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# The unalterable functions of journalists in view of the emerging multimedia job profiles

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## Abstract

**Introduction.** This research article addresses the functions and job profiles of journalists in the new multimedia environment. **Method.** The study is based on a qualitative method, a state of the art review, and interviews to a sample of representatives of Spanish journalist associations. **Results.** There are coincidences between the academic and professional fields in relation to the inalterable features of journalists in view of the emerging multimedia job profiles. The article also offers an updating proposal for the classification of journalistic job profiles established by the Spanish National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA). **Discussion.** The new media environment highlights the need to review outdated concepts and keeps alive the scientific debate on the tasks that are being strengthened in the journalistic profession, as well as the need to redefine job and training profiles, which are still in going through a configuration phase in a changing media landscape.

## Keywords

Multimedia journalism; journalistic job profiles; journalistic roles; education; journalistic professionalism.

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Translation by **CA Martínez-Arcos**, Ph.D. (Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas)

## 1. Introduction

The concepts of Journalism and journalist, as well as the delimitation of the functions and job profiles of information professionals, are again revised, as on previous occasions, in view of the constant evolution of the journalistic activity. This is a debate that has reappeared as a consequence of the emergence of technological tools which, beyond from purely technical issues, lead to the search for new models of business, reorganisation of media structures, new narratives, as well as changes in journalistic skills and roles (Salaverría, 2000, 2008, 2012; Díaz, 2002; Meso, 2010; Biondi *et al.*, 2010; Soengas *et al.*, 2014). This context fosters the need of redefining certain aspects of the journalistic work in view of the new digital journalism that transforms the traditional figure of the reporter into a multimedia journalist, who performs new routines on different platforms, is multi-tasking and multi-language.

Based on this context, the objective of this research is to provide an analysis of the qualities, functions and job profiles that are traditionally attributed to journalists and transferred to the multimedia environment to determine and specify the possible variations that respond to the new training needs.

The study is based on a relatively nascent but fruitful theoretical framework which confirms that the new media environment causes a profound change in the profession of journalism, which leads to hitherto unexplored new professional roles and job opportunities (López, 2001, 2010, 2012; Meso *et al.*, 2010). All of this is based on the premise that 21<sup>st</sup> century journalists “will be digital or won’t be” journalists at all (Álvarez, 1996: 114) and that their work is connected in a permanent and unavoidable way to a new global communication context that affects multiple perspectives related to the Network Society (Castells, 2008).

Professional and technological changes go together with the new consumption preferences of the audiences at a time in which the media also publish content generated by the user, like comments, photos, videos, blogs and even articles, which makes recipients ‘prosumers’ (Berrocal, Campos and Redondo, 2014), since they carry out informative work as they consume media-generated contents, leaving behind the one-way communication model. This is a reality that the media themselves promote by asking users to submit information and documentation ranging from comments to photos, videos, participation in live programmes, inclusion of blogs and even articles written by readers (Hermida & Thurman, 2008; López, 2012). The participatory journalism promoted by the Social Web implies a permanent mixture and exchange of content between journalism professionals

and enthusiasts (Singer, 2011; López, 2012), which revives the debate on the professional work of journalists in a broad sense. Journalism has lost control and exclusivity rights over contents and has been forced to open its doors to collaborative production and active audiences (Palomo, 2013).

In this context, it is timely and necessary to review the academic debate on certain concepts of the journalistic profession and particularly the research on the emergence of new journalistic roles or job profiles, which are sometimes translated in new tasks, and the disappearance or absorption of some professional figures and the appearance of multi-tasking profiles (Masip & Micó, 2009; Scolari *et al.*, 2008). What seems already admitted academically and professionally is that the new environment of digital convergence, which is still in a configuration stage (Silcock & Keith, 2006), causes changes in journalistic routines, the demand for services, and the professional roles.

This research study emphasises the opportunity and pertinence of relating the change in journalistic job profiles with the new educational needs of journalists (Mellado *et al.*, 2007; Balandrón, 2010; Sierra *et al.*, 2010; López, 2012; Rosique 2013; Sánchez & Berrocal 2013), proposing a further development of the formative figures included in Journalism study programmes. This is an issue that is still under discussion and needs to be delimited with contributions from the academic and professional fields addressed in this article.

## 2. Hypothesis and method

This research study tests the hypothesis that the traditional functions of journalists do not vary with the emerging multimedia job profiles, which do change and are still undergoing a process of configuration or evolution in a transitional media landscape. The study uses a mixed qualitative method: a state of the art review and an open survey questionnaire applied to a sample of Spanish journalists.

First, the article presents a comparative literature review, which allows us to compare the different perceptions of journalism and journalists, and to compare the qualities traditionally attributed to journalists with those attributed to multimedia journalists, through the analysis of the academic discussion that helps us to shape the theoretical framework on which the study is based.

Based on this academic discussion, this article develops and specifies the training profiles proposed by the Spanish National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) in its White Paper on Communication Studies (*Libro Blanco de los Estudios de Comunicación*) (2005), which guides universities in the adaptation of their training programmes to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). This review is considered timely a decade after this proposal was made since it has coincided with the main changes that have occurred in the sector and, therefore, in the training needs of journalists, and because it is not proposed hermetically, but as a contribution to the open academic discussion that has been raised in this regard. Finally, to confirm or refute our hypothesis, this research uses the interview technique [1] with a limited yet representative sample of professionals belonging to five associations of journalists that comprise nearly 46,000 [2] professionals of the Spanish media.

The limited sample is composed of the spokesmen of associations that were chosen for their greater representation according to different criteria: the number of members, the years in operation and their

active role in the current professional scenario, field of research (academic field) and professional field. Under these premises we interviewed the representatives of the Spanish Federation of Press Associations (FAPE), the Spanish Federation of Journalists' Trade Unions (FeSP), the Press Association of Madrid (APM), the Spanish Society of Journalism (SEP) and the Association of Journalists of Catalonia .

### 3. The progressive incompatibility of the concepts of journalist and journalism

The absence of a professional statute for journalists in Spain, and practically in all of Europe, prevent us from having an official or legal definition of the profession and its professionals. To raise this conceptual review, this study uses a literature review that starts with the main dictionaries and journalism manuals to verify the validity or outdated status of such terms as journalist and journalism, multimedia journalist, digital journalist, online journalist or cyber-journalism.

Because of its wide dissemination, we consulted the 2001 Royal Spanish Academy Dictionary (DRAE), which gives two meanings to the term journalism: 1. "Written, oral, visual or graphic presentation and treatment of information in all its forms and varieties. 2. The studies or career of journalists". Regarding the concept of journalist, this dictionary defines it as follows: "person legally authorised to practice journalism. 2. Person professionally dedicated to perform literary or graphic information tasks and opinion-creation functions in a newspaper or an audiovisual medium".

Both definitions are identical in the latest online edition of the DRAE ([www.rae.es](http://www.rae.es), 2014). In this regard, it is important to note that there is a certain lag and lack of updating, especially because of the absence of references to multimedia journalism, online journalists and online journalism, which are terms that do not exist for the Royal Spanish Academy (which does include meanings from the same etymological family such as *ciberespacio*-cyberspace and *cibernauta*-internet user). In addition, the definition of journalism does not mention media platforms or multimedia languages. As for the definition of journalist, it refers to a person "legally authorised to practice Journalism", when in fact currently in Spain there is not a law or statute that determines who can be a journalist.

Another aspect to discuss or review is the fact that the DRAE attributes to journalists "literary tasks", a concept linked to 'art', which does not correspond accurately with the result of the 'informative task' performed by journalists. In the same way, the reference to 'digital media', which have their own platform and style, is missing from the list of media ('a newspaper or an audiovisual medium') included in the definition.

These definitions included in the 2001 DRAE (the 22<sup>nd</sup> edition) do have evolved in comparison to the 21st edition from 1992, which are as follows:

-Journalism: "Work or profession performed by journalists".

-Journalist: "Person that composes, writes or edits a newspaper. 2. Person who, professionally, prepares or presents the news in a newspaper or another information-dissemination medium".

This outdated puts in evidence, in a way, the speed at which technological changes occur in the sector, since, less than a decade ago these definitions were considered to be adjusted to the

professional reality of the time. The need to redefine these concepts to reflect industry changes is confirmed by a brief documentary retrospective that shows how, in the last century, these concepts have evolved in step with the view of journalism held by the society of every decade (Videla, 2002). The evolution of the concept of journalist in the DRAE in the last century serves as an example:

- 1822 edition: “Composer, author or editor of a newspaper”.
- The 1914 edition (14th edition) introduces new meanings: “composer, author, or publisher of newspapers. 2. The person whose job is to write in a newspaper”.
- The 1984 edition, maintains the basic definition offered in 1822.
- The 1992 edition also defines it as “a person who, professionally, prepares or presents the news in a newspaper or another communication medium”.

Other dictionaries also show this conceptual evolution. An example is contained in the 1922 edition of the Espasa Encyclopaedia (XLIII: 861), which offers a vision ahead of its time, in the sense that, unlike the DRAE, it does not conceive journalism as a job close to literature and considers it unique and unmistakable:

“There is something in Journalism that prevents us from framing it in a particular literary genre. It requires a synthetic talent, of encyclopaedic and superficial culture, of mental agility, of classification of facts, of criticism that grades the importance of everything that happens in life, of distribution of things, since there is nothing that can be mistaken for journalism” (on Aguinaga, 2001:251).

One of the largest specialised dictionaries, still updated in the beginning of the 21st century, the *Diccionario de Periodismo* (Dictionary of Journalism), coordinated by Professor Ángel Benito (2001) and written by leading theorists, defines journalist as “a professional who performs informative functions in any media: especially press, radio and television”. Benito adds that journalist “is the professional that selects, gathers, sorts and shapes the news of public interest, to disseminate them through the media” (2001:116).

The same Dictionary defines the concept of journalism as “the mode of mass communication whose specific aim is the non-intentional dissemination of documentable events and the proposition of fairly subjective comments, or opinions about socially relevant events” (Benito, 2001: 1.004). It also designates two elements that further define the concept: its particular and own message, the news and, secondly, the psychological disposition of intellectual honesty of the communicator that practices it.

In both meanings, presented a little more than a decade ago, there is no reference to multimedia journalism and journalists, although at that time, some researchers already foresee the changes in digital journalism (Salaverría, 2000; Díaz, 2002). Although the previous definitions show, somehow, that the essence of Journalism and journalists does not change; they also show that these terms are adjusted through time, mainly to the technological and productive changes. This also highlights the need to update the definitions of the DRAE, as an informative starting point.

### **3.1. The evolving definition of multimedia journalist**

The definition of journalist cannot be easily separated from the new meaning of multimedia journalist due to the now inevitable reference to journalists' dissemination of information over the Web and other media. In fact, the most visited online encyclopaedia, Wikipedia, offers a broad definition of journalist, which we replicate here because is more up-to-date and complete than the manuals in use:

“A journalist is the person who is professionally dedicated to journalism, in any of its forms, either in the written press, photography, radio, television or digital media. His/her job is to discover and investigate matters of public interest and compare, synthesise, rank and publish them. To this end, he/she uses reliable and verifiable sources. This is how he/she makes his/her articles, which can take several forms of dissemination: oral, written or visual” (10 October, 2014: 6:40 hours).

The different definitions of multimedia journalist include different terms that refer to a similar reality, such as digital journalist, multimedia journalist or cyber journalist, although with nuances in their meanings. The definition of cyber journalist has been complemented by different researchers and shows that it is a meaning in evolution or, rather, under construction.

Santiago Tejedor (2007), author of a thesis on cyber journalism, defines the concept of cyber journalist as:

“A professional who knows the informational structure of the cyber media, dominates the productive routines which enable him/her to produce real-time information, presents versatility in terms of training that allows him/her to take on different roles in the performance of a journalistic task, knows how to use the Web as a source of information (always applying ethical criteria and filters that guarantee the veracity of the information obtained)” (2007: 407).

Moreover, the academic debate has raised the idea of changing the name of journalist for communicator because with the new technological changes, it is referred to as “people with enough skills to facilitate the flow of information between the different social actors, and with the ability to make the most of the digital tools available” (Perona, 2000: 99). In one way or another, it is important to note that the concepts of cyber journalist and multimedia journalist might still require progressive revisions, especially due to the variations occurring in professional job profiles, which are in a process of transition and constitute our subject of study.

### **3.2. From the ‘historian journalist’ to the multimedia and multitasking reporter**

One of the objectives of this study is to outline the qualities that can be considered to be inherent to journalists, regardless of the platform, through a literature review that seeks to compare, by way of ‘fixed image’, the qualities drawn from the first Doctoral Thesis on Journalism published in Europe (Peucer, 1690) and the traits that contemporary scholars attribute to the multimedia journalist and contribute to complement the previous definition.

In the 17th century, when the first Gazette was printed in Spain in 1660, the first doctoral thesis on journalism in the world was published in Germany by Tobías Peucer, under the title *Relationes Novellae* (1690) and translated as ‘On News Reporting’ (Aguinaga, 1996). This first academic and scientific work on journalism sets the qualities that characterise the journalists from an era when they, rather than mere writers, were considered historian-journalists. Peucer called these qualities “virtues” and grouped them into two modalities which are attributed to understanding and will (1690: 43-45):

-Intelligence to know the facts that deserve to be trusted.

-Judgement, “supreme attribute of understanding, so that the news deserving credit are differentiated from vain rumours” (Ibid.: 14).

-Respect and pursuit of the truth, are two qualities that Peucer attributed to will, “to prevent [the journalist], perhaps subjected to partisan interests, from thoughtlessly mixing falsehoods, or writing poorly researched pieces on matters of importance” (Ibid.: 45).

The qualities identified by Peucer in the 17th century are similar to those attributed by contemporary scholars. Some propose defining features which are considered unalterable:

“The curiosity, the love for the truth, the respect for the rights and divergent opinions of others, the love for good expression, the sense of social justice and the need for a more balanced and peaceful world, the liberal and sympathetic frame of mind, the concern for the language and human adventure (...) Requirements as valid today as they have been since this profession and our career exist” (Lozano, 2007: 19).

The values and qualities traditionally attributed to the journalists of any medium, as the classic ‘journalistic instinct’ to select and order contents, the creativity, the ethics, the ability to work in a team, etc. “will continue to be essential, but others must be added to them such as flexibility, the ability to adapt to changes, technological versatility and functional mobility” (Bernaola *et al.*, 2011: 188). From the perspective of Galdón (1999), there is a series of traits such as intellectual curiosity to find out what is happening in the world.

The list of qualities attributed to traditional journalists must add those qualities attributed to journalists working in digital media, online journalists and multimedia journalists who, given the quick technological changes on which they depend, require to enhance, especially, two qualities: polyvalence and versatility. “Digital journalists must be able to master a number of tasks which include: access, management, integration, creation and evaluation of online informative messages” (Tejedor, 2007: 407). Multimedia journalists should have sufficient skills to work in different platforms (multimedia) handling written and audiovisual languages (multilanguage) in a journalistic reality that is no longer linear, neither in the information it offers nor in the language it uses. In the words of Masip and Micó (2009), multimedia journalists should show this polyvalence and versatility from different perspectives: media versatility, in the sense that they must produce content for different platforms; technological polyvalence because they take care of the entire production process; and thematic versatility because they must now deal with news from different areas or sections. Thus, “apart from having a ‘well-furnished head’, they require versatility to ease their

adaptation to changes in technologies, and facilitate thematic specialisation and creativity cultivation” (López, 2001: 15).

The quality of polyvalence has different levels; depending on what the different media require (Salaverría & García, 2008) with the risk of turning this polyvalence, in times of crisis, into multi-tasking demanded by staff reductions.

If we take as valid the idea that digital journalists retain the qualities of the traditional reporters, we should also add that, given the current overabundance of information, professional reporters must sharpen their “ability of analysis and synthesis” not to mention that in the new socio-labour context, they require “an approach that integrates online skills with the creativity and innovation with which industries and the knowledge society operate” (Lorente, 2010: 26). These qualities are added to the features that Peucer himself attributed in the 17th century to will and understanding: intelligence, judgement, and search for truth, now applied to journalists in any media platform.

#### **4. Delimitation of the journalistic functions**

The functions of informing, interpreting and intermediating are traditionally attributed to journalists regardless of the platform in which they work. When trying to define them in the multimedia environment, difficulties arise due to the amalgamation of the new tasks currently assigned to journalists. As the officially agreed-upon point of departure, we have the function or functions of the professional journalists established by the Spanish National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA), whose White Paper on ‘Communication Degrees’ (*Libro Blanco de Títulos de Grado en Comunicación*) guides universities to establish their study programmes dedicated to train the journalists of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This white paper assigns journalists the role of “interpreters of the social reality when it comes to conceive, articulate, produce, analyse, and manage all types of media, programmes and products in any technical platform, medium, system or field of information” (2005: 310). That is to say that they put first the work of interpreting and include various tasks that may correspond to various job positions (writer, analyst, director, etc.), regardless of the platform.

Underlying the functions attributed to journalists is their primary task of public service which involves considering the practice of journalism in its highest level derived from the right to information which citizens delegate to journalists. A task in which they must achieve the objectivity of their discourse, the ability to comprehend (phenomenological process), interpret (hermeneutic process) and transmit (metaphorical creativity), like Sánchez-Bravo pointed out in 1979 and other theorists endorsed three decades later when confirming that the function of “providing impartial and timely information to citizens so that they are free and capable of governing themselves” does not vary (Biondi, Miró & Zapata, 2010: 138). The basic professional principles “intrinsic to the journalistic work in any medium and platform [are still valid]: verification of sources and facts, the pursuit of truth, objectivity, the condition of public service, journalistic ethics, etc.” (Rosique, 2013: 118).

But in the new context of overabundant information and of the new role of the audiences, the debate on the amendment or reinforcement of certain professional routines remains open. Technological



change promotes a wide variety of tasks that converge in the figure of the ‘multi-function journalist’, also as a result of the economic crisis faced by the media and the subsequent work force reduction. The positive aspect of this figure is the fact that journalists have new free tools to create interactive pieces and even to report in several media at the same time, while its negative side is the loss of specialisation (Esteban, 2012: 18-19). Although the basic functions remain, there are variations in the sense that journalists “no longer have the exclusivity of some of their old functions as it was the elaboration of contents, their publication in a medium and the agenda-setting function” (Palomo, 2013: 114).

Journalists carry out new tasks, especially in the online environment, which are closely related to the promotion of new narratives, the management of social networks and the new sources of information. In this regard it is particularly worth noting the reinforcement of three specific facets in this context of overabundance of information: informative filter; documentalist or content curator” [3]; and reality interpreter. In practice, these three tasks are reinforced but also respond to the traditional functions of finding and selecting information; contrasting and documenting it; focusing and disseminating it, as explained below.

On the one hand, journalists must strengthen their role of “expert gatekeeper” because in “an environment of increasing complexity and proliferation of messages, journalists acquire renewed importance in their roles of clarifiers, selectors, guides, filters, anticipators, advisors and compressors” (Diezhandino, *et al.*, 2012: 9). That is to say that journalists reinforce their ability to “search, prioritise and filter information within the existing informational opulence” (Rosique, 2013: 118). There are also studies (Noguera, 2013) that propose that the traditional role of gatekeeper can be significantly amplified with the use of social networks at the time in which journalists are dedicated to retweeting or linking information. This theory, however, is not shared by those who point out that the role of gatekeeper “wobbles” (Díaz, 2002: 182-183) because the accessibility to information and sources gives users the power to filter information, banishing the idea that the public knows only what appears in the media.

This is an open debate which, without a doubt, is a broad field of study yet to be explored in view of the new informational uses of the audience which go in two apparently opposite directions: some seek quality information filters given the information overabundance while some others take advantage of technological tools to carry out their own independent, mature and individual selection of contents. And there are those who adopt both positions.

Another journalistic role that is reinforced is the role of documentalist or curator, which is a professional able to select, get in the flow, assess and discuss (Varela, 2011) data and information in large quantities. This job is that of information manager and content manager.

Finally, it is important to add the promotion of the role of interpreter that provides deeper and more complete information that helps people to have a better orientation and understanding of a reality overloaded with information and biased sources. Ultimately, there could be changes in the tools, tasks, and platforms, but the function will remain the same: “To report with the classic criteria of truthfulness, selection, hierarchical organisation, interpretation and contextualisation” (Diezhandino, *et al.*, 2012: 9).

Ultimately, despite the variety of new tasks that may exist, journalists perform the primary function of informing, from which other two directly derive: the intrinsic role of informing their interpretation of reality and the role of integrating and mediating for society by disseminating information, interpretations and opinions. All this, with the ultimate goal of linking the social and political elite with the public, in the highest sense of social responsibility and public service in which the practice of journalism must be understood in any medium. “The job remains essentially the same” (Díaz, 2002: 178), especially understood as a public service with high doses of responsibility.

## 5. Emerging journalistic profiles

After reviewing the qualities and functions of journalists in the new media environment, the triangle hereby proposed is completed with the analysis of journalists’ professional or job profile, understood as the set of skills and competencies that identify reporters’ specific skills and knowledge to carry out the responsibilities of their profession or a specific task. The different journalistic profiles resemble both the acquired training/education and the possible job opportunities.

The professional journalistic profiles, unlike the qualities and functions, quickly evolve with the changes in society, along with the technological tools available, the demand for new services and the labour market of the moment. The current convergence defines “renewed professional profiles” (López, 2010: 232) that are dynamic and changing. “Journalists have had to assume tasks that were traditionally characteristic of other professions, which has forced them to develop a more complex and demanding profile” (Masip & Micó, 2009: 93). These changes are associated with technology because of the need to face the production of multi-platform contents and can be considered as a diversification of the labour market (Mellado *et al.*, 2007). In this sense, emerging roles arise as new job opportunities in which journalists can work “at the service of companies, institutions, organisations, etc., to put them in contact with their publics, social partners, with and without press mediation” (Piñuel, 2000: 5), for example. And, the vast majority fits in three major categories: multi-media journalist (handles different media), multi-tasking journalist (assumes several tasks at the same time) and multi-platform journalist (disseminates work through different channels) (Meso *et al.*, 2010: 307).

In turn, it can be said that these categories are mainly related with three communicative aspects: social networks, the greater communicative representation of companies, institutions or entities, and the ability of the public to interact.

That is to say that journalists are required to perform new services like handling large amounts of data and sources, increasing information dissemination in the social web and interacting with the public. This is a requirement applicable to all platforms that already require “A specific profile, very flexible and able to adapt and recycle according to the developments that take place” (Bernaola *et al.*, 2011: 187). This is quite a process of change in which a variety of roles come into play, some of them representing an extension of old tasks, while others are new and, to a certain point, largely experimental areas.

### 5.1. Revisionist proposal of training multimedia profiles

The issue seems to be agreed upon in the academic debate: the professional journalistic profiles do change. But we should add two more issues: the danger of confusing journalistic profiles with ‘multi-tasks’ (as a result of the momentary demands of the market and the economic context) and the need to adapt these changing roles to journalism studies. Firstly, we must not overlook the fact that the media urgency to assume different professional profiles also promotes the “one-man band” journalist (Álvarez, 1996: 14), who is able to use video images in the online edition of the newspaper and transmit written messages through the radio station. This is an issue which is exacerbated in times of crisis and differs from the required specialisation, in the sense that, digital journalists should know how to work in all media and with all means. That is, journalists must be trained to perform polyvalent, flexible and versatile roles.

With regards to the adaptation of Journalism studies to the new reality, we can consider the premise that the new journalistic profiles “require a preparation that is different from the one received by journalists so far” (López, 2001: 14). This is an issue that is already part of the academic debate. The question is in which specific profiles to train journalists, knowing that the change does not consist only in handling the new digital tools and new languages, but in knowing the keys of the platforms, the design, the intelligent agents and teamwork, without losing an integral professional training.

The different journalistic profiles currently accepted in the academic and professional fields are, as mentioned, based on the basic four profiles established in ANECA’s 2005 White Paper on ‘Communication Degrees’ (p. 191). These profiles, which are the basis of Spanish universities’ Journalism study programmes in their latest adaptation to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in 2010, are described as follows:

1. Writer of journalistic information in any type of platform: professional of journalism in any traditional or electronic media that develops his/her activity through genres creating journalistic contents. Professionals who take on the tasks of writer, reporter, presenter and director of one or several of them, including the design, writing and implementation of scripts of reports and audiovisual or multimedia documentaries.
2. Writer responsible of press or institutional communication: professional responsible for the press or communication office of a public or private institution; is there to coordinate or run all the informative or communicative tasks that the entity may need.
3. Communication researcher, teacher and consultant: specialist in research and analysis of communication phenomena and processes for all types of public and private organisations; trained for advisory, consultancy and mediation tasks. Secondary and higher education teacher of communication and new information and communication technologies.
4. Website manager and content editor: professional responsible for the drafting and execution of editing works in general for cultural and informative content production companies. Specialist in the treatment, management and editing of all kinds of content through preferably digital systems.

These four basic journalistic job profiles seem to be assumed in most of the study programmes. But the reality of the labour market does not offer such a clear delimitation partly because of that variety of the tasks that pushes journalist to fit multiple profiles at once and, in part, because of the speed at which technological changes and the new information demands have occurred after ANECA's proposal was made. Far from considering these profiles outdated, we propose to develop and characterise them through four multimedia journalistic profiles to which different non- mutually-exclusive tasks or multi-tasks are associated (see Table 1).

1. The first professional profile proposed by ANECA, the reporter in any platform, requires the training of a multimedia journalist who is able to inform on multiple platforms and dominates multi-language. At the same time, this professional can become a 'versatile writer' or 'specialised writer', in any platform or theme. This is an issue that can result in another study that we do not attempt to carry out here: the convenience of journalists becoming specialised in more specific areas and themes to carry out their work with more specific expertise for different multimedia publications, or the convenience of being versatile journalists able to perform digital multitasks (drafting of text, videos and design) with general thematic knowledge.

Included in the general profile of multimedia writer or reporter, one can already speak also of 'journalistic information manager', given the complex information filtering work that journalists must do. This profile can be linked to the role of programmer, not so much as a computer technician but rather as journalist capable of navigating with ease in some content management systems such as PHP (Hypertext Pre-processor, for the development of websites) (Azócar, 2011). New skills to deal with the so called data-driven journalism, which leads writers to dive in huge databases, especially official databases, made available by new technologies, without relying on government spokesmen or the degree of public transparency which follows the whim of politicians. Journalists now perform the role of documentalist, which involves diving in information and managing documents.

In the same way, this emerging figure can be extended to the audiovisual field with a new journalistic profile of 'content manager', a figure responsible of "controlling and managing an enormous amount of materials, distributed through different channels, be it DTT, Internet or mobile phones" (Bernaola *et al.*, 2011: 187). That is, the work of the reporter that controls multiple audiovisual sources and diverse broadcasting systems.

2. Secondly, the press office manager proposed by ANECA requires the training of a multimedia press office manager since the increasingly competitive marketing and public-commercial image market requires professionals with multidisciplinary expertise and, above all, a strong preparation in the digital information to be able to disseminate information of the company or institution in many more ways and platforms. That is to say, they generate multimedia information (press releases with written releases, audio, video, attachments, etc.), as part of what could be also called a 'multimedia corporate reporter'.

The uniqueness of this journalistic profile is that it can be adjusted to freelance or employment contracts and that it demands knowledge on how to increase and make more effective the informative and corporate presence and diversification on the web, on various platforms, and in several languages. Even this profile has ramifications such as the information broker, in charge of finding specific information on the Internet and providing it to a third party (individuals, companies or

institutions) that previously hired his/her services (Real, 2004). Moreover, the variety of facets of this journalistic profile continues to grow.

3. The third journalistic profile established by the academic guide of ANECA, the communication consultant, teacher and researcher, is already immersed in the study of new technologies and has a variant that could be considered consistent with the so-called Bologna Process that seeks greater relationship between the academic and business environments: the ‘lab professor’, a mediator between the university and the company, combining teaching and research and, at the same time, connecting theoretical discoveries and the social effects of communication with professional practice, to give answers to colleague journalists working on the other side and to the company avid for new business and information models to fit users’ trends. This journalistic profile is considered more of a future trend, focused on new narratives, platforms and trends that might require greater expertise.

On the other hand, complementary facets to this profile arise due to the possibility that journalists with experience in media will collaborate or participate in different studies, especially empirical, in collaboration with academic research or in reports commissioned by consulting firms, focused on media, audiences and markets to help both professionals and academics to keep abreast of the technological effects.

In this section we can also include the journalist-professor profile as a new academic role to enhance in other degrees and in other educational levels. That is, we should encourage media studies to reach different areas so that teachers graduated in journalism can teach about the media in other university degrees from the perspective of the social influence of the media. Equally or more relevant is the promotion of this figure in secondary and high schools to provide younger people with the keys to analyse and filtering the media. This is a figure that might need to receive specific training for this purpose.

4. Finally, the website manager and editor is the profile most updated to the digital realm of journalism, and one that could be adjusted to the ‘online website and content manager’ job profile, which consists of the generating of information on the Web and can, in turn, include other two more specific and complementary profiles or facets that need to be detailed because of their recent introduction in the labour market: the independent multimedia manager (freelancer) and the social networks manager.

On the one hand, the ‘freelance multimedia manger’ offers services and skills to handle journalistic criteria and the language of the different platforms for companies and media. In other words, this professional can at the same time write for a website, create videos for the internet and carry out communication strategies for one or several companies. It is a journalist which, in itself, constitutes a mini informative company.

On the other hand, the social networks manager has various facets. Some authors call it “the journalist’s social profile” because it requires a “social polyvalence, understood as the ability to interact regularly and simultaneously in various ways with the public” (Palomo, 2013: 114). This facet includes the role of ‘community manager’, which, in turn, can be considered part of the ‘multimedia press office manager’ profile or can be specialised in this service, exclusively for the

media and different agencies. This professional manages the social networks of a company, institution, entity or media company to reinforce the online presence of their brand and achieve greater dissemination and commercial effectiveness, from a communicational or strictly informational point of view.

This journalistic job profile is also included in the activity of the media looking to better manage their social networks. It is already an essential job that is done by many self-taught journalists that lack the specialised training. In a related way, we propose the role of “gatekeeper on Facebook”, which is dedicated to professionally selecting the informational contents of the medium in this social network, avoiding the figure of multi-purpose journalist (Rodríguez *et al.*, 2010: 205). The new journalistic job profile that emerges from Twitter also acquires special relevance. This social network offers new access to sources and allows the dissemination and viral marketing of information, although some studies show that its use is directed more to disseminating pre-existing content than to create it (Carrera *et al.*, 2012). In short, the new tools give rise to new routines that gradually make up new journalistic job profiles which, in this case, can be grouped together in the so-called ‘social networks gatekeeper’ category, which shows that each of these profiles is expanding.

The emerging figure of ‘community manager’ with all its possible future variations, depending on the social network in which it specialises, has a rising labour demand, and is a journalistic job profile that, depending on its goal, may be straddling between Journalism, Public Relations and Advertising. In response its most journalistic facet, the main function of the community manager is to consume the information generated by the institution and to disseminate it internally and externally. Training in this field should provide journalism students the ability “to search, select, retrieve, organise, prioritise, analyse and process information” and one of its basic skills is to know how to write well, show creativity and innovation and adhere to a deontological code when using the network with the so-called “values 2.0” (Baladrón, 2010: 213). This work responds to informational criteria.

Table 1 shows these four large profiles, as a summary of the new journalistic and multimedia facets. They can be considered as non-mutually excluding job opportunities for today’s journalists. They are not limited to these references, but can go through a period of expansion and arrangement in both work and academic realities.

This proposal comes to confirm that the training and professional profiles of journalists can no longer be considered fixed, but that they are more interdependence with the demands of the labour market, where many of them are already booming, susceptible to expansion or disappearance, depending on the definition of the journalistic models during a period of digital transition. This is a reality to which it seems suitable to adapt the study programmes of future journalists.

**Table 1. Delimitation of new multimedia training profiles**

Journalistic Profiles	Multi-facets and multi-tasks
<b>1. Multimedia reporter</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Versatile writer in any platform or theme</li> <li>-Specialised writer in any platform or theme</li> <li>-Programming-based journalistic news and content manager (data-driven journalism)</li> <li>-Audiovisual content manager</li> </ul>
<b>2. Multipurpose and multimedia press office manager</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Multidisciplinary journalist</li> <li>-Multimedia corporate journalist</li> <li>-Information broker</li> </ul>
<b>3 Lab professor and consultant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Teacher and researcher</li> <li>-University-business mediator</li> <li>-Collaborator journalist in media and market research</li> <li>-Journalist-professor in other media-related degrees and education levels</li> </ul>
<b>4. Website and online content manager</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Freelance multimedia manager</li> <li>-Community manager</li> <li>-Gatekeeper on Facebook</li> <li>-Gatekeeper on social networks</li> </ul>

Source: Author's own creation with data from Aneca's *Libro Blanco* (2005).

## 6. The opinion of journalist associations

The academic debate about the new journalistic reality also runs in the professional field. After addressing the theoretical and academic debate, this part of the article will present the results of the semi-structured interviews with the representatives of five journalist associations about the subject under study.

Below is a summary of the replies of given by journalists to the questionnaire interview which, for the purposes of this research, focused on two issues:

“In the current journalistic reality, do you identify new professional profiles? Do you notice a change in the functions that journalists had been performing? If so, mention the journalistic functions or profiles that could have disappeared or have been incorporated in recent years”.

The spokeswoman of the Spanish Federation of Press Associations (FAPE), Elsa González, says that journalists are facing the new labour market where new “employment niches” are emerging in the context of a new Information Society. However, González believes that the function of journalists and the media remain the same: “to guarantee the right of citizens to receive free and truthful information; to be vigilant of all kinds of power; uncover corruption and abuse cases and to give voice to those who have no way of being heard”.

In addition, in view of the birth of new non-journalistic news reporters, she defends the role of the professional journalist: “Journalists are needed more than ever, to confirm, place, highlight and humanise the information. Only journalists and the media company are responsible for what they publish”. In this complex work, she qualifies the training of journalists as “fundamental”.

The Secretary General of the Spanish Federation of Journalists’ Trade Unions (FeSP), Dardo Gómez, reiterates that “the function of informing has not changed; neither have the ethical principles that should govern it; and its social function remains as undeniable as ever and more necessary than ever.” He states that changes have occurred in the information dissemination platforms, and the work tools and routines. In his opinion, these changes allow journalists to “be more effective and better informed”.

The President of the Press Association of Madrid (APM), Carmen del Riego, also highlighted that “the essence of the journalist’s work is still the same: to inform, obtain information, contrast it, digest it and transmit it to citizens so that they can understand the reality in which they live”. In her opinion, the current journalistic reality does bring changes by broadening the work scope of journalists, especially in a large field of communication characterised by new tasks related to social networks.

The Dean of the Association of Journalists of Catalonia, Josep M. Martí, argues that new technologies “are also introducing new professional profiles, such as the community manager, and all those professionals who can engage with content management”. In this new reality, there are tasks that, in his opinion, are being adapted to the profession’s reality “but without altering the concept or the social role of journalism”. With regards to this work, he reminds us that the journalist “must be well informed, but above all must be well trained”.

The then President of the Spanish Society of Journalism (SEP), Concha Edo, confirms that, faced with the labour changes, “journalists should keep their professional duties unchanged as the importance of providing truthful, interesting, documented, rigorous and professionally structured information, regardless of the platform used: technological improvements should not lead to superficiality”. She recognises the changes in the new job profiles such as the need to “know how to interact with the audience through social networks” without losing the standards of quality. She detects increased intrusion in the profession as a consequence of the emergence of new technologies and considers that professional journalists should counteract it with “updated specialisation”.



In summary, there seems to be clear coincidences among the representatives of the five journalist associations consulted. These professionals confirm that there has been a change in the journalistic model as a consequence of the arrival of new technologies, but without directly affecting journalists' informing role. They also point out their consequent ethical requirements, their social responsibility, and their necessary role as 'information filters' and guarantor of the right to information, with all that this implies. Similarly, they agree that the new media landscape does change the professional profile of journalists and consider that these variations constitute new job opportunities or employment niches linked to digital and multimedia information.

## 7. Discussion and conclusions

The results of this research show, first, that in the review of the conceptual framework the concepts of journalism and journalist vary in the multimedia environment so that some traditional meanings have become outdated, as those offered by the Royal Spanish Academy Dictionary (DRAE), which have been overtaken by technological changes. The main reasons for this mismatch are: the DRAE defines the journalist as a 'person legally authorised to practice journalism', when in Spain there is not a law that determines who is authorised to be a journalist; in addition, the DRAE assigns journalists 'literary tasks' which in practice do not necessarily respond to the informative production process; the DRAE does not mention multimedia work or the difference in platforms; and it does not include the meanings of cyber or online journalism and journalist.

Second, the study delves into the idea that the concept of multimedia journalist and online journalist are evolving, or under construction, in a period of transition towards new digital business models, information demands and delimitation of professional roles that prevent us from reaching a closed definition.

Based on the theory that 21<sup>st</sup> century journalists have to be digital or else they will perish, we concluded that the characteristics traditionally attributed to the information professional are applicable to multimedia journalist, although the latter develops specific qualities such as polyvalence and versatility.

Third, the literature review and the direct consultation to active professionals, through an interview questionnaire, corroborated the hypothesis that the main functions of journalists do not change in multimedia newsrooms, and that what changes is the journalistic job profiles that emerge as new job opportunities. In this sense the study reinforces the idea of that the journalist's informing, interpreting and mediating functions remain unchanged as fundamental pillars of the right to information, regardless of the media platform.

In spite of this, the article shows an open academic discussion over the modification of certain journalistic roles such as gatekeeper, documentalist, curator, and reality interpreter; which are reinforced or reduced given the overabundance of information and new information consumption preferences of the more active receivers.

Fourth, the research study suggests that the emerging journalistic profiles should be considered as new job opportunities, especially linked to three main aspects: social networks, the greater interactive presence of companies, institutions or entities, and the public's ability of interaction.

Finally, the academic debate already addresses the need to link the new journalistic profiles with the training/education needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century journalists. Under this premise, the research study proposes the development of the four training roles established by ANECA to adapt them to the study programmes around four roles: versatile or specialised multimedia writer; multifaceted communications office manager; laboratory professor and researcher; and multimedia services promoter and community manager. This is an opened proposal in the unfinished debate over journalists' job and training profiles, which should remain under research because they are evolving and depend on the changing technological and communicational market.

- **Funded research:** The results presented in this article are linked to the research carried out by the "[New trends in Communication](#)" (Nuteco) research group and to the teaching innovation project titled "[Evaluation and development of teaching methods in communication and media competencies](#)".

Dates:

-Start of the research: 3 April, 2014

-End of the research: 30 October, 2014

## 8. Notes

[1] Interviews carried out via email between 4 and 19 May 2012 and as part of a wider research project from which some results relevant to this article are extracted.

[2] The Spanish Federation of Press Association (FAPE) was created in 1922. It has 48 member associations and 13 linked associations which represent over 20,000 partners throughout Spain. Its President, Elsa González, occupies this position since May 2010.

The Federation of Journalists' Trade Unions (FeSP) was founded in 2001 and has 2,700 affiliated unions and 300 trade union delegates representing more than 14,500 workers. The questionnaire interview was answered by its Secretary-General, Dardo Gómez, who holds the post since May 2009. The Press Association of Madrid (APM) is the oldest association of journalists in Spain (created in 1895) and is the largest regional association with more than 7,600 partners. The questionnaire interview was answered by its President, Carmen del Riego, who was appointed in December 2011.

The Association of Journalists of Catalonia was created in 1985 as one of the first organisations of journalists in Spain. It brings together different groups of Catalan professionals with over 3,700 members. Its Dean, Josep M. Martí i Martí holds the position since March 2010.

The Spanish Society of Journalism (SEP) was founded in 1989 and has 150 members, with the peculiarity that all of them are professors and researchers from most of the Spanish universities offering communication studies. Concha Edo was its President since May 2010 but was replaced by Fernando López Pan in 2014.

[3] Specialist that selects and disseminates the most relevant content about a topic or field on different sources of information on the web (Guallar y Leiva-Aguilera, 2013).

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