CHAPTER 34.

SHAPING THE MULTIMEDIA MINDSET: COLLABORATIVE WRITING IN JOURNALISM EDUCATION

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Blogs are being used for PR, online newsmagazines are booming, and young people are watching TV more and more often via Internet portals such as YouTube. Increasingly, publicity results from stories and news on the Internet. This development is unstoppable, just like when the market switched from black-and-white to color photography, from silent movies to sound films, and more recently from letters to e-mail. And, as always in journalism, anyone who understands how to exploit current technology for contemporary storytelling is in demand. The accelerating change calls for media—and journalists—fit enough to adapt to new circumstances. Professional practice and research show that multimedia mindsets foster applying three success factors: writing on all channels (see Section 1 of the article), working in teams (Section 2), and finding emergent solutions (Section 3). This has consequences for the design of writing courses in journalism education (Section 4) —including meaningful, relevant assessments, as an example will show (Section 5). The second part of this essay describes in detail a new joint programme in multimedia journalism designed by the Zurich University of Applied Sciences and the Zurich University of the Arts.

What is the difference between a blog and an item on a journalistic website? Not the information itself; everything right and wrong, important and unimportant to say or ask about almost any topic can be found in blogs and anywhere else on the Internet.

Why, then, use journalistic Brand X medium on the Internet, as opposed to non-journalistic Brand Y or Z? Because as a user, I assume that I will get more from Brand X than I would a mouse-click away. Only research and preparation,

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only such genuine journalistic performance, still separate a journalistic medium from YouTube and the rest of the net. Distribution costs nothing, trust means everything, and content is king like never before.

Newspapers and radio programs are becoming user interfaces for content management systems, for databases of journalistic stories, and for public storytelling (Singer, 2008). This development is unstoppable, just like when the market switched from black-and-white to color photography, from silent movies to sound films, and more recently from letters to e-mail. And, as always in journalism, anyone who understands how to exploit current technology for contemporary storytelling is in demand. Professional practice and research show (e.g., Brannon, 2008; Perrin, 2010, in press; Quinn, 2005; Singer, 2008; Tunstall, 2009;) that this is done with a multimedia mindset by applying three success factors: writing on all channels (see Section 1 of this article), working in teams (Section 2), and finding emergent solutions (Section 3). This has consequences for the design of writing courses in journalism education (Section 4) – including meaningful, relevant assessments, as an example will show (Section 5).

SUCCESS FACTOR ONE: WRITING ON ALL CHANNELS

Even convergent media need coherent texts, moving images, and suitable sounds. Editors-in-chief of leading publications in media-convergent journalism say that writing will be the key competence in the journalism of the future. By "writing" they mean the ability to present complex relationships not only with speech and written characters but also with sounds and images in an appealing, illustrative, and appropriately objective way.

First of all, this "writing" succeeds by using the familiar strengths of print, radio, and television journalism. As paradoxical as it may seem, these strengths are more urgently needed in convergent media than ever before. If journalists nowadays opt for a media item with sound but no images, they must know and make clear to their audience why audio information alone conveys the topic in the best way.

In the multimedia environment, journalistic items are organized similar to musical scores, but in all media: journalists present information, mediating between verified facts and the appearance of protagonists—usually the people concerned and the decision makers. In addition, there are other elements involved, such as experts, specialized knowledge, and transitions (Figure 1).

The text score of a quote story shows that an item often begins with a quote from someone representing the people concerned. Then the journalist might

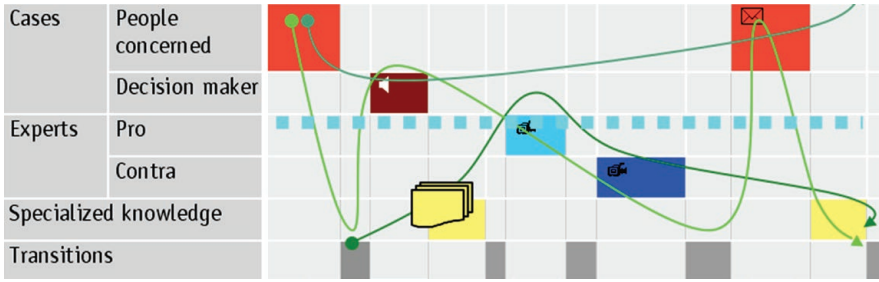

Figure 1: Score of a quote story with paradigmatic, syntagmatic, and navigational variants.

transition to the appearance of a decision maker, who the people concerned hold responsible for their misery. This is followed, for example, by specialized knowledge, introductory comments, an expert's opinions, a transition, a second expert, a transition, the people concerned again, additional specialized knowledge to round off the "score," and finally a summary statement.

A journalist might design the quote story not only for classically linear radio or television or for a newspaper, but also for her audience sitting in front of a multimedia computer. If so, she can prepare the main text as a written report, incorporate a quote from the decision maker as an audio file and the appearance of the experts as videos, and provide a link to a forum so that other people concerned can make comments.

In principle, a journalist operating in convergent media must continuously decide in favor of or against options within three new degrees of freedom:

- Paradigmatic variants offer "more of the same" on request, such as more background information or more comments from those involved (e.g. from blogs).
- Syntagmatic variants disclose what happens before and after what is linearly accessible; for example, the whole expert interview from which the journalist extracted only a single statement to incorporate into the media item.
- Navigational variants make it easier for users to skip or steer directly to certain parts of media items and thus to determine their own paths to gather the information they want.
- Every media item can be supplied with such a score. Journalists who master this universal tool of preparing media dramaturgy can design more clearly organized items, switch between media more easily, and exploit the strengths of all media more flexibly. Since complex production processes in journalism are increasingly based on division of labor, scores with many voices should be played ensemble, not solo.

SUCCESS FACTOR TWO: WORKING TOGETHER

Media convergent journalism is not for lone fighters. Almost no one can do everything perfectly, not in a single medium and most definitely not in multimedia settings. In the practice of leading media, successful convergence means a balanced and orchestrated interplay of professionals, each of whom brilliantly solves parts of the multimedia production task:

- shaping dramaturgical profiles that position one's own media product on the market, make it stand out, and distinguish it from the rest
- finding and delimiting topics, doing the necessary research, providing raw materials, and incorporating contributions from the audience
- preparing parts of the item to be read, listened to, or watched, as complementary voices of a multimedia score (see above)
- allocating assignments and bundling the results, so that the most suitable topics and dramaturgy run on all the right channels
- systematically updating and linking new media offers, indexing items for internal databases and for searches by users.

Multimedia assignment editors act as directors, conductors, and co-composers of such text scores. They allocate assignments to small teams and consolidate the results. Multimedia reporters work off-site, collecting morsels of information for all channels (e.g. still images, moving pictures, sounds, quotations).

In between, though, editors operate in familiar and new roles, using their knowledge of the topic, dramaturgical skill, their own material and that of others, and their media channels to create appealing, relevant, topical, and self-contained stories that will be retrievable on the net anywhere and anytime. They remain responsible for research, preparation, and maintenance way past the day the stories are published.

In this game, those who work well with others survive, because they are strong in their own fields and on the interfaces between their fields and those of their colleagues. This much is already clear. However, it is also clear—based on experience—that truly new things are still to come.

SUCCESS FACTOR THREE: FINDING EMERGENT SOLUTIONS

It took decades until serialized chronicles became independent news reports, until newspapers read aloud became listener-friendly radio, and until filmed radio became visually-interesting television. It might take further decades until

a repertoire of dramaturgical patterns for journalistic items in convergent media can be developed and consolidated in daily editorial practice.

Such new patterns come into being *emergently:* the new whole is then more than the sum of its parts (O'Grady, in press). For journalistic writing this means that a successful item in digital space is more than just the additive mix of writing, sound, pictures, and interactiveness. It surpasses the accumulated advantages of its components with a fundamentally new quality. Such emergence, though, requires ideas, coincidences, courage to try things out, humility to learn, and, of course, time. Dramaturgy takes much longer to mature than technology does.

Anyone entering journalism today, wanting to stay in the field, or even educating and assessing new journalists should seize the opportunity of the present uncertainty and develop forms that exploit the added value of integrated media. An example of how to assess all three factors crucial for writing in convergent media will be presented using the case of a collaborative writing course, Text analysis and text production, in an MA program for arts journalists (who cover and critique music, literature, film, architecture, etc.).

COLLABORATIVE WRITING ON ALL CHANNELS: TRAINING THE MULTIMEDIA MINDSET

Text analysis and text production is one module of the Arts Journalism MA program that two Zurich universities (Zurich University of Applied Sciences and the Zurich University of the Arts) set up together for about 12 selected students per year (http://mae.zhdk.ch/).[1] The students come from Switzerland and other countries, but all speak German, as the courses are held in that language. The module described here prepares them to be journalists (online, print, radio, television) or PR-managers focusing on cultural issues.

It is in this module that attitudes, knowledge, and skills of journalistic writing are systematically reflected upon and taught. The Text analysis and text production module comprises fourteen full days spread over two semesters (Figure 2).

The first eleven days of the module are one-day workshops. Each workshop begins with a short theoretical block, followed by text analysis of case studies and collaborative text production as group assignments. The workshops end with a joint evaluation. During optional evening tutorials, students can receive feedback about their individual text products.

The workshops cover first the interplay of writing process, text product, and optimization (days 1 to 3); then micro- and macro-processes such as title and

	Perspective	Topic
1	Process, product, and optimization	writing process
2		systemic optimization
3		text product
4	Production process	micro: title design
5		macro: communication design
6	Text structure	e.g. reviews and comments
7		e.g. editorials and glosses
8	Text environment	e.g. word, picture, sound
9		e.g. information graphics
10	Text function	e.g. rhetoric
11		e.g. branding
12	Integration workshops	Convergent Media Production:
13		– conceptualization
14		– realization
		– implementation

Figure 2 Schedule of the Text analysis and text production module.

communication design (days 4 to 5); and exemplary aspects of text structure, function, and environment (days 6 to 11). The last three days of the module (12 to 14) are left for integration workshops with a single assessed assignment, which, at the same time, is the showcase for the module.

In the three integration workshops, each two weeks apart, the students produce a special section for the Swiss architecture magazine Hochparterre, with about ten items on the topic Emotion in architecture. The section is published on multiple platforms: the print version of Hochparterre and their multimedia website http://www.hochparterre.ch as well as the didactically-motivated, experimental website http://www.redaktionzukunft.de ("redaktionzukunft" means *"newsroom of the future"*). The first integration workshop focuses on conceptualization, the second on realization, and the third on evaluation.

- In the first integration workshop, the students decide in workgroups and in plenary how to approach the assignment as a group and individually. The workgroups start with input they have prepared during the preceding weeks: group 1 with media management, group 2 with text design, group 3 with the journalistic profile of the special section. Moreover, all the students present their individual approaches to the topic *Emotion in*

architecture and outline what they would like to say as individual authors. Later on that day, the students align the ideas of the workgroups with the individual journalistic visions. They decide on and assign responsibilities and steps in the production process, on the profile of the product, and on the tasks each author has to accomplish.

- The second integration workshop focuses on the realization of the *Hochparterre* project. The students as individual authors or as members of the production team get advice on demand from the module leaders, who act as external advisors at this stage of the project—rather than as teachers, as in the previous workshops, or as assessors, which they will be in the last integration workshop. Before this final day of the module, the students submit the special section along with a writing diary in which they describe and reflect on their iterative learning process.
- The third and last integration workshop—which is the last day of the entire *Text analysis and text production* module—focuses on the evaluation of the *Hochparterre* project. Together, the module leaders and students evaluate what the entire project group, the three workgroups, and the individual authors have produced. This evaluation is presented in more detail below.

COLLABORATIVE EVALUATION: ASSESSING THE MULTIMEDIA MINDSET

How should the students' multimedia mindset, their ability to recognize the success factors in their collaborative production of the *Hochparterre* special section best be evaluated? In order to grapple with this complex issue of evaluation, we consider outcomes from three levels of text production: on the conceptualization level, the input from the three workgroups to the entire product group; on the realization level, the reflections on the iterative process of writing and learning that are recorded in the writing diaries; and on the product level, the individual texts and the entire special section.

An interdisciplinary group evaluates these outcomes: one is an expert in convergent media, one in conceptualization of communication, and one in writing processes. These three experts are the main leaders of the Text analysis and text production module. The other experts are the students themselves: they are experts in their own processes of learning. First, the module leaders agree on a grade for each of the evaluated outcomes and the students do the same. Then, the averages of the two groups' evaluations determine the final grades for each outcome.

The grades for the writing diaries and the individual texts apply to the individual students, whereas the grades for collaborative outcomes such as the group input or the entire special section apply for the respective groups. Thus, a grade of A for the text design input means an A for all the members of the text

Focus	**Category of journalistic strategies and practices . . .**	**. . . in convergent media**
Process	Goal setting: What do I want to achieve by my item? What should it look like when finished? What sense does it make?	What do I want to achieve across media?
	Planning: How do I achieve my goals? Which is the best way to resolve the problem? How do I structure my item?	How do I split tasks across media?
	Formulating: How do I find my words? How can I stimulate my text flow?	How do I negotiate my workflow?
	Controlling: How can I improve my text? What do I consider a mistake and how can I eliminate it?	How can I improve the interplay across media?
	Defining the task: Who decides what I am going to do? How do I know what I am supposed to do?	Which is my task within the cross-media concerto?
	Implementing the product: How do I make sure that my work fits in what my collaborators do?	How do I implement my product in media clusters?
	Reading sources: When do I read sources? Which sources do I read? How do I read them? Why do I read them?	How do I gather linkable sources?
	Reading the text-so-far: When, why and how do I read my text-so-far?	How do I navigate through my product so far?
	Handling tools: How do I use as efficiently as possible the tools available? When do I use which tools?	How do I cope with recent, as yet unfamiliar tools?
	Handling task environment: How do I manage the different tasks I am supposed to carry out?	How do I update hot items?
	Handling the social environment: How do I interact with peers, superiors, interviewees? Who can help? Who expects what?	How do I collaborate in multimedia newsrooms?
	Optimize production costs by holding to space and time restrictions: How do I cope with the resources at hand?	How do I handle infinite hyper-space?

Figure 3 Set of text production criteria for the (self)evaluation, with highlighted subset for collaboration.

design workgroup, a B for an individual text or writing diary results in a B for that student, a C for the final special section results in a C for all of the students. The average of these three grades is the final grade for the module.

The reflections and discussions preceding the grading are based on a shared set of criteria. The set operationalizes the multimedia mindset and the success factors on a practical level of writing strategies and practices (see Figure 3, cf. Perrin, 2003; Perrin & Ehrensberger-Dow, 2008; Perrin, 2009 in press). For instance, the success factor of collaboration is operationalized as defining the task, implementing the product, and handling the social environment.

The following example illustrates the interplay of journalistic strategies and practices on the product level (e.g., *finding the sources)* and the process level (e.g., *goal setting, formulating and handling the social environment). T*he student in question practiced and reflected on this interplay during his text production, and it was discussed in the evaluation in the last workshop as an example of an emerging practice to stage interviews in convergent media.

The student S.G. addressed an extraordinary topic and opted for an unusual format: an interview via e-mail. His topic is objectophilia, the intimate love a human feels for inanimate objects, in this case for the Twin Towers in New York. In his writing diary, the student reflected on the risks of his interview format:

Focus	**Category of journalistic strategies and practices . . .**	**. . . in convergent media**
Product	Optimize factual recency and relevance by limiting the topic: Which topic, which aspects and details should I choose?	Which aspects do I cover with which media?
	Optimize discursive authenticity by finding the sources: How do I choose reliable sources and reproduce them?	How do I integrate the sources into my own items?
	Optimize author's uniqueness by taking own position: Which is my or our distinctive approach, perspective, hypothesis?	How do I achieve my USP across media?
	Optimize symbolic conventionality by staging the story: How do I design dramaturgy and style?	Which media transformation for which effect?
	Optimize accessibility by establishing relevance for the audience: What do I want to achieve for which audience?	How do I tune audience design across media?

Figure 3 (continued).

> Given that my focus was clearly on one case, specifically a single individual, I only considered two genres as possibilities: an interview or a profile. Since Sandro told me early on that he did not want to talk to me on the phone or meet with me, I decided on an e-mail interview—although I was aware of the inherent difficulties of this. (Translated from the original German diary entry.)

S.G. dedicated particular attention to the dramaturgy: "The first question has to set the tone, no unnecessary shifts, smooth transitions, space to rearrange things and delete bits . . . it's all about overcoming the deficiencies of an impersonal interview" (translated from the original German diary entry). In addition, S.G. edited and streamlined the answers of the interviewee linguistically (e.g., by eliminating redundancies). This procedure is common for transforming spoken interviews into writing, although wide segments of the audience and even authors are probably not aware of it.

In the discussion with the group, S.G. proposed a paradigmatic variant (see Figure 1) to make such staging procedures visible for the audience: readers would be able to access the literal transcription of the spoken interview behind the edited written text. The raw material would shimmer through the elegant final product—a variant of the interview genre inspired by the particularities and novelty of media convergence. A new solution for an old journalistic problem emerged from conflicting demands and the possibilities of convergent media.

To sum up, this way of assessing such programs shows that:

- students and experts differ only slightly in their grades
- students profit from the discussions during self-assessment when they reflect as a group on what they have produced individually and collaboratively and what they have reflected on in their writing diaries
- multimedia mindsets can be assessed through this multilevel and multiperspective procedure systematically, explicitly, and convincingly for all parties involved.

Shaping the multimedia mindset with such assessments, workshops, and programs is what is required in the present professional environment. Convergent media challenge and enable us to come up with new solutions. Channels of distribution are becoming almost free of charge on the net: everything is everywhere. Branding in the media business results primarily from journalistic performance and audience design and from strong teams capable of writing for all channels with courage and openness for collaborative emergent solutions. Journalists who are fit in these areas will ensure the success of journalistic media.

The multimedia mindset makes the difference: in newsrooms—and in the corresponding educational programs.

NOTE

1. See the Kruse essay, this volume, for a description of the mission and structure of the Zurich University of Applied Sciences, as well as for a summary of the linguistic demography of Switzerland. Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) is a centre for teaching, research, and production excellence. While firmly anchored in Greater Zurich, its influence extends well beyond Switzerland to the wider international stage. ZHdK offers a broad range of degree programmes and further education courses in education, design, film, art & media, dance, theatre, and music. Closely interrelating teaching and research, ZHdK promotes transdisciplinary projects. Hosting over 600 events a year, ZHdK makes a significant contribution to cultural life in the city and region of Zurich. See the ZHdK website: http://www.zhdk.ch/?id=962.

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