Bar-Ilan University (RA)
Faculty of Humanities
Library of Information science

אוניברסיטת בר-אילן (ע"ר)
הפקולטה למדעי הרוח
הספריה ללימודי מידע

Information Behavior of Journalists - The ways in which journalists cope with information challenges / Orit Slinger

Abstract

Information is the journalist's main tool, their job is to receive and obtain information, to verify information, to process it and to provide it to the public. The technological developments that occurred in recent times, which permeated the journalistic domain, changed the working processes and opened new ways of communication, searches and documentation. If, in past decades, journalists had means of obtaining information such as face-to-face conversations with sources, delving into archives and phone calls, nowadays, the journalist is faced with available and much easier possibilities: the mobile phone, email, chats and social networks are some of the means journalists can utilize to contact their sources. The internet, including electronic databases, and advanced & easy-to-use search tools, enable simpler and easier access and obtaining of information that in the past would have necessitated greater resources, which were dependent on time and place

The journalistic community is varied, mainly due to the nature of journalism. The journalist does not have to obtain an academic or professional certificate. He requires coverage abilities, which are completely depend on their qualifications. The media world is comprised of varied jobs: various fields of coverage and personal work styles. Each and every journalist develops their own work method; they establish a network of connections with sources and create communication patterns in accordance with their specific needs. This study wishes to examine the manner of the journalistic information behavior in the developing technological backdrop, while referring to the uniqueness of the studied community. From this desire to reflect the special nature of this community, the decision was made to conduct a qualitative study which examines the studied community in an up close and personal manner.

Bar-Ilan University (RA)
Faculty of Humanities
Library of Information science

אוניברסיטת בר-אילן (ע״ר)
הפקולטה למדעי הרוח
הספריה ללימודי מידע

When technology first started permeating the media elements, information behavior of journalists became a research subject of various studies. The present study aims at continuing these studies, while referring to the frequently occurring technological changes, as well as working from a perspective of Information Science Studies. This study deals with three main points, the first of which is: how do journalists use information, the second point focuses on the internet, its importance as a source of information, and the degree of its permeation into journalistic work; the third point deals with the matter of journalistic training, meaning, to what extent are journalists trained in the field of information and in particular: is there a need for such training. All of the abovementioned points have been examined via qualitative research, which includes in depth, semi-structured interviews with journalists.

Some findings that strengthen the results of the previous studies arise from this present study, in regards to journalists' use of information. As Reich claimed (2007a, 2007b) journalists prefer direct communication and informal sources of information for gathering simple & basic information, while it is true that they will utilize databases and the internet, according to their statements, they will always prefer to talk to a human source on the phone, to meet them face to face and to be present when an event occurs.

As previous studies indicated, the internet has permeated journalistic work; the present study shows that this permeation is rapidly expanding. All of the studied journalists use the internet for the extensive range of their requirements, and all of them acknowledge its advantages; however, the internet is not without disadvantages, and the journalists are well aware of these too. This availability – anytime & anywhere, constant demands, these factors transformed the journalist's work into a much more intensive one. The surplus of information can also make it harder to obtain relevant information, as well as damage the journalist's status as the provider of information. Another finding indicates that new technologies such as Tablets and Smart phones gradually permeate journalism and are utilized by journalists for communication and as a means of obtaining information, anywhere and anytime, without relying on desktops. Moreover, new platforms such as social networks permeate the journalist's work and are used by the journalist for the purpose of locating people and communicating with people.

The present study found that journalistic embracement of technologies was done in an unorganized manner and that searching, verification and documentation methods were found to be unprogressive. The

Library of Information Science
Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, Israel
/library www.is.biu.ac.ilWebsite: Email: Ruthi.Tshop@mail.biu.ac.il   Tel. 972-3-5318163

הספריה ללימודי מידע
אוניברסיטת בר-אילן, רמת גן, ישראל 52900
טל. 972-3-5318163

Bar-Ilan University (RA)
Faculty of Humanities
Library of Information science

אוניברסיטת בר-אילן (ע״ר)
הפקולטה למדעי הרוח
הספריה ללימודי מידע

interviewees did not exhibit any proficiency regarding advanced search methods, professional databases or methods of verifying information and evaluating websites. It seems that journalists, perhaps due to the nature of their work surroundings, are developing methods of using information that are unprofessional, however, despite all this, they usually succeed in achieving their goals. When faced with an information challenge, they do not spare a thought regarding the best search method which would lead to the optimal or fastest outcome; rather, they act intuitively, in the manner most accessible to them at that given moment. They do not distinguish between searching for information on Google and obtaining information via a phone call made to a colleague or source, for them, any method is legitimate if they managed to achieve their goals through it, the fact that their working tool is information, and that they are unprofessional and inefficient in the field of information and obtaining it, results in the development of varied working methods, in accordance with their respective needs.

The study indicates that journalists are not trained in an organized and extensive manner in the field of information, not even within the framework of Media Studies; it seems that journalists are developing strategies for using information, in the course of their work; they receive the majority of their training during their work. They feel that there is no real need for formulated training, at least not within the framework of higher education, nor within the framework of the various Media elements.

The present study presents an up-to-date picture regarding journalistic working patterns, while focusing on the field of information behavior; it combines the domain of information sciences with the world of media studies. The research perspective enables the external view of the journalist's work, as well as the uncovering of their working methods, the extent of technological permeation and journalists' information using habits. The study suggests continuing this line and researching the influence of technologies on journalistic working habits, and the need for training in the field of information. Moreover, it opens up the possibility of comparing the studied subject in other countries, while addressing the limitations such as language and access to databases.

System No. 002377042

_____

Library of Information Science   הספריה ללימודי מידע
Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, Israel   אוניברסיטת בר-אילן, רמת גן, ישראל 52900
/library www.is.biu.ac.ilWebsite: Email: Ruthi.Tshop@mail.biu.ac.il   Tel. 972-3-5318163 .טל