Which Future for Newspapers?

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Indiana University Bloomington, Telecommunications Building, Room RTV 226

Meeting with students from 3-4pm on Oct. 24th in Wells Library, Room LI 001.

ABSTRACT

In Europe and the United States, the decline of newspapers started long before the advent of the Internet. However, the spread of the Internet has accelerated this decline. The number of Internet users who read news online, the amount of time they spend reading news online, and the number of pages they view have been increasing rapidly. In fact, the Internet has become the main source of information for the young people. But is the future of the newspapers really endangered? To answer this question we carried out a survey of key actors: the journalists who are everyday on the frontline of the rapidly changing world of journalism. We sought to understand how European journalists foresee the future of the press and how they assess the changes in their jobs and in their professional status since the integration of the Internet in newsrooms. We started with the assumption that the press should be studied as a socio-technical system, shaped by the network of power relationships between the main actors involved in it: namely editors, journalists, audiences.

The research was carried out in 11 countries (Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, United Kingdom, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden) in 2005-2006. We selected a convenience sample composed of 239 journalists working for 40 of the most read newspapers in these countries. For each outlet, according to the availability of the journalists contacted, a questionnaire was administered to up to five journalists of the print edition and up to three journalists of the online version. The issues investigated include: technologies that will shape the future of print newspapers; the opportunities and challenges offered by the Internet, and the impact of the Internet in the newsroom. To consider all the aspects of the future of the press, we also took into account other data from the editors and audience associations. Contrasting visions and perceptions were analyzed and discussed.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Leopoldina Fortunati is professor of the sociology of communication at the Faculty of Education of the University of Udine, Italy. Her research focuses on cultural processes and communication and information technologies. She is the author of many books and is the editor with J. Katz and
R. Riccini of *Mediating the Human Body: Technology, Communication and Fashion* (2003) and with P. Law and S. Yang of *New Technologies in Global Societies* (2006). She is associate editor of the journal *The Information Society* and serves as a referee for many journals. She is co-chair with Richard Ling of “The Society for the Social Study of Mobile Communication” (SSSMC). Her works have been published in eleven languages. For more information about Dr. Fortunati, see her home page at: [http://web.uniud.it/dest/docenti/fortunati/curriculum.htm](http://web.uniud.it/dest/docenti/fortunati/curriculum.htm)