

Analysing Digital Journalism

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Interviews

P. Calvet, D. Milián, S. Marcè, B. Kebbeh, O. Giró, P. Solernou, M. Ripoll, M. Zippo, M. Gironès, A. Sprouls, T. Boettcher, J. Bingham, J. Vahtera, P. Clery-Merlin, F. Vidal, P. López, M. Pratdesaba, J. Gual, I. Poza, L. Piñar, G. Masó, C. Soler, A. Vidal, E. Michalek, F. García, M. Rits, S. Bhundia, E. Jayson, R. Browne, B. Menéndez, J. Uhl, I. Wollek, I. Topadze, P. Stateva

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Àgata Guinó, attached director of TOTSantCugat:
“The TOT it’s a very strong brand. It’s more than just
a newspaper”

Pau Calmet i Cardona

TOTSantCugat is the reference newspaper in Sant Cugat (Catalonia). With 120,000 unique readers per month (more than the city's population), the newspaper has faced different contexts that have led to a change in the way of conceiving the media.

In this interview we are going to talk to Àgata Guinó, deputy director of TOTSantCugat and responsible for social networks of TOTgroup, on different challenges and opportunities that the newspaper has had to face.

What challenges arose from the introduction of the digital world? What were the solutions? Have any problems been maintained?

The TOTSantCugat opened its website in 2011. One of the problematics that arose was to combine the newsroom and content of the paper (which at that time had two media, the TOTSantCugat and the Diari de Sant Cugat) with the new digital media. The newsroom and also the journalists, that were used to making news

not immediate and focused mainly on the written press, had to gain agility in order to keep the rhythm. One of the solutions was to hire me because I had the notion of making videos and thus be able to nourish the digital medium. Slowly, the newsroom began to adapt with the schedules since in the web the information does not stop so we had to adapt schedules to include the maximum of day time (from 6 in the morning to 11 at night in case something happened).

Have media related to the local world found it more difficult to adapt to the digital environment than at the state level?

Yes, for a matter of resources. The newsrooms of national newspapers have more newsrooms also have different teams that are exclusively dedicated to certain areas such as social networks (one person per network). In addition, they have workers who are exclusively dedicated to content "en

blau" which is content that is based on clickbait giving them an advantage in the digital format.

Do you think that the use of social networks has had a positive impact on your media?

We have many followers in our main networks (instagram, facebook and twitter) apart from whatsapp where we have 7000 users, 7000 users who have told us they want our news updated. So yes, social networks have had a positive effect since people follow us a lot. That's due TOT is a very powerful brand. In fact, the website was prior to the website of the public newspaper "cugat.cat" and we exceed them by 50-60% of audience each month. The brand has helped people to follow us in all the social networks and incentive the diffusion. Respect negative things, first of all people often slander competition. For example, the city council reports something through networks that before you could report it first (because it was interested in it going out to the TOT first and now the council publishes it first). You also have to be careful because if you do something wrong through social networks (such as spelling mistakes) it can generate criticism or that people defame you.

Where do readers come from in the digital format? There is influence of social networks?

The TOT digital audience comes mostly direct, which is an anomaly in digital media. Therefore, the brand has more influence than social networks (and its dissemination). That's good because it means that people want to be informed by the TOT. For them it is not the same from where they receive the news, people follows the TOT. The tot["all"] equals quality.

What criteria do we use to confirm the veracity and quality of the news in a context where the news is instantaneous?

We use the same criteria as always, the contrasting of sources and the journalistic criteria. Journalists know how to write a story and what is the "ABC" of journalism.

Did old newspaper readers respond well to the digital section?

We have detected that there are people who report only by digital and vice versa. Young people are usually informed on social media and the digital version. We have a WhatsApp channel where we publish the latest news and additional information and

we have realized that older people who have a smartphone, as they already use WhatsApp before and are familiarized with the application, make use of this channel. However, there is still people who depend on the weekly publications to find out the news, that's why it is so important that in Sant Cugat the TOT is still published for those people who do not read the digital (there are still a large number). In conclusion, there are people who have adapted and people who have not.

Is there a difference between the most popular sections of the digital format compared to the physical format?

It may be, some do, but they complement each other. There are usually no big changes between formats. As the public between the formats is different (in the case of the paper format of older people), the lobbies and entities of Sant Cugat place a lot of value on paper.

How is the TOTSantCugat financed, what is its business model?

The main source of TOT income is advertising. We receive grants like all media and also grants from the Gen-

eralitat due the use of catalan. advertising comes mainly from both local businesses and institutions such as political parties, the city council and cultural entities.

Is advertising, the basis of TOT's business model, different in digital format and physical format?

No. Both companies and institutions want to be in both formats.

"TOT is a very powerful brand. Every one wants to appear on it"

Àgata Guinó

Is the business model of the TOT group (present in Sant Cugat, Rubí and Cerdanyola) the same in all locations or are there variations?

There are variations. In the case of TOT Rubí, there is no digital format. The TOTCerdanyola is conceived in the image of the TOTSantCugat although it is not at the level of the TOTSantCugat because the cities are very different. First, because Sant Cugat has more inhabitants. Second by

the social, political and economic fabric of Sant Cugat which is exceptional and generates by itself a lot of news.

Do readers usually participate and create content in the TOT? What mechanisms does the TOT have to enable the participation of the people?

Readers participate a lot. However, as Sant Cugat has grown a lot with new peripheral neighborhoods, there are people who do not participate in all this social life and the TOT acts as a tool for social cohesion. In fact, there are people who come to live who say that they have been told that to find out the news of Sant Cugat in the TOT, that is, the TOT is a reference in the city. Regarding the mechanisms, the main ways of interacting with the readers of the TOT are the letters of the readers as well as the photo complaints (which enjoy social prominence). In fact, there are citizens who think that we are one more institution of the city council and they demand things from us.

Finally, speaking of the most recent challenge, what impact has the Covid crisis had on the TOT?

The coronavirus has affected the newspaper in different ways. In the first place, it has increased the number of readers until reaching maximums. This is due, among other things, to the fact that local news related to the issue of covid (such as interviews with people who have experienced it, vaccine information...) began to be interesting outside the municipality reinforced by the use of social media.

In fact, in March 2020 (in the middle of Covid crisis) we reached 230,000 unique readers. However, and in a paradoxical way, revenues have decreased due to the decrease in demand for advertisements (the main source of income for the medium) due to the economic situation.

How the way of working has changed due Covid?

We had to close the newsroom and apply teleworking which was the definitive push to make the switch to cloud computing. During the quarantine TOTsantCugat never stopped posting.

Fernando Aragón, editor-in-chief of *El Orden Mundial*: “The quality of a media is non-negotiable”

David Milián & Sergi Marcè

Fernando Arancón is 29 years old, and he has been the editor in chief of *El Orden Mundial* since 2012. It started at the university as a hobby, but it became more serious 5 years later, when they became one of the first Spanish media to launch a subscription method. Nowadays it is a reference medium about international information in our country and it has more than 3.000 subscribers. He describes this achievement as a “miracle”, because he admits that they landed in this world “without having a clue of anything”.

Arancón is also very proud about the satisfactory evolution that international news has experienced in Spain in recent years. He claims that the popularity of the foreign news has been growing a lot and they have taken a great advantage of it.

How would you define *El Orden Mundial*?

As our founding motto says, we are a means of analysis, informative and independent. We don't consider that we do journalism, but analysis: we don't explain the facts themselves,

but why they happen and what's behind them. We are an informative medium because we tell the complex in a simple way for the public. And we consider ourselves independent in that we seek not to rely on a single source of income, unlike what has happened to other media, which have become enslaved to practices that deviate from their editorial criteria.

When is the media born?

It was born in 2012 as a blog, a crappy thing. We were studying at university, and it was our hobby. At that time, there were many things going on in the world – the Arab Spring, the Ukrainian War, the rise of national populism in Europe and the US – that were not being counted well in Spain: we were too focused on our crises.

When do you start taking it more seriously?

We grew slowly and became professional at the end of 2017, when it was already consuming us as much time as a normal job. We did it through the subscription. We were among the first

in Spain to use this method, following the example of referents in Europe and the USA.

Was it difficult to become a viable media?

Becoming viable was like giving birth, very difficult. The beginning was very complicated because we didn't have any money of our own to invest. We had to do a crowdfunding to make it through the first year. We succeeded and after a few more months we were economically viable. Today we still are, and this is brutal because most of the media in Spain find the opposite. Many of the big ones are in deficit and are compensated because they are very influential.

Considering your international theme, how hard is it to attract new subscribers?

It's complicated, but it's about consistency and getting to know your audience well. The challenge is not to attract new subscribers, but to retain them. Readers have the same experience as everyone else with the gym: there are a lot of people who sign up for the first time, but then get tired and quit.

What professional profile works in El Orden Mundial?

We differentiate the in-house part of the contributors who write the articles. We only have in-house members on our payroll, technical profiles who are in charge of design, marketing and editing: the heart of the medium. We still don't have the muscle to have a team of 40 or 50 people biting all day. The articles are written by freelancers of all kinds. Journalists, political scientists, historians, sociologists, etc. collaborate.

What is most important to you as a media?

The quality of a media is non-negotiable. Quality is the future because people demand it. The future of media doesn't go through misleading or flashy headlines: even if people click, they notice when you sell them shit. People want to get informed and, in the end, they get tired of seeing shit.

How do you achieve this quality in El Orden Mundial?

A quality media should be an honest one. I don't expect readers to think what I do, or what the contributors write in the middle. I disagree with many of the conclusions written in El Orden Mundial, but as long as they are well argued I, as a reader, will buy them.

It's been 9 years since you started the project and the information paradigm has evolved a lot, especially on the Internet. Knowing that you are a digital medium, how have you adapted to this change?

I don't think we've changed that much at the level of communication because we were born on the Internet. But I do believe that there are certain tendencies where some major media are getting lost. Subscriber newsletters are an example of this. I understand social media as a way to connect with your community, and many mainstream media newsletters are pub-newsletters, where they offer any kind of articles to add visitors.

What use do you give to newsletters?

We bet on newsletters with quality content and try to convey value to the subscriber. We send one every Sunday, where we explain why certain articles have been made and attach the highlights of the week. In addition, every month we send another newsletter where we tell you what we have done this month in the medium (improvements, new agreements, new releases...). It's not just about dropping a bunch of articles and seeing if they read them.

In addition to newsletters, how is your relationship with the audience?

We try to cultivate it a lot because it is important to keep the connection with your people. They give you clues as to what they want and what they don't want and this helps us. Naturalizing the relationship between media and readers in a much more horizontal way is positive. We come from an absolutely vertical model where the newspaper publishes and the reader reads it, but it is an obsolete relationship and only reinforces the discredit of the media.

Members of The World Order have been appearing more and more in traditional media as collaborators. Is it a cause or a consequence of your growth as a medium?

Both. The media are calling us because they need experts to speak to them properly about international issues, which are of increasing interest. But the appearance in them has also helped us grow because it has opened us up to new audiences, especially older people who are farther away from the digital world.

Are you born with the intention of differentiating yourself from traditional media?

We knew what we didn't want to do. There were things that we liked and incorporated, but there were other

things that personally horrified me. When we were born, people were already distrusting the media because they were dishonest and savagely practiced clickbait and other techniques. We were very clear that the public wanted to pay if they were treated like adults and with valuable pieces. And so we did.

Have you ever considered adapting your medium to a physical medium?

For me the role is dead. One only has to look at the figures for newspaper circulation in Spain: they are tending to zero. We haven't thought about it because it's a money hole. Joining a car that's dying seems stupid to me.

How do you see the future of the medium?

We have pretty good prospects. Right now we have 3,000 subscribers and we want to reach 4,000 by next summer, and 5,000 by 2023. I'm pretty optimistic about the future of the media because the subscription system is very stable: it's very complicated for thousands of people to leave from one day to the next. Moreover, people continue to demand international; it is not a passing fad.

Daniel Cortés, *La Ràdio Capital*: “We’ve had to work for many years to get some credibility”

Binta Kebbeh



Daniel Cortés speaking in the studio of La Ràdio Capital

Daniel Cortés, head of the news team at La Ràdio Capital, outlines all the journalistic strategies of his media. They have become a traditional medium to a fully digital media, applying new multimedia content, reducing

hypertext, working on transparency and, above all, credibility for its users. The process of converting the traditional medium to a completely online medium is the key to this interview.

What is Radio Capital?

It is a digital media of radio and writing. It is a digital radio from the Baix Empordà based in Palafrugell (Catalonia). We are a hundred percent province-based media with the highest professional aspirations and with the goal of not being in a format that all province radios follow, but with the aim of reaching many more people and with many more channels. We also want to have radio programs that are very similar to what they do on big radios and follow digital strategies from a local and province level. We want to follow strategies that can be assimilated to other larger media.

When was it founded?

I should distinguish two things: first, in terms of radio, it was founded 20 years ago, but then we launched the digital media model around five or six years ago. We are a third sector FM radio, and we were interested in a fully digitalized media.

You have gone from being a traditional medium to a digital medium. How have you adapted to this new digitalized innovation?

As for news writing, it was already born digital. As news writing and radio we have

never been analog, so from a starting point, we took on all the digital language codes and combined them with radio. So, we all work with networking and we have a studio, but everyone works with networking from home. The web system is WordPress, but we have been adding extras to the whole digital system, apart from the web; such as starting with the newsletter and others. We started working with social networks like Twitter and Facebook, but then we joined Instagram and Tik Tok by making short videos like reels. We have also joined Telegram. Now, the last thing we're doing and setting up is a system for sending news by WhatsApp. We are doing this because we are noticing that Facebook has a low user interaction.

How do you define your audience that listens to you the most and reads your news?

The public that read our news are people from the Baix Empordà or people who have a relationship with it. There are a lot of people who spend the summer in the Baix Empordà or work there, so they stay to watch the news here. But above all, our public is people from the lower Empordà interested in the news of what is happening here.

There are also people who have second homes there. Therefore, this

includes a wide variety of audiences. The ages, however, are diverse, depending on the characteristics and the interests of people, also education is an important factor. It is expected that people in their 18s and 20s wouldn't be interested in the local information, but what we do is go find them, as I told you, on Instagram, Whatsapp, tik tok, and so on.

So do you adapt to the needs of the audience you want to focus on?

This is what everyone aspires to, but it is very difficult for a medium like us in the third sector, that is, an associative medium. It's a matter of looking and knowing what news the public likes best.

What writing model do you have?

Being a digital media we try to use direct language, without subordinate phrases and with clear headlines. In addition, we also write on the radio that we apply the same rules.

Is your content completely free?

Yes

Have you considered applying some payment methods to a certain content?

We considered it during the lockdown. We were not thinking of a pay-

ment method, but of a system of partners who can selflessly contribute so that they offer us a series of benefits or privileges, but not when it comes to consuming information. But, we thought of it for users who want to receive information through Newsletters, talks, book presentations.

Speaking of Covid 19: has the pandemic affected the funding of the medium?

We are a non-profit medium. So, the small revenue we make from advertising is used to keep the radio running. Therefore, no one who collaborates in it has the desire to make money out of it. This has given us some security. This gave us the ability to have all the information. It includes privacy policy, editorial policy, diversity policy and the code of ethics for digital media.

Do you consider yourself a transparent medium?

Yes. We try to make all the information available to our users.

If there is an error in a published piece of news, do you tend to report the error or just correct it without reporting it?

It depends on the extent of the error. For example, if we want to headline "La Bisbal Market will return to the streets wide this November" and headline "La Bisbal Market will climb

to where it is" in this case, we will communicate. In addition, we will not only post the error, but we will often post the previous version of the news item with the current version reporting the error we made. However, if it is a minimal error such as a date that is within the text, then we change it without warning, as long as we assess the extent of the error. Aside from that, if there aren't a lot of people who haven't been able to see it, we think it's a nonsense to tweet for something insignificant.

To make advance notices, how to share clues about the news you will cover?

We often say it directly. For example, if there is a demonstration on Instagram we explain it there. But it always depends on the topic and the scope. In local communication, there may not be as many acts as these. It's not something we have as a rule. Sometimes when we have to cover a fair or any other event, because we previously posted on the topics warning that users can follow them through our websites. If it's relevant enough and people are expecting it, yes we do.

Do you have a section on your website where users can provide suggestions or complaints about your writing or radio programs?

We have a section where users can contact us directly. What we don't have are open comments on the web. Concerning social networks, such as Instagram or Twitter. Do you tend to respond to your users' comments? Do you have an interaction with your users?

We like to create community and we tend to do it. We have a lot of people on Twitter, Facebook and especially Instagram where they tell us things and sometimes users need to expand the information. In this case, we often respond as long as the comments are within the ethical margin and are not destructive comments.

Do users find it easy to contact journalists?

No. When we post a news item, we do not post or set up our emails. We don't have it as a regular thing either and we would surely do it.

Do you tend to post the profiles of people you need to interview? Why?

We don't tend to do that. It is not part of our work policy.

Do you tend to post the profiles of people you need to interview? Why?

We don't tend to do that. It is not part of our work policy either.

Do users show a lot of interest in your digital content?

We have a lot of answers and a lot of interest via email. The interaction in the Newsletter has surprised us a lot. Besides, there is a very high click-through rate in the newsletter and thanks to that, many people respond to our emails. On Twitter there are more or less serious reactions, perhaps not so much thoughtful ones. But we do notice a lot of reflections through the mail.

Faced with the interaction, you have noticed that your participants are trying to increase their point of view in relation to the news you publish. Do they usually make constructive criticism or destructive criticism?

We are not criticized so much for the content we publish, but for the facts. We receive no criticism from the journalistic base.

Did you receive insults in some comments?

We have never been insulted, but the protagonists of the news, yes.

Being a completely online media, are you afraid that your content will have less credibility?

As a local media, or media that do the same information as us with the same inspiration, as El Diari de Girona and Punt Avui, being two media with a lot of credibilities, this helps us to be a credible medium as we deal with similar issues.

Still, we did have to work harder on credibility. Being a radio gives us a status that the native digital media do have to work much harder. We have had to work for many years to gain some credibility, and many times we do notice that we are within this dynamic of digital media that may not have as much credibility as being digital natives. Although sometimes I think this is going to be less, since young people no longer buy newspapers and therefore already take for granted that the media is all digital. But being a radio and newsroom has given us some credibility.

Why do you think users tend to not trust online content?

Because there are so many types, it's hard to say. Before people would go to the newsstand and from the five newspapers there, they would choose their trend; but right now there is more content; perhaps people are not clear what the most serious medium is. In our case, when someone sees a news story about Palafrugell or Sarrià, it is very easy for them to identify us, the Diari de Girona, the Punt

Avui, or the Costa Brava media. Perhaps in this sense, we are saved from this mistrust by being a communication of proximity.

Do you work with different sections?

In a medium like ours, it doesn't make so much sense to make sections but to make the news by town. If one day we divide it into sections we would do it into villages.

How do you summarize digital media innovation?

We work with more visual formats, we try to do things directly through networks, videos, maps, or graphics.

Eloi Latorre, promoter of *La Directa*:

“There is a lot of low-quality journalism online, but this kind of media has its days numbered”

Olma Giró, Pol Solernou, Maria Ripoll

A small group of people came together 15 years ago to create a project where they could play an active role in society when it comes to social injustices and the promotion of change, but most importantly, to keep people informed about all that was happening around them with an interpretive and yet professional point of view. This is how *La Directa* was born, a modest - but yet renowned - progressive catalan magazine that promotes slow-journalism amongst many other social values that they share with their subscribers.

Eloi Latorre is one of the twelve persons behind this project since its beginning, and now he is the current Digital Edition Coordinator of the magazine and the Culture Section Coordinator of the printed magazine. In the digital edition of the magazine he is in charge of closely following all the content that the writers and collaborators prepare, then he edits, publishes and spreads the content through the social media of the magazine. He often writes his own pieces

too, which lately have been mostly cultural, such as his very last article “Gramenet, mud’s memory”¹ -original title: “Gramenet, memòria del fang” -, or one of the articles he is most proud of: “Bread, land, freedom, constructivism and ‘soleares’” [“Pa, terra, llibertat, constructivisme i ‘soleares’”].

How did *La Directa* start and how was the digitalization process?

La Directa is a project that was born with the idea of being a weekly paper in 2006. Curiously, it wouldn't have been viable to do this project anytime later because even when we did it, it was quite outdated. After all, the printed press crisis had already started by then. For a few years, it was a printed weekly magazine without a web page. In 2012 a website was made but it only collected content from the physical magazine. In 2014, after an internal debate assembly process, we decided to make a reorganization that made the magazine into a fortnight with much more non-

temporal themes, and we decided to start a digital daily update.

How was the media funded?

The printed magazine is the basis and economic solvency of the project. It's the brand of *La Directa*. Currently, it has 3,500 subscribers who pay 80-85 euros per year, which is 80% of the budget. There is also some advertising -banner digital edition and paper. The thing is that advertising is defined in the statutes, it cannot surpass the 10% of the annual budget -and yet it never reaches that point-. We also have a list of delimitations within the advertising, for example, we do not accept advertisements of companies involved in the exploitation of workers or that are in the Ibex 35.

What we do publish is advertising that is usually owned by the town hall or campaigns of initiatives that contribute to social transformation. I must say that we have an adjusted budget.

How many people work in *La Directa*?

La Directa is formed by a fixed staff of twelve people and a large group of collaborators. As for the fixed staff, four people work in the digital edition, one is the photography coordinator, one other is the design coordinator, one is the editor of paper magazine, one the corrector, another one

is in charge of internal and external broadcast, one administrates subscribers, and one person is working from the Valencian country, where we have an important amount of collaborators.

As far as collaborators are concerned, *La Directa* was born as an absolutely militant project, and there are many of them: over 100 people.

La Directa is funded mostly by the subscribers, but the people who believe in the media and put their efforts to make it work are extremely important for the magazine.

What role does social media play?

For us, social media is very important, but we also have the feeling that we have emerged in an out-of-time model, old and anachronistic. We've had this impression in all the steps that we've made: when we first started with the magazine, when we launched the digital format, and also with networks.

In 2015, we started with Twitter and Facebook, but now it's been about three years since we've been using mostly Instagram -we used it a lot to spread activities we do beyond our publications-. But we've always had the feeling of being late, for example, we don't have a community manager, we do the social media management altogether, always following the style-book, but there isn't a single criterion, so now we have an internal debate

about whether or not to hire a person dedicated exclusively to networks who will look at the impact they have on them. The problem is always linked to budgetary reasons.

Unlike other digital ones, which is a great advantage, the number of visits has never been a decisive criterion for us. We have never stopped publishing a subject just because perhaps it would not have many visits.

We are not dependent on visits, because fortunately, we depend on subscriptions.

Javier Díaz-Noci talks about the clickbait in his article *The life of news and the wealth of media companies in the digital world: Reader revenues and professional practices in a post-COVID world*³, he says that “One of the most obvious impacts, which maybe the adoption of business models or media based on the readers’ revenues is changing, is the obsession on the metrics based on the single user and, therefore, on practices such as the clickbait”.

Do you think that what Díaz-Noci refers to is an inevitable consequence of the competitiveness in the digitalization of journalism?

I would like to believe this is not inevitable. At *La Directa* we stick to professionalism and rigorousness in-

stead of sensationalism. As a journalist it’s very gratifying not having to think about a striking headline and instead, applying the journalistic criterion. We don’t search for clickbait headlines to trick people into clicking and reading our articles. If we did, our readers would have the feeling that the media has failed you in many ways, for example, because the journalist hasn’t done his job contrasting facts. There is a lot of low-quality journalism in the digital world, but this kind of media has its days numbered. However, and even though the fact that I do think that there is a tendency to do higher-quality journalism, there are also those who play both cards: quality content and content for visits, so they opt for a hybrid model.

Could the loss of jobs due to the print newspaper crisis be compensated in any way by the creation of jobs in digital media?

Well, we might be living in a cocoon here in *La Directa*, because no one has lost their job since we started. All 12 workers have been members of a cooperative from 2016 on with a mixed model: work cooperative and then consumer cooperative (like other companies outside of the journalism world such as Abacus). Since the team was created, the staff has never been cut. Some people have left by their own choice, but they have been replaced.

Do you think that the lack of digital knowledge of your generation affected your view and strategy in *La Directa*?

Well, when I was born we did not have all of that. Surely when it comes to the new generations there is a different point of view, much more in favor of digital media I guess. Actually, at *La Directa* we have begun to have a debate thinking about the future and we wonder if in 20 years we will be able to maintain a project that relies on a paper magazine. Reading routines have changed a lot, millennials no longer have the reading culture they had before, but, as always, some are more adapted and those who aren't as much. Obviously, this is something that worries us, even though our readers tend to be subscribers from day one, we need to keep thinking about the future and try to consider other ways to attract younger readers.

What makes the readers subscribe to a newspaper? What motivates the willingness to pay for information? A good marketing strategy? A good economic approach?

In our case, we are convinced that it has a lot to do with the affinity that readers have to our brand, which has been consolidated through the years.

People remain faithful due to the credibility and values it attributes to the brand of *La Directa*, much more than the specific and individual contents we publish. We believe that people subscribe because they believe in the project and want us to keep on going. Yes, when we publish a good research, maybe once or twice a year, we do a good dissemination campaign, and we see that there are significant increases in subscriptions, but aside from this it is usually out of affinity with the ideology and willingness to follow the project.

In a digital age characterized by interactivity between audience and journalists, what would be the keys to make a healthy and productive relationship between them?

The first answer that comes to mind is that I would prefer that the answer is not on Twitter, although most of the time it depends on things like that. You never know what to do with Twitter so that conversations can be conducted in the most professional way possible. What is more, we get very nervous when the criticism on Twitter begins. We doubt about giving answers as "*Directa*", although we know for sure that it is best not to answer and not to start a debate involving the magazine's reputation. On the other hand, it's okay to receive feedback on the content. We post because we

don't think the interactivity is negative, but it's always complicated. Networks sometimes turn interactivity into a public spectacle, and that is why we prefer to send private messages, have calls, send emails... Because the fact that everyone can see it all leads to some kind of insanity. It is much better for us, if someone has something to tell us about an article, to do it privately. So in order to have a healthy communication, for us it would be key to avoid falling into public exhibitionism.

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Ryan Hudgins, news editor of *The Collegian*: “Twitter is an innovation that has changed the industry”

Morgan Zippo and Marc Gironès

Digital journalism has been gaining importance in recent years, ahead of what has been traditional journalism. Taking advantage of this boom, we had the pleasure of being able to interview Ryan (20), born and raised in Chicago, is the news editor of the Collegian (online media) at University of Richmond in the United States. Studying journalism and leadership studies, Ryan worked in a magazine in Chicago for a year and a half, in January 2021 it will be one year since she started as news editor and student run on campus newspaper. She has a major role inside the newspaper where she has a news staff of 20 writers and assigns them stories. She also edits and follows stories from pitch to finished and published product. Moreover, Ryan often writes her own stories and assists the editor and chief with her needs. It is known that journalism has a complex definition but “conveying accurate and pertinent information to community members in order for them to make informed decisions as citizens” is how Ryan defines it. Finally, she also explained to us the differences between working in an online medium and a

traditional one that we will see throughout the interview.

Business model of media organization

Q: After hearing about your organization, we are interested in learning more about how you collaborate with your colleagues. Can you describe how you interact with those below you?

A: The students who work below me are the newswriting staff. It is very important to get the new writers accustomed to the Collegian’s guidelines and get them all writing in the same style. Making sure everyone knows the guidelines and writes in the same style helps to minimize the amount of edits I have to make later. I also ensure that we have a welcoming environment and everyone understands that they can still make mistakes. My intention is to prepare the staff for the real world. One thing that can be challenging is making sure everyone is meeting the deadlines for their articles. It is often hard to create a balance between writers not feeling

overwhelmed and meeting deadlines.

How do you normally interact with your superior?

We are normally in constant communication. I ask her a ton of questions or ask her for advice. I'm usually asking whether we should pursue a story that was suggested or get her input on if the story has hit a dead end. This will usually happen when one of our sources won't talk. The editor and chief also serves as the final edit for all of the stories after I look over them.

It seems like you have a really good system going with your team and you guys interact well to get the job done. Do you think there is anything you would change about the cooperation between the people you work with?

I think the only thing that is difficult sometimes is how complicated it can get when deciding who has the final say. This is especially apparent when everyone disagrees on edits or whether or not to pursue a certain story. I wouldn't want us to not have healthy disagreements, but sometimes the gray area on who should decide the outcome can be problematic.

That definitely seems like it could lead to some complicated situations. It would be interesting to

think about whether using consumers' opinions could help with this issue. Do you ever interact with any active readers?

Since the Collegian isn't opinion based I don't usually take criticism from a reader into account when deciding whether or not I should change a story. However, since we are a pretty small organization, we rely heavily on news tips, so I do interact with readers in that regard. It is extremely important to get news tips so we can decide what people want us to report about on campus.

How do you think technology has influenced how you do your job? Are there any major innovations that stick out to you?

In general I think that technology has changed the industry tremendously. Both of the newspapers I worked for were print based up until 10 years ago when they became completely digital. I think Twitter is definitely a major innovation that has really changed the industry. You can be concise and quickly get 50 words out about what is going on in the news, opposed to reading an article online or even getting a newspaper printed.

Do you think that twitter in general is helpful or harmful to journalism?

I believe that Twitter is more beneficial for consumers because it is a quick way to get information for free.

But for journalists, this fast information may turn people away from long articles or news that requires a paywall. I do think that it is important for twitter to flag tweets that may be spreading false information, like they have done with Donald Trump. This is definitely something that helps twitter become more of a reliable way to consume news.

Speaking of paywalls, when dealing with a business model, financing is a key issue. Do you believe that a paywall or subscription will ever be needed or beneficial to use in the Collegian?

I don't think so. The Collegian is the only way that students can get information about what current events are happening on campus, and it receives money from the University of Richmond to keep operations running.

Digital Media's influence

What is your opinion of how digital media has affected journalism? Advantages and disadvantages?

The main advantage is that you don't have to wait till the next day to consume news. It is at your fingertips, like you can access it whenever you want from anywhere. And the disadvantage for journalists, is that there is no structure or set time of when you are reporting because like many years ago, newsrooms would cut off

at a certain deadline but now you can publish an article at any hour of the day.

Do you think digital media can eclipse (replace) lifelong media?

Yeah, I definitely do, sooner than later. I remember in my childhood I would see a lot of people carrying around the newspaper, but now I never do. Even my parents always used to have the newspaper but now they mostly consume news on their iPads. So, I assume this will also happen with younger generations.

In your opinion, what kind of medium do you prefer as a worker? And as a consumer?

Being able to be in both types of mediums, I prefer the print based as a worker. It is more rewarding to hold something that you have produced instead of just clicking a link. On the other hand, as a consumer, I prefer digital. You can consume news at any time and links make it easier to follow up stories and get more information.

Strategies, transparency, trust, objectivity, and other journalistic values

We have talked a lot about how technology has influenced the evolution of journalism previously. With the appearance of digital media, do you think that the reliability of news has been lost?

Yes I do think a lot of the reliability has been lost. There is such a push to be the first ones to publish a story that fact checking and making sure sources are credible can go out the window.

Yes, this is definitely a flaw of getting information out so fast. Thinking about the positives of digital journalism, do you think that with the evolution of online media, young people are more interested in the news or anything around them?

I do, because apps like snapchat allow consumers to access the daily mail or other news outlets, giving more access to current events. I use snapchat to read the daily mail almost every morning.

Do you believe that you are transparent (honest about what you are writing about and how you are writing about it) with your audience?

Yes, I strive to be transparent and honest with readers of the Collegian, and any media I am working on. I believe that it is really important as a journalist to write about both sides of a story. We always try to get a source that disagrees with our main source to allow readers to see both arguments.

Since you do believe yourself to be transparent when writing, do you

think that this desire for transparency is in any way out of concern with self-promotion or marketing? This is often more of a concern in big companies.

I think it is important to be transparent so that readers have all the information they need to be informed citizens. Since the Collegian is primarily trying to help students be informed and is funded by the school, I don't think there is any reason for us to hide the truth about what we are writing or how we are writing about it. I would hope that other newsrooms would say the same, because you would not want journalists to be swayed by self-promotion.

Do you think your answer would be the same if you were working in a big company and stressed about money?

I would definitely hope so. I feel like losing transparency is more likely to happen in a magazine, rather than a newspaper, because they are constantly trying to make the most entertaining and scandalous news possible, rather than trying to keep consumers best informed.

How the way of working has changed due Covid?

We had to close the newsroom and apply teleworking which was the definitive push to make the switch to

cloud computing. During the quarantine TOTSantCugat never stopped posting.

Social Media Manager Laura Höler: “Older generations are not open to successful social media marketing”

Twenty eight year old social media manager on working with non-digital native clients and other challenges in the industry

Alexandra Sprouls and Tea Boettcher

Laura Höler, social media manager for CARLNANN takes on many roles and challenges throughout her daily life in the office. Her company is an ad agency for brands with their roots being traced to one of Germany's oldest advertising agencies. The company was bought out in 2018 and after the buyout, the agency reinvented themselves and the oldest agency became younger than ever. While based in Hamburg, Germany, it's clients are Süd Tirol, Kölln Haferflocken and HVV Switch to name a few. In this sense, they do nationwide advertising as well as local smaller clients. The agency works on offline jobs such as billboards or posters citywide and also has a strong hold on social media accounts where they tell brands what and how to post, to garner more attention and properly sell the brand's vision. That falls under junior social media manager Höler's realm of responsibility. Before starting her job at CARLNANN, Höler studied "Publizistik " which can be translated into public relations and

journalism for her bachelor's degree and then moved on to achieve her master's in strategic communication. During her master's degree, Höler worked as a PR intern at the beer brewery Carlsberg and after her studies, she moved to Hamburg for an internship at EDEKA, a grocery store chain in Germany, dealing with Corporate Social Responsibility. Höler then landed her job at CARLNANN as their junior social media manager where she is working with the brands Kölln Haferflocken and HVV Switch. Kölln Haferflocken is a brand that mostly focuses on oats, cereal and muesli and HVV Switch is a mobility app that aims to make public transportation in Hamburg easier. Höler proceeded to explain how she helps produce successful campaigns for these companies.

When asked about what factors play into the process of making social media posts for a brand, Laura Höler answered: "Good question, because I was asking that myself, actually, when

I started, because I had nothing really to do with the social media part of the brand before. Actually, my job description really just said “you need to like social media and spend a lot of time there” and I was able to do that.”

Höler explained how she is constantly cultivating ideas from all around her which is especially important at the start of every month. Using October as an example, she explained how she would create images based on holidays such as pumpkins for halloween and for Kölln Haf-erflocken, the oat brand, she would make an entire week’s campaign out of National Oat Day on October 29. The process would continue with writing captions and the text that would be on the photos she chooses. With her goal being to properly represent the brand, Höler needs complete approval before she posts any content for these brands on their social media. Artists from CARLANN’s art department then bring Höler abstracts to life followed by more meetings with the clients to confirm the advertising reflects what they would like it to. The responsibility falls back on Höler as to when she should post the content creations and to create monthly reports on the content that

has been published that month. The reporting includes the number of likes, comments the content gets but also the money that was put into it, because most of the posts are paid and rarely ever consist of organic postings. When asked if Laura would do things differently if the clients did not have the last word, she claimed that she would choose different social media platforms to reach audiences. Furthermore, she would be more descriptive in the captions of the post as well as using Instagram more frequently and trying to establish a community there while also adding more topics to the posting plan.

Höler revealed that clients are not very open for discussion as they believe they know what is best, when oftentimes Laura is in the right.

“You have a part in the agency where you are trying to give good advice, but sometimes it’s hard because they just won’t listen even though you have the reports that prove you’re right”

Laura Höler attributes this issue to her young age. While she may be younger than the clients she is working with, she has found she often has infinitely more social media experience than her clients but due to her age, they believe their wisdom to be more in topics they may not completely understand. An example of this was when she tried to integrate TikTok and Snapchat campaigns to help brands target younger audiences but since the clients had never heard of the companies, they were not open to the idea even though Höler had previously successful campaigns on these platforms with the company's exact target audience. In this sense, Höler believes that "older generations are not open to successful social media marketing". Another generational issue Höler has experienced with social media was when she told a client to create Instagram stories throughout his day. While she provided ample examples of what she expected and what would be successful for his brand, he was unable to receive the results that Höler had obtained previously due to poor camera work and lack of energy that is crucial in Instagram story campaigns. In recent years, brands have also been attempting to make campaigns surrounding diversity and

other inclusive topics. Höler finds that companies are actually rarely fully transparent with their readers or consumers and tend to greenwash things, saying they are all for diversity when in reality they are not really contributing to it at all and it is more for show. Some clients ask for help with appearing more diverse and accepting on their social media platforms, but since they do not have an actual story to tell it often ends up being something as basic as posting a pride flag during pride month or including people of color in photos for their campaigns. A struggle Höler has had to keep up with and adapt to in the industry is the constantly changing aspects of social media. With the transition to Snapchat and TikTok in comparison to Instagram and Facebook, the time posts are up is constantly decreasing. While people are losing attention at quicker paces, Höler actually sees this as an advantage since shorter campaigns mean that she has to get right to the point and tell the product as it is, not with as much useless jargon as she has had to previously to please her clients. This additionally ensures quality stays and she is able to stay truthful to the customers. Höler has experienced many challenges and successes in the social media world

which has helped her adapt to its ever changing environment from a professional standpoint.

Rory Winters: “It is unfortunate that mainstream media has a growing lack of trust of the public”

The journalist on *The Detail*, online journalism and the distrust of the media

Jonah Bingham

Rory is the chief reporter at ‘The Detail’ which is an investigative news and analysis website based in Northern Ireland which focuses on the reporting of vital news stories which are of public interest. The not for profit organisation, is a multi-award winning digital media newspaper which is committed to delivering challenging journalism. Rory has played a central role in a project looking into homeless deaths and has gained UK wide media attention for his reporting on this issue. The project was shortlisted for Investigation of the Year at the 2019 Amnesty International Media Awards in London.

Online journalism was quick to incorporate their readers into influencing the type of content published on news websites (Ruiz et al., 2011). However, there has been little scrutiny into this phenomena and its implications for democracy (Ruiz et al., 2011). Audience involvement and participation has resulted in journalists losing control over content posted to their news

websites (Meyrowitz, 1985). It could be argued that transparency could ‘lift the curtain’ of online journalism, causing audiences to question the authority of journalists and mainstream media (Lowrey and Anderson, 2005). The rise of immediacy within online journalism is a cause for concern, particularly during the period of ‘fake news’ and misinformation which can be easily spread on social media platforms. Several studies have found a correlation between the rate of audience clicks and journalist decision making, for example Vu (2014) conducted a survey among US newspapers and concluded that editors are willing to adjust their decision making based on online metrics (Welbers et al., 2016). Analysing online metrics can threaten the ‘gatekeeper’ role of journalists because it allows news media organisations to take into account the preferences of their audience, therefore affecting journalistic impartiality (Welbers et al., 2016). Kovach and Rosentiel (2001) state that the first

principal of journalism is 'truth telling', however they describe this as an utterly confusing principle which is impossible to pin down (Karlsson, 2011).

Whilst distrust in journalism and mainstream media is a cause for concern, more worryingly is the fact that audiences are turning to social media for their daily news (Grosser, 2016). Social networks allow organisations and elites to bypass mainstream media and present their message directly and unmediated to their followers (Hamada, 2018). The decline of journalists' jobs and journalism student's uncertainty into entering the field of media (Hovden, 2016), coupled with the collapse of several news media organisations across the world, are suitable indicators of the crisis in online journalism (Hamada, 2018). The emergence of the 'fifth estate' of media was supposed to provide the audience with a wider role in journalism, including increased public debate and scrutiny, however the result was a distrust in online news organisations (Wahl-Jorgensen et al., 2016).

Where do the incomes that feed the company come from (business model) in your particular online news media organisation (e.g private, public or mix ownership).

The Detail is a non-for-profit organisation which relies on philanthropic

funding and grants from organisations which are willing to fund public interest journalism.

What is the reader revenue model of your news media organisation (e.g, membership, subscription or paywalls, sponsored content, subsidies).

The Detail operates a subscription system which anyone can sign up to for free.

How does your online news media organisation use multimediality in their articles to engage readers.

Primarily, The Detail produces investigative written journalism which is often long-form. However, we also use photographs, infographics, interactive visualisation tools and video pieces to reflect our work alongside our written pieces

Are the proper conditions for quality journalism only met when journalists are given freedom to work independently away from the company owning the news media (corporate level).

If, at a corporate level, a media organisation is too stringent with its journalists on the basis that it doesn't want them to pursue research which is in the public interest then the quality and importance of the work which those journalists are able to produce

is negatively impacted. This is unfortunately something which happens in some media organisations.

However, it is often important for individual journalists to engage with colleagues and editorial staff to get 'another pair of eyes' on their work prior to publication. If the editorial staff are well-intentioned, capable and willing to produce important work - then it is beneficial for journalists to engage with them over their work.

Editorial staff will tend to have a more intimate relationship with the media organisation at a corporate level, but as long as they are doing their job independent of external, powerful interests then quality, important journalism can still be produced.

Are transparency and objectivity improved in online journalism?

It really depends on the online journalism source. Some online journalism is more transparent and objective than traditional media, but the opposite can also be true. It just depends on the source. In addition, most major media organisations produce online and offline content.

Would you consider advertising as a barrier for journalists to report freely due to certain negative issues surrounding key advertisers usually being hidden.

Advertising is often important for media organisations to survive and thrive. However, if corporate entities which pay for advertising space in a media organisation dictate the issues which that organisation can investigate - then that is problematic for free and open journalism.

How important is convergence journalism in the modern day landscape of online media, particularly with the fact that more readers are turning to social media to get their news.

Journalism which uses a range of tools can be effective in reaching different people. For instance, if use video alongside your written work some people will find the video more engaging while others will still prefer the written work.

In your opinion has social media increased levels of immediacy within online digital journalism, in particular to user interaction with articles posted by news media organisations on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

It is undeniable that social media has made the news 'quicker'. In the past, news was simply produced on scheduled television news programmes, daily/weekly newspapers and on specific radio shows. However, nowadays media organisations break stories every hour of the day through social

media which reaches the public immediately.

What is your opinion on the growing distrust of mainstream media, with audiences turning to social networks such as Facebook and Twitter to get their news from unproven sources.

This is a difficult issue to address in a short format as there are many issues at play. However, in many ways social media is a good thing in that it allows people to have a voice who would not in the past. This can lead to issues which mainstream outlets haven't previously covered, getting into the public domain. However, it is also true that social media leads to low quality discourse which can of course be inaccurate and defamatory. It is unfortunate that mainstream media has a growing lack of trust of the public. However, it is incumbent on those media organisations to pursue fact-based, public interest journalism which does not rely on 'cozy' relationships with government agencies and politicians - which unfortunately is the case in some circumstances.

What is your view on the opinion that immediacy threatens the quality of online journalism, or would you argue that open discussion and dialogue between the audience helps inform readers.

Open discussion is ultimately a vital cog in the media landscape of free societies. However, the promotion of rapid-fire journalism over long-form, public interest investigative journalism is detrimental and it is too prevalent.

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Media environment is going through a fundamental change, says editor in chief Lasse Virtanen: “The media has not kept up with the change well enough”

Jasmine Josefiina Vahtera

During the past decades the field of journalism has been undergoing a fundamental change. Online has come alongside with offline. Today, working in the media requires balancing between journalistic goals and market pressures. Future challenges are related to digital transition and resources.

“The oil rig parable of the former CEO of Nokia comes to mind. Traditional media has the situation that we are on the edge of a river and should get to the other side, because the forest is already burning behind us”, says Lasse Virtanen.

He has been the editor in chief of the local weekly newspaper Aamuset since 2007.

In 1996, soon after the launch of www, the differentiation between print and online began (Díaz Noci 2013, 259-260). In the beginning of 2000’s the border between online and offline started to blur (a.m., 264).

Virtanen reflects that there are now two tracks of production: online is for fast, short, and breaking news, print for longer articles that will stand the test of time. Print has lost its relevance as a channel for news. “Nowadays, news is fast-food served online.”

It can be said that the newsroom, as we know it, is disappearing, or at least changing. Therefore, it is vital for media organizations to come up with new ideas, tactics, and organizational



Facsimile of the latest printed newspaper on aamuset.fi. For editor in chief, Lasse Virtanen it's a strategic choice to serve print edition also online.

structures. (Deuze, Witschge 2017, 2, 6, 8).

The eventual strategy of Aamuset is, above all, to be local. Printed version is feature-like publication about local people and phenomena.



Screenshot from aamuset.fi 1/11/2021

Virtanen describes that when print was still a remarkable source of breaking news, the work was more about chasing news and especially scoops. Now, the nature of the journalistic work has changed from scoops to more analytical and many-sided reporting.

According to Virtanen, challenges of online media are related to the bigger workload and the binding nature of online media. Online site must be updated 24/7.

News, and especially breaking and exclusive news have become the main apparatus for competition for online news media (Kartveit 2020, 1470).

However, despite of the hectic nature of online, Virtanen doesn't see website as "a mandatory evil". For him as a journalist, it's a "lifeline".

"It's also a blessing that online page must be updated all the time. When I have some (breaking) news I don't have to sit on it and wait for the print release, I can put it right away to our online pages."

As a local weekly newspaper, which have small resources and few employees, Aamuset doesn't have separate network journalists. Online service is updated along with other work. Still, Virtanen affirms that they are seeking to make updates also in the evenings and on weekends.

"Media organizations that have the public service obligation, such as The Finnish Broadcasting Company (FBC), must always have the latest information on their pages. Since we don't have this kind of obligation, there's no need to have someone in the office all the time. We can preset some articles for later publication."

Even though the online is important, the printed newspaper is still the most important for Aamuset.

"We are a city newspaper, and our funding comes from advertisements. Majority of advertisements are still sold for the print. Print is also a specialty of our advertising vendors, and we have well-established customer base."

The advantages of print advertising in Aamuset are wide distribution and high circulation.

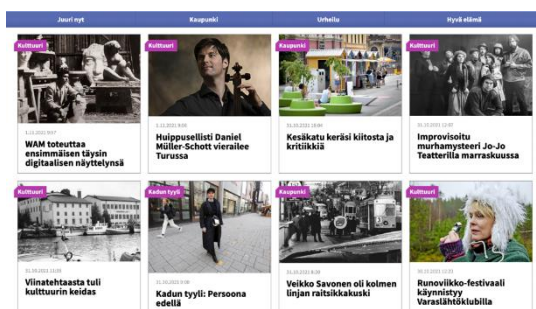
Social media platforms, such as Facebook, are good in targeted advertising and maintaining the customer connection because they learn to know the user.

Still, traditional media reaches a wider range of potential customers. The advertising challenge on online side is how to make it tempting for advertisers.

Virtanen considers the situation challenging, because Aamuset has a regional target group.

“We should be able to get huge audiences for our online service to tempt the advertisers. The competitive situation in online is pretty ruthless.”

Market model has brought the increasing competition to the field of journalism (Welbers, van Atteveldt, Kleinnijenhuis, Ruigrok and Schaper 2016, 1140, 1047). Therefore, in many media organizations click tracking has become commonplace.



Front page layout, city & culture -section, aamuset.fi 1/11/2021

Virtanen says that they don't do click tracking as much as they maybe should. He doesn't accept the culture of click titles but still, he sees that click tracking, when used properly, is a good tool.

“We pay little attention to click tracking, and I don't see that it could bring much more to this type of newspaper”, Virtanen reflects.

Nowadays, both the audience and the media organizations are fragmented. However, regardless of the number of resources, every media organization should keep up with the transition. Otherwise, will be left behind.

Today's media organizations are facing two kinds of pressures.

On the other hand, digital production processes and concepts are taking over, and therefore, the traditional journalistic policies are endangered. On the other, the mechanisms of market economy are penetrating the journalism. (Günther, Schultz 2021, 144).

In Virtanen's opinion, the media organizations have not been able to keep up good enough with digitalisation and the related change.

According to Virtanen the biggest challenge now is renewal that many media organizations and newspapers are planning.

However, there is gap between generations which affects to the success

of a renewal. Virtanen sees that many will fall into that trap.

“The question arises, for whom the newspapers are renewed? For the older generations who don’t want the change or for the younger ones who don’t care about the print anyway? The result is that the renewal is completely useless.”

Virtanen sees that for the young generations the whole concept of traditional media is outdated.

“They have social media platforms, feed, influencers and Youtube. They don’t care about the newspapers’ brands. The only way they might end up to a newspaper website is through social media.”

Therefore, Virtanen considers that media organizations should keep up better with the change and find new ways of producing media.

“Even though podcast is not necessarily a natural way for me to produce content, it could be a natural way for the recipient.”

For Virtanen, the crucial question is, what digitalisation in media means after all. What is the direction the media organizations should head for? What should be done next?

“The need for news is and will be the same it was before. The crucial question is how and by whom the news should be served to the public in the future.”

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Jean Chichizola, deputy editor-in-chief, *Le Figaro*: “We should be less obsessed with the new technologies themselves”

Pierre Clery-Merlin

Jean Chichizola is deputy editor-in-chief at the Figaro society service, specialist in questions related to terrorism in France, all tendencies combined, Islamists but also extreme right, left, terrorism, regionalist (Corsican, Basque, Breton even if things have calmed down). He also works on questions of history and memory. He is in the process of finishing a great work on the “compagnons de la libération”, resistant Gaullists from the first hour of 1940. He is also in the process of preparing a subject on the Harkis and on the law which was announced on these people. (1)

Career

Sciences Po Paris, then DEA in political sciences. Worked for a subsidiary of the newspaper Liberation, which was doing international coalition, then moved to Reporter Sans Frontière for 4 years to defend press freedom. Then he set up a news agency with friends to cover the cases of the international criminal court for Rwanda. After he worked at the DSD weekly for a year to be hired at Le

Figaro after articles published on Corsica caught the eye of a journalist from Le Figaro who asked him to come and work with them. For him, today it has become difficult to be a journalist without a proper journalism school.

For him, working at Figaro is seizing the opportunity to have the financial means to do a good job because it is a very large newspaper. In addition, when you contact people to do interviews and say that you are from Le Figaro, all the doors open. Another reason is that you can have several lives within the journal. He was editor-in-chief of a team before becoming associate editor in the corporate department. For him, it is interesting to participate in the great mechanics of the newspaper. He remembers the 2008 crisis when economics experts did not understand what was going on. With passion, he explains that it is impressive to see the information machines set in motion to provide information to readers, and unite dozens

of journalists together (correspondents, specialist columnists, editorial lists, investigators).

They founded an association which has received funding from the EU, Canada, and Belgium. In addition, they had created an associative media with a newspaper published in a few thousand copies, in French, English and Kinyarwanda (Rwandan language). At the same time, an agency dispatch, which is like an article in more summary. They had followed the genocide and the after genocide with a few journalists and they considered the trials very important. This lasted 2 years, during which their seat was based in Tanzania in Arusha, where the seat of the international criminal tribunal for the genocide was located.

Travel? In France as much for the terrorist aspect as for memory and history. Recently, he has frequently been in Morocco, Italy, Germany, or the United Kingdom.

As for memory and history, he likes to have a foot in the present, with what can happen in France. But also, in the past to understand the reasons why some got involved, acted. If there is a parallel to be drawn between one era and another, it is that those who were qualified by the Nazis as terrorists in the 1940s, had very different ideals and principles than what kills in the world today in the

name of an extremist and / or totalitarian ideology.

“We should be less obsessed with the new technologies themselves than with the need to keep those principles and adapt these new technologies to the principles rather than adapt the principles to the new technologies.”

Before being at Le Figaro, he had in fact worked a lot on the themes of international justice. Despite the trial of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, he also continued in the branch of memory on questions of justice at the Center of crimes against humanity, installed in Paris. The National Anti-Terrorist Prosecutor's Office, which monitors contemporary terrorism issues, also has a division that deals with crimes against humanity, sometimes working on very old crimes. For example, he recently wrote articles on a raid in Marseille in 1943 which led to the opening of an investigation for crimes against humanity by the French prosecution.

“Of course, putting these stories, archives, iconographic documents, photos online can be very interesting. This underlines the idea that justice can pass even 80 years later. You always have to try to fight for the

memory to persist and for justice to pass, and this can be done with online media."

Would these online archives be accessible to everyone?

The principle of Le Figaro is the same as that of many other newspapers. There are 2 levels: that of the web accessible to everyone and the so-called "premium" web, intended for those who decide to subscribe to the digital version which is often coupled with the paper version. We can play on the 2. As for the liberation companions, a few years ago, the article was available only to subscribers but also to purchase. At the same time, a timeline with a series of photos and captions was made available for Internet users who wanted to read without subscribing to the newspaper.

"This double principle is complementary. Reach as many people as possible with this info and get as many people as possible to subscribe to the newspaper."

How do you go about publishing your articles online?

It's basically the same principle, the same journalistic mechanics. The journalist chooses his subject, has it validated by his editor-in-chief or possibly works on a subject that is proposed to him, often current events, if something happens in the field of the journalist concerned. He does his investigation, writes his article, which is edited, therefore proofread by the managers of the department for which he works and then the article is proofread by other journalists who ask questions if certain things are not clear, correct some errors. The editorial secretary also provides proofreading work. Then the article is put in one channel or another. Either in the paper, in this case it is also almost all the time in premium web. Or maybe it is decided that it will be posted online for free, because the topic lends itself, there is already another article on another topic, or because it is very hot news.

Is there a new organization of newsrooms since the switch to digital? Do you see new professions appearing there?

"It depends on whether you know you are writing the article for the internet, paid or free. And it also depends on the possibilities we have, if we know that there are video links,

photos, sound recordings. Any possibility of enriching the article, the author can do. Then if we do not have specific things to add as the author of the article or if we do not have the time or the technical possibilities, because of a bad connection for example, or if we are at deep in the Moroccan atlas to meet a 100-year-old veteran who invites you to his farm accessible by donkey, it is not always possible to enrich the article. In these cases, there are web editors who do 2 things.

On the one hand, there is the possibility of enriching with, in particular, links that refer to other articles. There the internet is interesting, with a mirror game and enrichment of information. We are writing an article on the ongoing trial of the attacks of November 13, 2015, and we refer in this article to the hearing of last Friday for example, or to an article that talks about the attacks, and which will allow us as reader to immerse ourselves in the context of the time. It can be obtained as an article reference, or as a video. It's a very specific, interesting, and important job. Lately, there is also the need to not only refer to previous articles but also to refer to other productions of the newspaper as a whole. In the print, web, photo, video or televisual service, the one of Le Figaro is highly developed. We can

refer to all kinds of other content, articles, interviews with external speakers, a talk from the TV Figaro, tribune of a great intellectual, historian, all enrichment of the article.

"This is the big difference between print and the web. The web will be much more enriched than paper, with an enrichment by reference."

A few years ago, there was a sort of science fiction of journalism, a flexible electronic tool on which you can read articles. By clicking on certain points in the article, we could access a presentation of the author, the character we are talking about, the context.

But in the technical choices there are bifurcations. Today the tablet still exists but has been competed with by the smartphone. The idea of the electronic flip-through journal was abandoned because today with smartphones, laptops, and tablets, we have the equivalent. With the advent of the smartphone a little over 10 years ago, it's incredible to see audiences of all ages who have adapted to reading a newspaper on such a small screen. "

Hyperlinks, also enrichment in transparency? Increased trust with more sources? What about links to other newspapers?

Regarding sources, it's the same principle on paper or on the web. First of all, when initial information has been disseminated by a news organization, we quote that source, we do not steal the information. On the web, we cite but also refer to the article in question. This is part of a basic journalistic principle and the need to provision our site. I remember a few years ago a discussion with the former director of Le Figaro. The question was, if we refer back to the colleague's article, will there be a diversion of our audience? The manager said not at all, you are wrong, it is in our interest because it helps people see that we are citing our sources and therefore have more confidence in our site. In addition, it is a back and forth phenomenon, the person will go to our colleague's initial article and then return to the Figaro website.

There is also a difference whether the source is open. If we ask a minister about a news item, we quote the person, and we quote his contributions. If he has already done an intervention for the newspaper, we refer to the interview. But in journalism, there are also sources that are never cited. At this point, that is part of the level of trust that a media outlet

needs to establish with its readership. The job is not to broadcast fake news.

Vital element of our time: professional journalism can be a safeguard against fake news because news is not a completely neutral material. When you've worked as a journalist for a few years, you take a step back from information, beyond ethics itself.

For example, a few years ago we were trained by a British journalist who taught us how to tweet. He told us in an obvious but important way that twitter news is not news. We cannot write an article an information thrown on the social networks. Most of the time we do not know the value or the nature of this information. You have to work on it, verify it, enrich it, deny it, drop it if it is false. Journalism is an anti-hysterization of what can be observed on social networks where people who do not have these safety nets, engage in diatribes or mad campaigns on news that are not or are incorrect. Where the professionalism of the journalist can come in handy by filtering, taking your time wondering about the news.

How do journalists manage the audiences that have become active? Do they read the comments? Use this information to enrich the approach and the articles?

He starts by saying that there are 2 levels of interaction. The first one is through the comments for example. He does not systematically reread all the comments made on the articles. The comments are moderate, there as everywhere else. Likewise, they continue to receive written letters from exalted people but also comments that exceed legal standards.

What is interesting is that even in the age of social networks, classic interaction continues. Signing an article with them is the journalist's twitter or email. So, there is the possibility for the reader to ask a question to the journalist, or to report an information which would have escaped him, whatever the channel. We are no longer in the commentary which is the expression of an opinion but there is a willingness to add, correct, or point out something to the author of the article. This is done by social networks, but also by telephone, or by mail.

For example, for the subject of memory and history, while writing an article on the release of Paris and the conditions under which it happened. He received a phone call from a woman who wanted to talk about her father whose story was unknown. Armenian naturalized French in 1930, he had with his cheese and dairy delivery tricycle, guided the French

troops arriving in the capital in August 1944 because they had to go very quickly and did not know the ground. They had to avoid all the German roadblocks so as not to waste time. This person whose story has been forgotten was fascinating. For the same article he received an email from a person who informed him of another fellow soldier of the liberation who died in 1945 in the fighting in Alsace but one of the first to arrive at the town hall of Paris on August 24, 1944, in the evening.

Interaction is facilitated by the contact of journalism but could have been done by other means. On top of that, social networks, and the internet, which were described as a danger for the daily press a few years ago, are an excellent means of dissemination and exchange of information.

Loss of his power of gatekeeper as a journalist? Relay of information by citizens without controls, people choosing topical issues.

He does not feel dispossessed of his expertise as a journalist but remains very critical of social networks because he observes that it is often an open sewer, with big mouths and extremists of all edges that try to monopolize the floor. He also appreciates that citizens can discuss the news and question journalists. He is

opened to discuss, dissect, debate the info.

However, it opens up another social and societal question that no longer depends on journalism, namely the confinement of communities to social networks. Recently, he was discussing with a fellow journalist who explained to him that on the Internet, he is in isolation, with people who share his ideas. He finds himself locked in a world, which is the antithesis of journalism. But it is also a fundamental issue for democracy.

What shocks him about the Figaro situation 20-25 years ago is that new technologies have made it possible to magnify and multiply the impact of his articles. The consultation figures for the various Figaro websites are phenomenal, well beyond the reach of the paper newspaper a quarter of a century ago. In a democracy it would be inconceivable for him to criticize the fact that there are additional means of communication and that we can seize them.

What do you think of this same silo effect caused by algorithms in online journalism?

"It's a danger to everyone, not just journalism. Even if the journalists are the least in danger on this because the reflex is to look elsewhere. There is a negative trend in terms of intellectual, artistic, and political open-

ness. We remain human and not machines. This question of algorithms is more of a societal question, very problematic. "

He then relativises by exposing that before we did not need these algorithms to lock ourselves in a circle. We read the authors we loved, the analyses of intellectuals with whom we agreed, the newspapers that corresponded to our ideas.

"But this is where the internet was able to blow up borders. People today on the web are going to be interested in news, media, newspapers, which they would not have thought of accessing in the old world of the print media. The information spreads differently but in greater number, which is interesting. "

Have you heard of "click bait" and pay per click?

"The last element is dangerous for our development and for society itself. The job of a journalist is to inform in the broad sense, but it is also to arouse controversy, debate and not only serve what people ask for. It's very problematic if we start to have a ratings policy in terms of news. It is a perilous development.

Regarding titration, an American journalist said a few decades ago that the journalist's mission was to bring to life a product which was made from trunks of trees kneaded and transformed into paper by the magic

of the verb, of the title. That's the beauty and the interest of this job. On any platform, we will attract the reader. A well titled article, a video with a good start will be attractive. We do not prostitute ourselves in the material. The attention of the reader is drawn to the information that is disseminated. This is necessary, important, it can be learned and is a matter of professionalism. You have to both attract and inform. "

Trend towards this movement, decline of the analytical, investigative journalist. Less scoop, less ground with online newspapers?

"No, whether it is the pure player (only online), or the media like Le Monde or Le Figaro, which have made their technological and internet revolution. At Le Figaro, not only on the Internet but also in terms of video, television channel, there is no less investigation.

For years there has been a debate among media executives between the free and paid web. Do we make everything available to the reader and we are compensated by advertising, or do we consider that the products (articles, videos, etc.) which are the work of the editorial staff of the newspaper, journalists paid for that, that we make them pay by subscribers?

The great news in recent years is that naturally people were willing to pay for news, subscribe to media and therefore fund the production of valuable, confirmed, verified, enriched news. This was done through a movement initiated by the Americans from the NY Times, and the British from the Financial Times for example, and implemented in France by Le Monde, and Le Figaro. From there, it is necessary for the media to continue reporting, investigating, have exclusive information, because people are starving for information and willing to pay the price. There, the economy of a medium begins to become solid, and the internet is not the great gravedigger that we described a few years ago but on the contrary a means of securing the notoriety of a medium.

The numbers show that a very low percentage of users of online newspapers actually subscribe, and that's enough for you with very high attendance as you said. But what about small media?

"If we take Le Monde and Le Figaro, sufficiently up to date, an increasing part of the number of subscribers are collected, seduced on the web and then subscribe to the newspaper with the possibility of having access to the paper version. If we put a premium

article online, out of this large number of people, the ones who will decide to trigger a payment on the article or on a subscription are very few, but that is not the question. Because if tomorrow all of Internet users who surf the Figaro website subscribed, we would overnight have millions of subscribers, which is totally unimaginable. However, we are talking about Le Figaro, a newspaper that has been in existence for one and a half century, therefore a newspaper that has the means to have a free website that brings information to people and that maintains the cost and the interest in the media and at the same time a real source of products, original articles that feeds the web premium. This is what a media worthy of the name needs to build on. Otherwise, we see that pure players are often niche media. They will have a certain number of subscribers, smaller than those of the major media. "

How did you adapt to this revolution?

"The Figaro title has existed since 1826, at the end of the restoration. It has been a daily newspaper since 1866, which comes out every day, now 6 days a week. This reflection around new media, new technologies is essential with all that it poses at the social level. Because news is vital in a democracy. It is no coincidence that as soon as a dictatorship takes place,

the first thing it does is take possession of the radios, TVs, newspapers. And that is not new. When Napoleon made the 18 Brumaire in 1799, he closed three quarters of the newspapers in a few weeks. It is also necessary to delve into the past to understand that everything that seems old-fashioned to us today, rotary presses, high-volume presses, industrial printing houses, were major innovations and that if we take history from Le Figaro, we have a succession of journalist adaptations to a new journalism created by new tools. But fundamentally the basis of the profession, which is to release verified information and tell stories of interest to readers, is the same with the same excesses. The same as in 1866 or even in 1826. The predecessors fought with technological revolutions, sometimes of great level with the rise in power of television in the years 40-50 for example, but always with success.

Multimediality, immersive practices, do these new practices help achieve a more democratic journalism as one might have hoped?

"Not really. We made the same mistake with the new technologies as we did with the old ones; with the radio, mass-circulation press... We thought it was going to be a tool for emancipation, openness, enrichment, enlightenment, that it would open minds. It has been, the radio, the

mass-circulation press, the internet are, but it's not just that. This not only about new technologies but about the use we make out of them, of the journalists but also of the citizens, particularly in a democracy. In a dictatorship, the question does not arise. The use of new technologies, of the internet in China, maybe tomorrow in Russia, is much more simplified than it can be in France, the United-Kingdom, Germany, the United States or elsewhere. We should not be surprised at the drifts and slippages; they are consubstantial with the behaviour of certain people who do not share our democratic values. They can be very negative tools but also remain tools of emancipation and information. "

Could this multimediality be used even more?

"Yes, I think you have to use all the technological tools you have if you want journalism to endure.

Incidentally, our job is also to respond to the requests of our reader, Internet user, to tell us "Allow us to better understand the world as it is, bring us information, and stories that interest us." When I write an article on the 1943 Marseille raid, I know that I am informing my readers and that I make them discover a reality that they do not know, an unknown part of the history of our country. "

"Convergence", synonymous with more collaborative work, organization of newsrooms around the world?

"About ten years ago we were introduced to the completely common newsroom of the Telegraph in the United Kingdom, the Guardian too. This question of convergence also depends on very basic criteria of premises and capacity. But this is the current trend. The borders that might have existed a few years ago no longer exist. There is no longer a need for separations.

In the days of the paper newspaper, the exercise was already very little lonely. The journalist is alone when he investigates alone. But journalism is a very great job of craftsmanship. Lots of contributors interacting. It's amazing to see people from completely different backgrounds working together. New technologies bringing a whole different world to newsrooms, at the same time bringing the shrinking of the printing world.

One should be less obsessed with the new technologies themselves than with the need to keep those principles and adapt these new technologies to the principles rather than adapt the principles to the new technologies.

Le Figaro is in the middle of the paper and digital world, and we can see that the osmosis between these two worlds is not so complicated.”

Josep Casulleras, *Vilaweb*: 'Honesty, integrity, pluralism and courage are essential values to face censorship'

Francesc Vidal i Illa

To start with, this interview will mainly focus on the digitalization of journalism, specifically, this online newspaper, interviewing Josep Casulleras, head of redaction of the online newspaper *Vilaweb*, which was the second most read Catalan digital newspaper throughout 2020. Josep Casulleras will be asked questions regarding 3 main topics about digital journalism; the characteristics of the digital language and its use in his newspaper, the production routines that characterize the web page, and finally the strategies, transparency, objectivity and values of the newspaper.

On the one hand, when asked about the characteristics of the digital language that is used in most of the articles, he states that it is "centered in professionalism and quality communication", as not only it is important for them to be giving the right information but also focuses on the quality of it, by enhancing the language used in articles, making them way easier for readers to cope with.

In addition, Casulleras also adds that "interactivity is a really important

part of journalism nowadays", as it closes the digital gap between readers and the webpage through direct reader collaborations or mainly comment sections in news articles, making it easier for them to captivate readers into consuming their newspaper more often.

On the other hand, when talking about the production routines that *Vilaweb* follows, the interviewee shows us that the webpage has "seven main windows of information, each specialized in the latest and most relevant news". These include; Local country news, which focus on territorial concerns about Catalonia, and where most of the articles are published, concretely between 5 and 10 articles are published on a daily basis depending on the amount of events that occur during the day. Followed by equally important news windows, such as Culture, Society, Economics and Science, which are really relevant to most of the viewers as he states. Most of these, concern both Worldwide and territorial news, centering the importance of these news in the

rigorosity and quickness of the information in which it is delivered to the newspaper's readers.

In the last place, the last window of information titled as 'Opinion' is based mainly on the collaborators opinions on many diverse topics, as the newspaper "highly values both the interactivity of article writers and readers".

When talking about the values of the newspaper, Casulleras highlights that this is if not, the most relevant aspect of the newspapers. He states that "*Vilaweb* exists to give voice to the 'Catalan countries' " with the willingness to become an instrument to control power, defending progressiveness, the fight for the common benefit, Catalan language, culture and most importantly, liberty of opinion.

Referring to the newspapers journalistic values, he exposes 6 main aspects that run the newspapers values, firstly, journalistic honesty and integrity, secondly, pluralism of opinions, in third place, courage to fight against authoritarianism or every censorship or oppression intent.

Furthermore, the interviewee states that nowadays, digital newspapers have some responsibilities towards their readers and consumers, as the relationship between the webpage and the reader can seem further away than traditional and conventional press. He exemplifies this with the ob-

ligation they have to "give their readers the maximum social responsibility, quality, elegance, and the best version that they can give of themselves, but also staying away from sensationalism and banalism".

To conclude, when asked about the sustainability of digital press, he talks about the risk that newspaper companies have to go through, as nowadays there are hundreds of different sources of information, and small errors can lead to huge loss of consumers. Causing many newspapers to, although being sustainable at first, ending their reputation and in consequence their financial situation in a short period of time.

He explains that *Vilaweb* has a particular way of sustaining themselves financially, as they do not concur to using high amounts of advertising in their webpage, as in their opinion this could cause a bad image. Instead, he explains, they opt for "annual subscriptions", which are not forced by any means, or small contributions of money. That way, they are ensuring that readers are the strength of the newspaper, helping them be a "voice for democracy", demonstrated by the over 20,000 subscribers that *Vilaweb* has achieved over the years.

Joan Puig: “There is no neutral journal”

The editor of *La República* talks about the relationship of the digital journalism and the independence of Catalonia

Pol López i Ruiz

Joan Puig (Malgrat de Mar, 1959) has been a controversial character in Catalonia. He was part of the pro-independence party Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, which allowed him to be a member of the Spanish Parliament in 2004, among other successes. He has always been known for being a clear defender of the independence of Catalonia. After leaving the party, he now keeps this conviction as the editor of *La República*.

How would you define *La República*?

It is a journal at the service of the pro-independence cause, because the majority of the media are against it. We were founded after *Directe.cat*. Almost four years ago, we decided to change its name to *La República*. It was done because we think it is the best solution for Catalonia. We work to fight against the lies that the Spanish and part of the Catalan press write. We defend the independence of this country.

Apart from defending the independence of Catalonia, which is the editorial line of the journal?

We are progressives. We believe in a society with social justice, based in an advanced social democracy. We are near to the left and the center wing.

Who is the owner?

We are part of a limited society called Catmedia Global. They continued as the owners despite the change from *Directe* to *La República*.

Which is the business model? Which are your revenue sources?

The revenue sources in digital journalism are mainly advertising or subscribers. Currently we are developing new ideas and new ways of financing, but for the moment our income are advertising and the Catalan subsidies for journalism.

Don't you have subscribers?

No, we don't. We are studying to implement a system of subscription for 2022. We want this to be part of the financing of the journal, besides advertising and the Catalan subsidies for the press, as I said.

Precisely about these subsidies you complained in an [article](#) about the

institutional advertising report that the Generalitat [the Catalan government] published in 2020. In this article, you say that *La República* is one of the most punished journals by institutional advertising.

The 2019 and the 2020 reports were published by the new government of ERC. The previous government left without making these reports public. After two years, they were published, and we were surprised. We saw strange things in the distribution of the advertising. There were some newspapers out of the country that got some aid which is hard to explain. We complained because we were punished in comparison. Apart from that, there are some other public administrations that give millions of euros in advertising, like Barcelona's council, which have banned us.

Have you been banned by Barcelona's council?

Yes, we are. It is impossible that they put advertising in our journal.

Do you know why?

It is not difficult to imagine the reason. We are critical of Ada Colau, and they make us pay for it. They give advertising to media that behave themselves. Nowadays, either offline or online press depend on advertising. Except for some media that have a huge quantity of subscribers, such as *Vilaweb*. They don't mind if you

threaten them with not paying for institutional advertising, whereas we have suffered because of the economic situation. However, we won't change our editorial line because of this.

Let's talk about your organisation. How does your editorial board work?

We have an editorial board with shareholders. But due to the pandemic and the need to save money and to face the situation, now we gather online. However, we communicate with the journalists through Whatsapp or video call. We used to have a newsroom but we left it in order to readapt to the situation.

How many writers are there in the journal?

We are six people. We also have some smaller journals. Apart from *La República*, we have *Benvinguts al Món Rural*, *Més Economia*, *Món Castell* or *La República Esportiva*. These are smaller journals that we manage. There might also be a collaborator for helping.

Do these small journals have more workers?

No, they don't. These are more specialised journals in which we publish some news. For example, there is a sports journalist that, when he writes an article, he publishes it *La República Esportiva* too.

How do you guarantee that you accomplish the journalism values? Such as the principles of truth, diversity, objectivity...

Well, although someone may say that newspapers are independent, there is no neutral journal. At the journal, there is an editor with an ideology, and sometimes, opinion and facts get mixed. We are a journal that defends the independence of Catalonia, but we also try to explain what happens. We criticise pro-independence mistakes too. We won't praise the work of the Generalitat or the pro-independence parties if they don't do things well. Apart from independence, there are some other things that happen every day related to economy or society. We try to denounce everything that attacks social justice.

There are some **theorists** that think that trust is more difficult to create in online media than in offline. Do you agree with them?

Nowadays, with social networks, allow everyone to express their opinion. Sometimes on social networks and digital journals, which are extremely connected, there may appear some fake news. Moreover, between online and offline media there is less difference every day. All newspapers are trying to enter the digital world.

Do you have any transparency mechanism so that the audience can contact you?

We have an email. All the letters that we receive are published, if they are respectful. There is also the right to answer back.

Have you ever been forced to rectify any article?

Yes, we had to do it sometimes. In the digital world you are always running, so you might make some mistakes. If this happens, we recognise it and apologise. We have to be careful, because running is not the best option.

Referred to the digital tools. Do you have any comment sections?

We used to have one. But when we opened *La República*, we didn't allow comments because there were not many comments, and they were disrespectful. Besides, if someone wants to comment, they have social networks. Then, they are not anonymous people, and they take a risk if they want to insult. We are studying to include a comment section, where people can comment if they are registered.

What was the kind of comment that you received?

Lot of them were repeated, made by people who spent all day making the same comments. We found that 80% of the comments were anonymous people who just insulted. Moderating

these was a loss of time. But now, if someone wants to read an article calmly, he can do it perfectly. In case he wants to comment, then he has social networks.

I understand, by what you are saying, that you give a lot of importance to social networks.

It's an important part obviously. We see what people says, and then we can rectify if it's necessary.

Do you make use of SEO tools?

We are trying to improve. We are a modest journal because we had to renounce to a big structure, so that we could get adapted to the income.

And the multimedia elements?

We use them, but we are not the journal that takes the most advantage of it. Due to what I tell you, we have a modest structure.

Do you use any analytics?

Yes, we do. We can see if people enter directly into the article, or if they come from a social network, for example. We can know it. However, we don't want to get obsessed with the clicks. There are some websites that show their statistics on Google Analytics. Although they don't tell you that this audience comes for the yellow journalism they make. Then they mix the numbers, so it seems that the political news get views. The battle of

statistics is dirty, and we preferred not to take part in it.

Do you think that the expansion of pro-independence ideas in the last decade wouldn't have been possible without digital pro-independence journalism?

Yes, I do. If they hadn't existed, the media would hardly talk about the *procés*. The traditional media have talked about independence according to the evolution of it. Not only digital media, but also social networks. Both of them counteracted the traditional media.

In an article of October 2020, entitled "We have the big media against us, including TV3 and Catalunya Ràdio", you say that these media do not defend the pro-independence cause like they should. A year after, has this situation changed?

There has been an attempt of destabilising the pro-independence process after October 2017. In television, for instance, there are more journalists at the debates who are against independence. They don't want people to protest. You can see it at the journal *Ara*, which decided to avoid advertising of the 1-O. Then, their editorial lines have changed. They don't refuse independence, but they don't defend it convincingly.

Why do you think this happens?

Because there are different ways of seeing independence. At the government itself there are people who prefer to negotiate slowly. There are some people, definitely, who don't want us to protest. Protests have decreased and they want it.

Silvia Cobo: “Changing the culture of writing in a newsroom cannot be done in a course. It requires a transitional period”

Silvia Cobo (Barcelona, 1979) is a journalist and head of networks for *El Periódico de Catalunya*. In 2012 he wrote *Internet for Journalists* (UOC). After seeing the impact the Internet had on journalistic routines, she has tried to introduce communication professionals to the world of writing for networks, SEO, web analytics or verification of sources on the Internet.



Silvia Cobo, journalist and digital content manager at *El Periódico*

Picture: Ceded/ Ferran Nadeu

Maria Pratdesaba

What's your job today as the community manager of *El Periódico*?

The first thing I had to tell you is that the word “community manager” is no longer used in the media. There is more talk about “responsible for social networks” or “content distribution”. When you have audiences as

large as 800,000 followers on Twitter or 10,000 on Instagram, you can't talk about communities. It would be a utopia. Starting from here, my job is to choose which topics we think will work best in social networks and think about which networks, at what time, with what headline, photo... Basically,

it is thinking about how to adapt the contents of the newspaper, knowing that not all issues are social, and that's not good or bad. We just need to accept it.

Has this work been difficult to understand in a conventional medium such as yours?

A lot. Multiple editors still don't understand it. When I entered, the person who ran social networks in *El Periódico* was one of the youngest in the team. The management believed that simply because she was young, she would be capable to do that task. It's not about that: maybe this person does not like social media or simply does not do well with it. Some professionalization came when I arrived, five years ago, because I had already worked in other media as a content distributor.

And how many people work on your team now?

We are still a very small team, formed by two permanent professionals and a student who helps us. This, for a newspaper like ours, apart from being very small and clearly insufficient, indicates the importance given to our department. The same happened with SEO's: initially there was only one person dedicated to it, then two, and now they are three. It is becoming more professional as the medium leaderships have turned out about

the importance of digital. It's not enough just to have editors, you need specialized content management profiles.

Are journalists trained so that they can better work on this new paradigm?

Courses are given, but changing the culture of writing cannot be done in a course. It's a matter that needs much more time. We would need many courses for many years, because going against the dynamics that have been around for 20 or 30 years is complicated. This happens in *El Periódico*, happens in *El País* and even in *The Washington Post*. Changing the culture of a newsroom is a real challenge and needs a transitional period.

So, your job is to adapt all their texts to make them publishable.

No. We can't change the text because it belongs to the editor. What we can do is suggestions. Years ago, journalists wrote articles about movies and series with straight texts. We suggest them to make lists, as they are more enjoyable to read through smartphones. "Due to the quick reading of most users, there are formats that favor comprehension and which the reader values, such as lists" (Cobo, 2012. *Internet para periodistas*). Something similar happened with pictures. If you talk about several

series, it is better to use a combo with more than one photo. Visually you are explaining that the article not only talks about one, but about a bunch of them. We try to say all those things, because it's important to express the article value and the editors need time to internalize all these concepts.

“It's important to express the article value and the editors need time to internalize all these concepts”

The speed of production is one thing that maybe does not work in their favor.

Absolutely. They don't have time to look at those details, and that's our job. We try to act as “the eyes of our audience”, and this implicates being aware of how the content looks on networks. What we do have is the ability to change headlines and photos for what will be published on social networks. I cannot change the article photo, but I do can change the one that will be shared on Facebook and Twitter. That's faster than having to run and ask editors to change their own picture.

Which is prioritized in a headline for networks?

A bad headline spoils a good text. For that reason, the ideal world would be to get an understandable headline that incites reading, but the editors do not make them with so much intention and I am constantly changing them for social networks. However, there is still a lot of “paper headline culture”: those short headlines without keywords. On paper, they are accompanied by a photo and a context that makes the reader understand it, but they don't work in networks. “On the Internet, keywords such as proper names or place names are essential. They help us improve the positioning of this content in search engines. It is also better to use common and colloquial words instead of techniques” (Cobo, 2012. *Internet para periodistas*)

Inciting reading means clickbait?

Not always. We live thanks to tracking, but currently there is also a natural clickbait. Many contents cannot be summarized on a headline. If you talk about “*the 10 Japanese restaurants in Barcelona that you cannot miss*” it's obvious that you can't mention all of them in one sentence, so the reader will have to enter the text. I wouldn't call that clickbait, but rather practical content.

This also helps you to fight with algorithms.

Maybe yes, but what helps us the most is choosing social topics. One of

our most visualized publications was an article about a ribbon that parents put on their baby strollers to simulate the street rattling. We were talking about a company, but the public was really interested because that solved a problem from their daily routine. Thus, when we publish gastronomic reviews, I always write: "Save this photo for when you have no ideas". Algorithms highly value this click and for the user is something really natural. people, and everyone chooses the way to find them. The wider the funnel, the more future subscribers.

What about convergence? Do you often write your own articles?

I don't write articles because I have a vast number of contents that I had to distribute, but I do write things for Instagram posts, where I try to be very rigorous: make full leads, with all five questions, and make them very informative. If the text has an author value, we put a fragment of the text in quotation marks and we try to be original. I know that there are other mediums with large social media teams that make their own news for the networks. They see that right now a cat is very viral, saving itself from the eruptions of the Palma volcano, and they don't wait to ask anyone to make that news, but they do it themselves, although sometimes that news may never be seen on the home page.

This is what we know today as convergence. They are trying to form a hegemony between traditional media and the Internet, and we are still a little bit far from it.

With the aim of searching tracking, right?

Effectively. *La Vanguardia*, for example, hangs everyday emotional news about dogs and cats. They have a very powerful and specialized network team, and their strategy rely on searching tracking. When they detect a viral topic, they exploit it. There's a problem: to have subscribers you need traffic, it's like a funnel. If ten people visit your web, one of them will become a subscriber. For this to happen, you need these ten people, and everyone chooses the way to find them. The wider the funnel, the more future subscribers.

"To have subscribers you need traffic, it's like a funnel. If ten people visit your web, one of them will become a subscriber. For this to happen, you need these ten people"

So, which platforms give us more tracking?

70% of social traffic came from Facebook. It's said to be outdated, but it's

not. Twitter only matters for journalists, but it gives very little traffic (10%) and a lot of work. I would love to do funny threads, but if I kill myself to make a tweet maybe it has 200 clicks. That, for a newspaper like ours, is insignificant. Sometimes the automatic tweet is not as worked but gets 50 clicks. The energies must be highly valued. About Instagram, I think that it's a tool worth investing in, because it has links and a larger and younger audience, even if still doesn't give us that much tracking.

And TikTok for when?

We don't have a very organized strategy yet. I think it's an investment for the future if you want to attract young audiences. *The Washington Post* is doing a great job there, not generating traffic, but branding. They are positioning themselves in the minds of young people in the hope that tomorrow, when they need to read news, they will go to the *Post*. It's an approach from entertainment to information that I find very interesting.

Is it a tool for any content?

Not at all. There are things that cannot be explained in a video of tiktok, such as the uploads of the types of interest, because anyone will be interested and because explaining complex things in a more accessible way is not simple. You need a specific profile: a screenwriter capable to sell

these topics with some charisma and a little bit of humor.

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Antoni Maria Piqué: “I think [printed newspapers] have been given more life than they deserve”

Joan Gual Godó & Irene Poza López

Antoni Maria Piqué is a journalist who currently works as the projects manager for *El Nacional*. Considered a center-right medium generalist digital media, it deals with current issues such as politics, economics, society, among others. In the past, Antoni Maria Piqué has worked for Catalan newspapers such as *La Vanguardia* or *Ara*, and he was the director of *Diari de Tarragona* for over a year. Six years ago, he started working in José Antich's digital project, *El Nacional*. He defines the newspaper as the one which “has incorporated into [digital] journalism all the strategies and ways of working of the popular press”.

Despite being the projects manager, he also has the task of product development and works as a journalist publishing some articles. As he says, he spends many hours teaching younger people about the digital media. In addition, he is a professor at Pompeu Fabra University. We talk about digital journalism and ask him about topics such as paywalls, user participation, multimediality, immediacy, trustworthiness, and the future of online journalism.

You have worked in print newspapers, such as *La Vanguardia* or *Diari de Tarragona*. Now that you are working in *El Nacional*, an exclusively digital media, which would you say are the main differences between offline and online journalism?

There is a huge difference, amongst other things because, in print newspapers, all the work and processes end up in one single product, a physical newspaper made in a specific moment. However, in a digital media company, you are continuously working and publishing non-stop. This can seem an inconsequential difference, but from the work process' perspective, it's a whole different world. The skills needed by a journalist differ a lot from one side to the other, even though the basic skills, the essence of the profession, is common ground. The news is the same today as it was twenty years ago. But the way of catching the audience's attention, of informing them, is completely different; the consumption of information is completely different. Moreover,

print newspapers are a product that is disappearing; they are not in crisis, they are disappearing. Print newspapers don't work anymore, they no longer grow, neither their readers nor their influence or benefits. I think they have been given more life than they deserve. Anyway, the main difference between offline and digital journalism is the way of working. Because of the technology you use, the type of consumption the public adopts... It has nothing to do with print journalism, even if the essence of news doesn't change.

"Print newspapers are a product that is disappearing; they are not in crisis, they are disappearing."

You've talked about the skills a digital journalist must have. In your opinion, which are the most important ones?

You need to be much more tempestuous, much more able to immediately communicate your information, and through a wide range of platforms. A journalist who works for a print newspaper has no need to be present in public life in any other way than through the pieces he publishes in the newspaper. A journalist from a

digital medium must be present in social networks. You need to know how to speak in public, you need to know how to appear on camera, you need to have a minimum notion of editing audio, video, working with photographs, knowing which resources work and which don't... Everything has become much more sophisticated in that sense. In general, whatever skills that help you go faster are necessary. These are things that may seem as trivial as using a smartphone. For a paper journalist, being quick typing doesn't matter.

How does the financial model of *El Nacional* work?

El Nacional is financed 95% through advertisement, and 5% through the Club El Nacional, which is basically people affiliated with the newspaper that pay because they like what we do and want us to keep doing it. But that's a very scarce quantity, we live from online advertising.

Have you thought about implementing some kind of subscription method in case advertising stops being a source of sufficient revenues?

Advertising provides us with enough benefits, for the moment. Since we're the leaders, the ones with the higher quantity of single users and page views, we appear in every campaign of programmatic advertising.

Branded and promoted content work really well for us, since plenty of brands like our style, more direct and popular, always to the point, and they request us many products' diffusion campaigns. To do what we do with the information but do it with their products; that sells perfectly. And then, the typical display campaigns, the typical formats of digital advertising. We live from advertising; from the private one, for the most part, but also the public one.

El Nacional was created in March 2016, and quickly became the Catalan digital newspaper with the most audience.¹ In this sense, the events that took place in fall 2017, such as the Catalan referendum or the imprisonment of Catalan political leaders, were crucial in the rise of information consumption, especially through digital media. During this period, El Nacional had the lead with around five million users. According to OJD's data, it is still the leader amongst Catalan newspapers, with more than nine and a half million single users and 37 million views in September 2021.²

Going back to what we were talking earlier about the future of print

journalism, how do you see the future of digital journalism? Many companies are implementing paywalls since advertising is no longer enough. Do you think these subscriptions are the future of online journalism? From your point of view, are people willing to pay? And, if not, is it because of a lack of economic resources?

People are willing to pay if there's enough incentive, and this has diverse facets. Your disposition to pay is strictly associated with the brand's prestige. If The New York Times tells you to pay for what it's offering you, you find it logical, because it's The New York Times. Another factor is whether the information you offer is necessary or not. The willingness to pay, which is the crucial element here, is generated in different ways, but it's really difficult to make people pay. Not to make them pay 10 euros or to make them pay 1 cent, but to make them pay at all. Because you, as a newspaper, must offer a product that lives up to what people are paying. And readers often consider that information is -and must continue to be- a free thing. It was the same with football a couple of decades ago. Young people, have already been born in

¹¹ Franch, Pere; Guallar, Javier. «Diaris i revisites: panoràmica editorial i d'audiències a Catalunya (2016-2017)». Anuari de l'Observatori de Biblioteques, Llibres i Lectura, 2018, Vol. 5, p. 152-66 [Accessed: 29-10-2021].

²² Ojdinteractiva.es. 2021. Evolución Audiencia ELNACIONAL.CAT. [online] Available at: <<https://www.ojdinteractiva.es/medios-digitales/elnacional-evolucion-audiencia/totales/anual/5862/trafico-global/>> [Accessed: 29-10-2021].

this context: if you want to watch a football match, you pay for it, if you want to watch a movie, you pay for it. Contents are paid for. But it was a big fuss back then. The information must go through that process too, in order for people to get used to the fact that journalists need to eat every day, that we have families and we want to live from our job, and for this reason, we must charge readers. And it's these two things, both that journalists must live up to what we're asking readers for, and that readers must understand that what we offer is not free.

I think we're on track, people are getting used to paying. There will be one day when it will be the normal thing that if you want to read *El Nacional*, you must pay, and you pay. Not yet though. In addition, the whole organization of newspapers must be directed towards payment, and that's a lot of work. This is just the beginning, but we're headed in that direction. Newspapers, televisions, and radios depended, until now, on brands, which pay to display their products next to the news. That doesn't work anymore. Brands ask you to publish content to attract the public they are interested in, instead of the content people need to see, or that goes along with your editorial line. And a newspaper is not -or it shouldn't be- a machine to capture attention so that brands exhibit themselves next to your contents. A newspaper is an

actor of public life, of the things that make us a society, of the common purposes that bring us together. Advertising had worked well in that sense, but now brands demand things from you that you don't want to give. Whereas the audience doesn't; the audience might pay you if you do something they like, or might not if you don't, but don't have the interest brands have. They have citizens' interests, and journalism is in line with that, we're on the same game, so to speak, but brands aren't. This association that has been so fruitful for such a long time, between advertising and news, can be really toxic today. If we can get rid of that, the better.

"This association that has been so fruitful for such a long time, between advertising and news, can be really toxic today. If we can get rid of that, the better"

We'll come back to that shortly, but we wanted to ask about some of the characteristics of digital language. As for multimedia, to which extent is it important in *El Nacional*? Do you think it enhances the quality of journalistic pieces or, in contrast,

aiming to cover too many formats can be detrimental to this quality?

Personally, I think news pieces are not that flexible, the informative material is not as flexible as it seems. It's really hard to explain, for instance, a budgetary debate through a TikTok. Everything can be done better, things can be communicated in a more pleasant and friendly way, less tediously and densely, but there's a limit. Sometimes the excess of embellishing ornamentation doesn't help, doesn't let the substance of the information arise. I also think we must make an effort to learn to use these resources, social media, and different platforms, such as the iWatch, for example. We must learn to bring journalism to these platforms and devices. Somewhere in between these two aspects, there will be journalism. But, honestly, I truly believe that reading text, or listening to a voice, is much better and it's a fantastic way to explain things. Does multimedia help? Definitely. There's no doubt about that; multimedia can help. But it probably helps to capture attention, more than to hold it; it helps to draw attention, rather than to communicate substantial things. However, this is barely starting. Right now I see too much submission to platforms, and media companies think more about simply using the platform instead of about how to effectively communicate through that platform. There's plenty of work to

do, and that's your job, because my generation won't do it; when we try to do these things we don't get good results, we must let you do it.

With these new tools, immediacy is one of the requirements of digital journalism. How much importance does *El Nacional* place on this characteristic? Is analysis, by contrast, preferred?

Immediacy is crucial for us. In fact, one thing does not rule out the other. Being fast and tempestuous from the very first moment is one of the features of our brand. We are live; indeed, we have an important piece called "en directe". It's like a river, there all the information of the day goes by, it's like a balcony we offer people above this river of information. And it's one of the most checked and viewed pieces on our website. It's crucial if we want to compete, and it's a value that the audience looks for, that you can ask money for.

Before you were saying journalism must live up to what people want to consume. Do you think immediacy is enough? Or do people consider themselves entitled to free immediate information and, therefore, are willing to pay for more in-depth journalism?

In order to be a quick newspaper you must invest, you must invest in technology, you must invest in people and

training, hence you must charge the audience for it. Because it's a value, and you can put a price tag on it. If you don't complement that with analysis, with pieces that add context, that help you put the information in a half-term or long-term perspective, with research, it doesn't make much sense. Speed isn't quite useful if you can't put it in the broader context of life. This demands more time, it demands an expression that's not a twelve-second video, it demands more experienced people. Readers will be more willing to pay for material that gives them context and perspective rather than for immediacy, but, as I've said, they are two complementary things.

Which tools does *El Nacional* offer readers so that they can communicate with the media outlet? Can they, for example, leave comments on the website?

Users can contact us via email, phone, etcetera. They can leave comments, but just those registered, from whom we know their names and surnames. In the past, this option was available to everyone, but we had some legal problems due to comments made by readers through the tools that the newspaper provided them. So we've limited that function to people who say who they are, as in any civilized discussion or debate. To readers that are part of the Club El Nacional, we

also offer them events, gatherings, and roundtables with some of our journalists, and then they can ask and express their opinions directly.

And as for user-edited or user-generated content, where does the newspaper stand?

Readers can send us things via email, or tell us things -which they do- on social media. But there's not a great interaction between the audience and us, even though that's probably because we don't give them enough facilities to do it. At this point, while there are areas in which the project is more advanced, it is still quite underdeveloped regarding user participation. I think that, because of our personality, we're not that kind of newspaper. But still, it's a pending matter.

"Media companies think more about simply using the platform instead of about how to effectively communicate through that platform."

Do you think these participation instruments end up being a sheer marketing tool on some occasions? Or, by contrast, they are useful and should be boosted to take readers' opinions into account?

Frankly, I think there are very few readers who can join journalism and add something to it; it's not their job, neither do they have the knowledge or availability to do so. I would like to find some tool to make the most of the good things people have, such as the natural sense of justice, but that's a really difficult thing to do, I don't know how it could be done. I feel we've been fooled with that. This idea that the Internet would enable people to explain things to each other, this idea of citizen journalism, I think it's all a great illusion. It seemed something that could be achieved, but in the end, we don't know how to do it. We may find out someday, but for now, it doesn't work.

"We have lost readers' trust because of this, because many times we do not know how to separate our convictions, which everyone has, from work."

If El Nacional finds itself at the center of some controversy, is it addressed? Or if it makes a mistake, is it rectified?

Yes. That's our job. Not to rectify, but to explain things correctly. When we don't do that properly and people tell us, we amend it.

Related to what we were talking about multimedia before, do you think more polyvalence is required from journalists every time? And if so, can this negatively impact the final product's quality?

To the first question: definitely. To the second one, I think polyvalence is not a value in itself, just if it helps you work better with the information. If you ask for polyvalence only because you want to be on Twitter, it doesn't make much sense. Polyvalence is a virtue but it needs to be used properly. I want journalists to bring me news, not to be polyvalent. I can add polyvalence, but if you don't bring me news, I can't add that. It's important but overrated.

Do you think the audience trusts the media? How do you see this relationship between audience and media today?

I think trust is very low. The journalism of the last 15 years, more than having a clear, transparent, and public editorial line, which is really good, nobody pretends everyone to be neutral and objective, because this is totally inhuman, more than having an editorial line, we have been very partisan, very sectarian, we have not explained many things well... We have lost readers' trust because of this, because many times we do not know how to separate our convictions, which everyone has, from work. We

can't value a fact as very important because we like it, or it fits us, or it's what we think is convenient, people don't want us for that, people want us to tell them what's going on and help them make decisions, not to take them for them. In Spain, especially from the year 2000, of the first absolute majority of the Partido Popular (PP), journalism became very partisan, very sectarian, and this is very noticeable. Are there journalists who try their best? Lots of them. Are there journalists who do well? Definitely. But we also have the other side, and that's been very noticeable. The aim of journalism should be not believing the first thing that's heard, searching, researching, asking, turning things around, asking even more; sometimes two and two don't make four, but other times two and two do make four, not three and a half or four and a half as we would like. And we often don't do that. I could go on and on about a thousand cases in which journalism hasn't lived up to its responsibilities. And people do realize it. We don't want to be in a regime of little freedom, sometimes we can trade security for a piece of freedom, but people are not idiots. I get mad because I'm outraged by all this, and I'm upset because I didn't become a journalist to go through these things, and I hope you didn't either. We do our job well, we can make a living, we may not be millionaires, but people will live

better, and we will be able to sleep more peacefully, because if not it's a drama. We have politicians who are worth little, and we have a right to be a little better represented, and here journalism is crucial. I do not say this to discourage you, on the contrary; there are many things to do, there are tools to do it, before you had to buy a newspaper, now you open a blog, and you have it. The picture is super hopeful, I am an unrepentant optimist, but we need to know where we are.

Digital journalism and how the Internet changed our profession: *3/24* and *El Attelier*

Laia Piñar & Gemma Masó

The Internet supposed a revolution. It changed all, and that's for journalism too. The Internet created a new space where media entered and developed without knowing how. Certainly, with this online space, a new form of journalism, different as we used to know, began: digital journalism or web journalism. However, the Internet also became invaluable to journalists, being not only a source of stories but also one of the most useful tools for professionals in journalism.

We have interviewed two different types of media to comprehend how they deal with the internet demands. One of them is focused on publishing articles about fashion and the other one is a TV channel.

3/24 (read as three twenty-four) is the first 24 hours news TV channel in Spain. It belongs to Televisió de Catalunya, the public broadcasting network of Catalonia. *3/24* was born in 2003 as an initiative of the Catalan public television to develop digital terrestrial television in Catalonia. The channel operates as a regular full-time news and information channel, including news, traffic, sports and stock markets. The 24 hours news TV

channel plan was remade into a continuous information service which enabled it to offer content dedicated to science, society, history, etc. From *3/24* we were able to talk to the chief-editor David Izquierdo Salas who has been working on the channel for more than a decade.

El Attelier Magazine is an online magazine based in Madrid and it was created in 2013 by Luli Borroni, the director. Its main objective is to "talk about fashion as a lifestyle". Their articles show the influence of fashion in our lives, that is why they also embrace new designers. Another essential topics are sustainable projects, fashion and beauty with values and feminist empowerment. The feminist movement is expressed through every post and it gives voice to women who work hard for their dreams. Nevertheless, they write about fashion trends connected to the values of the magazine, such as ethnic fashion and social sustainability. We had the opportunity to talk to Marina Rodríguez, she is the community manager and deals with the organisation of social networks.

Digital language and media organization

Online journalism is a main source of information nowadays. Almost every company can produce news through the web and has evolved to this new organisation. Nevertheless, in the early 21st century, almost everyone takes journalism on the web for granted (Karlsson and Holt, 2016). This kind of production began in 1994 with The Electronic Telegraph.

In the case of immediacy in El Atelier Magazine, it is important to explain some current events as rapidly as possible. As immediacy refers to the nature and consequences of the faster pace of publication in web news (Karlsson and Holt, 2016). "In the posts published in the social networks it is essential to have topicality" argued Marina. Also there needs to be a relation with the subjects of the account. But, there are other topics that are not about current affairs, those articles should be interesting to the audience and can be posted whenever the magazine organises.

For instance, the selection of what appears in each publication is done through a calendar, to work with time, this helps to have a better organisation of the publications. First of all, if there is an event or something important, like a special day such as Halloween, the publication has to be related to Halloween. Or if there is a

runway of the Fashion Week, the content should be related to the Fashion Week. For example, in the case of The Fashion Week in Madrid, the publications during that week and the days before and after were about The Fashion Week. So, it is important to take into account what happens in that time to generate publications related to it and to have content about current events.

After the organisation of the calendar, they create content in Canva, because multimedia is an essential trait of this magazine. They produce images, videos or infographics. This item is basic in online journalism, which has not been a clear trend of online journalism until the possibility of offering streaming video through an acceptable band width (Díaz, 2014).

Through Instagram, they publish videos or reels, in order to have more acceptance by the audience. "The first thing we search is the photo, and afterwards I write the text", explains Marina. Sometimes they use informational text, if they are sharing a new talent or the events of the Fashion Week. But they can publish motivational phrases or another type of content which is not information.

The organization of the media network depends on the importance of the article. Not all the news are posted in instastories, but all the

posts are shared through that virtual space.

“Because it is something closely related to the followers and they will receive it faster”. This idea is linked to tempestivity, because instastories publications only stay for 24 hours, then they disappear. Tempestivity is conceived as the period of continuance of a news product, its relevance – the time for which we can make it available without its becoming obsolete, either considered as a discreet unit in itself (Díaz, 2014). Besides that, there is a tool from Instagram that they use to interact with their followers. In this case, Thurman would consider it as conversational interactivity, because it is the direct connection between readers and the ones who wrote the new and adaptive. The most relevant articles are shared in the posts, but there are other ones only shared in instastories. Depends on the significance of the subject. This magazine does not use any publicity through the media.

The community manager explains that social networks are a place of priority diffusion, “because social networks have become a part of our lives 100%”. She exposes that in her case, and a lot of people, acknowledge the news through social media by the publications of the accounts. So, it is one of the most relevant ways of communication for young people mostly.

Because younger people have nonetheless grown up in a digital media environment, that is why they are with a far greater range of pay services (apps, streaming services, video-on-demand) than older people, who have grown accustomed to an internet dominated by a culture of free (Fletcher and Nielsen, 2016). In this case, Marina concludes that it is essential to take care about what you publish and where.

Finally, hypertextuality is essential in the articles. It has to do with the possibilities of linking journalistic texts to other texts (Karlsson and Holt, 2016). In the articles, they have to insert one internal link and another external link minimum. Because we they Wordpress to write articles and Yoast SEO to be more visible. So, it is compulsory to put hyperlinking from information of another source and from their magazine. In the case of the posts in Instagram, if it has relation to an article on the web, they insert the link. The community manager explains that hypertextuality shows an important impact “because it will help users to read an article or our monthly magazine, we insert the link in every post for everyone to click and go to the web or the magazine”.

Business model

One of the main themes when it comes to analyzing media companies is their business model because the

source of funding affects the competitiveness of media firms, their abilities to adapt to changing environments and their sustainability (Picard, 2006).

Private media companies had based their revenue mainly on advertising, but in the past few decades they have been trying to develop pay models for news because advertising gains

alone are insufficient to sustain a journalistic corporation (Fletcher and Nielsen, 2017). In the case of *El Atelier Magazine* they found an alternative way to sustain their media company with advertising. As Marina explained, the way they understand publicity is by doing branded content. And they are not the only ones. Branded content has turned into one of the business model options along with paywalls or current advertising (Suárez-Sucre, 2016). Therefore the media that opt for this choice leave behind the traditional ads to transform them into part of their content. Offering content with implicit advertising can compromise the journalistic task, but in the *El Atelier Magazine* they are aware of this and try to offer articles about the brand or product “always as a report of quality other than mere advertising”.

As regards *3/24*, it’s different: it is a public channel in *Televisió de Catalunya*. As David expound, *3/24* is part of the *Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals (CCMA)*, a public media

corporation created by the *Generalitat de Catalunya*. In this case, being a public media company means that their financing model is mixed: more than half of its revenue comes from public funding through the *Generalitat*, while the rest comes from advertising and sponsorship both on the network and on the TV channel. The risk of the public financing model is being too attached to the ruling party. The basic mission of public media companies is to serve the cultural, social and political needs of their audiences and, with this, provide a common universal service (Picard, 2006). Even so, David assures that they are totally independent from the *Generalitat* because the institution does not interfere in their journalistic job.

Newsroom convergence and organization

A key concept in today’s journalistic world is convergence. By this we mean the process by which the different editorial teams are merged and integrated together. But it’s not that pretty as it seems, convergence is a business maneuver motivated only by the aim of increasing journalists’ productivity and reducing costs (Siapera and Veglis, 2012).

David, from *3/24*, assures that newsroom convergence is essential because, even though they are organized in different sections, all of them

collaborate with each other. “We are close and in our newsroom. The social media team knows Twitter very well and therefore when there is a tweet that provides us with important information they send it to us, and so do we”, he says.

Marina agrees with David explaining that “in El Attelier Magazine convergence is relevant because we are constantly generating new ideas”. In this fashion media, the journalists, and also the director, participate in different jobs and coordinate with one another to do their best.

Marina also reiterates that the newsroom has to be a comfortable space where communication is the clue. “We cannot be writing the same articles”, laughs about it.

In what the digital era refers, El Attelier hadn't had any problem with being online, in fact, they were born online so the Internet is inherent to that team. This is different on 3/24. “Now in our newsroom there are a lot of people who are digital natives, but for many years none of us were”, explains David. In this situation of transition to a more digital environment, the newsroom of 3/24 had to learn all about this “new universe”. However, like anyone else on the planet, all the journalists of 3/24 were part of the digital and technological world in their private lives, so, as David tells, “adapting was not as tough”.

Production routines

Work routines are fundamental in a profession like journalism. On 3/24 David explains that they have two meetings throughout the day. The first one is around 10am to talk about how to address current events and which news are important. The other meeting is at 5pm and they value the evolution of the morning news, if some are still current and if there is new information to cover. In El Attelier is different because the information they cover does not require topicality. Marina says that they meet once a week, “on Mondays at 14pm, in order to explain the new ideas and to share the subjects for the articles to publish during the week in the web or in the monthly magazine sent to the subscribers.

To produce their content, 3/24 and El Attelier are very different too. In the fashion magazine, as Marina says, all the articles are from their research or about something which has been widespread through the media. “We also write about new trends”, adds the community manager. 3/24, on the other hand, is registered in news agencies like EFE, Agència Catalana de Notícies, Reuters, ... “We rely on news agencies because they have credible and contrasted information, so their teletypes are 100%, or maybe 95%, reliable”, explains David.

Yet when it comes to the Internet, the chief-editor of the channel shows

himself more skeptical: "in the Internet maybe it is 50% reliable, we have to check the information to ensure that it is truthful."

When it comes to immediacy, the two media also approached it differently. For El Attelier immediacy is important when something has happened, "for example The Fashion Week", clarifies Marina. But their main content is not about current events. In return, immediacy is 3/24 production, "we do the news for the now", explains David.

Strategies, transparency, trust and objectivity

Another essential trait in the digital media is transparency and it has taken the place of objectiveness. Both transparency and accountability are essential to legitimate news. For instance, media transparency demands media companies to "make information about editorial processes, as well as the journalistic actors involved in the making of news, available to the public" (Fenger et al., 2014:21).

In this case, 3/24 and El Attelier Magazine are in agreement. On one side, David explains confidently that on 3/24 "transparency is one of the most important items because it gives credibility". Furthermore, he exposes that they have the obligation to explain what is happening without hiding anything. Even though they use

some filters with the images, because they put beside the pictures that do not share extra information or the ones which can hurt someone's sensibility. For example, when the attack on the Rambles of Barcelona happened, they thought that the images of the van hitting walking people did not need to be on TV. On the other side, Marina considers transparency as a relevant characteristic in El Attelier Magazine. "To explain the truth is very important", she says without any doubt. Next, Marina continues manifesting her dissatisfaction with the way media organisations take into account transparency. Her conclusion is that a lot of times the procedure of transparency is not done. She contrasts this to El Attelier Magazine, which is not a big company and shares the truth. They do not gain anything if they lie to their public, related to the community manager.

Indeed, transparency is considered the best way to catch new audiences and to make them stay, because this item is linked to the value of the news and the truthfulness. The strongest and most secure option seems to be to enhance quality and credibility (Laminante, 2020).

Moreover, David sympathises with this idea. 3/24 catches the audience by being credible, "this is the best strategy", David resolves. Because this company conceives that its public

turns on their channel to acknowledge fresh, contrasted and corroborated news. He completely disagrees with sensationalism, so that they tell all the information as it is. To that extent, he is convinced that people need to know what happens, because that is what journalists are for: "we have to tell what is happening without hiding anything". Sometimes, they get information but cannot share the source, so it is essential to respect his or her "off the record" and only a judge can compel to unveil the source. But this is not how El Attelier Magazine catches its public.

As William Casey, the director of computer-assisted reporting at *The Washington Post* exposed there are two types of generating content, one with the embracement "of newspaper readers with a need to see publications to which they normally don't have access", and the other one based on "those with a specific interest in particular subjects or policy areas" (mentioned in Driscoll et al., 2005: 15). The one chosen by el Attelier is the second one. "We catch the audience publishing the content we like", remarks Marina. She continues explaining that El Attelier Magazine is different to a generalist model because it has a wide variety of content, but everything is linked to the magazine values. Which are the ones related to fashion, lifestyle, and embracing new talents. All of them are

already defined by the magazine. Also, it is focused on women and embracing them. So, they leave out a lot of topics, because they do not consider them as a part of the magazine. Here we can observe the function of the journalists as gatekeepers, they filter and transform the set of daily world events into a limited number of news articles (Shoemaker, 1991: 1).

She underlines the importance of being true to yourself and the values of the magazine. As a consequence, the audience who stays will like the same content you write about.

Subsequently, the community manager shares that it is not useful to generate content that does not follow your values, in order to have a big account and to have more followers. In this case, El Attelier Magazine does not have their main objective as attracting new subscribers in order to become a bigger media. Even though they know that they have to attract subscribers, but that they need to retain them as well: they are a volatile resource and competition is hard (Diaz, 2021).

Audiences

The interaction with the audience is a relevant construction in the organisation of every media company. The bidirectionality and the constant feedback between the users and journalists has become a main characteristic. Interactivity involves various aspects

of user activity and participation in the processes of consuming, contributing to, and disseminating news afforded by the web (Karlsson and Holt, 2016).

On one hand, 3/24 and El Atelier Magazine share their ways of connecting to its audience. The channel has an audience helpline and an email address where the audience can send suggestions and reviews about the channel and our work. Twitter and Facebook are also channels where people can talk to us. The Atelier Magazine, has also an email address where you can send your opinion or to ask any doubt. They also have Instagram to contact them.

On the other hand, bidirectionality is also used in both media. David informs that they believe in the bidirectionality between media and audience, but sometimes they fail and are grateful that the audience helps them do better. It happens the same to El Atelier Magazine, they accept any kind of comment, good or bad ones. "The good ones are completely accepted and the bad ones are received in order to improve and keep moving forward", explained the community manager with a smile.

In addition, 3/24 goes an extra mile. They use content that the audience has sent them, "always with their permission". If there are users who one day decide that there is a newsworthy

fact and want to record or report it, they are 100% grateful for the help.

However, it is their job and responsibility to ensure that the information of a user who is not a journalist meets the requirements of veracity.

Conclusion

Finally, these interviews have helped us to understand how different media companies work regularly. Also they have exposed that in the Internet world, traditional media were (and some still are) challenged to give answers to the demands of modern communication and started seeking ways to maintain their leadership in the news business. Both David and Marina agree on how the Internet changed journalism and not in a bad way. The two of them think the digital world has provided this profession with new tools to improve their task.

As a consequence, it represents the evolution of digital journalism and how those media organisations have adapted themselves to this new era. But, the media is not done adapting to this novel environment, times are changing fast and there are more interfaces created daily.

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Ana Pantaleoni: “The web is the priority because that is where readers are”

Ana Pantaleoni is editor in chief of *El País* in Barcelona and responsible for the Catalan edition of the newspaper. Pantaleoni has written about health, gastronomy, fashion and technology and has worked for a decade in the “Ciberpaís” technological supplement. Pantaleoni was graduated in Humanities, *El País* master, PDD in the IESE business school and journalism professor at Universitat Pompeu Fabra.



Claudia Soler & Arnau Vidal

How did you start working in *El País* and what is your role nowadays?

I studied Journalism at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra. I did not finish it because I wanted to work for *El País* and I applied for its master. I knew I wanted to work and live in Barcelona and not stay in Madrid so they let me do my practises in their Catalan editorial staff working in local themes. When I ended my practises, they of-

fered me to work in their new technological supplement called “Ciberpaís”. It had a very innovative view in technology and its advantages, its impact on people, how companies were using it and economical and human capital.

At a certain point, I started working for *Dominical*, too (another old supplement from *El País*). I loved the cooking and fashion themes. When “Ciberpaís” grew up, the newspaper

started its introduction on the website. It was a time where I was working a lot and when my first daughter was born I decided to give up journalism. Suddenly, *El País* offered me to work on the website. It was the best work schedule at that time, so I decided to stay. Nobody believed in the website in those days. Everything was new for everyone. This was fifteen or sixteen years ago...

I have been working in the Catalan editorial staff since then, imposing the importance of the website. I am the website responsible for all the information in the Spanish language that is published from Catalonia to the rest of the Spanish country's web. We started an informative Catalan edition called "El País Cat".

Nowadays it is an edition focused on Catalan culture and I am responsible for it.

You worked for a decade in the "Ciberpaís" technological supplement. How was the digital world entrance against the traditional printed newspapers and how has *El País* adapted to the journalism digitalization?

El País is one of those newspapers who were strongly committed to digitalization. Those new websites that do not produce printed news can adapt better than us. Although it has been a difficult transition because of the paper and website coexistence,

people have adapted to it and have understood how important the website is without forgetting the paper relevance. The printed edition has relevance.

Although it loses readers every day, there are people that still buy and consume it and we must connect with them. Obviously, the website is the priority because that is where readers are.

One of the digital journalism characteristics is the direct interactivity between the media and the readers. How do you keep this interactivity?

We have comments and all kinds of tools to know if people like or read what we are creating and publishing.

Do you think that in the digital era it is harder to maintain credibility and transparency towards readers?

Yes, we have lived through a period of bad press, I mean, you notice that a few years ago it seemed cool to be a journalist, but now they judge you depending on the media where you work, which is hard. In the end, we are journalists working for a newspaper but there may be editorials that do not represent the journalist and there is nothing wrong with that. I do not always agree with *El País'* editorials. Moreover, when I see things I do not agree with, I comment on them in the meetings, I express my opinion and

there is not any problem. Now this aspect has been lost, they see you as a soldier of the right wing, the left wing, the independence...

Do you think social networks such as Twitter are positive for journalism because they create feedback with the readers or not?

In the end, Twitter is a closed addictive world. I realize that other social networks such as Facebook or Instagram let you reach readers more than Twitter. We always talk about Twitter, but sincerely you will arrive more to the public using other social networks. However, it is true that Twitter offers you everything that is happening and people's reaction with immediacy. Politicians and journalists use it: the politician makes politics via Twitter and the journalist does the same. People go and search what the journalist has said without needing face-to-face work. It is a very closed world. For journalists, it is important to know that Twitter is a possibility, but there are others too.

"Immediacy is for very important news, but we must cover other things too"

You have just said one of Twitter's characteristics is immediacy. Do you think social networks, where everyone whether they are professional journalists or not can publish all kinds of information are dangerous for journalism?

I do not think so. The covid-19 pandemic has proved it. In such a difficult time, where we were all worried and there were press conferences on Saturday at two o'clock in the afternoon or at midnight, I personally think that it was proved that people were ready to search information from health specialists or people with credibility, which had a lot of readers. People know where to get informed. The reader knows where to go. The results show this fact.

Nowadays information can be published quickly. Do you think this forces journalists to have more immediacy and prevents them from contrasting and deepening information?

Nowadays, this is a common discussion. I personally think immediacy is for very important news. If Jordi Pujol dies tomorrow, we must be the first to publish it. We must play with this immediacy, not with other types of it. If a volcano explodes, we must be there covering it, but we must cover other things too: offer a scientific opinion from a specialist, explain how people are living it, offer the best multimedia

images we can take from it, offer live information... Our requirement as a newspaper is very wide. Immediacy is another point from the pack that we are offering to the reader.

Nowadays journalists want to be the first to share the news due to the hard rivalry and the demand for immediacy. Do you think that it can affect the objectivity and the quality of the news?

Yes and no. You publish the information first, but then you improve, I mean, if it is very fast information, you can make mistakes. I have done important cock-ups such as misspellings, no matter how focused you are. This is an advantage of the web: in half a second you can correct it, they always make a screenshot, but in half a second you have overcome it.

In your opinion, which aspects should digital journalism have?

Digital journalism needs to have immediacy, I mean, you have to be very aware of what is happening, it forces you to track the social media constantly. Every day there is something that you are not seeing and that is catching people's attention, that is where you have to catch the information that was not in your daily agenda. Digital journalism has this aspect we were not used to, many times it prevails the agenda.

Hypertext, multimedia and interactivity are some of the main characteristics of digital journalism. In your opinion, which ones are the central ones?

In *El País* we use the same language in the printed edition and in the digital one, but we change the headline because they usually do not have the same translation to the web. Journalism on the web needs much more than the subject-verb-predicate structure. The perfect news in digital journalism should have video, should include links, should have related information and should be shared in all social networks, basically.

***El País* has experienced its editorials' convergence since the appearance of the digital era. Do you think that this decision was made to improve communicative aspects or it was done with corporate goals?**

Maybe I only see the bright side, but I think that the long-term aim is that everyone who is working in the newspaper must have good stories, therefore it should not be important if the news appear in the digital edition or the printed one, I mean, if you have a good story the platform stays in a second term.

Do you think that information that can hurt the readers' sensibilities has to be avoided or that the task

for journalism is to show harmful realities?

We have a very clear manual of style and usage and we take on it. We have it very integrated: if I have any doubt I check the manual of style. The main goal is to publish information that is true and can provide something to the audience and, mostly, to share news.

“A responsible journalism is the one that provides news, and the truth is that news do not always like.”

Should responsible journalism act as a watchdog or it is better not to share news that can harm the establishment?

A responsible journalism is the one that provides news, and the truth is that news do not always like.

In *All the News That's Fit to Sell: How the Market Transforms Information into News*, (2004), James T. Hamilton asserts that money affects the quality of media information. Do you agree? Why do you think money is important in this job?

Doing good journalism is very expensive, many resources are needed. This does not mean that a media with less

economical resources does journalism with fewer quality. We are talking about digital journalism which requires video, infographics, data treatment, photography...

Do you think that a pay model is the solution to the decline of the media?

It is the solution. We are doing a job which has to be paid, as any other. If you pay more or less is a different aspect, but the job that we are doing has to be paid as it is worldwide, as it happens with music, for example, and everything. Even so, it is hard to make readers pay for information, it is what it is, it has to be done and that is a step that we all had to take.

Nowadays journalists are asked to be more versatile (they need to know how to work with different formats). Do you think that it is an essential aspect in digital journalism?

I do not think so. I still believe that there must be someone who is in charge of the video, a journalist who looks for the news, writes it and makes the script with the videographer, another person who takes care of the podcast, etc. I believe in teamwork, but everyone should do whatever they know the best. I do not believe in “orchestra journalism”.

Do you think that journalists have had to build up new skills to adapt to digital journalism? Which ones?

I do not see it, I mean, nowadays journalists need to know how to edit, they need to have ideas...I still believe in specialization.

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Ruperta Steinwender: "I would not call it a danger, but an opportunity for freedom of opinion and self-empowerment."

The editor-in-chief of *Das Querformat* about business models in their company, the permanent change in journalism and the challenges of a new medium.

Elizabeth Michalek

Ruperta Steinwender, 34 years old, is the chief editor of the magazine *Das Querformat* and also owner of the marketing agency "convoz". She studied European ethnology and media in Graz and is a trained academic media specialist. *Das Querformat* is a new, open and tolerant magazine with special focus on the queer scene in Austria.

What is your exact position at *Das Querformat*?

So, I am the editor in chief there and I am basically included in all the tasks. For example, planning and conception of the magazine, but also writing articles. I am also responsible for the team leadership and coordination. Furthermore, business activities like ad sales are in my jurisdiction. And last but not least networking. This is an important part in this job.

What does the magazine "*Das Querformat*" stand for and what is the intention behind it?

Das Querformat ushers in a new phase in the queer Austrian media landscape. It is the magazine for an open and tolerant society. We look behind the scenes, ask questions and are the mouthpiece for queer messages - while also entertaining.

An interesting fact about your magazine is that you hire a lot of young people. Is there a specific reason for it?

Yes, there are several reasons why. One of the is the "Promotion of young journalists" in cooperation with the ÖH FH Joanneum Graz. With our magazine and the cooperation, we offer the opportunity to gain practical experience. We also pair already experienced journalists with young journalists for joint contributions, so that knowledge is passed on in practice. I also take a lot of time for detailed feedback loops when the contributions are submitted. The "learning" factor is very central to our project and accordingly important to me.

So far, about 40 people have contributed regularly or to individual editions, half of them is between 20 and 30 years old and the other half is made up of 15 people between 30 and 40 years old and five people between 40 and 57 years old. In other words, we have a very good mix of experience and age in our magazine. This mix in turn is a great enrichment for the team and offers different approaches and perspectives for the contributions.

Journalism has changed over the years. In the meantime, online journalism has become indispensable. Would you say that the job of a journalist has also changed as a result? If so, to what extent?

Yes, there are huge changes! Journalists can publish reports online very up-to-date and inform the readers therefore immediately. Due to the Web, we have more design options with different media formats like videos or sound. They can be combined with text and images in contrast to print, which makes it way more appealing to the readers. If there is a mistake for instance, adaptations and updates to articles can be made very easily and quickly. There is no chance to fix errors that easily with print products. Linking people, older articles, sources, other media or even social media is a great part of online journalism. Due to online journalism, we can

reach more people on a faster way, also because of the links I just mentioned. However, the focus and quality of the work can tend to get lost due to the pressure to "publish everything quickly". Often, we are expected not only to produce the text, but also to photograph or film at the same time and to take care of image or video editing afterwards. The scope of a journalist's work has thus increased tremendously, and we must have way more skills than 50 years ago.

During my course, we also talked about business models in journalism. *Das Querformat* allows their readers to choose an individual amount as a subscription payment. What is the intention behind this?

Das Querformat should be accessible to all, regardless of individual financial situations. Therefore, our subscribers decide for themselves what amount of money is affordable for them. Our claim is to carry information and knowledge to the outside. In this sense we also have an educational mission. In my opinion, knowledge should be available to everyone, regardless of their income or financial situation.

You also allow readers to access the articles online. Why is it important to you that they are free to read?

As I already said, we want to make the information accessible to everyone, which is why a large part of the articles can also be read online and free of charge. Since the print edition entails significantly higher production costs, there is the subscription model mentioned above. Online, we will remain free for the time being.

Many online media use a comment function to enable the participation of their readers. I noticed that this is not possible on the *Das Querformat* website. Is there a reason for this?

No, there is no particular reason for that. In the user experience design process, we didn't consider the comment feature. However, it is a good input that we will discuss in the team.

Do you see any dangers in the increased participation of readers through web journalism? What are the downsides of today's media world?

I would not call it a danger, but an opportunity for freedom of opinion and self-empowerment. Through participation, a wide variety of perspectives can be presented and discussed. Of course, there come also downsides of the today's media world like the hate on the net. Speaking of the shadow sides, I also have to mention trolls, fake news and the manipulation that can be made.

What factors do you think a medium should have in order to be of high quality?

So, there are many factors! First of all, it should have a critical and an objective view on the topics. The products of the medium need to be well researched using trustworthy sources. The chief editor and its editorial team must be willing for reflection, self-criticism, and constant questioning for their work. With this there should also be no fear of criticism within the team or from readers. Without criticism the work would not get better. In my opinion defining the editorial line and values is also important and should be lived in practice constantly. In today's world layout and editing is as important as ever before. That's why lots of effort should also be put in this field by a media company. I almost forgot to mention the independency of a medium, also in a political sense! This might be one of the most important factors, but also a difficult one, when one thinks of ad sales, fundings and donations.

The first issue of "Das Querformat" was not published until January 2021, in the middle of a pandemic. How did the pandemic affect the work of the editors? What changes have there been as a result?

Our first editorial meetings took place exclusively online via zoom, as well as most interviews and the research for

the first articles. Although we worked very closely together in the team and were in constant exchange, there was a first face-to-face meeting, respecting the covid-measures of course, only in the summer during an editorial meeting and retreat in Vienna. I have to say that coming together like this really intensified the dynamics in the team so much.

Do you believe in the future of print journalism?

In my opinion, print journalism has a future in the area of niche topics. People like to have, for instance, finance or lifestyle magazines in their hands. I am alluding to the haptic experience here. The tradition of displaying them in Cafés, studios, at the hairdresser or in concept stores will remain. Concerning the news, I have a different opinion. I think that they will mainly be consumed online due to the actuality and the "live" feature the internet can provide for the users. Print is too slow. We live in a fast world, so we want also to consume the news in a fast way and always be on the pulse of time.

Would you say that transparency and objectivity are promoted or rather endangered by online journalism?

So first of all, it is important to learn how to critically question and assess content. There are and were also print

media that disseminate manipulative, false, non-independent or non-transparent information. That's why I see online media as an opportunity to promote transparency because, for example, comment functions allow everyone to express their opinion, react to content, and share facts and information.

You hear that in the media world and in journalism, people are trying to cut corners. How does that work in your magazine? Do you finance yourself completely without advertising? What are the dangers of the frequent cost-cutting program in newspapers/magazines in general?

We finance ourselves through grants and advertisements. There are indeed some dangers when there is not enough money available for a news product. Just to mention some quickly, unfortunately the quality can suffer under it, when trips to interviews or the research, as well as fees cannot be paid. Besides you reach less people without financial resources.

What are the difficulties of running a new medium and what do you wish for the future for "Das Querformat"?

As I already mentioned we depend on fundings and promotion, so we hope that our sponsors will fund us for many years of course. Since there are

already so many mediums on the market about nearly every niche topic, it is also hard sometimes to stand out. However, I think that with our open and tolerant product we will manage to do so. A wish for our future in *Das Querformat* is more financial support to be able to produce a higher circulation and to be able to provide financial means for fees.

Alberto Molina Arce: “The future of journalism is in its past”

Thanks to the interview made to Alberto Molina Arce and Samuel Negredo Bruna, two complementary points of view address and deepen the importance of digital journalism and its components, its design and the future that awaits this profession. One perspective from the online editorial designer and the other, from an academic of the subject for a more complete and enriching approach.

Sofia García, Marion Rits

Alberto Molina Arce studied Journalism at the University of Navarra, and collaborated as a student in the organization of the Malofiej International Infographic Awards and the ÑH Journalistic Design Awards. He worked in newspapers in the area of visual journalism in the Design sections of El Mundo (Madrid), El Correo (Bilbao) and Las Provincias (Valencia). He is currently working at Errea Comunicación, a studio dedicated to newspaper, editorial, graphic and web design, and journalistic consulting directed by Javier Errea.

How would you introduce yourself?

Well, I work in Errea, a design studio, but because paper press production declined, we went from having teams of designers, for example, to not hiring as many consultants. Well, we have mutated to something else, more communication, with the same idea of telling things. I am a journalist, I have studied journalism even though I say I am a designer, I am an

infiltrator. I dedicate myself above all to what is graphic design itself and to everything that has to do with data visualization, editorial design and digital design.

When do you think the breaking point is given to give way to digital journalism?

For some years. It is true that everything that has been entering, we are doing things, for example in El País, through the narrations on different screens, they use digital narration in a way that until now had not been done. We now understand that digital journalism is not only putting what is written in digital, it is not a repository of what is printed. In this enrichment of the stories, infographics for example, have an important role and at the beginning of the pandemic they have helped to explain what certain things were like that were previously captured in the abstract or were more complicated to understand. El Cor-

reo, El País, are examples of newspapers that have been developing in this area for some years.

Web design is fundamental to online journalism; do you think it enhances participation?

There are two blocks of thought, those that think that participation is important and those that are not, and of course it is, but a participation not from the point of view of "walking around", but with the digital they help you to solve with the data of the user to generate information. Participation per se, creating comments or such does not appeal to me very much. It highlights a much more interactive type of participation of course, digital has helped a lot in this regard, not limited to asking surveys on the street.

How does the resource of immediacy work from online editorial design?

Well now in general everything has been invented, all journalists work with redone models, because there are not many options; in the sense of making a report opening with a news item or opening with a photo and arranging it in a different order, but there are not many options, especially if it is very immediate. Here comes a question, digital journalism has to be all immediacy or it can be

slower, because there are other networks for the immediate. In the field of design, it is impossible to make a very broad development in digital in a very short time, digital design contributes when it makes sense with the narration and contributes with the information.

What do you think the future beholds on digital journalism?

For example, the New York Times, everything it does, sets the trade and the direction to go. One of his recent reports mentions the importance of the visual, doing things visually; on the other hand, they mention how to take advantage of what is printed today. Does it make sense to print yesterday's news? I do not know. I don't think the newspaper has to be slow or all about analysis and opinion, but it doesn't have to be immediacy and news either.

The Guardian, for example, in the midst of the pandemic relaunched its weekend print magazine, it seems paradoxical, but the more modern we are, the more we want the old, the paper and the nostalgia of a printed newspaper. Nor do we invent anything new, what has to be done needs to be done well in the measure of the possibilities, have a good narrative, good resources; otherwise, they pass us by, because now there is a lot of competition.

“Nor do we invent anything new, what has to be done needs to be done well in the measure of the possibilities, have a good narrative, good resources”

What are the most important aspects for designing a web journal?

The first and for example, now that El País has just been redesigned in digital, the typography is important, it is essential that it looks good and has personality, the textual aspect is marked by the typography, I am not telling you that they are all very expensive pieces of typography, but it cannot be all Google forms, there is more range.

On the other hand, the subject of the image, although it seems classic, is very important. I'm talking about classic things that you need to take care of the basics. The infographics to see the narration is also necessary, but they are always resources at the expense of the story. Doing the basics well is much more.

What is the relevance of multimedia and hypertext?

Well, it happens with newspapers that do infinite scrolling, and one goes to the next and so on. But it depends on the objective, if the newspaper wants you to visit its page and its individual

pages, in an infinite scroll it tells them more. There are others that let you, as a user, choose because you know what you want. It depends on the strategy, but making a good hyper-linking strategy is necessary.

Biggest, most important changes from the beginning of your career till now?

I haven't been that long, huh! Well, my dream in its day was to make newspapers, but they are no longer made as before. You have to reconnect with the audience and in all media. The director of the newspaper El País named one of his talks as "The death of paper and how to enjoy it", whatever remains if you have to die, you have to do it while having a good time and for that you have to do things with humor and in a good way. Technological changes, the media and social networks such as Twitter or Instagram, and it is true that the media are starting to get on the subject recently. I believe that everything has yet to be done and there is still a way to go from its path.

We do not usually think that a subscription to a digital newspaper can give us something, but if we all have a subscription to Netflix and for example, I asked in a class how many had a subscription to a medium and of the 12 they only had 2, which were from their parents. It is necessary to reconnect with people, to go beyond

mere information, the future of journalism is in its past and it makes sense to write well again.

What is the importance of visual resources on online media for the audience?

The media cannot be Instagram either to understand us, it cannot be a thing of doing “swipe” and that's it, but neither can it be something that does not attract people, that does not connect with the audience. Well, you have to reconnect a little with people and specifically, in digital journalism, that would be that, connect with people and explore that field of storytelling that the internet has, very different from paper. Each medium has limitations and possibilities, so it is knowing how to take advantage of them, typography, photography, video, they are very important.

Samuel Negrodo Bruna:
“Media nowadays cannot rely on one single revenue stream”

Samuel Negrodo Bruna has a PhD in Communication and was an Academic Coordinator of the International Media Program of the aforementioned Faculty, supervising exchanges of students in North Amer-

ica, Asia-Pacific and Africa, and Visiting Fellow of Cardiff University. His research focuses on digital news audiences, including the digital divide; in journalistic modalities and formats native to the internet, such as those that integrate audiovisual, participation and direct, as well as in the possibilities of interactive media for multilingual information and in minority languages. Now he is an Assistant Professor of Journalism at the Faculty of Communication of the University of Navarra.

Do you think ‘immediacy’ is the most important aspect for a journalist?

Yes, one of the most important ones. It is an important aspect of digital journalism.

Which is the importance of hypertext, multimodality and participation?

I think hypertext and multimedia are taken for granted, currently. These have been features that have defined digital journalism for a long time, but I think that they no longer do so. Even though some of the traditional media are adapting the online given, they do not remember those features although they are the defining features and have been the defining features in academia for the last 25 years.

Do you think online media has influenced the quality of journalism?

Online media offers the possibility for everyone to post and write online. Not only the ordinary citizen but also people or companies that want to cause harm, unfortunately. They can use digital media not for the good, but in a bad way. So that way journalism/journalists had to build a shield against the damages of some of the evils of digital media.

At the same time, online media made it possible for journalism to become available for many more people. For example, people who don't or can't buy written newspapers. It also enabled more diversity of voices, which is one of the main features of digital media, and people can read articles more directly. It has its good and its bad aspects.

What are the biggest, most important changes from the beginning of your career until now?

I was a trainee in digital newsrooms around the year 2000. At that time, the metrics and the real time measurement of audiences was not as important as it is today. Also social media was not that important as a way to access news as it is today. I would say that those are the main changes that I have seen. Also, when I worked on my PhD thesis from 2008 till 2012, I had to do research about online videos. It was already popular back then,

but not in comparison with all the OTT, over the top video platforms, that we have today. The consumption online is still dominated by text and pictures/photographs. Currently video is everywhere, especially for younger audiences.

What are the most important changes from printed to digital journalism?

The main aspects that changed for newspapers and magazines is periodicity: the deadlines they used to have in printed media have been substituted by less strict deadlines. When you have something to publish, you don't have to wait until the next issue of a newspaper or magazine to be published, you can immediately publish it online. Also how to convey the value of written/printed journalism online when you no longer focus on selling an issue, a finished product. Nowadays newspapers and magazines try to charge for content, to sell subscriptions.

“Digital Journalism has evolved, grown and matured so much in the last 25 years, so I think we have seen its evolution, especially for print/written media”

What do you think the future beholds on digital journalism?

Digital Journalism has evolved, grown and matured so much in the last 25 years, so I think we have seen its evolution, especially for print/written media. It's true that audiences for audiovisual media for television are still mainly offline media so I guess that the main changes in the years ahead may come in the field of broadcast journalism. Therefore, how radio news and especially television news are influenced by the internet and how they provide. Because currently radio and television outlets basically provide the internet newspapers online with mediums. I guess that this is going to change. Although, I still think that there is room for evolution in the field of broadcast journalism online.

Which is the business model, and the reader revenue model, of the media you analyze?

I have just published an article on this topic with some other professors. We have found that the media nowadays cannot rely on one single revenue stream/on a single source of income. They need to diversify their source of media, and we have found that media that are well established, have the capacity and the potential to develop several revenue streams. They are more diversified than smaller digital news outlets, maybe younger outlets

that have not been able to develop so many revenue streams. So I think that users paying for content is a good thing because it improves the independence of the media but at the same time it can't be the only revenue stream. Most media their general interest is to attract as many readers/users as possible, because that enables them to continuously advertise and become a premium outlet for advertising which is a very important source of income. They also need to diversify other kinds of streams such as e-commerce, selling tickets to events, selling products, ... and in general also organizing events themselves, providing training, consulting or communication services to other companies. We found out that the more revenue streams a media outlet has, the better it can assure its sustainability. Paying for content can address very different strategies: from paying walls to micropayments or subscriptions with added value. Although, not all the mechanisms guarantee journalistic independence in the same way.

What's the most important topic you talk about and teach in your classes?

That's a good question! I think it definitely has to do with 'searching', working with sources of information, finding the sources on the web, and also the use of graphic and audiovisual content. This is something that is

often hard to understand and implement because it requires to be very correct and accurate. This is crucial for the credibility of information and to distinguish your profession of work as a journalist from any kind of content. No one knows if something is true or false. So the process of identifying sources, assessing sources, etc. and the process of the journalist, writer, reporter, editor in order to provide the reader with the right information, is very important. I think that being transparent and aware of the process are the most important aspects within digital. It's also important for a future as a journalist, more than the use of a specific tool.

In Conversation with TLDR News, the YouTube Journalists

This interview with Jack Kelly, CEO and Founder of TLDR News and Ben Blissett, Lead Writer and Head of Live and Podcasts at TLDR News explores topics such as media convergence and organisation, digital language and trust in journalism in the context of producing journalistic content on YouTube.



Sonal Bhundia, Ella Jayson & Rebecca Browne

Founded in 2017, TLDR News has rapidly expanded to become one of the most recognisable YouTube creators of journalistic content in the UK, reaching over 544,000 subscribers and 80,018,830 views as of writing. As we sat down with Jack Kelly, the CEO of the agency who established TLDR whilst studying at university, we gained an insight into the world of digital journalism particularly from an executive perspective. Likewise, Ben

Blissett was able to offer his experience as a lead writer and tailoring content to meet the needs of TLDR's young and international audience.

Media convergence and organisation

To begin the interview, we discussed media convergence and organisation, drawing upon Jenkins' (2006) description of media convergence as a

process which impacts the production and consumption of content. Jack outlined the 'variety of phases' that must take place, especially in the editing process to ensure that content is clearly summarised and understandable for their intended audience. This involves input from all areas of the TLDR organisation, ranging from 'lead writers' to 'contributors' that are geographically located all over the world as well as the 'animating team'. In particular, Jack focused on the 'clean perspective' of the animation team that were described as 'a good kind of test market' and 'touchpoint' to ensure clarity.

Ben reiterated this point, adding that the animation team acts as a 'good sounding board like a normal viewer'. These statements highlight how TLDR operates in a collaborative manner to enable clear channels of communication and constructive feedback, regardless of one's position in the organisation. As Ben aptly concluded, TLDR aims to use 'a wide array of sources from a combination of people', revealing the importance of varied perspectives to inform to help the editing process in the creation of TLDR content.

After these comments, we moved on to further discuss TLDR's business model and organisational framework, with emphasis on how workloads are managed across different teams. Jack

elaborated that there are 'separate silos for the main channels UK, EU, US and Global, each of which has their own lead writer' who is responsible for the formulation of content. Despite the distinction drawn between channels, Jack was keen to stress that 'there's no formal exclusion between the channels, everyone can jump in wherever. It's just easier if you've got groups so that if you're organising a meeting you know exactly who to contact', suggesting that organisational groupings are merely a formality to add a sense of structure at TLDR.

Finally, to gain an insight into the intricacies of the production process at TLDR, I prompted Jack to walk me through the timeline of creating a TLDR video from start to finish. Ben answered that it generally 'takes about 48 hours' to complete production, with time 'roughly split into a day of writing, researching and editing and a day of animation.' Expanding on this, 'A writing day will consist of a writer picking a topic which will be discussed by the team in some kind of meeting' whereas animation will usually take 'around an hour per minute worth of content so a 10 minute video would normally take about 10 hours to produce but it changes video by video'.

Following this initial discussion on digital convergence and organisation

in the context of TLDR News, it became apparent how their production process is shaped by collaborative involvement across teams and responding quickly to news cycles. Their answers reflected how the nature of digital journalism demanded a sense of multi-modality in the production process, shown as TLDR uses a unique combination of animation and voice overs to convey the news in a simple way to their audience. Moving on to the interview, we decided to switch the topic of conversation to digital language, focusing particularly on how TLDR interacts with its audiences on digital platforms like YouTube.

Immediacy, Interactivity and Multimodality

Immediacy is an important concept in digital journalism that TLDR are aware of, however, compared to large, mainstream media outlets such as The Times and The Guardian, TLDR are a very small organisation. They are not going to be able to beat these outlets when it comes to reporting on a breaking news story. TLDR told us that their aim is to put the news story in context, meaning they are not trying to race the big outlets. They use this as their unique selling point which allows them to compete on another aspect other than speed. They believe that readers don't always need

the news story immediately, as long as it is still relevant and in people's minds the story will do well. This aligns with Karlsson and Holt's (2016) findings that web journalism allows news stories to be published at will as opposed to traditional journalism where the stories are churned out linearly at recurring windows of dissemination.

When speaking with the TLDR team we could really get a sense of the relationship they have with their readers and supporters. They use Patreon to allow supporters to vote on future video topics and get priority YouTube comments for a small monthly fee. They are consistently in communication with their supporters, something that is not possible for mass media organisations. Karlsson and Holt (2016) found that because of this, mass media has the limitation of only being able to invite passive consumption by spectators rather than the active participation of citizens. TLDR stated that they view themselves as more of a conversational platform than a news platform and really value the interactions they have with their viewers and supporters.

Multimodality allows TLDR to build constancy and loyalty within their content and provides them with tools that ultimately improve how the news stories are told. Across their website, their YouTube channel and social media pages they use standardized

branding, colours and graphical styles to enhance the connection with their audience and increase brand recognition and identification. TLDR uses the landing page on their website to display thumbnails of recently posted news articles and use visual illustrations to draw viewers in and begin the storytelling process. They can thrive on multimodal structure and new means of expression that digital journalism allows.

Trust

With trust in journalism falling on average by around 10% in the past decade (Statista, 2021), it is clear that people are losing faith in news outlets. But as these individuals shun mainstream news, as Fletcher and Park (2017) have found it also means that they are more likely to engage with alternatives such as blogs, social media and online sources where they feel they can get a different perspective. People from all backgrounds can now produce news content online, and what that now means for trust in online journalism is crucial to society. Are they factually accurate, unbiased, accountable and transparent about their production process, funding, and structure?

In talking with the team at TLDR News however, it is clear that despite everything there are ways the online environment can produce systems

that create quality journalism that enriches and educates. Their company is still a business however, and it needs to create revenue from somewhere. As TLDR operate on YouTube they generate an income from the adverts that are placed before and during their content though this can amount to little, as Jack and Ben told us they often fund their business through supporters donating on their website, subscribing to their Patreon and buying their merchandise which they confess is 'not normal for news'. They sell their products and services by making people believe in their content and supporting them. The way they are funded allows as Ben says 'greater feedback, you know what people think' and they have the ability to 'vote on video ideas', 'suggest topics', and be in constant communication with the TLDR team whether through comments or Discord chat servers. This influence that supporters have could be a real threat to their overall trustworthiness as they can incentivise them to take a certain view or obstruct information and facts even. It is important to remember however that 'some traditional media outlets have people paying for the funding who want to see a certain outcome' Ben quite rightly points out. Score et al. (2017) found that donor funding in traditional news outlets allowed them power to direct the attention of the media, suggesting that the

issue of funding is not unique to the digitisation of journalism; it needs to be monitored across the board. Jack started TLDR with the goal of remaining impartial and providing unbiased explanations of the context and significance of events in the news, and it is on this premise he has found a niche market of people who want to fund this. He says 'from the outside it is easy to underestimate how much people actually want us to be impartial', if they were to start straying from this it would destroy the business. They acknowledged that this is not the case for all YouTube reporters or the best way to grow a channel on the site, stating that the 'more successful model would be to pick a side' and then use information to build a narrative, which combined with the algorithm makes it possible that people can be trapped in echo chambers of biased opinion. Nonetheless, it seems that if enough people desire good journalism and value it enough to support it then good journalism does not necessarily have to come from a traditional media company. That desire just needs to be cultivated in society.

While funding can create a crisis of confidence in media no matter the medium we must acknowledge that traditional media has more official systems that hold them accountable for their content. Accountability in

journalism generally refers to the ability of others to criticise and question journalists and the responsibility they have to produce quality, factual work. Mainstream media can be held officially accountable by external and internal regulatory forces from charities, governmental regulators, best practice guidebooks, ombudsman, press councils to media criticism in journals (Fengler, 2019). In online spaces such as YouTube there is no such authority in place which means misinformation and distortion can go unchallenged. TLDR though, in their pursuit for integrity and the interactivity that social media provides, have found ways to build a level of accountability into their working practices. 'Two years ago we introduced the factcheck, so below videos on our website you can fill out a form with details about what didn't go well or wasn't accurate, and it will go straight into my email account and we will follow it up with writers and make the necessary changes if required', Ben also feels that it is a lot easier for them as compared to larger firms to have this close level of conversation that keeps them in check. Comments on videos and on servers are also checked regularly and responded to which is very different to Domingo's (2008) finding that online media from traditional sources suffers from an 'inertia' when it comes to developing a dialogue with their users which could

be vital in increasing their trustworthiness with the public. While those holding TLDR accountable may not be experts, the team themselves ensure that they also have their own structures in place regarding accountability. Having experts help write scripts, having numerous people look over written content, making sure they go to the 'primary source of the story whether that is a press release, press conference or data', using a 'balance of partisan sources', using high quality institutions and presenting numerous perspectives in their work are all ways they have pushed themselves to be held accountable. They are also clear about the sources they use and have even deleted or edited videos last minute when users or their internal systems raise issues. While the online landscape may seem like the wild west of journalism this interview with TLDR suggests that it could in fact provide ways to restore trust within journalism.

You cannot consider trust in digital journalism without thinking about how the levels of transparency that online mediums provide encourages trust in ways that were unprecedented just a decade ago. The increased integrity and credibility that TLDR gains by allowing people to get glimpses of them as people, behind the scenes footage and through an honest and open dialogue in their

videos about criticisms they have faced and their standpoints has allowed them to create a reliable brand. It is vital they market their company in order to gain support and they believe transparency has helped them gain around half a million subscribers on YouTube: 'if we were completely faceless I think it would be a lot harder to build that credibility in that trust'. Although, it is a balancing act of providing the right amount of transparency to build a brand, but not too much to undo their credibility as a news business rather than a money-making scheme as Chadha and Koliska found in 2015 when they concluded news companies were only using the online space as a promotional tool rather than a tool for more open interaction. TLDR certainly utilises the transparency the online space allows, even if they could push it further and be more open with how much diversity and expertise goes into their writing process.

People's trust in journalism is not always duly deserved, especially when it comes to the online news media. The level of freedom of speech that the digital space allows will continue to be something that the world battles with, so it is important that a desire and respect for quality, impartial journalism is encouraged whether people are finding information from traditional or non-traditional sources. It is more important than ever that

trust is improved in online journalism and individuals having a good idea of what makes a source worthy of trust is a component of this especially now there are so many options. TLDR is certainly leading the way and demonstrating what a trustworthy news source from smaller groups can look like online.

To conclude, the interview with Jack and Ben from TLDR was very insightful for us to learn about the different aspects of their company and their use of digital journalism concepts. They are a growing team which means they have members who are specialised in certain areas, however everyone in the team can contribute in all areas which reduces the chances of biases. Being a small team compared with mainstream media outlets means TLDR works to compete on building connections with readers and putting stories into context rather than speed and immediacy. They genuinely believe in accountability and their incentive structure is built on trust. People subscribe to them for neutral, easy to understand facts and that is what they strive to provide.

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Unai Frías: 'In the future digital journalism will be the majority option'

Member of the digital newspaper *Gasteiz Hoy* since its beginning, he is one of the main drivers of this native digital medium from Álava

Blanca Carmen Menéndez Rubio

10 years after the launch of *Gasteiz Hoy* we spoke with Unai Frías, social media manager of the newspaper, to analyze the origins, the present and what the future of this digital medium may hold, which has managed to gain a position among the main media in Álava, using a very particular business model, based on the campaigns and digital marketing strategies they offer to their customers.

What were the origins of *Gasteiz Hoy*?

Gasteiz Hoy was born a little by chance and without any expectation. That is to say, it came at a time when our jobs as employees did not fill us and also as a place to dump the knowledge we were learning in our courses and masters, in addition to our careers. So, at the beginning of time, we came to combine it with other works. Over time, we began to think about leaving the rest and dedicating ourselves to fully empowering our project.

And so, it was until we got to what it is today. In the last 8 years we have dedicated ourselves body and soul to our project.

At the beginning did you looked to another media of the competition?

In general, except in secondary details, we have never looked at other media because our philosophy is a bit particular. It is a fusion of two sectors that today have many synergies: the journalism and digital marketing sector. It does not mean that we dilute these two sectors, but that we finance the journalism we want to do through our own digital marketing agency. And that concept is totally different from the traditional media.

What goals were you looking for? Have you achieved them?

We can say that we have achieved them. We have managed to live from our own company but it is very complicated. We've managed to have a lot of customers who trust our digital

marketing strategies to strengthen their businesses. And we've gotten all these clients to fund the hyperlocal journalism we do, without relying on political parties, institutions or big business to influence the focus of the news or the content that is published.

What kind of media do you consider yourselves?

We consider ourselves an independent medium of hyperlocal information and that works a lot in citizen journalism.

The Society that owns the media, what kind is it? Do the managers of the company have to report the activity to their shareholders or owners?

It is a SC (Civil Society). We have no shareholders. We are two partners that manage the company.

What's your business model?

We finance the newspaper through the digital marketing campaigns and strategies we offer our customers. It doesn't have to be campaigns that necessarily appear in *Gasteiz Hoy*, we also do internal work of the digital structure of our clients companies.

Is it an open media or is it paid? Has that formula been maintained or has it changed over time? In the case of being paid which wall do you use?

It's an open media. We have always used this formula and have never considered enabling a wall of payment because it goes against the philosophy of our medium.

The digital world is torn between free or pay for content as the only way to guarantee quality and protect independence from power. What do you think about this?

The gratuity or payment are two options, but they are not the only ones. Just as we have done, by merging sectors, there will be people who will open up other alternatives. The most important thing to guarantee the quality and independence of the medium is that the people who manage the media really want their content to be of quality and their medium to be independent. Many media prioritize other issues over quality and independence. It's a matter of business philosophy and ethics. In many cases ethics vanish in the face of money. It is vital to be original to find business formulas capable of financing a free and independent journalism.

Have you developed your style book?

We have a clear and developed style book that we inculcate to all team members. We pay special interest in the way we write: direct, simple and thinking about mobile devices.

How do you treat the information received before his publication? What contrast methods do you use to verify the news you are going to publish?

Each information, depending on the way through which it comes, is treated in one way or another, is given hints of truthfulness or not, is trusted or treated as a mere thread from which to begin to inquire. It depends on multiple factors. The most theoretical method of contrast is to confirm the news through two different sources. This is not always possible and then other alternatives come into play, such as the truthfulness of the source, knowledge and trust in it, and other methods. In any case, the maxim is always that it is better to not tell a story than to publish something that later confirms that it was not entirely truthful, or that directly, was not that way.

Since it is permitted to publish the opinion of readers, is there any style book? If so, how is compliance checked?

More than a style book there is a filter in the comments. No comments are published directly and are published manually after reading them. This implies that there is a percentage of comments that are never published because it is impossible to review them all. I refer to the comments within the articles of *Gasteiz Hoy*.

Comments on social networks cannot be filtered this way and you can only add a list of words that, if they appear, the comment is vetoed. From time to time, when we see some disrespectful comments on networks we hide or delete it, but we focus on the comments that are made within each of the news, which are the ones that we can manage the most.

How are social networks managed?

It's a complex matter. They are managed among several members of the team and having previously done an analysis and a specific strategy for each of the social networks in which the medium has a presence.

How is the journalistic team of *Gasteiz Hoy* configured? Is there polyvalence of functions within your structure?

We have two working groups: the writing (the journalism part) and the agency part. They are working groups that help each other, there are people who do jobs for both parts of the company, although there are also people within the team who only dedicate themselves to one side. There is quite a polyvalence of functions, but always having a main function in each team member.

Do you analyze the profile of your readers? If so, what are they like?

Yes, we analyzed it. It is a profile that has been varying over time. More

than varying, it has been expanding. Now the differences between age ranges are getting smaller because the audience is very big. In any case, the reader type profile of *Gasteiz Hoy* is between 25 and 39 years old and lives in greater proportion in the new neighbourhoods. But as I said there is less and less percentage difference with other profiles.

How do you see digital journalism in the future?

Full of possibilities and as the majority option in journalism. I think that the paper newspaper will be relegated.

***Gasteiz Hoy* is 10 years old. What are your goals for the next decade?**

We honestly don't have targets for the next decade. We're going step by step. Getting here has been very rewarding but also very difficult. It is difficult to achieve economic independence, but it is even more difficult to reconcile personal and professional life. Apart from concrete ideas that we want to take forward, the main objective is that *Gasteiz Hoy*, in all its facets, no matter how much it evolves, continues to have the philosophy that we have contributed to it. Take it to the maximum possible evolution while maintaining our essence and feeling reflected and represented in what we do and in our values.

Moni Marcel, German digital journalist: 'Some colleagues compile articles only from Facebook comments'



© Moni Marcel

Jana Uhl & Ilaria Wollek

When the local editorial office of the "Schwäbische Zeitung" was about to be closed, the journalist Moni Marcel organized a demonstration with over 400 people. For that purpose, she used a medium that wasn't well frequented back in 2004 - the internet. The protest website www.sz-go-on turned into the online daily newspaper "NRWZ" (Neue Rottweiler Zeitung), which as an independent news platform for the German region

Rottweil, publishes daily news and articles about information, politics and culture. With Moni we spoke about her work as an editor, qualitative journalism and the influence of commercialization and the internet on newsrooms and news providers.

Moni Marcel is 57 years old and a trained social pedagogue. At school, German was always one of her favorite subjects, which is why she worked on the school newspaper at the High school back then. Later, she became

the press officer for the Rugby Club, until she was asked by the editorial manager of the "Schwäbische Zeitung" if she would like to work as a freelancer in the editorial department.

From the first issue in November 2004 until the end of the print edition in March 2020, Moni wrote for the NRWZ. In the meantime, she works for different editorial offices in the region, publishes the "Blickpunkt-Magazin" and, on the side, takes on the job of the press spokesperson for the "Schwarzwald-Baar-Heuberg" choir association and the "die Grünen" party in Rottweil. As an editor, she has published articles for the local daily newspapers "Schwäbische Zeitung", "Südkurier", "Südwestpresse" and "NRWZ". She has also worked for the "Jewish Allgemeine Zeitung" in Berlin and writes advertising copy for various companies.

What do you particularly like about journalism and working in a newsroom?

The stress. The pressure to be fast and up to date, to do five things at once and to have a great paper at the end. The variety of topics. The encounters with many people. The feedback from readers when they think something is particularly good - or even terrible. And the fact that I get the boss on the phone, instead of just

the little clerk, as I used to do as a social worker. That I can expose grievances, put my finger in the wound and pester the powerful.

How has journalism changed during your time as a journalist?

The internet has changed a lot. Before, we were almost the only ones who spread the news. Today, everyone can inform themselves. Opinion-forming has changed a lot. Good journalism is often no longer valued. And due to many cost-cutting measures, editorial offices are getting smaller and smaller, which means that quality is decreasing, which also contributes to readers becoming more dissatisfied - and the number of subscribers continues to decline. Freelancers take over the editors' work, and there is a lack of exchange and feedback.

What does "qualitative journalism" mean to you, what values are associated with it?

To me it is about good ideas, thorough research, intensive conversations, being close to people and listening well. It means fairness, originality and good language.



© Moni Marcel

How do print articles differ from articles that appear online? Is there a different approach to the production and publication of articles?

I can really only judge from my work at NRWZ. The online edition was responsible for quick, current topics and things like club reports, the print edition brought backgrounds, feuilleton, reading stories, nicely designed and also readable on the net. I think it was a good concept, all free of charge, with high coverage and therefore interesting for advertisers. We also had readers in Sydney and New York.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of online articles?

Positive is the high accessibility worldwide and the fact that you don't need paper. On the other hand, many say they like to have something in their hands - and that doesn't only apply to older people. And there is always the question of how to finance online journalism. How much are people willing to pay? I don't think anyone has found the perfect solution yet (except

maybe us with the small NRWZ). Advantage as well as disadvantage: online, people can express their opinion on an article quickly and conveniently. Who still writes a letter to the editor nowadays?

Do you think there are differences in quality between print articles and articles that appear online?

The web is faster, I think small mistakes are more likely to be overlooked or tolerated. But there shouldn't really be any differences.



Moni Marcel with the German politician Winfried Kretschmann © Moni Marcel

Do you think there are differences in quality between print articles and articles that appear online?

The web is faster, I think small mistakes are more likely to be overlooked or tolerated. But there shouldn't really be any differences.

Do interactive features like user comments or sharing articles on social media influence the way articles are written?

Sure. As a journalist, I am much more

directly exposed to criticism and also hostility. That doesn't make critical reporting any easier. It takes more courage today to express one's opinion publicly. And sharing articles again raises the question of copyrights and the financing of journalists' work.

What role do social media like Facebook or Instagram play in online journalism?

The diversity of opinion is greater, they make it easier for users to inform themselves - leaving aside the question of quality. Good journalism has to stand out and offer more quality. On the other hand, it also makes it easier to find topics that interest people. There are now colleagues who compile articles only from Facebook comments without having spoken to any of the authors.

What role does transparency play in online journalism?

Certainly a greater role than in the days when there were only printed newspapers. Because it's easier for readers to access information themselves and thus to question the statements in the article. But of course that applies just as much to print media today. As a journalist, you should always pay attention to the greatest transparency in order to remain credible.

Does the commercialization of news media influence the objectivity and quality of articles?

That depends on how the editorial offices deal with it or are allowed to deal with it. Are they still completely independent in their reporting? What do publishers dictate? I think it depends on that.

What opportunities do advertisements on the websites of online news media offer and what disadvantages can they create?

As I have already said, if they are clearly labelled as advertising and ensure that the editorial teams are paid and can work independently and neutrally - okay. For the reader, on the other hand, it is extremely annoying having to constantly remove advertisements in order to continue reading. That's why I think it's a good solution, as many do today, for the reader to pay a small amount for an ad-free page.

How has the work in a newsroom changed in recent years, what role does the internet and online media play in the process?

There are two sides to everything. Research on the internet makes the work easier, but the reporting has to be faster, it has become more difficult to attract readers. Here too, I can only speak for the local newspapers, whose teams have been and are being thinned out more and more, where the editors sometimes have to

cover all areas, even acquire advertisements. This does not make the papers any better if there is no time for research and writing. The number of subscribers to local newspapers has been declining constantly for a long time, and as far as I know this is not compensated for by online subscriptions.

How do you think digital journalism will develop in the future?

There is a slight trend towards good journalism after the Trump and COVID chaos. It seems to have become clear to people - at least to some - what value good researched articles can offer. But will this be a resounding change? Will readers be able to tell if information on the net is reliable? To distinguish good journalistic work from populism?

What challenges will journalists have to face in the future?

The challenges are already there: How do traditional publishing houses deal with the internet? How can you still make and sell newspapers today? How to get readers to spend money on information when it is available for free elsewhere? Moreover, there are fewer and fewer jobs for editors, and publishers are cutting back heavily on staff.

What would be an ideal future scenario for online journalism?

I think the concept of NRWZ for the

local sector is viable for the future. The combination of fast online reporting and a nice printed edition for the weekend. Free of charge, large reach, thus interesting for advertisers. I have had thousands of conversations about this in the last few years, also with countless people who complained on Monday morning because the NRWZ did not land in their letterbox at the weekend. However, there was not only a lot of heart and soul in the NRWZ, but also a lot of voluntary commitment. So I can't say that it really paid off in the long run. Basically, I think that there will also be a printed newspaper in the future. In the last few months, many people have said to me that they don't feel like looking at a screen in their free time when they already have to sit at a computer and mobile phone all day.

Thank you for the interview Moni.

It has become apparent: the internet has changed journalism and has introduced both advantages and disadvantages to digital reporting. Online journalism is primarily characterized by its participatory culture as well as high and international accessibility - on the other hand, it is not only more difficult to attract readers, but also the quality is decreasing more and more frequently due to many cost-cutting measures. As far as the financing of online journalism is concerned, it only remains to be seen what solutions and models can be found in the future. And

as Moni has stated: most importantly, it is crucial to maintain the independent, neutral research and reporting, which is the essence of professional journalism.

Daily Mail Online home reporter Jack Wright: 'Online is the best place to be now'

MailOnline journalist discusses the current status of online journalism while reflecting on the influence that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on digital journalism in the past two years. He also elaborates on the future of the news making process and the global establishment of subscription based model.

Ivan Topadze & Pauline Stateva

Having graduated from the university in Edinburgh with a degree in history and politics, five years ago Jack Wright moved to London to start a career in journalism. To gain experience in the field Wright trained at a big UK agency called PR Media and worked in South West News Service (SWNS), Bristol's news agency. He is now employed as a home reporter at *MailOnline*, Daily Mail's website, covering the UK news in a field of law and politics.

Question. Why have you chosen to work in the online journalism field? Have you ever tried any other type of journalistic job?

Answer. I haven't really worked in print, so I've only worked in online media. When I was in the South West News Service, I did writing exclusives for newspapers. However, after that I quickly got into online journalism, because print media has been declining for a long time, particularly the past couple of years, so I didn't want to stay in that field. The example would

be London's *Evening Standard* Newspaper, one of the two commuting newspapers in London which my company owns. At one point during the pandemic crisis they made a large number of their editorials redundant, not just journalists, but people who worked on that side, because people were working from home. Then, advertising revenue fell through, because companies realised that there might not be much point in advertising in newspapers if not enough people read them. The general trend in newspapers is down, and at the same time people still want that news. So, online is a good fit for that: if you want your work to be read, and if you want to make money, then you have to expect that you work a lot of long, difficult antisocial hours, nights and so on. Where I am, there is good pay, but that place is quite modest and at a local level it can be breadcrumbs. Online, I think, is really the best place to be now. Some time ago I heard

that, probably, a lot of big media panicked when online came along, so they had to quickly invest in it. And, I suppose, after that happened, the trend seems to be one-way. But it is absolutely worth trying to get into online media. As I say, often a lot of people are doing it for reasons of good pay.

Q. Would you say that today there is a significant difference between working in online media and printed media as a journalist?

A. Despite the fact that I don't have experience in print media, the big difference is, I think, that online media is instant, it's 24h news. There's pressure. The deadlines are instant. The cliché about print media is usually that you have a deadline and you work to it. Where I am, you get to get as many stories quickly as you can. That's the main difference. When you go through the newspapers the next morning, you'll notice all the news is the same, lots of it has already been there the day before. But sometimes, newspapers work on their own stuff. The Sunday newspaper in the UK have more time to get their own stories, they get some good scoops which is often why the newsweek in the UK is regarded to start on Sunday, because a lot of the big stories that set the agenda for the week come out on Sunday. In print media they prob-

ably give a bit more money to the reporters, which means they really invest in teams that do get exclusives. Where I work, we have a team that is called 'global'. These are the scoop journalists who will get their tickets paid to fly to certain places where there's a big story. For example, at the weekend, last Sunday, in Brentwood, Essex, two teenage boys died. They were killed in a suspected stabbing, as they say, but it's not been confirmed yet. The eight men were arrested. The decision was made to send 'global' to speak to the family members of one of the victims. And it became an exclusive, because we got some quite strong quotes from them. But the biggest difference is for the most part online is instant, it's breaking. In terms of the news that you are writing, you also have more space in the online rather than in the newspapers. We've got a chance to really flash out the story, to explain it, to incorporate all the aspects that newspapers don't have space for. Also, we can, as we say, 'clone' the story and just change the top for the next story. The idea is that you have all the context and you just retopping it with a new one, so every story has the same talking points. This is what we can do online, which no newspapers can. Those are the typical differences.

“Everything seems to be accelerating so much, and the need for more news more quickly at all times seems to be a thing”

Q. How does the difference between online and print media affect the perception of the profession of journalist in general? Do you think it could be true to say that journalists become less professional in terms of standard journalism or it is just a change in media?

A. I don't know if journalists today are less professional than journalists of the past. There was a piece in *The Critic Magazine* where the journalist Peter Hitchens was describing his days as industrial correspondent back in the 70s or 80s. Many people, not all of them though, were drunk most of the time, while they were obviously not permitted to be intoxicated at work. But I wasn't there and I don't know anybody who was. So I don't know whether or not there's a difference in discipline and professionalism. In my experience, there are always people who work hard and who do not.

Q. Let's talk about the current state of online journalism. Which challenges does online journalism face during the digital era and how were they altered after the Covid-19 outbreak? Are we in a position to make

conclusions now or do we have to wait a few more years to see the full picture?

A. I think it's true to say that you always need more time to see what's going on. What's the state of online journalism? Not all outlets are as successful as each other, that's the most obvious point. I think many publishers have realised that newspapers are almost going to be loss-making and that it was better to shift online. The Sun newspaper, as far as I know, for the last few years has been loss-making. The Sun Online was set up not long ago, and *Private Eye Magazine* did a piece about it with the view of it competing with *Daily Mail Online*. *MailOnline* was really the first big online newspaper in the UK and the interesting thing about it is that *Daily Mail Online* is free at the point of entry, so we make a revenue from advertising. It's possible that we're so successful because we were the first ones and we have the most traffic to the website, we have the most readers. Therefore, companies want to advertise. There was an interesting survey done and published by *Press Gazette* that said that *Daily Mail Online* is the most read newspaper website in the UK. In terms of the news in the UK in general, it's second after BBC News, but it's the biggest newspaper website. In regards to how the pandemic crisis has affected journalism, it can be said that during the pandemic the

traffic to our website increased, and almost in every country, by nearly 50% back in March 2020. That's a crucial moment, because people wanted to know what was going on, so as long as people are interested in the world and want some basic news literacy, they will read news. It would be interesting to compare free websites from the point of access with others that require subscription money. I do remember getting emails last year which suggested that people do subscribe and the numbers of people willing to pay for access to magazines have been rising. Journalism will be okay as long as people are interested in reading the news. The interesting thing would be whether or not websites free from the point of access will regard themselves as competing with websites which are behind paywalls.

Q. Let's move on to the discussion of the notion of digital journalism and its key features that are commonly referred to as: interactivity, immediacy, hypertextuality, and multimodality¹. Out of these features, would you be able to highlight one or two that stand out the most based on your experience?

A. We do have a large social media presence, quite a large number of followers on Facebook, we have a Snap-

chat channel. And we are actually encouraged to put hyperlinks into our stories. Sometimes it's just a credit to another newspaper if they've got a story or if we need to say where we got it from, and what will happen after the story is live, you'll notice some names or words come up in blue. That takes you straight to another webpage with all the latest stories about that subject or person. So, popular ones are 'the Queen' or 'Boris Johnson' and other major political figures, and then words like 'Brexit', 'coronavirus', 'COVID-19', 'lockdown', 'crime', 'London', 'Russia', 'Spain', 'Germany', 'France'. If we can add hyperlinks like that, that's always good, because people will go on them and find the stories, and the main thing for us is how many clicks we get. In terms of interaction with our readers, in the comment sections on our stories we have lots of comments which are not especially helpful. Sometimes we follow the things our readers say and that might be the basis for a story in the sense that if they show it from a different angle or if they give me a tip. We tend to get lots of posts on social media too, particularly on Twitter. Ultimately, we need the readers. If we don't have them, there won't be any advertisers and we can't do anything that we're doing anyway. We do need people to

¹ See: Deuze, M. (2003). *New Media & Society*, 5(2), 203–230; Massey, B. L., & Levy, M.

R. (1999). *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 76(1), 138–151.

visit the website and we do need people to read it. It's worth bearing in mind what our readers will want, as well as bearing in mind what they are saying through social media, comments and tips, phone calls and inbox.

Q. Would you say that in the context of modern digital journalism 'hypertextuality' contributes to the establishment of transparency, an open dialogue between the publishing and its audience?

A. No, I don't think so. Transparency is a sort of word that people want the government to use. Newspapers are interested in the truth, but I don't think it affects the way we operate, particularly apart from the fact that we want people to visit the website. So it's just practical to be able to add links to our stories.

Q. A trend for the fast-paced nature of news delivery today seems to be more prominent than ever. Do you think that the race for immediacy questions such criteria as objectivity and quality that are essential for journalism? In your opinion, which side will eventually take the lead – speed or quality?

A. I can say that the two can go hand in hand. You see, a lot of news is just reporting what people have said and done, and you actually don't need that much time to know what somebody said. I think what takes more

time is the bigger picture, the context of the story. If multiple stories are coming out, then it's worth stopping to think, 'What does it mean more generally? What's the broad picture?'. An example would be – during the week we did a story about internal government modeling for Covid, which suggested that cases would plummet to about 5000 a day this winter or by Christmas, without the need for more restrictions. And that was interesting, because later the government representative had given a big press-conference, where he threatened to impose them again. And in fact a couple of days later the prime minister spokesman came out to say that plan B restrictions will bring cases down, which is an interesting tense, because it suggests that they were going to do them anyway. And there were so many other stories about Covid crisis coming out at that time, that it required some more time to see the bigger story, sort of the Covid wrap, but there wasn't necessarily a need for that to be breaking. The breaking news case would be that a few days back Buckingham palace announced that the Queen was going to pull out of the COP26 Climate Summit. And it takes a few seconds to get something up just saying that. So, speed and quality of work can go hand in hand. But I think more generally, particularly in breaking, the quality of writing isn't as good. And that

would be because people are right in the eye of the storm, and that is why journalists have editors. Answering the question about which one would take the lead – I don't really know. Everything seems to be accelerating so much, and the need for more news more quickly at all times seems to be a thing. But then again, sometimes Sunday newspapers will have a big exclusive in a long form that would have taken some time to put together, and people will read it. So, there is no magic formula – that would depend on the publisher, the newspaper or the website and their methods of cooperating.

“I reckon that there was a point where the editors of all big newspapers might not have panicked when the online first came along, but I think electronic media is too powerful and radical now”

Q. Going back to the interactive part that you have briefly mentioned. From your perspective, what is the best way for journalists to make their publishing material interactive? Is there in general an objective for journalists to get feedback from their readers?

A. I don't think journalists are trying to get feedback on their stories. Journalists, particularly national ones, get flak for a lot of the things they write. And that's often because a lot of people don't know what they're talking about. But I don't think we're really trying to get feedback. One of the things we have to be really careful about, and actually it ties back to the previous question about quality of work, is that the things we write have to be accurate, which is to say that it has to be true or factual. So we do have to be very careful of that, and we do take more formal allegations of inaccuracy much more seriously. And it isn't just some journalist on a news desk having to handle all of that, we have lawyers and, what we call, managing editors – people who handle complaints. So it is not really my job to get feedback, the most important thing for me is to write accurately, having a sense of what readers could be thinking about, but ultimately aiming to please my bosses, my editor and the publisher of the website. That's really the main thing – they are the people who are paying my salary, so it does matter.

Q. And would that be correct if we say that accuracy and factuality that you've mentioned define the 'good' or 'quality' digital journalism nowadays?

A. Oh yes, absolutely.

Q. In the academic field media convergence is usually described through different types and concepts. One of the most conventional typologies includes 4 sorts of convergence: technological convergence, business convergence, professional convergence, and convergence of contents². While working as a journalist, have you ever experienced the influence of these processes? Do you feel the need to perform multitasking and show expertise in several professional domains in order to maintain your working position?

A. The only way I know how to answer that is by the time when I was being trained back in January of last year. The mentor that had me for a few days did say that when you work here you become part journalist, part editor, part photo editor, part lawyer. And he had a point: when you are doing a story, there are certain things that you instantly think about. On nights and weekends you are often suggesting headlines – and headline writing is another discipline entirely. You are also thinking about what preview images will look like. And then of course when it comes to reporting court cases there are also lots of things we have to bear in mind. In par-

ticular, contempt of court and reporting preliminary hearings. So, you do develop an antenna for these things and you do begin to think about getting opinions on it – you consult the lawyers, the managing editors on sensitive subjects, such as trans issues, gender politics, suicide stories. We just have to bear a lot of things in mind. Ultimately, you just have to be disciplined and professional, but in the job itself you are not only thinking about how to write a story, but also about how much you can say and if there are any restrictions, etc. So answering your question in short: yes, it is multifaceted in that sense.

Q. There is a point of view which says that convergence is on the one hand about increasing the productivity of journalists but at the same time is about decreasing salaries of journalists and job loss, since economically it is not profitable to keep several professionals in a workplace when there is someone who can take on more than one job by themselves. Has this been the case for you or your company?

A: I don't think so. I mean, maybe in other cases it happens, but not in my experience. I don't know anybody who was let go because they couldn't write a story and also manage a router, for example. I don't really

² See: Siapera, E., & Veglis, A. (Eds.). (2012). *The handbook of global online journalism*. John Wiley & Sons.

think that is a thing. Successful companies center people professionally, and they have large teams and they hire people to do different things. In our company we have a whole picture team and a video team. They wouldn't dream to write a story, but I wouldn't try to process anything that they do. So where I am, it's not really a thing.

Q. An integral part of online journalism for some time now has been public involvement, and there is a debate about the control of the news flow by audiences who seem to be getting more power in deciding what type of news they want to see. Do you consider public participation in the news making process to be rather a virtue or a burden that can negatively affect professional journalism?

A. That is a fair point. I can actually give you an example on this: during the week in the U.K. there has been quite a rout about the sewage problem, and I don't think the government expected such a backlash from people. What went down was, basically, Downing Street inclined most of the conservatives to vote down the amendment to a bill that was going through the Parliament, which would place legal duty on water companies to stop dumping raw sewage into waterways. The amendment was voted down and had to be rearranged, but

in the meantime there was actually an enormous public outcry about this, and several places picked it up, including ourselves, once we realised that people were angry. And I don't think Downing Street was expecting such a backlash, because in the end that became quite a big news piece, and last night the government said that they would meet people have way on this problem and would place legal duty on the water companies to make, what the call, 'progressive reductions' of dumping water sewage, which basically means they'll keep doing it but the idea is that they will dump less of it overtime. So, that might not have happened if we hadn't been aware of the public anger. In this case it is true that, to an extent, we were sort of following the crowd since we picked up on a lot of fury about it. But by and large, there are also times where we take a story and we make it a big issue. The pandemic crisis, for instance, is an interesting one because it's hard to know how much of the public fear of the virus comes from media reporting on the issue. The pandemic makes a good copy and good photography, so people want to read those stories. And there is something dramatic about seeing lines of ambulances outside hospitals. But then again I don't think that we created that panic. It's more likely that we just amplified

it. So with news it is hard to know who is setting what, really. I think it is fluid.

“It’s not true to say that free media fail, because ‘free at the point of access with advertising’ models can be quite lucrative. *Daily Mail Online* seems to be the striking example of this”

Q. What kind of business model does *Daily Mail Online* use? Could you please explain how the monetization process is organised?

A. *Daily Mail Online* is free at the point of access. It means that we use advertisements for our revenue, which is different compared to other places that put their stories behind ‘paywalls’ and therefore rely on subscription money. This works well for some places and not so well for others: people come to our website because it is free and it is possible that many of them would stop visiting the page if they had to pay to access it. It’s interesting to note that last year *MailOnline* reported a profit, because the area of online journalism grew significantly. Generally speaking, *Daily Mail Online* belongs to the Daily Mail, but it is actually slightly separate from it and its sister paper The Mail

on Sunday since it has its own editors and journalists. They are more like sister papers or sister publications. And yet *Daily Mail Online* pays the paper and The Mail on Sunday about 10 million pounds per year to access their stories. In return these papers remain viable because our website is so popular. It is especially important to them since there is a general decline in newspaper sales that has been accelerated by the past couple of years. Another interesting comparison of our company would be not just with outlets that use subscription models but with other free websites. For example, The Sun Online, which has sort of set itself up against us, has no advertisement. It is owned by The News UK that gives The Sun Online some part of their money per year. So I think The Sun Online isn’t there to make money unlike us in *Daily Mail Online*. And the results show that it works since we make profit and we do remain popular. There are some interesting graphs that show that it’s not true to say that free media fail, because ‘free at the point of access with advertising’ models can be quite lucrative. *Daily Mail Online* seems to be the striking example of this. Although, I don’t know if it is a general rule or it’s partly because we were the first ones to do it.

Q. Print media market seems to be gradually recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic’s damage, so

maybe it's too early to write it off. Do you think there is still room for conversation about the rivalry between online and print media?

A. I think at this point the online media has set itself as a leader. I reckon that there was a point where the editors of all big newspapers might not have panicked when the online first came along, but I think electronic media is too powerful and radical now. And it seems that people like to be able to check information not just on their computers but on their phones as well. I am pretty sure that *Daily Mail Online* gets most of the traffic on the website through the app. So I think the online media place in journalism is pretty set now. But it'll be interesting to know whether or not the print media picks up properly. And will it be this sort of vinyl revival, because now people buy LP's and stuff like that again, when everyone thought that it would only be Spotify, Apple and such. But of course the digital music sources are still dominant. So I think it'll be a similar thing with digital media. It is still possible that print magazines could still do fine. The examples include *The Spectator*, *The New Statesman* or *The Critic Magazine* which is quite new and has been doing well. So there may be a difference on how newspapers and print magazines pick up eventually.

Q. And our final question is, what do you think will be the future of online journalism? Do you believe that there is a chance for the subscription model to become common in coming years?

A. I don't know how widespread subscription models will be. I am not necessarily sure people will pay to login to our website, whereas people have it in their heads that they would pay for a subscription for *The Times* or *The Telegraph* as they consider them to be respectable. There is something about the fact that *Daily Mail* is a tabloid newspaper that might make people a bit snobby about it. That is why I am not sure that the future is subscription. And the sorts of people that have subscriptions usually tend to be journalists or well off professionals who are middle-aged, I am guessing, and I don't think that a lot of young people who are not journalists will read *The Times* or *The Telegraph*. But as a general point, I would guess that the 'free at the point of entry' model is still going to be the best shot in the long term, because people will still want to be able to read their news and I'm not sure if they will be willing to pay for it.

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nalism. John Wiley & Sons.

This is a volume which gathers the best interviews done by the students of the course *Analysing Digital Journalism*, Journalism Degree, Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona), during the academic year 2021-2022. The interview was to be conducted to any practitioner or people in charge of an online edition of a medium, from any place of the world.

It was recommended that the interview contained one or more of the core topics of this course, e.g. quality in online journalism, accountability, interactivity and use of multimedia skills, relation with the (active) audiences, media ownership and corporate analysis, routines and practices in the newsroom (and adaptation to the online environment), or any other topic suggested by the students.

Topics the reader may find in these interviews include:

The characteristics of the digital language and its use in that media organization (hypertext, interactivity, multimediality, immediacy, memory...),

Business models,

Newsroom convergence and organization,

Production routines and

strategies, transparency, trust, objectivity

and other journalistic values.



