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The report D5.2 “Computer-Assisted Reporting (CAR) in Vlaanderen anno 2006” looks at how computer-assisted reporting techniques are taken up in journalistic newsgathering practice. Computer-assisted reporting (CAR) refers to the journalistic use of IT for online research and/or data analysis.

The starting assumption of this report is that encouraging computer-assisted reporting (CAR) may lead to more ‘primary journalism’ – journalism based on primary sources, original newsgathering and critical analysis. As the report is aimed at media professionals, researchers, journalism teachers and policy makers, who all have an interest in quality journalism in the digital era, we try to make clear to each of them *why* CAR is important in contemporary journalism. We point out a paradox in contemporary journalism: although journalists have never had it so easy to get access to information from a variety of sources all over the world, most of today’s news reporting is criticized for being too homogeneous and too much based on secondary sources such as press releases, news wires and content taken from other media. It goes without saying that CAR can not be seen as the panacea for journalism, but CAR skills may help journalists increase both their digital literacy and ‘numeracy’.

By defining computer-assisted reporting and describing the different CAR skills and techniques, we try to make clear *how* both the Internet route and the analytical route of CAR may lead to more ‘primary journalism’. Although CAR sounds like an anachronism, research shows that many journalists are still not familiar with the wide range of benefits of the computer and the Internet for newsgathering, online research and data analysis.

In a next chapter, we provide an overview of current initiatives to promote the use of CAR in journalism (with a particular focus on Flanders). We underline the pivotal role played by the American National Institute of Computer-Assisted Reporting (NICAR), that offers training and support to journalists. For Flanders, we can refer to the activities of journalists’ organisations like the Vereniging van Onderzoeksjournalisten (VVOJ) and Fonds Pascal Decroos voor Bijzondere Journalistiek, but also to the portal site Journalinks.be, that provides a lot of information, tips and tricks for CAR use in the newsroom. The report also looks at how the ideas surrounding CAR have found entrance in current media policy and journalism training programs in Flanders.

On the basis of this general state-of-the-art overview, we can conclude that in spite of the growing awareness of the importance of CAR for journalists among media professionals, researchers, journalism teachers and policy makers, CAR does not seem to be of central concern in the professional newsroom. Further research is needed to gain a better understanding of the reasons for the sluggish adoption of CAR in contemporary newsrooms. Furthermore, deeper insight is needed in the skill and competence requirements for journalists in the digital newsroom, and the position and role of CAR techniques in this broader picture.