN JOURNALISM

Blockchain is gradually conquering the media industry, promising to improve credibility and transparency of workflow. It can be used for any form of asset registry, inventory, and exchange, including every area of finance, economics, and money. Figure 9 shows some of the applications of blockchain in journalism [14]. Common applications of blockchain in journalism include the following [1,14-16]:

- *Smart Contracts*: Smart contracts are self-executing protocols with terms directly written into code. They are like the simplified, automated versions of legal contracts, or laws and rules codified into computer code. In journalism, they automate licensing, manage digital rights, and facilitate micropayments directly between readers and writers, eliminating payment delays and costly administrative middlemen. Smart contracts execute micro-payments immediately upon content consumption. They can automate complex

royalty distribution. In collaborative investigative journalism, multiple parties (the reporter, the editor, the photographer, and the local fixer) contribute to a single story. A smart contract can be programmed to automatically split all incoming subscription or micropayment revenues among these contributors, eliminating administrative overhead and building trust within collaborative networks.

- *Provenance*: The most urgent application of blockchain in journalism is establishing content provenance—the verifiable history of a digital asset's origin, edits, and distribution. When a journalist publishes an article, photo, or video, the metadata (including the author's identity, publication time, location, and edit history) can be hashed and recorded onto a public blockchain. This creates an unalterable, permanent record of the content's origin, known as provenance. Ultimately, blockchain verifies provenance, not truth. A bad actor can still notarize a false story on the blockchain; the technology simply ensures that the actor cannot deny being the source of that falsehood, thereby enforcing accountability. Blockchain must be regarded as a tool to verify provenance and accountability, not an automated arbiter of absolute truth.
- *Fake News*: Blockchain is a potentially useful technology in the fight against misinformation. Either by mistake or intentionally, journalists often spread fake information that can result in reputational disaster for the parties mentioned. 86% of Internet users admit being fooled by fake news. The necessity to cover the news right then and there even worsens the situation, leaving little time for reporters to gather truthful evidence and do thorough research on the matter. This leads to frequent mistakes, misinformation and, consequently, lack of trust from the audience. Blockchain news platforms can help significantly reduce the spread of fake news. With blockchain content distribution, articles contain immutable metadata, so if some news turns out to be fake, the author will be easily traced and can be accused of disinformation, having no opportunity to alter the original piece. The rise of generative AI has exacerbated issues related to misinformation and fake news with fake local news websites now outnumbering legitimate ones in the United States. This development highlights the urgent need for reliable verification mechanisms, particularly for journalists. Blockchain has the potential to enhance verification through different approaches

including by facilitating community-driven platforms where readers participate actively in news verification processes.

- *Crypto Payments:* Incentives from readers and followers can enhance journalists' motivation to investigate and write better. With cryptocurrencies, readers can send money straight to the authors, skipping intermediaries. This can not only boost the quality of the content but is also a great option to support independent outlets and those covering controversial topics. If authors are supported directly by their audience, they are much less dependent on money from advertisers.
- *Permanent Archives:* With hundreds of articles and news items published every year, it is easy to lose some original pieces due to the human factor, broken links, or website malfunction. However, all news published on blockchain journalism platforms stays there forever and is easily accessible when needed. No one can discreetly change anything on blockchain, so all the data is stored immutably and is tamper-proof.
- *Content Verification:* One of the primary applications of blockchain in journalism is the verification of information. By anchoring news stories in a blockchain, journalists can provide readers with irrefutable proof of the authenticity of their sources. This not only enhances the credibility of the news but also holds journalists accountable for their reporting. Blockchain's disruptive potential extends beyond information verification. With blockchain, content creators and journalists can have direct access to their audience, eliminating the need for intermediaries.
- *Fighting Misinformation:* As generative AI makes it increasingly difficult to distinguish human-created journalism from synthetic media, blockchain are emerging as essential verification tools. These platforms allow journalists to secure the raw files of photos and videos at the point of capture, writing the cryptographic hash directly to the blockchain before any digital manipulation can occur. This establishes a "chain of custody" for digital evidence, protecting the integrity of photojournalism and investigative reporting.
- *Censorship Resistance:* In authoritarian regimes, journalists and independent news outlets face constant threats of censorship, website takedowns, and physical retaliation. Standard centralized web servers represent single points of failure; a government can easily block an IP address or force a hosting provider to delete an investigative report. Public, permissionless blockchains are inherently censorship-resistant because they operate on a distributed network of thousands of independent nodes. Once a piece of data is written to a block and accepted by the network consensus, it cannot be altered, deleted, or blocked by any single centralized entity, including governments or corporations.
- *Direct Monetization:* The collapse of the traditional advertising-supported business model has left a vacuum that current subscription models have failed to fill for the majority of local and niche publishers. Blockchain introduces novel economic structures that bypass intermediaries and enable micro-monetization. Traditional payment processors (like credit cards or PayPal) charge high transaction fees (often \$0.30 + 3%), make transactions under a dollar economically unviable. Cryptocurrencies and Layer-2 scaling networks solve this bottleneck by facilitating peer-to-peer microtransactions with near-zero transaction fees.
- *Automated Royalties:* In traditional media, freelance journalists and content creators often face delayed payments, opaque accounting, and complex licensing disputes. Blockchain's smart contracts-self-executing agreements hardcoded onto the ledger-can automate these workflows. When a media asset is purchased or licensed, a smart contract can instantly distribute the revenue among the co-creators, editors, and publishers according to pre-defined percentages. This eliminates the administrative overhead of

BENEFITS

Blockchain is not just a theoretical concept; it is already making waves in the industry. Proponents argue that blockchain can secure content provenance, eliminate rent-seeking intermediaries, protect journalists from state censorship, and build decentralized media ecosystems. In a decentralized journalism platform, the power is in the hands of the people-both journalists and readers. Other benefits of blockchain in journalism include the following [1,16]:

- *Authenticity:* In an era where "fake news" can be generated instantly and cloned websites can masquerade as reputable outlets, establishing the authenticity of a news story is paramount. Proving that a story or asset originated from a reputable news organization is paramount. Once an investigative report or document is committed to the blockchain ledger, it becomes permanently archived and globally accessible. Blockchain

accounting departments and ensures that journalists are compensated immediately and transparently.

- *Collaboration:* Blockchain not only ensures data integrity but also facilitates collaboration among journalists. By providing a secure and unalterable record of news events, blockchain fosters a collaborative environment where multiple parties can contribute to the creation and dissemination of accurate information.
- *Freedom of Speech:* Decentralization inherent in blockchain platforms safeguards freedom of speech. No central authority can censor or shut down a blockchain-based platform, allowing journalists to cover vital stories without fear of reprisal.

CHALLENGES

While the benefits of blockchain in journalism are profound, widespread adoption faces significant technological and cultural hurdles. The integration of blockchain into journalism faces significant technological, economic, and institutional challenges. Fake news, profit-driven reporting, media consolidation, censorship, scalability issues, energy consumption, lack of regulation, equipment costs, low awareness, and regulatory uncertainties are among the challenges that need careful consideration. Other challenges of blockchain in journalism include the following [1,16]:

- *Technical Challenges:* The primary obstacle to implementing blockchain in newsrooms is the fundamental architecture of distributed ledgers, which is governed by the Blockchain Trilemma. Coined by Ethereum co-founder Vitalik Buterin, the trilemma posits that a decentralized database can achieve only two of three core properties simultaneously: decentralization, security, and scalability.
- *Monetization Hurdles:* One of the most alluring promises of blockchain in journalism was the disintermediation of the media value chain. By cutting out rent-seeking intermediaries—such as programmatic ad networks, subscription aggregators, and social media platforms—blockchain was supposed to enable a direct, peer-to-peer “curator economy.” Through the deployment of custom utility tokens, platforms hoped to incentivize high-quality reporting, reward fact-checkers, and allow readers to purchase individual articles via low-cost micropayments.
- *Skepticism:* Many legacy publishers view blockchain with skepticism, associating it with the volatility and regulatory uncertainties of the broader cryptocurrency market. Blockchain is a tool for data integrity, not inherent truth. A blockchain can guarantee that a document has not been altered since it was uploaded, but it cannot determine whether the content of the document was true or false in the first place. This is known as the “Garbage In, Garbage Out” (GIGO) dilemma.
- *Scalability:* While blockchain provides data integrity, it suffers from scalability challenges. For journalism—an industry that relies high-throughput media files—scalability is non-negotiable. However, public, highly secure blockchains (such as Bitcoin or Ethereum) suffer from low transaction throughput and high latency. While private or permissioned blockchains offer higher scalability, they do so by sacrificing decentralization, essentially functioning as expensive, glorified databases that replicate the vulnerabilities of centralized systems.
- *Legacy Systems:* Legacy newsrooms operate on deeply entrenched content management systems, digital asset managers, and editorial workflows that are entirely incompatible with blockchain infrastructure. Bridging the gap between legacy IT and decentralized ledgers requires specialized middleware and highly scarce technical expertise.
- *Volatility:* The extreme volatility of the cryptocurrency market introduces unacceptable financial risks for news organizations. Journalistic operations require stable, predictable cash flows to pay salaries, fund investigative reporting, and cover legal fees. Denominating subscriptions, micro-donations, or advertising revenues in volatile tokens exposes fragile media outlets to systemic market shocks, rendering long-term budgeting virtually impossible.
- *Regulatory Tensions:* The core technical feature of blockchain—immutability—is also its greatest legal liability. Once data is written to a block and validated by the network, it cannot be altered, deleted, or unwound without compromising the cryptographic integrity of the entire chain. This permanence directly collides with modern privacy regulations, most notably the European Union’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The mathematical rigidity of blockchain clashes directly with the flexible, immediate, and human-centric nature of journalistic work. Many countries do not allow journalists to cover certain topics and punish them by shutting down publishing companies, withdrawing press credentials, and even imprisonment.

- *Lack of Regulation:* In a world where anyone with a smartphone can be a 'journalist,' maintaining the integrity of the profession is more challenging than ever. There is still no consensus on how to treat blockchain-based assets such as coins and NFTs, and what regulatory measures to apply to them. The absence of clear rules and standards makes it difficult to maintain an effective workflow.
- *Trust:* In today's fast-paced world, the trustworthiness of traditional media is facing a severe crisis. Misinformation, biased reporting, and a lack of transparency have eroded the confidence of the public in the news they consume. A fully public network will diminish trust-since any kind of computer, even a hacker's, can participate in the network and potentially commit fraud. In private blockchains the level of trust is increased but the network is more closed. The crises facing modern journalism are fundamentally social, political, and economic-not cryptographic. Rebuilding public trust and establishing sustainable business models will require human-centric solutions, ethical editorial standards, and robust institutional support, rather than the mechanical application of a decentralized ledger. The digital revolution has democratized the public square, yet it has simultaneously destabilized the structural pillars of journalism. Today, the profession faces a profound crisis of credibility and lack of trust.
- *Storage Limitations:* Blockchains are highly inefficient for storing large files like high-resolution videos or extensive document archives. Therefore, hybrid architectures must be utilized, where files are stored on decentralized storage networks, while only the cryptographic hashes are recorded on-chain.
- *Globalization:* Globalization and the need to cover an immense amount of news while competing with hundreds of publishers and media outlets creates great tension in the field of journalism.

FUTURE OF BLOCKCHAIN IN JOURNALISM

The future of blockchain in journalism extends beyond tools for verification and payments; it points toward entirely new organizational structures. The future is not a speculative utopia of tokenized news, but rather a practical infrastructure of verification and economic equity. As generative AI continues to blur the lines of reality, the value of information will increasingly depend on its certifiable origin. The relationship between AI and blockchain will define the future of digital media [1].

For journalists in the future who use public record requests for their stories, the proliferation of blockchain-secured public databases will potentially pose new challenges and opportunities to access the same records. Instead of submitting Freedom of Information requests, government blockchain overlays will need to be configured to provide differential access to citizens and the public at large, including reporters. A potentially new phase for blockchain applications will come from the increased adoption of proof-of-stake models [17]. Looking ahead, the evolution of blockchain in journalism is an exciting prospect. Innovations in consensus mechanisms, interoperability, and user-friendly interfaces are likely to shape the future of blockchain journalism, making it more accessible and efficient in rebuilding trust over time.

CONCLUSION

While blockchain is not a panacea for the structural declines of the media industry, it provides a foundational framework for establishing digital authenticity, protecting journalistic integrity, and fostering a more resilient, transparent, and democratic public sphere in the Web3 era. It offers a robust, cryptographically verifiable foundation for restoring journalistic integrity and financial autonomy in the digital age.

Blockchain technology has emerged as a beacon of hope for journalism. It is a mixture of technologies, and it can be used for different purposes. It is a technology to store data securely. Blockchain becomes useful when the data is used or recorded by a lot of people simultaneously, who also want to keep track of and secure all the edits made to the data without having a central database or authority do the storing, securing, and tracking all by itself. For those considering implementing blockchain in journalism, careful planning is crucial. Questions regarding the project's strategy, goals, budget, blockchain choice, and platform type must be addressed. More information on the integration of blockchain in journalism is available from the books in [18-21] and the following related journals:

- Blockchain
- IEEE Blockchain
- Human Resources Management and Services
- Global Journal of Human Resource Management
- International Journal of Human Resource Studies
- International Journal of Blockchain Technologies and Applications
- Journalism
- Journalism and Media

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Figure 1 The symbol of blockchain [2].

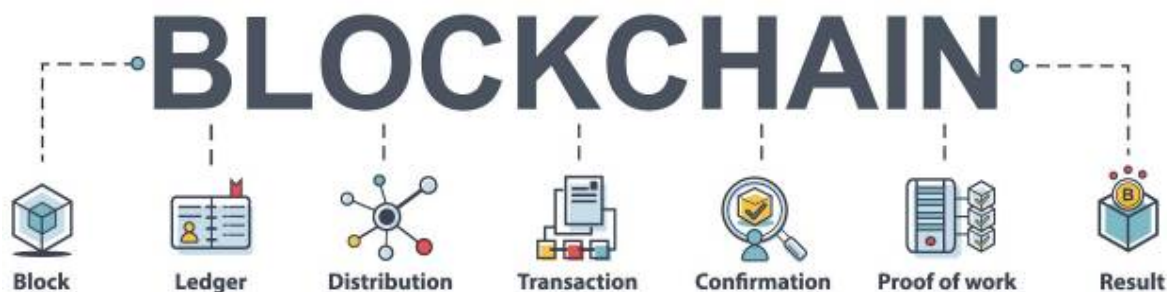


Figure 2 Different components of blockchain [6].

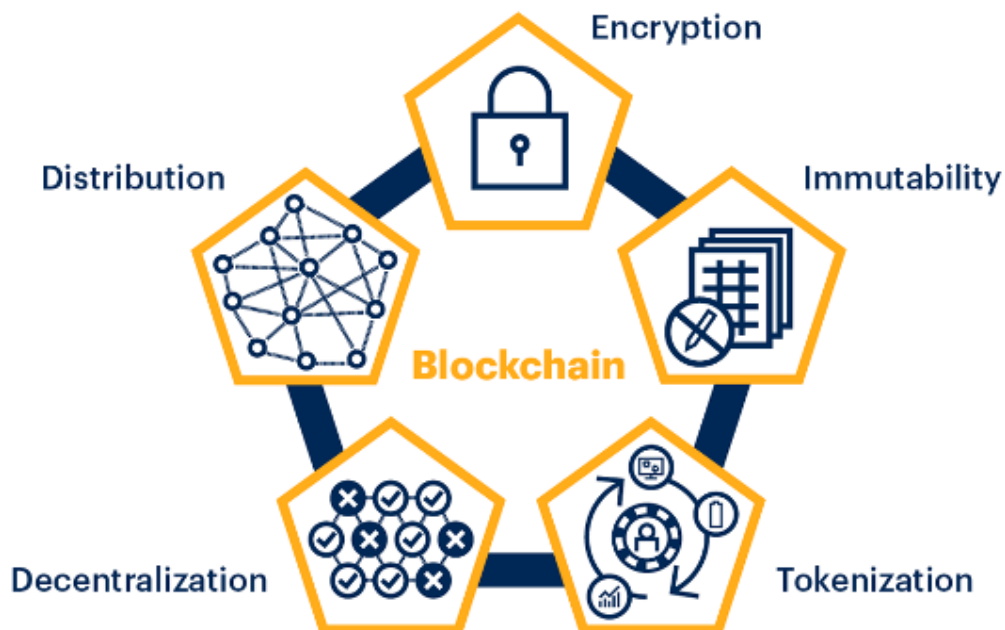


Figure 3 Five key elements of Blockchain [7].



Figure 4 Bitcoin [8].

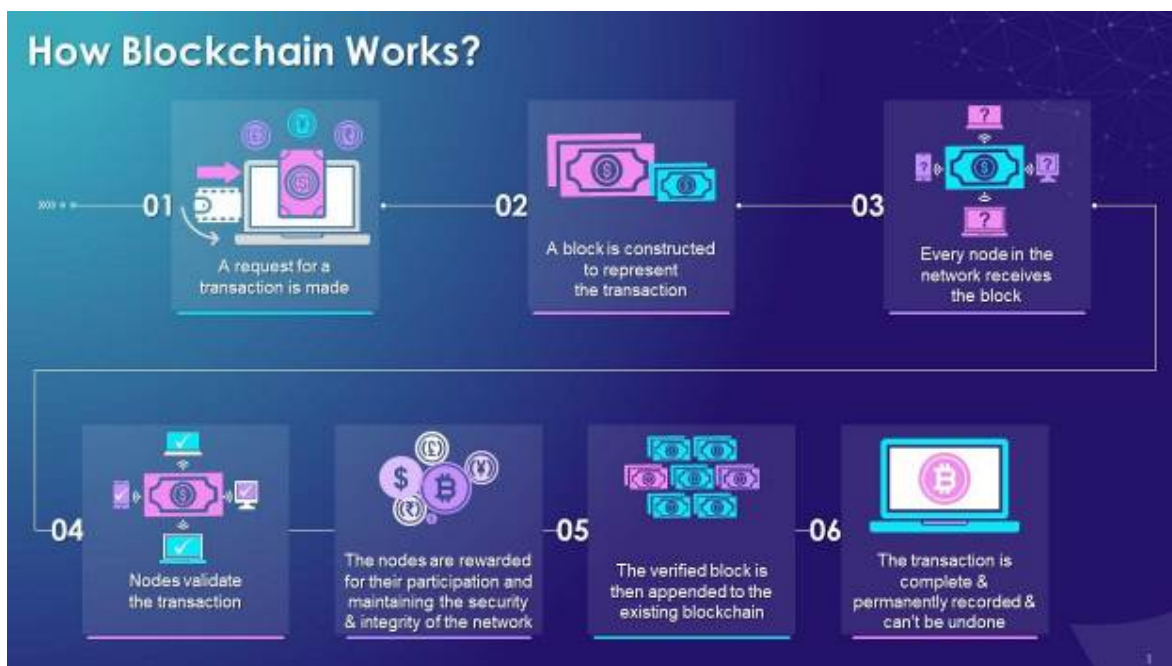


Figure 5 How blockchain works [9].

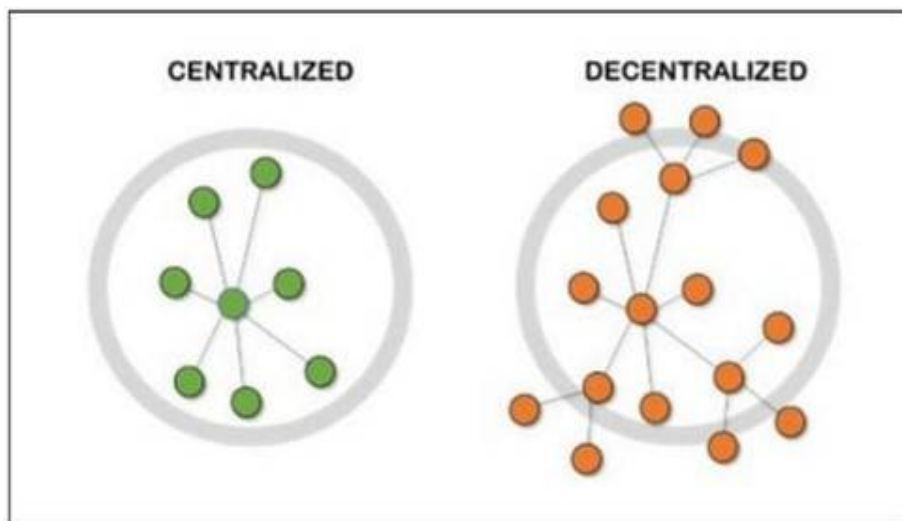


Figure 6 The decentralized property of blockchain [9].

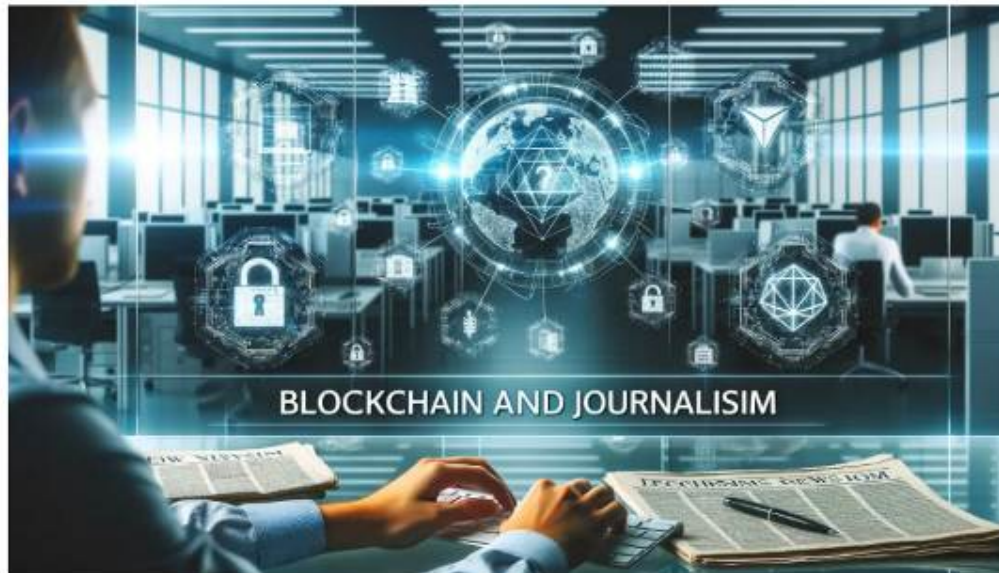


Figure 7 A representation of blockchain in journalism [12].

5 Things You Should Know About... Blockchain's Impact on News Media

- Blockchain can enhance journalism by ensuring the authenticity of information.
- It can combat misinformation by verifying sources and maintaining immutable records of articles.
- News organizations can build trust with audiences through transparent reporting practices.
- Blockchain can improve content monetization for journalists through micropayments.
- Understanding the intersection of blockchain and media can change how you consume news.



Figure 8 Five things on the impact of blockchain on news media [13].

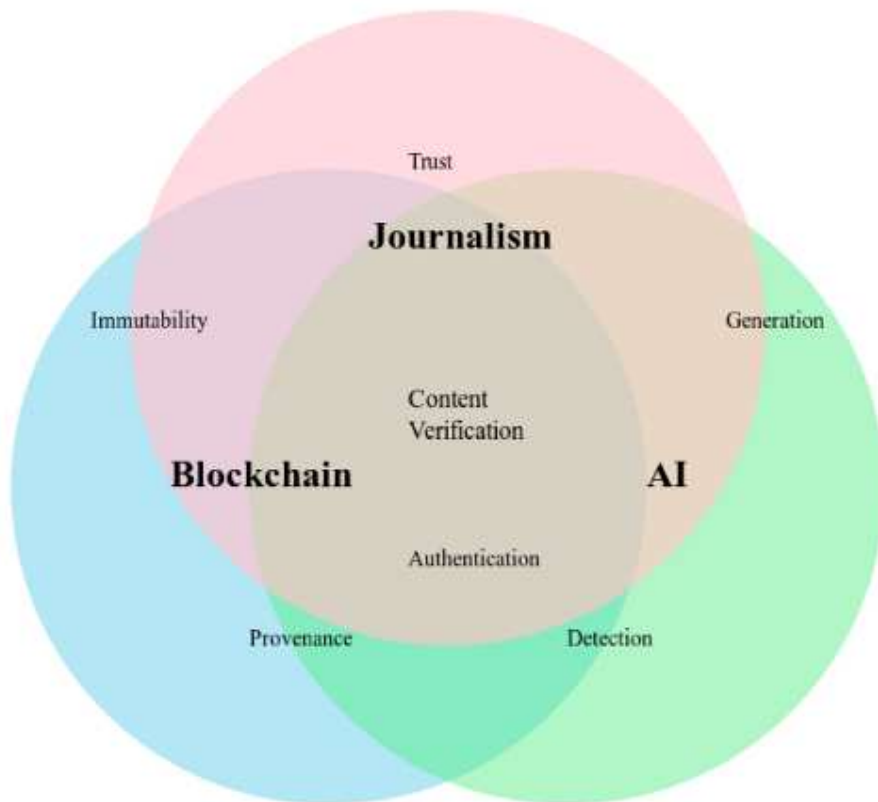


Figure 9 Some applications of blockchain in journalism [14].

