



The Apple Watch offers “glances” – the latest step in the miniaturization of journalism. Smaller than a tweet, glances deliver content specific to the wearer’s needs at that moment. The trend will grow beyond Apple and transform the way we consume information, with eyewear, auto windshields and other personal, frequently viewed surfaces becoming screens for “small” data.

At the end of World War II, computers were room-sized things that you could walk into. Since then they have shrunk through the office appliance stage to the home desktop, then to the portable laptop, then to a device that would fit in your pocket. Now they are becoming something you wear. At each stage, computers have become physically closer to the user.

Meanwhile, data has grown at an exponential rate. Where early computers measured information in bytes, each representing a single character of text, data is now routinely measured in terabytes, each more than a trillion bytes. But our brainpower hasn’t increased. Concerns about limits for fossil fuels have led to predictions of a “peak oil” point, but in the end, no strategic resource is more valuable than our focused brainpower. Barring some dramatic enhancement to human cognition, we are faced with more information than our brains can process, beyond “peak attention.”



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@robertpmoran get to the point,
what are the main trends?



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@BrunswickReview ok – wearable
computing, twitter-like content,
personalized and tailored to location

At first blush, glance journalism seems to make the challenges of “post-peak attention” more acute by further splintering our focus. Highly localized, personal alerts might have the opposite effect, by pointing out the most relevant information. Glances could well complement, rather than subvert, longer-form articles, building greater demand for more relevant news.

These mini-stories could also facilitate a change to an image-driven, post-text society by employing small icons and photos, building on the way we now use emoji. Our brains process images faster and retain them longer than text, experts say, making them the perfect choice for a medium where every pixel counts.

Automation will play a huge role in making glance journalism happen in a timely, relevant way. Ken Schwencke, a journalist and programmer for the *Los Angeles Times*, is famous for writing a program that pulls relevant data from US Geological Survey earthquake alerts. Called Quakebot, his program “wrote” Schwencke’s breaking coverage in March 2014 of a 4.7 magnitude earthquake with an epicenter six miles from Beverly Hills. Automated coverage of weather, traffic, crime, business and sport is a natural fit for artificial intelligence.

For businesses, messages flashing on tiny screens could prove a distraction, but could also aid informed decision-making with more rapid updates on relevant topics. For external communications, it means both good and bad news will travel farther and faster. It also means consumers will be closer to their favorite brands with just-in-time, just-in-place content and offers. Watch this space.

SAYING IT WITH A GLANCE

- > Be your own publisher, driving short-form news to stakeholders
- > Use more images and infographics, tailored for small screens
- > Format corporate data for automation