# Coming Out of Extinction:

# The Communicators of the 21st Century Gone Digital

Rosario F. Welle[1]

## Abstract

Trending data shows readers are consuming digital content over print media. However, not all print-based communicators and journalists are equipped with the required digital video production skills of desktop capturing, editing, and delivery of videos, photography, and digital narrative for building Web site content. To remain employable, they must accept the Digital Age and understand these new skills. They must transition and receive technology training available through community colleges, online channels and tutorials, and the emerging digitally native news nonprofits. Through the gathering, analysis, and synthesis of information from scholarly articles and colleges of the new generation of communicators and journalists, I argue that unless print-based communicators and journalists converge to the Digital Age they will become extinct relics.

**Keywords:** journalism, print media, digital media, web content, digital skills, mass media, means of communication.

## Resumen

Los análisis de tendencias muestran que los lectores están consumiendo más contenido digital que contenido de medios impresos. Sin embargo, no todos los comunicadores y periodistas tradicionales, o de medios de comunicación impresa, poseen las competencias necesarias de video producción digital en autoedición, diseño y publicación de videos, fotografías y narración para crear contenido de sitios web. En consecuencia, para mantener su empleabilidad, deben aceptar la era digital y comprender estas nuevas destrezas. Es vital que hagan la transición y que se capaciten tecnológicamente a través de universidades comunitarias, cursos y seminarios en línea y de los nuevos programas de organizaciones sin fines de lucro de medios nativos digitales. Basándonos en la recopilación, el análisis y el resumen de información obtenida de artículos científicos y de repositorios de datos de universidades con programas orientados a la nueva generación de comunicadores y periodistas, aduciremos que, de no incursionar en la era digital, los comunicadores y periodistas tradicionales pasarán a la extinción.

**Palabras claves:** periodismo, prensa escrita, medios digitales, contenido web, habilidades digitales, medios masivos, medios de comunicación.

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[1] Rosario Charo Welle is a freelance Spanish-English translator and editor, serving direct clients and partnering with colleagues. For the past 17 years, her working expertise has concentrated in the fields of Education (Prek-12), public media and communications, marketing, and healthcare. A member of ATA since 2001, she is the current Administrator-elect of its Spanish Language Division (SPD), the Division's Webmaster and Chair of the Website Committee. Mrs. Welle graduated *magna cum laude* with a BA in Communications and a Certificate in Translation Studies. E-mail: charowelle@veraswords.com

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**1. Introduction**

*The Future of Print Communicators and Journalists in the Digital Age*

In the past there was a clear distinction between the roles of print communicators and journalists, who were responsible for writing print content and video photojournalists, who were film and imagery makers. However, the new media environment, driven by the Digital Age, has caused a shift from print to digital content. This digital shift poses the question as to whether or not digital media will fully overtake print. To this end, the overall topic of this report concerns the immediate and future employability of print-based communicators and journalists in the fast evolving Digital Age.

*The Number of Digital Content Consumers is on The Rise*

*Newsweek* announced in October of 2012 that after almost eight decades of providing print content it was going entirely digital in 2013; in 2011, *Bloomberg Businessweek* launched its first all-digital issue. Moreover, data from the Pew Foundation (2009) states while a segment of the United States population remains loyal to traditional print media, the unavoidable reality is only one out of four surveyed readers actually read print editions of newspapers (Bock 2012, p. 601). These 21st century scenarios prove that the "print versus digital" debate is ever more relevant to both currently employed and aspiring professionals in the fields of Communication and Journalism Studies. Nevertheless, a number of traditional communicators and journalists are skeptical of the

idea that the Digital Age could be the death of print-based content. They believe consumers will continue to demand print editions that are considered more credible and thoroughly researched (Klaassen, 2012). Their assumption is that consumers will continue to demand specialized content only printed magazines and newspapers can provide.

*The Other Side of the Argument*

Erick Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee, director and associate director of the MIT Center of Digital Business, advocate that humans must race with machines, not against them (Brynjolfsson and McAfee, 2012).They also argue technology in multimedia skills must be embraced in all areas of the economy, including communication and journalism, to promote a resurgence of job growth (2012). They state print media is a necessity for the digital convergence. Some argue against this belief, stating the key may not be to embrace the Digital Age, but to imagine a world where print media may outlast digital media. People who imagine digital media disappearing have views that seem almost romantic when data clearly shows the numbers of print readers decreasing as the numbers of digital consumers are on the rise.

*The Required 21st Century Skills*

Therefore, to remain employable in the 21st century, print-based communication professionals must face the challenge of the Digital Age and demonstrate their ability to adopt the required digital video production skills of desktop capturing, editing, and delivery of videos, photography, and digital narrative—or multimedia skills and digital cross-platform skills. Desktop video production is commonly defined as the capture, editing, and delivery of a moving picture on a video camera; photography is the capture of a still image; and digital narrative is storytelling for a digital broadcast medium for Web site content. These required skills are emerging and redefining the roles of the print-based or traditional communication and journalism professional.

*The Print-Based Communicator*

The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics define the traditional communication professional as one who works as a public relations manager or specialist. These professionals are responsible for crafting and maintaining the good image of organizations and customers (U.S. Department of Labor, 2013), and have earned a bachelor's degree in public relations, communication, or journalism. According to the Bureau, print-based communicators, or traditional communicators, are expected to possess fundamental interpersonal and organizational qualities, research and problem-solving abilities, and public speaking and writing skills. The need for a communication professional to be trained for integrating print and digital is an impending reality.

Mary A. Bock, assistant professor of Communication Studies at Kutztown University, stated in 2009 that print advertising for newspapers reportedly dropped 44 percent (2010), which caused some publications to transition to digital. This should be an eye-opener for working and aspiring professionals in the industry: The shift from print to digital can no longer be denied or ignored, despite opinions that print will continue to thrive. Print-based communicators should look for practical training in digital cross-platform skills.

*Project Integration with the BACP in Communication Arts*

As a major in Communication Arts, it was important to choose a topic for the integrative project that would help me understand the impact the Digital Age is having on the media industry. I wanted to assess if the skills I have acquired in the Bachelor of Arts Completion Program (BACP) in Communication Arts would maintain their relevance beyond the classroom and into the professional world. In the crafting of this project, I drew knowledge from previous courses such as CA 2050 Effective Communication, BACP 3350 Directed Research, BACP 3450 Integrative Project Design, and ST 2100 The Digital Age.

## 2. Approach

*Knowledge Gathering and Comprehension Process*

To reach the fulfillment of the argument that print-based communicators must acquire the required digital video production skills of desktop capturing, editing, and delivery of videos, photography, and digital narrative to remain employable in the Digital Age, I began a process of comprehension. Specifically, one of gathering credible sources to not only understand the communication and journalism industry concerning the perspective of the employer and employee, but also how the industry has been changing and evolving within the last 10 years.

*Industry Trends, Patterns, and Discoveries*

Through reading several scholarly journals, I began to see a trend of common patterns across communication and news organizations concerning the staff they hire, influenced by the current changes in the communication industry. One common trend is the industry's shift from the large, for-profit news organizations to small private firms, and university-based non-profits. Another trend that emerged was the change in print advertising revenue and the means by which media organizations are funded. The need for interactive digital advertising prompted the industry to produce and deliver digital content. The industry now requires those who are able to work across the emerging digital cross-platforms or have an understanding of the technology. The change in industry requirements has been reflected in the staff news organizations hire and retain.

Another discovery was the shift in news consumer habits from print to Web-based content delivered through e-readers, tablets, and mobile technology—the reason magazines such as *Newsweek* and *Businessweek* transitioned to digital. In addition, social media sites, such as Twitter and Facebook, were evolving as a type of news sources for localized information and the latest content. The emerging media industry demands employees who can use these social media networks, know how to generate content consumed by them, and have an understanding of the digital tools needed to provide interactivity to the readership.

After synthesizing the knowledge of these trends, I turned to colleges and instructors of the new generation of communicators and journalists for clarification. I learned that not only were college students being trained in the digital media platforms, but also the overall writing styles were evolving. The new environment of the journalism and communication industry was headed towards evident convergence. The communication skills traditionally taught were overlapping with the emerging digital multimedia skillset. The convergence will be needed to provide Web content with concise information and give journalists and communicators an understanding of how the consumer responds to digital news.

Through the evaluation of these trends within the industry, employers, communicators, journalists, and universities, I now look for the counter-arguments. They come from traditionalist print-based supporters who believe print media is alive and well and transitioning to digital may not be needed for future employment. The lack of evidence and the types of arguments used to the support the longevity of print-based content clearly solidified my opinion that print-based employees who fail to transition into the new digital environment will become extinct relics.

## 3. Project Analysis

### 1st Sub-argument

Print-based content is threatened by the digital trend; therefore, print-based communicators will need to transition from print to digital content.

*Evidence*

In her article "Newspaper Journalism and Video: Motion, Sound, and New Narratives," Mary A. Bock, assistant professor of Communication Studies at Kutztown University, corroborates the decline of print-based advertisement with her statement that advertising for newspapers reportedly dropped 44 percent in 2009 (2012, 601). This means the print news industry was losing traditional readers, which explains why news organizations and other areas of publishing are shifting their resources to their Web-based presence.

Bock's two-year research included observing print-based journalists as they were transitioning to video production. Her findings identified three areas of tension: "frustration and some resistance" in carrying out their main writing duties and creating videos; in the ability of photojournalists to adopt multimedia skills; and in the narrative style chosen by print journalist in writing video stories (608).In the past there was a clear distinction between the roles of print news journalists (responsible for writing print content) and video photojournalists (film and imagery makers); however, the convergence of the two roles on the horizon.

This convergence is evident in other areas of traditional print publishing such as art, art history, and architecture where the resistance against providing content digitally is weakening (Howard 2012). Art history publishers are exploring ways of transitioning from print to digital. Publisher of Yale University Press, Patricia J. Fidler, is growing more optimistic about the technological shift taking place in the field of scholarly art-history publishing. These shifts will allow museums to use Web-based technology, such as image-rich digital publishing software, in the production of online catalogs (2012). This is another example of the urgency for print-based communicators to consider training in digital multimedia skills. Similarly, editor of *Ad Age* magazine Abbey Klaassen, who argues in favor of print content, proposes that print will remain an asset for supporting and promoting digital content (Abbey, 2012). This in turn will require print-based communicators and journalists to learn how to integrate a "print look and feel" (2012) into digital content. To achieve a paper-look on digital publications, professionals will have to use digital cross-platform skills to provide an interactive and dynamic experience for consumers accessing information.

*Reasoning*

The increasing demand for digital content is forcing print-based communicators and journalists to accept the imminent shift of delivery methods from print to digital.

*Counter-evidence and counter arguments*

Some print-based journalists contend that many readers still prefer to receive information through print-based content. This claim suggests that as long as readers demand print versions of magazines and books, digital content will not fully replace print. In such cases, digital cross-platforms skills will not be required for employability of print-based communicators. Journalist Richard B. Stolley predicts in his article "The Power of Truth" that print may diminish to an elite subscriber list, but that books and magazines will not "be displaced or diminish to irrelevance" because of the desire for mankind to search for truth and creativity (Stolley 2010, p. 266). The author suggests that print will not fully disappear in the digital future. Print-based communicators and journalists will then continue to remain employable in the communication, journalism, and publishing industries.

Scholars William Douglas Woody, David B. Daniel, and Crystal A. Baker bring another perspective to the "print versus digital" debate. Findings in their 2010 research, "E-books or Textbooks: Students prefer Textbooks," shows that the current computer-savvy generation of undergraduates still prefers to read and learn in print (Woody, Daniel, and Baker 2010, pp. 946-47). In their research, 91 university students as participated and the results show that undergraduates would rather read charts and captions in print books (2010, p. 947). In general, college students dislike e-books. While they agree that digitization of print content will continue to thrive, they also propose the shift to digital-only content will be a slow process.

The evidence of Bock, Howard, Klaassen, Shepard, Woody, Daniel, and Baker provide credibility to the argument that print is not on its way to disappearance in the near future. From this conclusion it can be inferred that print-based communicators may not have to adopt digital cross-platform skills just yet to remain employable. However, further evidence shows another reality: convergence of print and digital in the communication and journalism industry is taking place at a vertiginous pace. While their respective research helps validate their viewpoint, these scholars do not provide conclusive statistics to *disprove* that communicators who are able to work across multiple platforms will have an advantage over communicators who cannot.

*Warrant*

By accepting the shift from print to digital taking place in the communication, journalism, and publishing industries, print-based communicators and journalists will remain in business through exploring and adopting the emerging digital technologies.

## 2nd Sub-argument

Mass-media organizations will give candidates priority for jobs in communication when they are proficient in the digital video production skills of desktop capturing, editing, and delivery of videos, photography, and digital narrative.

*Evidence*

Associate professor of communication and journalism John Russial and doctoral candidate Arthur Santana surveyed the newspaper staffs of 210 U.S. newspapers, collecting only 181 responses. In their study, "Specialization Still Favored in Most Newspaper Jobs," they compared survey data from 2009 and 2007 to assess which skills were important for working in traditional newsrooms. Among their findings, in cross-platform environments, video production is a common denominator, as 99 of the top 100 U.S. newspapers included video on their websites in 2009. The convergence of sets of skills, video and audio creation, and editing were found in some measure important to all staff members excluding copy editors. However, an important finding was that the traditional skills of copy editing, reporting, and photography still remain very important in specialization (Russial and Santana 2011, pp. 12-17).Although traditional skills are still sought, the authors themselves consider their findings inconclusive (2011, p. 20). It is relevant to point out that their data *does* reveal the emerging trend that newsrooms will prefer multi-skilled journalists able to handle media convergence trends of the 21st century.

Similarly, associate professors of communication Tim Brown and Steven Collins shared the results of their 2008 national survey of newspapers and television news providers in

the article "What 'They' Want From 'Us': Industry Expectations of Journalism Graduates." With their research, they attempted to understand the skills the media industry seeks in communication graduates. Responses from 149 newspapers and 61 television stations show that broadcasting organizations place more value on candidates with skills in video recording and editing, and who understand multimedia narrative (Brown and Collins 2010, p. 74). Top skills for newspaper organizations were digital photography, multimedia narrative comprehension, differentiating between writing print-based and Web-based content, and video recording. When seeking candidates for online production, the top skills desired were multimedia narrative, writing for Web content and video, PhotoShop, and HTML (74). Therefore, besides the expected traditional communication skills (i.e.: critical thinking, learning ability, editing, reporting, spelling, and research), media organizations are looking for candidates who have an understanding of multimedia components that could enhance their news reports.

*Reasoning*

Communication industry employers will not consider print-based communication candidates competitive if they do not possess or understand the digital cross-platform skills.

*Counter-evidence and counter arguments*

Despite the above findings, some may argue that the traditional skills of critical thinking, learning ability, editing, reporting, spelling, and research continue to hold more value in communication and mass media organizations over the emerging digital cross-platform skills. Clearly, all communicators and journalists will be expected to be competent in these areas for the production of content whether for print or digital distribution. Since the data is inconclusive and collected from 2007 and 2010, it may support the argument that communication professionals do not need to be multi-skilled in digital convergence for the time being. However, those who may disagree with this data for its inconclusiveness should be reminded of the undeniable fact that the industry

continues to converge. In some cases, it shifted completely or converged from print to digital content and delivery (i.e.: *Newsweek* transition to all-digital format in 2012, and *Businessweek* convergence to both print and digital formats).

*Warrant*

Adopting the required digital video production skills in desktop capturing, editing, and delivery of videos, photography, and digital narrative will give cross-platform trained job candidates priority and help promote them over those who lack experience in digital cross-platform skills.

**3rd Sub-argument**

Higher education programs should revise their communication and journalism curricula to teach students the digital cross-platform skills they will need to produce credible, concise, and dynamic content for an increasing Web-based and mobile society.

*Evidence*

Assistant professors of journalism and communication at higher education departments, Deb Halpern Wenger and Lynn C. Owen make an important research-based observation that higher-paid veteran journalists are being outplaced by younger multi-skilled and dynamic staff (Wenger and Owen, 2012). Their research validates the need to update communication and journalism curricula for preparing future communication professionals. Through their collection, research, and analysis of 735 job postings data from principal U.S. newspapers and broadcasting companies, in a three-month span in 2008 and 2009, they provide evidence of academic curriculum changes that include courses in multimedia skills. Wenger and Owen's findings showed that multimedia skills were a requirement for job listings under the category of print photojournalist (60 percent), editors (56.8 percent), copy editors (40.5 percent), and print reporting (38.8 percent) (2012, p. 8). They also found that there is a clear need for training journalists in nonlinear video editing and photography skills, and with "over a third of positions

requiring one or both" (8) there is already a current need. Their findings confirm that newspaper and broadcasting companies seek to hire communicators and journalists who are able to produce multimedia content across platforms.

*Reasoning*

Traditional higher education programs in communication and journalism do not include in their core curricula digital video production, photography, and digital narrative courses that students will need to fulfill the jobs many mass media communication and journalism organizations now require. Lacking these skills inhibit their ability to meet the needs of the 21$^{st}$ century consumer.

*Counter-evidence and counter arguments*

Some may counter that mass media communication and journalism higher education programs are already adequate and are teaching the basic skills in content research, writing, and editing for job seeking in the 21st century. They argue that companies still prefer experienced communicators and journalists over candidates who lack experience but who possess cross-platform skills. For instance, Russial and Santana quote Gil Thelen, executive editor of the Tampa Tribune, who states that he would prefer a journalist graduate who is specialized in one area as opposed to one who is skilled in many platforms (Russial and Santana 2011, p. 7). The research is generally inconclusive and cannot provide any credible sources or evidence to validate claims that current university level communication and journalism programs are adequate for training the communicator of the 21$^{st}$century.On the contrary, findings are conclusive that most universities in the United States are moving toward modifying their programs to include digital multimedia courses and adequately train working and aspiring communicators and journalists.

The late Lee Thornton, former interim dean of the Phillip Merril College of Journalism at the University of Maryland backs up this claim in her 2008 article, "A Dizzying Pace." She stated that many colleges, including the University of Maryland, were

moving toward a change in curricula that would prepare students for the multiplatform
work that will be expected of them in the field (Thornton, 2008). Thornton argued that
if students are taught these skills, they will be able to keep up with the demand of the
rapidly changing industry (2008).

*Warrant*

Establishing credibility through effective online research skills and the ability to
produce concise and dynamic content is important for communication graduates to be
successful in fulfilling the job roles required for digital video production, photography,
and digital narrative skills in cross-platform environments.

**4th Sub-argument**

Print-based communicators should understand each digital video production skill
necessary in the 21st century and be aware of the tools available for adopting techniques
required to remain employable.

*Evidence*

In his book, *My Turbulent Path from Print to Digital*, Stephen B. Shepard, former
founding dean of the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism and former Editor-in-Chief
of *BusinessWeek* relays his experience as a traditional journalist forced into
transitioning from print to digital. Despite facing the tensions of making the digital
transition, he was able to successfully overcome them. Shepard explains that seeing the
decline of *BusinessWeek* magazine, "one of the best and more lucrative magazines in
the world" (Shepard, 2013) forced him to lower his defenses against the digital
convergence. He began to accept technology and came to terms with the shift from print
to digital in the journalism industry. As dean of the CUNY Graduate School of
Journalism, he found himself being a student of the Digital Age's new technologies and
trends. He realized that these emerging technologies would enrich and benefit
journalism by reaching more audiences through interactive multimedia narrative.

Assistant professor of Journalism & Media Studies Rebecca Coates proposes in her work "Creative Destruction: An Exploratory Study of How Digitally Native News Nonprofits are Innovating Online Journalism Practices" that traditional communicators and journalists can seek technology training through community colleges, online channels and tutorials, and emerging nonprofit online news firms based at universities. Nonprofit online news organizations found that universities offer students and professionals free or fee-based training in computer-assisted reporting that incorporate multimedia content (video, audio, and still photography) and social media channels such as Twitter and Facebook (Coates, 2013, p. 11). These programs are specifically planned for professionals working in communication and journalism related areas such as public relations, advertising, marketing, and the production and delivery of multimedia content. Program courses will provide the necessary digital cross-platform skills to those professionals who are facing the emerging media industry for which they lack the required training.

*Reasoning*

Print-based communicators can face the Digital Age and acquire the necessary video production, photography, and digital narrative skills through traditional lecture programs or specialized training programs.

*Counter-evidence and counter arguments*

Some may contend that older generations of communicators may still reject cross-platforms and convergent communication environments simply because they were not born from new and fast-evolving technologies. During Bock's observations of print-based journalists transitioning to digital, she found that when journalists of the older generation were being trained in multimedia skills they became overwhelmed by having to conduct interviews and operate the camera at the same time. Once their training was done, they hardly use the camera again (Bock 2011, p. 609). Bock points out that as veteran journalists are asked or led to learn video production skills, they are also

learning the new narrative skills (2011, p. 606) required to thrive in the Digital Age. Despite the resistance of veteran communicators and journalists to accept the new media, Shepard's journey shows that it is not impossible to become multimedia-skilled.

*Warrant*

By understanding the available training opportunities, print-based communicators should be more willing to learn the multimedia skills they need for becoming cross-platforms communicators and journalists.

## 4. Solutions

Solutions to the problem of remaining relevant and employable in the 21st Century, for both aspiring professionals and seasoned communicators and journalists, can be summarized in a few short paragraphs. I derived these solutions through the collection and analysis of credible sources such as scholarly journals and periodicals from professional associations. The following solutions summary is a blueprint for effectiveness, and does not pretend to be all-inclusive, but rather a formula for achieving success.

*A different set of skills rather than the traditional skillset is required*

We are in a Digital Age where news services have moved to online Web sites that require digital video production skills for building multimedia content (Tremayne, Weiss, and Alves, 2007).

*We must realize this change is transitional*

Achieving the paper-look experience in the delivery of digital and Web-based content will require the understanding and adoption of digital multimedia skills (Klaassen, 2012). These include the learning of desktop capturing, editing, and delivery of videos,

photography, and digital narrative. These digital content sources must be combined to produce an interactive and dynamic experience for accessing information. The numbers of print consumers are declining; "print look and feel" with a digital fingerprint is on the rise.

*Understanding the skillset required across platforms*

Communicators and journalists must be able to understand and produce these multimedia offerings across multiple platforms (Halpern and Owens, 2012; Brown and Collins, 2010). Individuals should not focus on learning one set of skills. Rather, the new era demands not only the previous skills of critical thinking, learning ability, editing, reporting, spelling, and research, but also digital cross-platform skills necessary to deliver content across specialized technologies.

*Acquiring these skills as the logical outcome*

Traditional communicators and journalists can seek technology training through community colleges, online channels and tutorials, and the emerging university nonprofit content providers. Nonprofit online news organizations found in universities offer students and professionals free or fee-based training in computer-assisted reporting that incorporates multimedia content (video, audio, and still photography) and social media channels such as Twitter and Facebook (Coates 2013, p. 11). One example is at the San Diego State University currently offering a professional certificate in digital and social media. As stated on the university's College of Extended Studies Web site, the program courses are geared toward working professionals in the areas of journalism, public relations, advertising, and marketing and the production of multimedia content.

New dynamics show that veteran editors and journalists are establishing nonprofit Web-based news outlets which are funded through diverse channels such as grants, donations, corporation sponsorship, and training services (Coates 2013, p. 8). Print-based communicators must gain understanding of the new challenges facing the digitally-

driven mass media communication and journalism industry concerning sources of revenue once drawn from print advertisement.

*Taking the necessary steps*

The final solution is to convey the urgency for print-based communicators (public relations managers, specialists, journalists, and broadcasters) into accepting challenges the Digital Age poses for their employability and job security in the 21st century. They must take the necessary steps to adopt the required digital video production skills of desktop capturing, editing, and delivery of videos, photography, and digital narrative.

## 5. Discussion

*Analysis of Project Solutions*

The project solutions their role of clarifying not only the problem facing the industry and the employees that produce its content, but also the emerging trends in the Digital Age were clearly stated as well as. It was very relevant to emphasize the point that aspiring and working traditional communicators and journalists must first accept the changes driving the need for new skill-sets. When they fail to accept the transition to digital is necessary it makes learning new skills an almost impossible task.

Another solution conveys to print-based communicators and journalists that not all hope is lost because print content is evolving into an interactive, dynamic experience. Traditional skills of critical thinking, learning ability, editing, reporting, spelling, and research become interactive and portable through the emerging technologies for consumers and creating new revenue sources. The solution that states cross-platform skills are now needed was highly relevant as the industry no longer wants only specialized professionals. The skill of digital multimedia necessary to deliver content across specialized technologies must be understood and, if required, learned.

The fourth solution of seeking venues to acquire the skills brought the topic home. There are many avenues, such as technology training through community colleges, online channels and tutorials, and the emerging university nonprofit content providers,

for which specific examples were provided. The final solution of action brings the reader into a state of motivation. The industry is not simply cultivating a new set of tools, but is transforming itself. Organizations are forced to make effective changes. Digitally-driven content is a must for survival and sources of revenue are diverse. Most specifically, since 2009 veteran journalists and editors, once employed in commercial print newspapers, have become news entrepreneurs. They transitioned from commercial "legacy print and broadcast" to what scholars now term *digitally native news nonprofits* or Web-based only news outlets. Many of these digitally native sites are based at universities. Another key finding is the leaders of these nonprofit news outlets consider partnerships with traditional print news media organizations essential to reach more information consumers and have more community impact.

*Trends of Industry Changes in the Past Decade*

The project approach was successful. By researching and gathering credible scholarly sources, I was able to see trends of the industry changes in the last 10 years. I was surprised at the impact of technology on the large mass media outlets. The industry's move from large for-profit organizations to smaller nonprofit news outlets was a real eye-opener. The impact of Twitter and Facebook was also something that I had not anticipated.

The need for interactive, digital content, driving the industry for survival, prompted me to research colleges to see what has changed and how curricula have been affected. This also was the correct approach as it brought emerging university-based digitally native news nonprofits and instructors to the forefront. These discovery sessions led to the understanding that my thesis was fully supported.

*Inconclusive Data Concerning the Future of Print Content*

Probably the weak side of the project lies in the inconclusive data to support or disprove arguments of the future of print. Either the supporters of print content understand the need to move to digital, or the critics or skeptics of digital are not heard for the lack of

peer-reviewed and scholarly research. However, the majority of communication and journalism scholars do agree that print and digital are converging. They agree digital is on the rise, but they also concur print content has its audience and will not fully disappear.

*Self-Assessment Analysis*

If I had to start the report all over, I would have assigned extra time to the analysis of the data being that data interpretation and synthesis requires more effort for me. I would have preferred to conduct interviews and field research since I am more interpersonal and verbal. I would have also put more effort into finding credible evidence to support counterarguments as I learned that not all the sources I found in scholarly database are considered scholarly or credible.

My personal learning can be summarized in my professional experience as a translator of written documents. For performing efficiently certain professional activities, I had to adopt the digital multimedia skills required to create and deliver Web content on my own, outside the academic realm. The skills I adopted include: desktop publishing (creating content in layout and design platforms such as InDesign); digital storytelling, digital copy editing and design, video production for the Web; and a general understanding of the digital and social media dynamics. I have begun to transition through outside online research as the Bachelor of Arts Completion Program (BACP) in Communication Arts at the University of Denver has trained me in the traditional approach. This is evident in the BACP courses that influenced the topic I chose to enhance my major and learning.

The Effective Communication course and the Direct Research course have been central to the manner in which I conducted my research pertaining to the search, selection, and analysis of evidence. Both courses placed great emphasis on validating and supporting arguments with scholarly and peer-reviewed articles. Effective Communication taught me how to craft arguments with the pathos, ethos, and logos elements that are critical for conveying a credible and ethical project. Through the Directed Research course I learned the processes and stages of elaborating a well-structured and defined research.

From choosing a topic, to preparing the project thesis, the introduction, the conclusion, the literature review, and the project analysis, I have been able to apply this learning to the integrative project.

The Integrative Project Design course was also valuable to my work. While the format and outline required in crafting the integrative project was new to me, following this format proved fundamental for the successful elaboration and integration of this final report. All the elements integrate and fit together. The Integrative Project Design course also led me to utilize the University of Denver's Penrose Library resources, databases, and their staff more efficiently. Through the amount of research required for the project, I have honed my research skills for the gathering of credible and acceptable evidence. The library staff is very knowledgeable, and through the observation of their research techniques and key word searches, I gained valuable insight and research skills.

Another important thing I learned was how to effectively follow and apply a specific manual of style—Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Turabian has been most significant in the crafting of my arguments for the project report. It explains the critical elements of well-thought, researched, and supported arguments (i.e., warrants, reasoning, and counterarguments). It also provides the blue-print for the conception of the topic, thesis, drafts, and final product. The completion of this report should be a reflection of my BACP learning experience as a candidate of the Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication Arts.

## 6. Conclusion

*Problem*

The relevance of the digital convergence stresses the need for currently employed and aspiring professionals in the fields of communication and journalism to hone their digital media skills and combine them with their traditional skills. These communication professionals must receive training in both print and multimedia skills for producing multimedia content in the emerging digital and Web-based platforms. While some traditional communicators and journalism scholars contend that consumers of print content will continue to drive the demand for print media, research shows the imminent

convergence of print and digital content. Therefore, to remain employable in the 21$^{st}$ century, print-based communication professionals must face the challenge of the Digital Age. They must demonstrate their ability to adopt the required digital video production skills of desktop capturing, editing, and delivery of videos, photography, and digital narrative—or multimedia skills and digital cross-platform skills.

*Approach*

This study of a collection of journal articles authored by communication and journalism scholars explains how the near half drop in print advertising revenues forced media organizations to become aware of changes in consumer's habits. They realized that a shift or convergence to digital-based content was imperative. In researching specialized data bases, I used key word searches including digital media, multimedia skills, and print-based communication to find sources relevant to my topic. Searches were limited to scholarly and peer-reviewed articles, and within the last 10 year, which gave preference to the most current sources. In addition to searching for credible evidence in support of the thesis, I also searched for evidence to address counterarguments. However, I did not find scholarly articles with precise opinions that print would prevail over digital content. My classmates and our professor reviewed the evidence and solutions. After the critique, peer-review, and selection of the evidence and solutions, I began to integrate all the components of the project for its completion.

*Research Results*

Results corroborate that the increasing demand for digital content is forcing print-based communicators and journalists to accept the imminent shift of delivery methods from print to digital. This shift is requiring them to learn how to integrate multimedia components into digital content. Professionals will have to adopt digital cross-platform skills to achieve a paper-look on digital publications and to offer consumers the interactive and dynamic experience characteristic of the emerging features of the Digital Age for accessing information. Findings regarding the most relevant skills that media

organizations seek in candidates also show that they attached moderate importance to the convergence of skill sets (video and audio creation, and editing for staff members). However, the traditional skills of copy editing, reporting, and photography remain of great importance.

Most relevant is the research data that newsrooms will prefer multi-skilled journalists able to handle media convergence trends of the 21st century. Over half of all current job postings have multimedia skills listed as a requirement in fulfilling the job role. In addition, over one third of what could be considered job listings for traditional journalists now require nonlinear video and photography skills. To remedy this urgency for skills convergence, print-based communicators and journalists must first accept the Digital Age and that it requires a different set of skills other than the traditional ones. They must also understand the transitional nature of adopting new skills which calls for the understanding and learning of digital multimedia skills of desktop capturing, editing, and delivery of video, photography, and digital narrative. Through this understanding, print-based communicators must be able to produce multimedia offerings across platforms.

*Solution*

Thus acquiring the skills is the logical solution. Community colleges and universities are changing their curriculum to meet the challenge of employment in the Digital Age. Programs have changed to include learning the social media channels such as Twitter and Facebook. Courses will also provide the necessary digital cross-platform skills to create digital and Web-based content. In addition, another channel for learning that has emerged is the nonprofit online news organizations. These programs offer students and professionals free or fee-based training in computer-assisted reporting that incorporate multimedia content such as video, audio, and still photography. Therefore, traditional communicators and journalists can seek technology training through these community colleges, online channels and tutorials, and the emerging university nonprofit content providers.

The Digital Age is already upon us and "digital for hire" is already posted. Those who are unwilling to embrace technology's advances in digital communications of editing and multi-platform distribution will become extinct relics. They will find themselves existing as a museum piece alongside typewriters, telegraph keys, and rotary phones.

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