Schools of journalism facing participative Web 2.0

AMEY, Patrick, et al.

Abstract

This article looks at how students and teachers at four schools of journalism from Grenoble and Marseille (France), Bucharest (Romania) and Geneva (Switzerland), represent and make use of amateur online publishing practices. It analyses the current conflict between the values associated with Web 2.0 and the normative model underpinning journalism, which is historically rooted in opposing the figure of the amateur. Combined research methods were used in the study, such as a questionnaire carried out on a group of 85 first-year master’s students in journalism, semi-structured interviews with second-year students and teachers, and focus groups conducted among volunteer students. The survey’s results highlight the role played by training establishments in legitimizing and internalizing the standards of journalistic professionalism.

Reference


DOI : 10.1386/ajms.2.2.355_1

Available at:
http://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/unige:79631

Disclaimer: layout of this document may differ from the published version.

Schools of journalism facing participative Web 2.0

Patrick Amey, University of Geneva
Mirela Lazar, University of Bucharest
Nicolas Pélissier, University of Nice Antipolis
Nathalie Pignard-Cheynel, University of Lorraine-Metz

Abstract

This article looks at how students and teachers at four schools of journalism from Grenoble and Marseille (France), Bucharest (Romania) and Geneva (Switzerland), represent and make use of amateur online publishing practices. It analyses the current conflict between the values associated with Web 2.0 and the normative model underpinning journalism, which is historically rooted in opposing the figure of the amateur. Combined research methods were used in the study, such as a questionnaire carried out on a group of 85 first-year master’s students in journalism, semi-structured interviews with second-year students and teachers, and focus groups conducted among volunteer students. The survey’s results highlight the role played by training establishments in legitimizing and internalizing the standards of journalistic professionalism.
Keywords

School of journalism
participatory journalism
information practices
professionalism
professional identity

Introduction

The development of self-publishing in cyberspace has led to a phenomenon of mass amateurism, reflecting the increasing popularity of an expressivist model for the act of publishing information. The expressivist model suggests that each individual has thoughts and feeling as a background that may be expressed not only in private or domestic sphere but also in public sphere (Taylor 2007). As a widespread social value, expressive individualism ‘holds that each person has a unique core of feeling and intuition that should unfold or be expressed if individuality is to be realized’ (Belah et al. 1996: 333–34). This new paradigm that considers personal identity as over-valued (through blogs, posts, content creation) corresponds to reappearance on the Internet of practices common in far earlier times. It highlights the success of ‘technologies of the self’ and development of a new ‘stylistics of existence’ as conceived by Michel Foucault. In a more political context, the phenomenon also reflects the revival of critical examination of traditional intermediaries, particularly the mass media (Jenkins 2006).
Journalism is one of the social activities most affected by the phenomenon of mass amateurization, since it is forced to constantly reinvent itself. The use of Content Management System tools has led to a radical simplification of online publishing, thus broadening the circle of practitioners and triggering an explosion of non-professional productions (Paulussen and Ugille 2008).

These productions are found in the blogosphere as well as relatively well-known activist such as Indymedia and wikis and other community sites. The people behind these sites no longer limit themselves to providing encyclopaedias or exchanging photos, and are applying the principles of social online networking to the field of journalism.

A noteworthy development is citizen journalism, whose theorists and practitioners believe that journalism should not be a monopolistic field inhabited only by professionals from media organizations (in France, for example, holders of a press card.) Those claiming the legitimacy of citizen journalism take a community-based, decentralized and participative approach to journalism, encouraging a perception of media without the mass and journalism without journalists (Badillo et al. 2008; Robinson and Deshano 2011). Hence, while the possibilities offered by Web 2.0 and an unmistakable trend towards the democratization of cultural practices encourage everyone to become a writer, photographer or musician, another model whereby everyone can become a journalist is also likely to emerge (Bowman and Willis 2003).

The situation has become even more complicated due to the fact that media professionals – or at least, an active fringe of them – have thrown themselves into the movement by publishing their own blogs, incorporating self-published sources into their practices or even launching citizen journalism sites (Deuze et al. 2007; Domingo et al.)
As for the media organizations, they no longer think twice about giving space on their sites to an increasing number of blogs written by their (amateur) readers, and including them in their online editorial output; these blogs sit side by side with content created by staff and contributing journalists without any real distinction being made between the two (Noblet and Pignard-Cheynel 2010). These organizations thus seem to be seeking more or less deliberately to blur the lines by putting ordinary citizens, experts and professional journalists on the same level. Whilst there are those who rejoice in this readiness to open up and share the profession’s expertise, others take the opposite view and see it as a move towards the collective suicide of a profession that is vulnerable and ready to write itself off, to cut off the branch on which it has perched, unchallenged, for several centuries.

What is the real state of affairs? How do professional journalists feel about such publishing practices that give laypeople’s writing the same degree of legitimacy as their own (Bruns 2003)? Are we seeing moves towards the rejection and denigration of these amateur practices, or understanding, partial integration or even enthusiastic acceptance? It would certainly not be the first time in the long history of professional journalism that it has had to face questions of this kind and draw the lines between who is a journalist and who is not. However, the proliferation of what are effectively apprentice journalists writing on self-published sites, or even hosted or promoted by press organizations (Heynderickx and Colson 2008), raises a new issue that professional journalists can neither ignore nor play down.
As far as the older members of the journalist community are concerned, with a few notable exceptions, reactions tend to vary between rejection, incomprehension and indifference. But the research questions leading our study are:

- What of younger professional journalists?
- How are the 20–30-year-olds responding, a generation exposed at a very young age to new communications technologies (Buckingham 2008)?
- And what about the attitude of young journalists, their recent teenage years marked by the ever more widespread use of practices centring on the mobile phone, networked gaming, instant messaging, Wikipedia and blogs?
- In the conflict between the compulsion to express yourself as promoted by these new social practices and the standards of journalistic professionalism, which of the two will gain the upper hand? Is dialogue between them even possible?

To answer these questions, we chose to carry out a survey in several journalism teaching establishments at the master’s level (Grenoble school of journalism, Marseille school of journalism, journalism master’s at the University of Geneva and the Bucharest University faculty of journalism and communication studies). First-year students on these courses are mostly between 20 and 25 years old, in other words, young adults who are likely to have largely incorporated the expressivist model, described above, into their social and cultural practices, particularly their use of ICT. We can postulate the existence of a possible conflict of values between representations generated by the expressivist model and the objectivist-positivist model linked to journalistic professionalism.
As stated recently by Denis Ruellan (2012), schools of journalism are essential to the assimilation of the norms of journalistic professionalism and to enable the quality control undertaken, directly or indirectly, by those teaching in School of journalism. Schools of journalism also contribute to the emulation and conditioning triggered by the context of a relatively closed circle. They produce an early and highly codified structuring of future journalists’ relationships to their sources, audience and peers. In contrast, this control by a minority of elected representatives ‘peers’ in the British sense of the term is impossible in the system of citizen journalism, since the control is meant to be performed by all members of an audience of readers–authors that does away with the line between peer and non-peer: a self-regulation model is thus in conflict with a model based on institutional regulation by certified experts. It is also important to distinguish between what is professional and what is not; the keywords are ethical norms, related to journalists’ rights and duties (e.g., The Declaration of the Rights and Duties of a Journalist), vital in determining precisely, beyond the possession of a press card, the line between ‘real’ and ‘false’ journalists.

**Methodology**

A preliminary survey questioning a group of 85 first-year students at schools of journalism was carried out by a young researcher external to the establishment. The survey was carried out at the beginning of the university year in the form of a questionnaire targeting all first-year master students. They filled in the questionnaire at the start or end of their classes, with the prior agreement of the teacher concerned. Care was taken to ensure that the subjects covered in these classes were as different as possible
from the issue of relationships between journalism and the internet. Students were questioned on their

- Use of ICT before joining the establishment, particularly their participation in the expressivist cyberculture described above
- Practices of amateur-style journalism, both on- and offline
- Credibility they accorded to different media outlets
- Perceptions of internet-based journalistic amateurism, particularly blogs and participative sites.

A second survey was carried out on a sample of six to eleven teachers from each school of journalism, looking at their perception of an educational approach to the phenomenon of mass journalistic amateurism on the internet. This survey targeted different categories of colleagues teaching at the establishments covered by the research: teachers-researchers, secondary school teachers who were on secondment arrangement, visiting professionals, part-time lecturers, etc. The goal was to validate the hypothesis whereby the amateur journalistic productions available on the internet are seen with a certain degree of distance and reservation or even suspicion by teachers at schools of journalism, particularly those who work in press organizations. The survey used semi-structured interviews backed up by interviews carried out progressively during informal meetings with teachers outside the classroom. This format meant that the survey took place over a long period, from September 2009 to June 2010. We played particular attention to teachers in charge of classes on their
• Journalism perceptions and practices (writing techniques, scripting and formatting information)

• Information access practices (numeric vs traditional, access frequency)

• Social network usage and its impact on their teaching practice.

A third survey was undertaken one year after the first, in winter 2011, questioning a sample of second-year master students (M2). In each school of journalism, the method combined a series of semi-structured interviews with four students and a focus group with eight volunteer students. Focus group duration was between 90 to 100 minutes with four to five participants. Findings of stage one and two were submitted during fifteen minutes to the participants before the focus groups. Conversations were recorded and a transcript was done in order to allow a thematic content analysis. For the same reasons that applied during the first survey, it was conducted by researchers without any direct link to the teaching establishment. The goal was to again assess students on their perception of ICT and their effects on amateur journalistic output that competes directly with the output of press professionals working for media organizations. In order to measure the influence of teaching and work placements on the change, or lack of change, in their perception that had been theoretically positive before starting their course, they were questioned on their information access practices (numeric vs traditional, frequency of access); the goal was to notice if their journalism scholar programme has modified their
previous information process

- Perceptions of professional journalism
- Perception of journalism amateur on the web
- Expectation (leading from their teachers) in terms of new relationships that could be envisaged between amateur and professional journalistic productions.

Findings

*Students open to new information practices*

As précised already, the goal of this study was to demonstrate a principle of non-contradiction between the legitimization of certain forms of amateur journalistic expression (often treated condescendingly by the profession, in the same way as regional press journalists) and the value of teaching that meets the needs of media professionals working in press organizations. Although the idea everyone nowadays, with the development of the web and blogs, may become or be a journalism, it seems to us that this idea is tied to the current trend for dumbing down and techno-populism, it would be very useful if professionals, in addition to the teaching courses they support and recognize, became more involved in the current debate on new forms of collaboration between the centre of the media system (press organizations) and its periphery (amateur productions on the Internet). It may thus be possible to identify a point of convergence between media practices and cultural practices, reflecting the increasing complexity of contemporary developments in the information domain. Although not everyone can be a journalist, the future of journalism nonetheless remains an issue of concern to everyone, teachers of journalism first and foremost.
The results of the first survey show that, in terms of the personal use of information, digital sources are commonly used, especially among students in Grenoble. Despite regular or more occasional use of the written press, mostly free daily newspapers, the Internet has become a daily tool in looking up the news (see Figure 1). In Marseille and Geneva, newspapers and radio still have a dominant position, but their online versions are very popular. In Bucharest, the students favour television – the press is seen as ‘too expensive’ – and the Internet is also very popular since it is free.

**Figure 1:** Students’ media consumption habits

The most popular websites are the online editions of the traditional press. The students interviewed also visit Pro-Am participative sites (defined as mixed amateur and professional websites dedicated to journalistic information) and news blogs written by professionals (two-thirds of Grenoble and Bucharest students). They find the information on these sites to be ‘better justified, with more nuanced analyses’ than the traditional media. Blogs and participative sites are yet far less consulted than the traditional media’s sites (see Figure 2). In addition, they are nearly all members of an online social network. In Bucharest, some reservations were expressed: the blogosphere is seen principally as a highly subjective platform for expression, whose independence is questioned by the fact that journalists’ blogs are almost always hosted by press organizations. Hardly any of the respondents possess a 3G mobile phone, and even more rarely use it to stay informed.

**Figure 2:** Students’ primary information sources on the Internet
Almost all students questioned expressed that cyber-journalism has many advantages, which outweigh the drawbacks. The terms interactivity, reactivity and multimedia (enriched content) are often used. The ‘greater degree of freedom of expression’ is highlighted, as well as ‘the greater degree of independence’ cyberspace provides: professional journalists can only benefit by getting involved on the Internet. In doing so, they are strengthening and enriching their professional identity rather than weakening it or putting it at risk. Nonetheless, most students questioned also show some signs of caution: they say that they systematically crosscheck digital sources, as is customary in the traditional media, and some of them, mainly in Grenoble, actually consult the editorial guidelines for the sites they visit.

Furthermore, none of the 85 students in the research project subscribe to an elitist prescriptive model that gives press card holders the legitimate monopoly over news on the Internet. Despite certain reservations, expressed more strongly in Bucharest and Marseille, they feel that participatory journalism sites offer ‘critical’, ‘useful’ and ‘complementary’ editorial content compared to traditional media. For 88 per cent of the respondents, amateur bloggers have the right to express themselves on topical issues (as any citizen could do) by publishing comments or proposing reports illustrated by images. Amateurs’ legitimate right to comment on current affairs is therefore taken as a given, with a number of students in Grenoble referring to the ‘public’s commonsense’ or making an analogy with Voxpop, a format already widely used by the press. Several studies show that ‘amateur journalism’ often involves comments on current affairs rather than actually providing original content. The students recognize this,
referring to ‘desk-bound amateur journalism’. In Marseille, 67% of students do not equate amateur practices with in-the-field journalism, 47% see them as desk work (rewriting) and 71% feel that they are often only made up simply of straightforward comments on current affairs. As regards the type of editorial work provided by amateurs, half the students in Grenoble think that it is equivalent to some kind of desk-based work. However, most of them explain the situation by pointing out that office desk work is synonymous with high quality analysis and a new way of dealing with information. A significant number of students, particularly in Grenoble, are unafraid to state that a novice journalist, acting alone or within a virtual community (collective investigations), can produce better content than professional journalists. They feel that desk-based working, the case for most amateurs, is also advantageous in terms of making it easier to access documentation and providing time for information processing.

Nevertheless, they do not believe that this potential can be held as a general rule, quite the opposite. The majority of students interviewed establish a clear cut hierarchy, or even discrimination, between the information made available online by journalism professionals and the information provided by amateur sites. This distinction ties in with the professionalization approach adopted by teaching establishments.

**The early influence of the professionalization approach**

Most importantly, a marked difference in appreciation emerges between content produced by professionals and by amateurs. The quality of the amateur output is assessed on a scale from ‘average’ to ‘low’, whereas the professional output is scored between ‘average’ and ‘high’. In addition, students criticize the flood of definitions and practices
generated by citizen journalism, and reject the idea that ‘every citizen is a potential journalist’. They believe that the main criteria for separating the wheat from the chaff are ethics, professional ethical norms, status, remuneration, expertise, experience, maintaining a network, writing techniques and, especially, source checking (almost all students confirm that they check sources when they gather information on the Internet). These criteria lead them to favour blogs and institutional sites set up by professional journalists, in which, according to them, articles’ relevance and construction are higher than those on amateur sites (eg.: ‘they remain amateurs, and do not tackles subjects in the same ways’, ‘they have less experience’, etc.).

Aside from a fairly large number of students at Grenoble, most interviewees refrain from taking part in amateur journalism on the Internet. Only a small minority have had any experience with a regular news blog or contributed to a Pro-Am participative site (see Figure 3). We corroborate Auklands’ University finding (Hirst and Treadwell 2011) which displays if students have some engagement with social media, particularly social networking, they are still not entirely fully using its techniques and are not especially using social media as a production platform.

**Figure 3**: Students’ experience of creative activities on the Internet

Student’s presence in the most active social networks has in fact no effect on their information practices. The use of crowdsourcing, defined as collaborative participation of a number of individuals to journalism via the Internet, arouses the intellectual interest of some students, especially in Grenoble, but has not found any support among
interviewees. In short, we are not talking about a generation of Web 2.0 revolutionaries focused on participatory and citizen journalism (Pélissier and Chaudy 2009).

The focus groups and in-depth interviews that made up the third survey confirm the students’ tendency to adopt the corporatist approach of the profession they are preparing for. The quest for journalistic ethical norms and professional standards invariably guides their information practices in the second year of their master’s. Although in the case of a number of students, particularly in Bucharest, their range of digital sources has expanded since they began their studies and they consult them more or less regularly, they treat them with more caution, influenced by their teaching. ‘I think that it’s very important to check if the author is professional or not’, a respondent from Bucharest said. ‘At school, we learned to check if a site is reputable, reliable, we know if information is good or not. We learned how to be cautious and I really compare more now than before’, added a respondent from Marseille, where in fact students’ opinions were divided in relations to the school’s influence on a broadening of their choice of information sources as the following two responses from two other students demonstrate:

At the end of the year, I didn’t notice any far-reaching change in my reflexes when looking for information. I don’t look for information on the internet much more than before; we were shown lots of things on the internet, lots of possibilities, a diverse range of things, but, well, I don’t feel like going online any more than before, I’m still not very convinced about the format.
We’ve had lots of classes on the internet since the beginning of the year that made me want to spend more time looking online, but not in the form of blogs, more in the form of web documentaries on websites like Lemonde.fr and Arte, things I didn’t know about before.

The vast majority of students interviewed in Marseille, Bucharest and Geneva legitimize amateur participation outside the field of professional journalism: ‘Amateurs’ contribution should be confined to comment and opinion; the only legitimate content they could produce would be videos showing an event, like a fire, for instance’, according to a student from Bucharest. One student from Marseille said: ‘The fact is that everyone who argues in the street can do it online. But they’re not journalists; they’re people expressing their opinions. They’re commentators, it’s about freedom of speech’. The students feel that the lack of specific know-how to lend credibility separates professional work from the layperson’s opinion as outlined by one of them from Marseille:

When it comes to all the amateur stuff, I take it to be someone’s life, but I don’t see it as having any professional value because I don’t know who that person is, I don’t know what they do, I don’t know if they spend a lot of time doing it, I don’t know if they created their article by looking at lots of different sites and combining information or if they went out into the field, if they called people, if they’ve got contacts. So I don’t really trust it, I’m sceptical.
The question of authors’ profiles and to what extent they can be trusted is an aspect that emerges in the students’ answers. One student from Marseille said: ‘It’s good to have people who participate in providing information, in other words, specialists, economic experts, for example, who give their opinion, witnesses who provide comments’. Another said: ‘Amateur output has to be very carefully filtered’ (Bucharest). The interviewees pay close attention to the type of information available online, provided by experts, witnesses or the person in the street who just posts comments. ‘We’re likely to see them as experts, not as journalists. I don’t want to give them journalistic credibility, I’ll give them credibility in their area’. Interviewees in Marseille and Bucharest perceive amateurs who regularly contribute to news blogs and to participative sites as ‘sources of information’ or ‘contributors’. ‘It’s too early to recognize these amateurs as having some sort of status’, one student from Geneva says.

Interviewees refer to the fact that journalism is a profession that requires training, an objective view of events and current affairs, specific areas of knowledge, a broad general culture and necessary respect for ethical and deontological rules. The following four comments from an interviewee from each of three schools emphasize the role of training and education: ‘Journalism is a profession that is learned at a school, you need the foundations, the rudiments of journalism: how to write, the importance of cross-referencing sources and of not stating something without having checked first, deontology’ (Marseille). ‘The professional journalist is someone who has an ethical code. But I think that there’s a link, between methods and ethics’ (Bucharest). ‘It’s someone who has received a piece of information and who analyzes and checks it, who spends lots
of time checking contacts, reliable sources and so on’ (Marseille). ‘It’s someone who has to check information and provide differing points of view’ (Geneva).

A master’s degree is a stepping stone in the professionalization of young journalists, which is why they express similar representations of professional journalists and amateurs. Overall, we can see a cognitive dissonance between two worlds, something that few students seem to be able to express and reflect on together: on the one hand, the world of participative Internet-based expressivist practices; on the other hand, the world of professional journalism with its obligations but also its guarantees in terms of reliability and ethical norms.

The students questioned thus seem to have a foot on each side of the line drawn by journalistic professionalism and its outlets. This ambivalent and paradoxical position is interesting for the researcher, but difficult to maintain over the long term for students; the message conveyed by their teachers is not necessarily likely to help bring together the two disconnected worlds, the world of school of journalism and the world of daily family and social life.

**Teachers express reservations about amateur and participative production**

Teaching teams generally seem to have incorporated the Internet in their information practices. Even though the traditional media, especially the leading press titles and press agencies, are more popular than among students, the Internet is commonly used by teachers, particularly as a tool for a daily press review. Interviewees also say they take part in the Facebook and Twitter social networks, but without using them as professional
tools. They refer to them as ‘the current trend’. They visit blogs and participative sites less frequently and subscribe less to RSS feeds. But these practices are growing, notably in terms of the information produced by press organizations. However, regular consultation of digital sources by teachers, particularly amateur sources, remains less common than among the students questioned. Some teachers, especially in Bucharest and Grenoble, use digital networks for news writing exercises.

This difference in use between teachers and students can be explained primarily by a more critical perception of the Internet, seen both as a source of and platform for circulating news. Although a small percentage of teachers stress the advantages, most of them are more cautious, if not unconvinced. They make particular use of the example of their own students, and do not hesitate to denounce an attitude they describe as consumerist or even sloppy and irrational. In the words of a teacher at Marseille, the students exhibit a fascination for the ‘news banner’, those specific graphic images announcing the name or identity of a site or other types of advertising image. The teachers say that students sometimes give in to the temptation of precipitation, of over-the-top comments, of an overly emotional and passionate reaction, at the expense of accuracy in the checking process. More broadly, some interviewees criticized the ‘googlization of content’ on the Internet and risks of standardization.

Despite feeling that the practice of blogging can support the profession of journalist, teachers have a far more severe attitude towards their students in terms of amateur blogs, with some of them going so far as to talk of an ‘intellectual failure’. Overall, they reject the idea that a citizen, even a well-informed and well-trained citizen, can become a journalist simply by saying so. They allow participative sites a very limited degree of
reliability, feeling that such sites hold the promise of a revitalized press, but only if they are managed by professionals. Some teachers believe that ‘amateur journalism will never be comparable to professional journalism’. A higher percentage of teachers than among interviewed students also feels that amateur bloggers should not benefit from statutory recognition (press card, accreditation), or even a remuneration that implies their inclusion in the world of professional journalism. This feeling was especially prevalent in Marseille and Bucharest.

The teachers questioned primarily accuse amateurs of not respecting the rules and standard practices, especially in terms of how they handle sources. One teacher said: ‘Journalism is a profession that has to be learnt… not everyone can be a journalist’. Some of the interviewees, especially in Bucharest, see the blogosphere as a tool for denunciation, letting off steam or even settling scores rather than a calm and constructive public space.

This critical and discriminating standpoint, which reflects the professionalization approach adopted within the teaching profession, is not linked to the status of those expressing it, who include media professionals, both those working at universities and those who do not, and teachers-researchers. In some cases, Marseille for instance, the latter prove to be more open to new practices enabled by ICT for writing about and commenting on the news. In other cases, particularly Geneva, journalists teaching in school of journalism preach the benefits of cyberculture among their students.

We should also note that a significant minority of teachers are favourable to amateurs’ right to express themselves, as represented in the following answer: ‘information does not necessarily belong to journalists… there are bad journalists whose
output verges on amateurish, and there are people in the amateur world who are producing real journalism’.

It is true that the teachers questioned feel, as do most students that the identity of the person providing information and membership of a traditional press outlet or community of journalism professionals are essential criteria in recognizing the reliability of information. But at the same time, they also feel that content quality is what should be assessed, regardless of its origins.

**Conclusion**

What is the purpose of a school of journalism? Some interviewees feel that, in the light of their own experience, the schools are not indispensable, thanks to the benefits of on-the-job training. They even criticize them for producing a regrettable ‘formatting’ of students. On the other hand, a large majority say that the establishments are useful, if not necessary, in perfecting writing techniques (journalistic genres in particular) and, especially, for the collective learning of professional journalism’s ethical norms.

Could we presume we are facing a corporatist defence mechanism? Not necessarily. Paradoxically, as a wave of mass amateurism engulfs the world of information, rather than being perceived as a centre for transmitting obsolete teachings, schools have a new string to their bow. Thanks to their teaching experience and awareness of the professional changes currently underway, they are certainly capable of playing a role in the cultural and symbolic ‘decentring’ that is occurring. Since the approach that creates a head-on clash between ‘inevitably creditable’ professionals and ‘inevitably slapdash or irresponsible’ amateurs is no longer acceptable, the schools’ task is to support the switch
from a ‘single-voice culture’ to a ‘multiple voices culture’ which is characteristic nowadays of the Web 2.0, where Net users are also creators of user-generated content.

The time has come to recognize that professionals and amateurs interact within the same information eco-system and that the quality of the information they co-produce depends first and foremost on the quality of the procedure used to produce it (Domingo 2008). New-style journalists thus have to move away from their traditional teaching and consider the audience they are addressing as a ‘source of expertise’ likely to be able to substantiate and add to the information the journalists produce. The world of amateurs stretches much further than the domain of simple witness accounts of events or of inveterate commentators; amateurs are also specialists, at times extremely well-informed specialists, on issues that are linked to general news, questions that require increasingly accurate and detailed perspectives, as the public’s insistent demands demonstrate. We are thus faced with the challenge of collective intelligence along with its corollary; the ‘decentring’ of the professional model (see Chung 2007, Deuze 2008). Schools of journalism have a new mission: to open up new journalists to this ‘network culture’ (Machill and Beiler 2009) upholding ‘good practices’ in terms of producing and circulating value-added information. This mission constitutes a major change; making that change will not be easy.

**Figure 1:** Students’ media consumption habits ($N=85$).
Figure 2: Students’ primary information sources on the Internet (N=85).

Figure 3: Students’ experience of creative activities on the Internet (N=85).
References

Badillo, Patrick-Yves, Bourgeois, Dominique Lesourd, Jean-Baptiste and Bonjon Peyron, Christiane (2008), ‘Plus personne n’est journaliste’/ ‘No one is journalist’, Médiamorphoses, 24, pp. 79–85.


Machill, Marcel and Beiler, Markus (2009), ‘The importance of the internet for journalistic research. A multi-method study of the research performed by journalists
working for daily newspapers, radio, television and online’, *Journalism Studies*, 10:2, pp. 178–203.


Robinson, Sue and Deshano, Cathy (2011), ‘Citizen journalists and their third places. What makes people exchange information online (or not)?’, *Journalism Studies*, 12:5, pp. 26
Ruellan, Denis (2012), *Nous, journalistes: déontologie et identité / We, journalists: ethics and identity*, Grenoble: PUG.


**Contributors details**

Patrick Amey, Ph.D. Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, and researcher at Medi@lab, in the Institute of Communication, Media and Journalism at the University of Geneva. Major publications: *La parole à la télévision. Les dispositifs des talk-shows* (L’Harmattan, 2010), with Pierre Leroux (eds), *L’échange politique à la télévision. Interviews, débats et divertissements politiques* (L’Harmattan, 2012). In 2008, he was awarded the Credit Swiss Award for Best Teaching (Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences of the University of Geneva).

Mirela Lazar, Ph.D. summa cum laude in Philology, is Associate Professor at the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Studies, University of Bucharest. Major publications: *Le Journal à l’image de la télévision* (Editura Universitatii din Bucuresti, 2005), *Neo-
Nicolas Pélissier, Ph.D. in Media Studies, Professor, Head of the Communication Studies Department, University of Nice. Associate Professor at ICM, University of Geneva. Major publications: *Journalisme, avis de recherches* (Bruxelles, Bruylant, 2009); Editor of: *Les sciences de la communication à la rencontre des Cultural Studies* (Paris, L’Harmattan, 2009); *Culture as the Hidden Dimension of Journalism?*, Association for Cultural Studies, 9th World Congress, Paris, UNESCO, 2–6 July 2012.


Contact:

Patrick Amey, Institute of Communication, Media and Journalism, University of Geneva (Medi@lab), 40 bd. du Pont d’Arve, 1211 Genève 4, Switzerland.
E-mail: Patrick.Amey@unige.ch

Mirela Lazar, Faculty of Journalism and Communication Studies, University of Bucharest, 36-46 Boulevard, Mihail Kogalniceanu, Bucharest, Romania
E-mail miralazar05@yahoo.com

Nicolas Pélissier, Communication Studies Department, University of Nice, 98, Bd. Edouard Herriot- B.P. 3209 – 06204 Nice CEDEX 3, France.
E-mail: pelissier06@gmail.com

Nathalie Pignard-Cheynel, University of Lorraine, UFR Sciences humaines et Arts, Ile du Saulcy – BP30309 – 57006 Metz Cedex, France.
E-mail: npcheynel@gmail.com

Note

1 The Schools of Journalism where this study was conducted were Grenoble School of Journalism (France), Marseille School of Journalism (France), the Journalism and Communication Master’s at the University of Geneva (Switzerland) and the Bucharest University Faculty of Journalism and Communication Studies (Romania).