Trends Analysis

Journalism´s future is hybrid and adapts to all supports

Concha Edo

Sixteen years after the *San José Mercury News* became the first newspaper with a space for its news in the internet, journalism has become immersed in a more complex crisis than other past ones because this one leads to an information model change that the media cannot avoid. And, although the basic concepts have remained the same, what has changed -a lot- is the work of journalists, publishers, narration, formats, sections, investments, publicity and, above all, the relationship of the media with the audience.

Keywords: internet, online journalism, cyber journalism

Cuando se cumplen dieciséis años desde que el californiano *San José Mercury News* se convirtió en el primer diario que disponía de un espacio para sus noticias en internet, el periodismo se encuentra inmerso en una crisis más compleja que otras anteriores porque conduce a un cambio de modelo informativo que los medios no pueden eludir. Y aunque los conceptos básicos no se han movido, sí que han cambiado –y mucho- el trabajo de los periodistas, las redacciones, la narración, los formatos, las secciones, los géneros, el diseño, las inversiones, la publicidad y, sobre todo, la relación del medio con la audiencia.

Palabras clave: internet, periodismo digital, ciberperiodismo

Concha Edo es profesora de periodismo en la Facultad de Ciencias de la Información de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid (España)
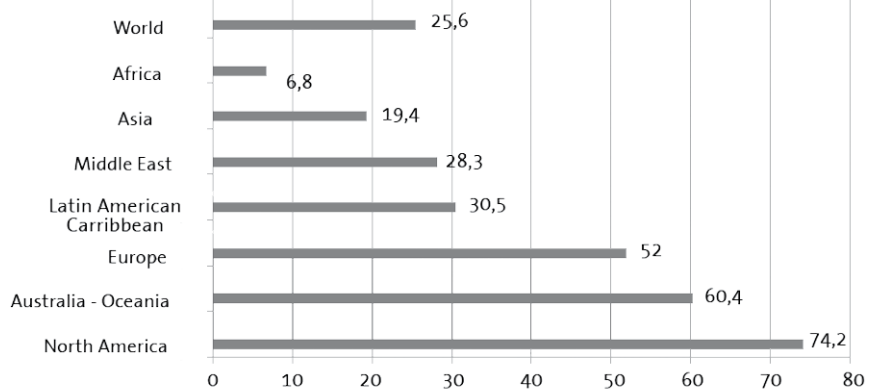
1. Internet dominates as information and communication means

The truth is that internet is making its way as the base with highest possibilities for communications, at least for the time being. Data figures are elocuent although with important differences according to the different world locations and even with different possibilities within a same country. We will review the more recent European and Spanish data. In chart no. 1 it is possible to appreciate the differences between continents and the figure that is a result from adding up all the quantities: 25,6% of the inhabitants of the planet are interconnected.

Chart. 1 User per 100 inhabitans

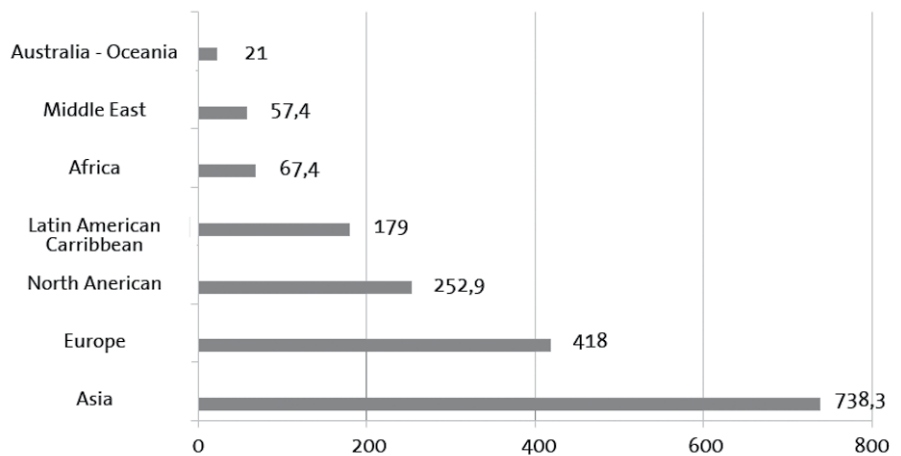| Region	Value
World	25,6
Africa	6,8
Asia	19,4
Middle East	28,3
Latin American Carribbean	30,5
Europe	52
Australia - Oceania	60,4
North America	74,2

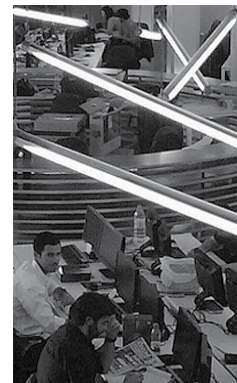Source: Internet World Stats (september 2009) Our own elaboration

Yet if only 25% have access to internet, in this percentage the use of it shoots up. In Finland, where 80% of the population uses the network, access to wide band has turned into a right that will become law in July of 2010 and must reach the entire country by 2015. This is the first country to do so although Switzerland passed a motion of similar characteristics in 2006 guranteeing internet connections for all its citizens. And in France, Greece or Estonia among other countries, access to internet is considered to be a right but the speed rate is not stated. These government actions are not free but are the door to communication possibilites of cyberspace (e*l Mundo*, 19-X-2009; *El País*, 21-XI-2009).

Chart no. 2 shows another perspective of the data: if we notice the total number of internauts, Asia and Europe surpass the United States and the total number of users that internet World Stats offered at the end of September 2009 is of 1.733.993.741, with an estimated population of 6.767.805.208 persons.

Chart 2. Internet users in millions

Region	Value
Australia - Oceania	21
Middle East	57,4
Africa	67,4
Latin American Carribbean	179
North Anerican	252,9
Europe	418
Asia	738,3

Source: Internet World Stats (30-09-2009). Our own elaboration

From either of the two points of view, the facts are always the same, each year access to the net increases throughout the world and on line media manage to get visitor numbers in cyber space that grows higher than the audience of any of the other information supports. In Spain, the data of the General Media Study (EGM) for 2009 show how these figures rise in a daily way in cyber media, internet as opposed to the stagnation or in many cases, the progressive reduction of the rest of the supports as can be seen in the following charts.

Chart 3. Evolution of the index for social penetration in Spanish media

	Internet	Newspaper	Radio	Television	Magazine	Supplement
1997	0,9	37,7	55	90,7	54,7	32,4
1998	1,8	36,9	53,5	89,4	53,2	31,9
1999	2,9	35,2	53	89,4	53,3	31,3
2000	5,6	36,3	52,9	89,2	53,6	32,1
2001	9	35,9	52,4	89,2	52,8	30,4
2002	10,6	37,4	54,7	89,9	51,4	29,5
2003	13,6	39,7	57,9	90,7	53,1	29,4
2004	16,8	41,1	56,8	89,6	55,1	30,4
2005	19,7	41,1	55,5	88,9	53,8	27,7
2006	22,2	41,8	56,1	88,6	47,7	25,4
2007	26,2	41,3	54,7	88,7	49,4	24,9
2008	29,9	42,1	53,1	88,5	53,3	21,7
2009	34,3	39,8	55,3	89	51,3	21,9

Source: EGM/ Our own elaboration.

Chart 4. Spanish ciber media with more single users (a)

elmundo.es	6.638.000
elpais.com	5.646.000
marca.com	5.496.000
rtv.es	4.203.000
abc.es	3.672.000
telecinco.es	3.406.000
20minutos.es	3.364.000
as.com	3.258.000

Source: Nielsen (January 2010)

Chart 5. Spanish ciber media with more single users (b)

elmundo.es	23.677.5102
marca.com	20.559.553
20minutos.es	9.887.791
rtv.es	8.189.817
telecinco.es	7.228.055
sport.es	4.738.843
lavanguardia.es	3.745.797
mundodeportivo.es	3.627.207
antena3tv.com	3.615.483

Source: OJD (January 2010). El País and ABC don´t have this measurement.

In this context, visits to Spanish cyber media reach considerable figures in spite of the irregularities revealed by the different measurements of charts 4 and 5 and, if this propagation of the most read newspapers in 2009 is counted in hundreds of thousands, average hourly sale of copies (*El País*, 401.392; *El Mundo*, 309.995; *ABC*, 257.018; *El Periódico*, 217.607; *La Vanguardia*, 200.982; *La Razón*, 140.324; *El Correo*, 113.421 and *La Voz de Galicia*, 101.452, if we focus on the newspapers that have a readership of over one hundred thousand copies), in internet these figures are transformed into millions of visitors and in audience levels close to those of television although we are still far from the access figures to internet that more developed countries have in this respect.

Internet is the textile weaving through our lives (M. Castells, 2001, 15), the highest communication offering that the history of humanity has ever presenced. Yet we must not forget that this unlimited space described in the library universe by Jorge Luis Borges, unlimited and periodic that locks up in an orderly fashion all the books, can only be entered by one fourth of the population.

2. Journalism entrenches itself in cyberspace

If we pause a moment and review the mediatic supports that are shown in charts 3, 4 and 5 (daily papers, supplements, magazines, radio and television), we can check that all have an information network yet it is the daily press that has become more well situated in the network and are winning the audience battle at least for now and today. Perhaps this is because they have survived centuries of changes in journalismm or perhaps it is because the process of closing and opening newspapers around the world has been digitalized for years now and the screen is a commonly used element in press rooms. They are followed by sports sheets and television channels: a trend that becomes inverted in the Anglosaxon world as can be checked by the information shown below.

From an international perspective and according to the top news of Alexa dated 11th of March 2010, the twenty highest viewed sites are: 1) news.yahoo.com, 2) bbc.co.uk, 3) cnn.com, 4) news.bbc.co.uk, 5) news.google.com, 6) nytimes.com, 7) weather.com, 8) my.yahoo.com, 9) huffingtonpost.com, 10) msnbc.msn.com, 11) foxnews.com, 12) guardian.co.uk, 13) online.wsj.com, 14)
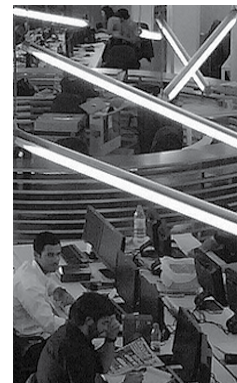
reuters.com, 15) weather.yahoo.com, 16) reddit.com, 17) washingtonpost.com, 18) latimes.com, 19) timesofindia.indiatimes.com and 20) money.cnn.com. Even though the webs accounted for are weather stations, positions 6, 12, 13, 17, 18 and 19 match cyber media that also have paper bases and consolidated prestige and the BBC and CNN in their online versions surpass any other media.

In the global classification of this same ranking, which takes into account all kinds of webs and in which searchers impose themselves and social networds, nytimes occupies position no. 96; indiatimes.com 172, guardian.co.uk 235, wsj.com is at 271, marca.com 313, washingtonpost.com 351, latimes.com 371, elmundoes holds position no. 459, elpais.com 564 and abc.es is ranked at 2.588. Figures that increase in each reviewal and reveal how citizens in the areas of the world with access to internet choose this newtork to find out.

There are different proposals on the characteristics of journalism information in cyber space (Pérez Luque y Perea Foronda, 1998; Casasús, 2002; Paul y Fiebich, 2003; Kawamoto, 2003), yet a more synthetic trend has become predominant (Deuze, 2001) which is accepted by the majority in the Spanish academic circles and is centered around three basic properties: hyper textuality, multimediability and interactivity. Other authors add constant updating (López, 2005: 45*).*

Of all of these, there are two that stand out notably and define the work patterns of the press rooms and the response of the *people who used to be considered the audience* according to the definition made by Jay Rosen, Professor of the University of New York. The first is the constant update of news, one of the keys to success of cyber media that have the highest number of visitors. The second yet no less important key is that the audience is no longer passive *(Pavlik, 2001: 20)*, although now this trend in participationn is still in its initial stages and there is still a long way to go.

As far as constant updating, more recent studies show that there is a clear selection of visitors to cybermedia that head more for news than journalistic texts such as analysis or opinions. From the conclusions of these works (Diezhandino, 2008), noteworthy issues are the subject matter in order of importance chosen by readers are: politics, events, social events, economy, terrorism, sports, legal issues, culture and shows, science, environmental issues, other various subjects and technology as well as information society. Very similar to those of paper issues excepting the information on events which is much more abundant in the net.

In line with what has already been stated, 87,42% of the genre used in digital media are information; 10,34% are chronicles; 3,72% are news coverage and 2,05% are interviews. The rest are all under 1%. It is also deduced that the results of abuse of bureaucratic sources and agencies in press rooms that are more busy reproducing contents instead of creating them with the following percentages of uses in sources: institutional, 13,74% ;agencies, 31,76%; no reference at all to sources, 29,63%; other media, 4,47% and other sources (notes, polls, press meetings, city hall meetings, parliament sessions, events), 6,95%. The agency itself goes from 9,48 and 19,88%.

Another analysis (López et al., 2005), centered around the headlines in paper and online formats, had reached similar conclusions previously although less complete: information is still the main content of newspapers in and out of the net; latest news is more important than interactivity, dominance of news genre rules; home made and/or own drawing up of news is the highest choice, cyber media use in an irregular form, hypertextual, multi media and interactive resources are used unevenly. And both confirm that

brief news dominantes over the possibility of indepth subject dealing. However, now it is necessary to add that the participation of the readers grows progressively, which is true that the news genre dominates as opposed to parts that are more analytical or interpretative, and the reality is that hypertextual resources are not unevenly used but rather used sparsely and indepth reports are a rarity (Edo et al., 2008).

If design is taken into account, this has followed the trends of technological improvements. In sum, it can be said that (Armentia, 2007: 36 and 58.), after a period of "proto design" which was limited to transferring pages, as of the year 2000 a distinction became apparent in which this material becomes specifically digital. It is then that navigational menus start appearing in the sides and upper parts of the pages and the pages are divided into three areas -with a structure known as *trident*- images are included and the Flash program starts being used for graphics, experiments with multimedia start being done and there is an increase in the participation by the users. In 2006 there is a turning point towards clearer structures to ease navigation and there is a trend towards a horizontal layout of the space in two parts, eliminating besides this, the menus that had up till then occupied the left hand side.

However, now it should be added that the design must respect the importance of one or another theme at a given moment. And, take into account the potential users (Cabrera, 2007: 70 y ss.), depending on their technological ability, their cultural level or age, as they are more and more "proactive" and it is indispensable that a higher effort be done in this sense to enable and make personalisation of the contents relatively easy. In spite of the obvious progress, there is a paradox in that the majority of the journalistic production on line is mainly textual (Domínguez, 2007: 83). Yet the cyber media can, depending on technological progress, offer services that are impossible for the paper version, radio or television and must exploit this possibility (Pereira, 2007) counting on new professional proposals.

Another interesting aspect that should be noted is that, as a result of the convergence of supports that is being produced in journalism, there is a trend to unify the paper format texts with digital ones that is being assumed by the headlines. One of the hardest consequences is that the companies are taking advantage of this entire context to made an undesirable staff adjustment reducing their staff numbers with all the consequences that this means on a human and labor level that this implies. But, from the point of view of the future of journalism, it will be necessary to see which is the change process in the way of working and what is the information product that the cyber media and newspapers will have to offer as a final result in a setting in which search engines such as Google have appeared in information with new models and in many cases, arguable ones.

3. The mobile phone, social networks and citizen participation

With the access to internet growing day by day in the more developed areas and as said earlier on, in the first lines of this text, reaches 25% of the population, a much more visible feature is the increase in the use of mobile phones in the world: it amply surpasses 50% of the population and turns it into the most widely extended mass media with more possibilities for communication via internet, lighter, comfortable and manageable than any computer.

A study last year shows an increase in the use of internet using mobile phones that grew by 30% (Nielsen, july 2009). The report confirms that
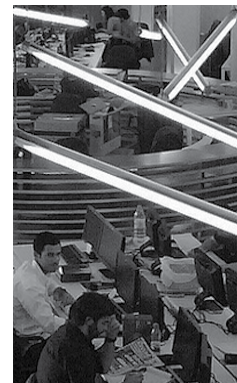
this trend will continue growing as 57% of European users state that they are willing to increase their use in the next few years. Mobile phones are no longer limited to calls and have multiple functions. In Spain the main activities are: sending text messages (73,5%), sending images (21,5%) and accessing internet (10%) with teenagers as most enthusiastic users.

This study also supplies data about mobile phones such as an access way to social networks: 25% already do this. Facebook concentrated over 442.000 people connected by mobile phone and the activities in social networks from mobile phones are:

Chart 6 . Percentages of activities in social networks from mobile phones

Read messages	51 %
Send messages	49 %
See photos	44 %
Upload photos	31 %
Add friends	29 %
View profiles	24 %
Receive text alerts	20 %
Create or upload profiles	18 %
Upload videos	12 %
Participate in chats	12 %
Publish blogs	9 %

Source: Nielsen.

On the other hand, social networks such as *Facebook, Friendster, My Space, You-Tube, Digg* or, in Spanish, *Tuenti*, *Menéame* or *Del.icio.us*, among many other general and specific ones with dozens of millions of visitors are already part of cyber space and their possibilities must be studied from the perspective of journalism which so far, has centered itself on the choices that are made by internauts. A few months ago Nielsen published a report on the networks (A Nielsen report on Social Networking's News Global Footprint) which assures that their use along with *blogging*, is the fastest growing activity area in internet and is already located among the four leading ones after searches and ahead of electronic mail. Besides, the time used by the consumer in social networks and blogs, grows three times faster than any other practice,a nd at the same time grow progressively both in numbers of users as well as the ages of those participating.

And, finally, it is necessary to comment interactivity and participation by the readers in the contents of the media. During the first years, information interactivity with readers was done in electronic mails with opinions and participations in debates, forums, conversations and chats. After this, the possibility arrived in which one could have one´s own web page and next something much more attractive, cheaper and easy to use: the *weblogs*, more known as *blogs*. In Spain these are called "bitácoras". According to more recent measuring, there are over 130 million but after the initial explosion, only a small number continue insofar as including important updating and interest content: only 1% update on a daily basis; only 5,56% have updated in the last four months and less than 1% of their authors have written a post in the last week. The impact of the blogs is softening because technology goes very fast and they are no longer a novelty.

Still, there are very valuable experiences in this field that should be pointed out. For example, the U.S. *Huffington Post*, founded by Arianna Huffington, which considers we are living in a golden era of information and in less than five years has managed to get over nine million unique users, has editions in New York, Denver and Chicago and has surpassed the internet audience of the *Washington Post* or the *Los Angeles Times*.

Another different issue is that during the last few years cyber media has started to publish contents sent by readers following the trend of the maximum defender of this tendency: Dan Gillmor, a U.S. Citizen who published a book titled *We the media* in 2004 and foresaw media that would contain just citizen information. The first and most widely known one is the Korean *Oh My News!,* But the fact is that several years have gone by since its foundation and there are still very few competitors. A European experience is the French web www.agoravox.fr, which today has a version in Italian as well as English. In Spain we can mention the no longer existing www.soitu.es, which managed a good level of quality but perhaps due to its structural problems, only managed very low participation percentages if compared to the examples above.

In spite of all this, journalists and professional editors are more indispensable than ever in this tangle of information that we move in nowadays. And even including readers sending news, photos or videos that are interesting and publishable there are information parts that can only come out good if done by an expert hand. It is not possible to confuse this valuable contribution by citizens which is useful and frequently inestimable with professional journalism: the future success of the media depends on the percentages that are dedicated to each one of these two information means.

4. The quiet information revolution

We find ourselves, in spite of the crisis, at an especially interesting moment in journalism, to a large degree caused by technological progress but also because of the changes that are taking place in society considered as a whole and from an international point of view. In the most recent decades of the past twentieth century, the more advanced countries evolved towards the post industrial era and the information society (Bell, 1994), towards a "third wave" which more than other important political or economic changes, had generalized the possibility of obtaining information from internet, Mattelart, as well as Toffler also contribute a critical view of the passion for technology and this unlimited world of information and communication, and, within this context, the proposal for a universal pragmaticity becomes an updated proposal, a universal science of language based on universal and valid structures in any situation or communication context, previously stated by Habermas.

And, in the setting of the twenty first century, solutions for the future are directly associated to constant updating of information at the moment it takes place, fidelity to brand image, use of video and audio by means of alliances with other media, higher interaction with the user, who can participate in a direct way, and the transformation of the sections in co-ordination centers and syndication of contents. Journalism done by table writers that gradually change into screen writers with many more sources and less personal contact with them, and, at the same time, a closer relationship, more direct and frequent with the readers thanks to interactivity. Yet a space that also requires less time for research to go indepth in subjects and information that is produced is more superficial.

As far as the future of newspapers is concerned, different trends can be presented. It is possible that in each country just a few quality paper issues be published with more analysis and opinion and a more lightweight information be offered in internet with all sorts of webs, blogs and portals. It may also be possible that local headlines be published in paper and a small number of digital dailys worldwide with universal information being offered. Or, more likely as seen in recent years, that internet be the key to all that is latest news and local news and daily papers concentrate on more indepth matters. Time will say which of these will impose itself on the rest.

It is a *silent revolution* which is having a notable influence in the large newspapers that see how their number of copies diminishes and their publicity and incomes are more reduced while they eagerly search for the nuances of what will constitute their new identity. The co-existence between paper and the screen will still last for a considerable amount of time but, although now they resist changing, it seems that paper newspapers will need to reduce the number of pages they have -this already takes place in some cases on week days or days with less sales- and at the same time, offer a wider range of connexions through the net: longer texts, photos, videos, sound, graphics, opinion, interpretation and, even the sources used by the journalist signing the article. And perhaps charging a price for more relevant, better treated or more valuable information data.

The indisputable fact is that journalism continues being the same in a different landscape and the hard part, just like always, is to do it right. The real battle is to be waged in the contents and the reliability that a media can offer and the best webs -just like the best papers or the best television and radio information programs- will be those that receive most visitors and will attract more publicity. A prestigious banner with expert journalists, specialised and well documented continue being the key to success, also in the cybernetic era.

Bibliography

Armentia, José Ignacio (2007), "La lenta evolución del diseño periodístico en la Red", en Larrondo, A. y Serrano, A. (eds.): *Diseño periodístico en internet*. Bilbao. Universidad del País Vasco.

Boczkowski, Pablo J. (2004), *Digitizing the News. Innovation in Online newspapers*. Cambridge, Massachusetts. The MIT Press.

Cabrera, María Ángeles (2007), "La relación entre el diseño y los contenidos en internet", en Larrondo, A. y Serrano, A. (eds.): *Diseño periodístico en internet*. Bilbao. Universidad del País Vasco.

Canavilhas, Joao (2009), "Contenidos informativos para móviles: estudio de aplicaciones para el iPhone", en *Textual&Visual Media*, nº 2. Madrid. SEP.

Casasús, Josep Maria (2002), "Nuevos conceptos teóricos para la investigación en periodismo digital", ponencia presentada en el VII Congreso de la Sociedad Española de Periodística. Sevilla, 7-9 de marzo.

Castells, Manuel (2001), *La galaxia internet*, Barcelona, Mondadori.

Dader, José Luís (2009), Periodismo en la hipermodernidad: consecuencias cívicas de una identidad débil (y algunas vías de reconstrucción), en *Textual&Visual Media*, nº 2. Madrid. SEP.

Díaz Noci, Javier y Salaverría Aliaga, Ramón (coords.), *Manual de Redacción Ciberperiodística*, Ariel, Barcelona.

Deuze, Mark (2001), "Online Journalism: Modelling the First Generation of News Media on the World Wide Web", *First Monday*, Volume 6, Number 10, 1 October.

Diezhandino Nieto, María Pilar (dir. y coord.) (2008), *Periodismo en la era de internet. Claves para entender la situación actual de la información periodística en España*. Madrid. Fundación Telefónica.

- (2008), "¿Un nuevo paradigma para tiempos cambiantes?", en *Textual&Visual Media*, nº 1. Madrid. SEP.

Domínguez, Eva (2007), "Interfaces e interactividad: claves para una plástica periodística digital", en Larrondo, A. y Serrano, A. (eds.), *Diseño periodístico en internet*. Bilbao. Universidad del País Vasco.

Edo, Concha (2009), *Periodismo informativo e interpretativo. El impacto de internet en la noticia, las fuentes y los géneros*. Sevilla. Comunicación Social (2ª edición).

- (2006), "Importance of changes by internet in Journalism language: iconics elements and multimedia infographics", en *The impact of Internet on the Mass Media in Europe*. United Kingdom. Abramis Academic Publishing.

- *et al.* (2008), *Internet en los medios de comunicación españoles. Informe anual 2007*. Memoria del proyecto de investigación realizado por el Grupo de Investigación y Análisis de internet en el Periodismo (GIAIP) de la Universidad Complutense.

Gomis, Lorenzo (1991), *Teoría del periodismo. Cómo se forma el presente*. Barcelona. Paidós.

Kawamoto, Kewin (edit.) (2003), *Digital Journalism. Emerging Media and the Changing Horizons of Journalism*. Maryland. Rowman&Littlefield Publishers.

Kovach, Bill y Rosentiel, Tom (2003), *Los elementos del periodismo*, Madrid, El País.

López, Guillermo (2006), *La autoría en la era digital: industria cultural y medios de comunicación*. Valencia. Tirant lo Blanch.

- (2003), "Géneros interpretativos: el reportaje y la crónica" en Díaz Noci, J. y Salaverría, Ramón (coords.), *Manual de redacción ciberperiodística*. Ariel Barcelona.

López, Xosé *et al.* (2005), "Tipología de los cibermedios", en Salaverría, R. (coord.), *Cibermedios*, Sevilla, Comunicación Social.

Masip, Pere (2007), Internet a les redaccions. Informació diària i rutines periodistiques. Barcelona. Trípodos.

Meyer, Philip (2008), "The Elite Newspapers of the Future". *American Journalism Review*. October-November.

- (2004), *The Vanishing Newspaper: saving journalism in the information age*. University of Missouri Press.

Morin, Edgar (2001), *Los siete saberes necesarios para la educación del futuro*, Paidós, Brcelona.

Pavlik, John Vernon (2001), *Journalism and new media*. New York. Columbia University Press.

Pereira, Xosé (2007), "Arquitectura de la información. Ingeniería del periodismo", en en Larrondo, A. y Serrano, A. (eds.), *Diseño periodístico en internet*. Bilbao. Universidad del País Vasco.

Pérez Luque, María José y Perea Foronda, Maider (1998), "El reto de crear noticias online. Análisis de la comunicación *online* actual y perspectivas de futuro", *Cuadernos de Documentación Multimedia* 6-7, Universidad Complutense, Madrid.

Piscitelli, Alejandro (2002), *Meta-Cultura. El eclipse de los medios masivos en la era de Internet*. Buenos Aires. La Crujía Ediciones.

Poper, Karl (1995), *La responsabilidad de vivir. Escritos sobre política, historia y conocimientos*. Barcelona. Paidós.

Steiger, Paul (2009), "The Future of Newspapers Amid Dissapearing Newpapers". Conferencia inaugural del 10th International Symposium on Online Journalism. Austin, Texas, 17 y 18 de abril.

Thussu, Daya K. (2004),"Media Plenty and the Poverty of News", en Paterson, C. and Sreberny, Annabelle (eds.): *International News in the 21st Century*. Hants (UK). John Libbey.