

Digitalizacion en el sector de la comunicacion – un reto europeo
- a Leonardo da Vinci project -

Digitalisation in Romanian Media Companies:

Born or Trained PC-centred Newsrooms

Raluca RADU, PhD student

Romina SURUGIU, PhD

Assistant Professors –

Media Department, School of Journalism and Communication Studies, University of Bucharest

Bucharest,
June 2006

Table of contents

Executive summary	3
Introduction.....	5
Print media	7
News agency.....	11
On-line press	12
Radio.....	15
Television	19
Convergent media group.....	30
Media industry providers	31

Executive summary

The process of digitalisation in Romanian companies started in 1995. At the beginning, the computers were expensive, thus few, and not powerful (one computer could store some 100 radio commercials at once). The newsrooms were hybrid, with both analogical and digital equipment, and some still are.

Some jobs disappeared. The typists are now replaced by computer operators or desktop publishing designers, web-designer and on-line editor. Some new jobs and some new companies appeared. For example, every newsroom has IT specialist support now. The Internet advertising is done by specialized companies, the advertising brokers, and the editor is supported by the technology provider and the Internet service provider.

Depending on the age of the interviewee, the researcher could identify a different relation with the computer. These different kinds of relations were also point out by the interviewees in a managing position. For example, there is a nostalgic perspective on handwriting, editing on paper or on hard copy and working with analogical devices. The nostalgic (from 40 years on) put in relation human creativity with the use of old equipments they were used to and they learned their job on. The younger generation has a different approach to the computer. They enjoy discovering functions of new software and doing new things with technology, but they get bored in the classroom. Some of them feel they don't need extra training for using the new technologies, others admit that structured knowledge in this area is very much needed.

By using the new technologies, the quality of media products may improve, but the lack of training (either because the newsroom staff feels there is no need to, or because there is no available training they know of or they can afford, because of time and money pressures) and the new devices, that have too many functions, make the production process slower and the human errors increase, in some cases.

Some of the interviewees feel the universities don't have the proper programs in the usage of new technologies, even if they are expected to. But some interviewees believe that general training should be done on content generation not on using specific software, which can be called "indoctrination". The newsroom representatives and the representatives of associated industries feel there is a need of cross-training, so that, in a team with both technicians, engineers and journalists, everybody could understand what the other is doing and what is the process that lies underneath the work results. In this regard, new jobs are developing as a link between the editorial and the technical staff and translator of the jargon to these two groups. The journalistic products are thus bettered, if, for example, the print reporter sees his text accompanied by photography.

Romanian market witnesses the introduction of the complete journalist that records, edits and encodes for several different media (print, audio-visual and on-line). The journalists and the technical staff has opposite views about the credibility and the efficiency of this complete journalist, depending on the effects this job will have on their present work, as such, on their work load and even on the existence of their jobs. In private radio, the introduction of computers, of Internet for collecting information purposes and of specialized software that help journalists do production, cut the staff in half. The new technology for the audio digital broadcasting is expensive, as it is meant to be changed every five years and the maintenance demand is constant. The digital systems are highly instable and the failures can appear anywhere. The reduction in costs can be done in the personnel departments, if the journalists decide to get involved in producing their materials.

Both technology and content related training is needed permanently, the latter in order to better understand the target public, to be able to adapt to the normal strategic changes, and to refresh the basic information (as it is the case with voice training).

Public service TV and radio stations train their staff constantly, to help them adapt to the digitalized world. Technical and content training is considered a source of competitiveness on the media market, but is mainly done in the commercial companies when new equipment or new production flows are implemented. The constant training is "impossible", because employees are intensively used. The usual training is mostly on the job. The private television companies witnesses many cases in which simple drivers were transformed in cameramen, DSNG operating staff members or broadcast technicians, based on their on the job acquired skills.

Introduction

In 2006, out of 621 media companies counted in Romania by a national study on media ownership, 50.56% were in the print business, 31.08% in radio, 18.04% in TV, 0.16% in cable and 0.16% were Internet based. Almost 80% of the Romanian media is local or regional media¹. This state of facts is the result of more than 16 years of free market in Romania, of a liberalized market in audio-visual that preceded some of more developed nations in Europe (*Soti TV*, the first alternative TV channel to the National Television, appeared in 1992) and a growing advertising market, after stagnation in the period of 1998-2002².

In 2005, the cable penetration was around 68% of households with TV (4,788 million - 83.3% of urban audiences) and satellite penetration around 2% of households with TV (<0.1 million). All 266 towns in Romania have cable³. The Internet penetration also is spectacularly: from 2% in 1998, to 9% in 2001 and 24% in 2004⁴.

Recent research (Coman, 2003, Gross, 2004) shows that the dominant model in the Romanian media is the liberal one and that television based companies control the largest part of the advertising money, thus have the largest revenues.

The most powerful media companies, be they state owned or private, are horizontally and vertically integrated. Thus, a company may have TV channels, radio stations, dailies and weeklies (horizontal integration) or may have a press agency, a films studio, a printing house, along with audiovisual stations and print press units (a vertical integration). The private capital is both Romanian and foreign and some of the companies that sell media products in Romania are quoted on European or American stock exchanges (like *Central European Media Enterprises*, quoted on NASDAQ). Some are family business. The 22.2 million Romania's population is attractive for the media industry, like it is attractive for other industries, that provide advertising revenues to the media industry.

The attractive market and the strong competition led to a search for the most up-to-date technologies that would lower the production costs and raise the product quality. Part of the companies had to live the whole digitalisation process, from offline typing and printing or offline editing with scissors (in radio), to adapting to an entirely

¹ www.mediaindex.ro, visited June, 5, 2006.

² <http://www.cetv-net.com/en/investors/presentations.php?s=all>, visited June, 5, 2006.

³ <http://www.cetv-net.com/en/investors/presentations.php?s=all>, visited June, 5, 2006.

⁴ <http://www.mcti.ro/img/uploads/indicatori/indicatori%20IT%20romana.pdf>, visited June, 9, 2006.

digitalized newsroom that changed the work practices. Others were lucky to be born digital, and had to face other problems, like the lack of a proper business plan and the inefficient human resources recruiting system.

The present paper presents the evolution of digitalisation in Romanian newsrooms, drafted with the support of selected representatives from print media, news agencies, on-line media, radio, television, media industry providers (see Annex 1).

This research is based on in-depth interviewing. The interviews took the form of focused discussion on the subject of digitalisation effects on the institution they are part of. The questions followed the pattern used by all researchers in the Leonardo da Vinci project "*Digitalisation en el sector de la comunicacion – un reto europeo*". The interviewing results are narratives of newsroom lives, so they contain "unique individual worldviews, perceptions that are negotiated through the act of storytelling itself" (Mello, 2002, p. 234). The information researchers obtained should be regarded keeping in mind the "negotiated, nonlinear, and interactional nature of storytelling" (Mello, 2002, p. 233). This doesn't mean the information is not accurate, but that this report is based on perspectives constructed through the interaction of researchers with newsroom representatives.

The Romanian specialists consider there is a difference between digitalisation and informatisation. Digitalization refers to changing the production, transmission and archiving support: transforming the equipment from analogical to digital. Due to the software, developed to replace and reproduce the same functions of the analogical equipment, the changes in the newsroom are not essential.

Television, with large supporting and journalistic staff, a constant drive to adopt new technology, because of the strong competition, and a constantly growing advertising market, that financially sustained the technology adoption, is the most interesting field to be studied in a paper about digitalisation in Romania. This is why the researchers have a special emphasis on this medium.

The informatisation process brings dramatic changes, as it has new elements that change the technological chains, the rhythm and the newsroom's efficiency. The informatisation, as compared to digitalisation, is very hard to be assimilated, especially by a large corporation, as *SRR*, with 2700 employees that would not give away their old reflexes.

Print media

- Val Vilcu, Senior Editor, *Adevarul*, SC ADEVARUL SA (national quality newspaper, private, Romanian owners)⁵

Adevarul was one of the first titles issued after the Romanian Revolution of 1989, but it inherited the infrastructure and some of the newsroom from *Scanteia*, one of the leading newspapers before 1989. Thus, the media institution witnessed all the transformations required by a digitalized newsroom. Val Vilcu, Senior Editor at *Adevarul*, is part of the newsroom since 1990.

Adevarul doesn't own a typography or a web site division, these services are externalised. Around 1995 the typography they work with changed the system, from lead to offset printing. The process of digitalisation started in the *Adevarul* newsroom around that date, also. Before digitalisation: "We were writing on a writing machine", says Vilcu, "we were getting telex transmissions, from *Rompres*, the news agency, and faxes, from *Mediafax*, the other news agency - this is why they are called *Mediafax* - and the printing was done on lead. The linotype section was in the place occupied now by *Realitatea TV* (in the same building, *our note*)".

"The journalists were writing by hand their materials, and then they were sending the texts to the typists, who were writing them on the writing machines. The journalists that owned writing machines, because these were in short supply, were writing on the writing machines directly". Some typists are computer operators now, some are working with the DTP department, and some left the newsroom.

Around 1995 came the first computers, which were in short supply and were very simple, like a writing machine, for the typists. The journalists waited some three-four years to start using the computers themselves. "The articles were not done on the computers, but other things, like official papers and e-mails. Because we had here, at *Adevarul*, a large typists' support (around 7-8 people, out of 200), the stake was not to write the article using the PC - you could write it by hand."

Before digitalisation was used extensively by the *Adevarul* newsroom and by the industry and sources in general, the typists were writing not only articles, but also the classified ads or the TV program that was coming un-systemized on facsimiles.

Since 2000 the newsroom was digitalized, by the typists' support was kept. Vilcu explains: "On the one hand, the older journalists were still writing articles by hand, and on the other hand, there were moments with a time pressure to be taken into consideration. Out of the five members in the Director's Board at *Adevarul*, only two

⁵ Interviewed on June 1st, 2006.

were using the computer then, as a writing machine. In addition, *Adevarul* was famous for the beautiful style: elaborated, intellectual articles, not simple pieces of news. Also my generation, people of 40, enjoyed writing on paper. I think you are more creative when you see the word on paper, when you cross out a part, see the text as a whole - there is a different relation with the paper, as compared with the computer. I type fast, I adapted well to this, and any other article I write directly in the computer, but I write my editorials by hand, and afterwards I use the machine. Same with more important articles, short novels, literature I write.”

Since January 2006 all journalists in the newsroom staff have a computer, and they can work without paper. “Before, we worked a lot on print. The journalist was printing the material, and the editor was making corrections with the paintball, on print. These prints were going afterwards to the typist, and that service was operating the final, correct form of the article. There was, is true, a fracture, because the correction was done by paintball, and somebody else was retyping it in the computer, and it was a lost of time. On the other hand, it was the common law of having a document, on which someone was assuming his responsibility. Not that there is no responsibility now.”

The final product comes out faster. But it is more demanding - the paper was better for the eyes. “And I think there are more typing mistakes on the PC, that otherwise. One wins time - copy and paste are the most well-known journalists.” The computer is very helpful in gathering information, in getting access to law projects, for example, or in reminding events. Even the relation with confidential sources is eased. “The faxed disappeared in the last year or so, and I think the phone companies feel the decrease in revenues. Very few, city halls or public institutions poorly modernized, still use the faxes. The rest is entirely on e-mail.” Romulus Caplescu, at 84, “a symbol of the Romanian press in general”, works on the Internet, takes news from the Internet, reads news on the Internet, but doesn’t type, he prefers to write by hand, “and I think that, in his case, we can make an exception”, adds Vilcu.

There are new jobs, like for the DTP department. The archive is both electronic and on paper, and there are new jobs there, too. There were no classes for using the computer in the newsroom; each one discovered the machine on his or her own, or trained themselves elsewhere.

The photo service changed radically. The changes were triggered by cost rationales - the black and white film started to be more expensive than the colour film, afterwards the newspaper was done colour, on computer, but the process of passing from film to computer was expensive. This is why there were investments in digital photography and the photo-reporters got the equipment that enabled them to transmit photographs through the mobile phone, from the field to the central newsroom.

Vilcu doesn’t believe in the journalist that can be driver, photographer and journalist. The paper is looking for quality, so the pictures must be good, as good as the photo artist can make them. The journalist could get training

in conceptually thinking his text supported by an image. “For now, this is just utopia. The journalist may take pictures, if they are going to be used as photo-documents, that is, if the information they convey is far more important, regardless of quality.”

- Alina Miron, Editor-in-chief, *Familia mea*, *Lucru de mana* (magazines), *Edipresse AS Romania* (private, foreign owners)⁶

Alina Miron, 31, works in the magazines industry for 8 years. She started as sub-editor for the leading Romanian women’s magazine *Avantaj*, and later was promoted deputy editor-in-chief for another women’s magazine, *Olivia*. Now she works as editor-in-chief for two niche women’s magazines, *Familia mea* (My family) and *Lucru de mana* (How to knit).

Miron stressed from the beginning that the first and most important condition for recruiting somebody is to have experience with text editing software like Microsoft Office and Power Point. Real assets would be knowledge of QuarkXpress and Adobe In Design.

Miron confirmed that the production process for both magazines she coordinates includes copy editing on hard-copy (print-out). “We are aware that typing mistakes are hard to detect on the computer screen”, explains Miron, stressing that this is an empirical observation. The main challenge for writers and editors remains the command of the following software programs: QuarkXPress, Adobe Photoshop and Adobe In Design. “We are affected by the fact that at University, MacIntosh computers are not so much used. For magazines, the PCs are not so suitable”.

Regarding archiving system, texts and images are stored on both hard-disks and on film. A special software was designed for indexing images. Miron thinks that working in a digitalized environment has benefits: flexibility, time saving, people more competent and with new abilities. “We had no training courses”, says Miron “but we learned by doing, or asking for advice from colleagues or chiefs”. “Training is really important, both ways: the technical staff should understand how editorial process works, and editors should be able to know the main challenges of production side”, believes Miron.

“In the magazine desks, we are encouraging journalists to acquire various skills and abilities, from layout to photography techniques”, said Miron. She added that she and her colleagues must learn as much as possible, in order to remain competitive.

- Florin Dobre, Reporter, *Cotidianul*, *Catavencu Media Group* (private, Romanian owners)⁷

⁶ Interviewed on June, 6, 2006.

Florin Dobre, 23, works already for four years with the Sport Department of *Cotidianul* newspaper. *Cotidianul* was at the beginning a small newspaper, but since 2004 it became one of the most important newspapers in Romania, after being bought by a developing media group (*Academia Catavencu*). After takeover, a lot of investments were done in equipment and human resources. “In 2002, when I started, we use to have few and obsolete personal computers – one for two or three persons. The copy-flow was like this: the texts, as raw copies, were typed by reporters, sent to a server, edited on-line by editors, sent to the layout department, checked again and finally printed out, right before going to the printing house”.

“New technologies were introduced in 2004, by the new owners. We got new PCs, and a new system was implemented, based on a website. Now, in 2006, all articles of the newspaper are on line. Each morning, we find out how many readers had each article. This kind of feed-back is possible only in digital era, but the copy flow got more complicated: now, we print more copies in order to detect and correct mistakes, because we want to keep up the quality standards”, Dobre explains.

“There was no training. All young people in the newsroom have good command of computer. Anyway, at University I have studied programs like Netscape Composer and Page Maker, which are now obsolete and I cannot use such knowledge. I would have benefited more if the University had provided me with more information on editing for print media, instead of operating useless software”, complains Dobre. Regarding the complete journalist that works as a photographer and reporter in the same time Dobre said: “I believe in the concept of journalist being a specialist, not a one-man-show”.

⁷ Interviewed on June, 9, 2006.

News agency

- Andrei Pungovschi, Photojournalist, *Mediafax* (private news agency, part of the *Pro Group*, Romanian and foreign owners)⁸

Andrei Pungovschi, 25, works as photojournalists with *Mediafax* for almost two years. He started as freelancer, and now he is full-time employed. In his department there are four photojournalists, the average age being 26. By comparison, the competition – *Rompres Agency* (public service), has 14 photojournalists. But *Mediafax* keeps the pace, by having all production process fully digitalized.

The work-flow looks like this: pictures are taken at various locations and events; on the spot, they are downloaded on the laptop, the most appropriate are selected and sent through e-mail (mobile phone + modem) or File Transfer Protocol, to the *Mediafax* server. The editor will select again those pictures to be posted on the Agency' website, from where customers are picking them up. "All this may take no more then 10 minutes", says Pungovschi. For the archives, only the picture offered to the clients are kept. "The reason is not to overload the archive", explains Pungovschi.

"We have no time for training in-house. I would like to have such opportunities, but simply there is no time. My degree in journalism was very useful, but has nothing to do with my daily work. I would have been interested in more technical courses at the University, to learn practical things. For example, how to use Adobe Photoshop", says Pungovschi. He admits that he participated at two short-term trainings at the *Centre for Independent Journalism*, delivered by two photographers, one from *Reuters* and the other from *Agence France Press*. "I consider myself journalist first, and then photographer. My colleagues think vice-versa. But it was at the University were I learned ethics, news values and media fundamentals. And I have colleagues who are facing difficulties when asked to write a two-sentences caption for their pictures...", says Pungovschi, who also thinks that "all photojournalists should graduate a press department at University level".

⁸ Interviewed on June 9, 2006.

On-line press

- Manuela Preoteasa, General Director, *EurActiv Romania* (private, part of an European portals network)⁹

EurActiv is a network of news portals dedicated to European affairs, with the headquarter in Brussels. *EurActiv Romania* has two types of news coverage, Europe generated and Romania generated. The newsroom was computer-centred from the very beginning, May 16, 2004.

Manuela Preoteasa identifies two main features that differentiate the on-line newsroom from the print press newsroom. (1) The journalists are more editors than reporters, because they use information from different sources, most of them on-line, and they interview sources by mail and by telephone, so they go less outside the newsroom walls. (2) Outside the newsroom, they act as a total reporter, taking pictures and sound bytes for the site. All the reporters had a complete basic training in the *School of Journalism and Communication Studies, University of Bucharest*, so they can act as total reporters, if need be. The newsroom staff gets training on journalistic topics (EU issues, structural funds) or on supporting activities competencies (media management, marketing).

The journalistic staff was not trained in using the software nor the hardware (each country has different software they use in the newsroom) but in the staff there is a soft developer- web designer. He has to know how to make a news website, not a window shop website.

“We also have a very specific job, because it combines the editor’s job, of editorial conception, with the one of technical production- he is the one that writes technical specifications. We don’t have a name for the profession in our newsroom, but he writes the technical specifications. He talks with the news staff, this is why it is very well if he has a journalistic background, or at least a history of working with a news site, and asks what are the editorial necessities, how should the product look like: the dimension of the picture, the number of columns, the number of sections. But I cannot ask the programmer for one column, I have to translate the journalistic language in their language, rather technical, but without 1 and 0. This middle man knows the programmer language (sufficiently, not very in depth) to translate the editorial conception in technical specification.” In this category enters writing comments (on every article, on some of the articles), censoring or not the explicit language, coloured fonts- all to be translated in the content management software architecture. “This is a very important job, because it saves time and money. We had, in the past, a person with a large web experience that supported this function, also. But I see it as a separate function. We need a person who knows the risks, because it is very hard to repair

⁹ Interviewed on June, 2, 2006.

something. For example, in our software administration, it took us several weeks to realize that the software did not like some characters, and it would delete everything. You can see how much useless work we've done, until we have identified the characters that were the source for those errors, until they were introduced in the software, so that it recognizes them and doesn't delete them anymore."

"We also have people that work with the multimedia tools, adds Preoteasa, but here one approaches the complete journalist, because these are things the journalist does- recording, editing, encoding. You always learn something new that is new for you or new for you and new on the market, because it was just developed. Thus, it is very important to have a person that knows about different software existing, because he can spare a lot of manual work, showing you the soft that does that automatically. For example, linking former articles to new articles, on key words."

The archive is basically electronic, and the third parties are even asked to use less the fax, if they also use the e-mail. Communication is PC based, also, and the part time editorial staff works outside the newsroom and feed electronically the newsroom with materials. The contact with the part-time staff and with (mostly East-) European counterparts is done by mail and *skype* (a free voice-over-internet protocol software). "We are very mobile and it is hard to gather everyone, so most of the meeting we do on-line". Due to technology, the newsroom is in a process of transformation. The Bucharest newsroom is going to be divided in a strong nucleon of desk-based editors, that will coordinate a mobile, home or other newsroom based set of collaborators. "We have collaborators and logically, we are not going to ask them to come to the office, there is no way we are going to do that!" Preoteasa says. The newsroom is now formed of around 10 people under 30.

An Internet based media product has many advantages. "The Romanian public is inclined towards images, I think. When television stopped providing relevant information and offered tabloid information, crimes and rapes, the computer fit in perfectly. In addition, the traditional internal media products suffered a de-credibilisation process, either because a *tabloidisation* process, or because owners' interests the audience felt. The Internet information is larger and more diverse, and the user has the sensation he is building his own newspaper." One of the disadvantages is that not all the information, on the news sites, is generated by journalists, so many times there is a lot of trash.

Another advantage is that the journalistic material has a longer life on the Internet. Even for audio or video formats, the perishability is eliminated. This creates the possibility of background links in a journalistic material. On the other hand, if the journalist has a laptop and an Internet connection, the journalistic piece can be done in real time, during an event, and send on the site as soon as possible. The fourth advantage in the interactivity possibility- the journalistic materials can be the base of comments and forum discussions among users. "And there is a very beautiful part, the multimedia part, and one can get information in a video format, or in an audio format. Of course, it is not that developed yet, but it is trilling to know you can see a TV broadcast in front of the computer, whenever you like."

Among disadvantages there is the rather small population percentage that uses the Internet for information purposes or, on another level, the attention Internet based product demands from the user (unless it is used as a radio). "The information on the Internet is highly disorganized, so, if you have a niche site, which organizes information, you can transform a disadvantage in an advantage created through added value."

"I think along with a lot of European journalists, in the integration of different media channels. I don't think they will be successful alone, as traditional media. They should be combined, and the journalist should learn to do more than writing texts." Preoteasa believes that the niche and the tabloid content will still be successful, but the media products need a business plan. She predicts the usage of all new technological tools in Romania, too, among them the digital television, which enables the user to be active to the point of selecting the end of a movie, for example.

Radio

- Ionut Samoila, independent consultant, radio networks¹⁰

For the private radios, digitalisation is complete, due to operation costs that reduced significantly. Ten years ago, radios in Romania were still working with cassettes and CDs and tape recorders and Ionut Samoila witnessed the digitalisation process from within, working both as editorial and as technical staff. At the end of 1998 the computer started to be used to store advertising in private radios, but the computers were not very developed and had a maximum capacity of around 100 commercials at one time.

In 2000, next to the commercials the radio station put everything on the computer- music, sound bytes, and started to use special radio software bought from the United States of America, Italy and France. "Romania is the only country in Central and Eastern Europe, besides Russia, to have the most advanced technology for the radio industry, be it software or very large computers".

The advantages range from lower operational costs to better sound and better journalistic materials. The digital editing is much better, the radio sound more uniform, the human errors are reduced, the pauses disappeared. Furthermore, the reporting on the broadcast of the day (the log for copyright royalties purposes, for example) is done electronically; there is no need for a person to do that.

The software is used for determining content, also, for two years now. All songs can receive parameters related to target public, and the order of song entries is done automatically. For the most competitive radio stations, every song is tested with the help of an analyst, by phone, and every 3 months, with audience in a concert hall. The analyst helps the program director choose the best combination for the desired target public.

The equipment for DJs is very specialized, with a simpler keyboards and software that prompts on the screen the moment they have to speak. This very developed infrastructure has downturns, nevertheless. The DJ may not know what lies besides that simplified technology, and, if something goes wrong, he or she cannot take any measures. On the other hand, if the radio profile seems not very productive, the target public may be strategically changed, but the DJs cannot adapt that easy to changing style and informational content, explains Samoila. The radio people need both technology and content related training, the latter in order to better understand the target public, to be able to adapt to the normal strategic changes. In the future, there is a possibility that no DJ will be live anymore, and anything is recorded, predicts Samoila.

¹⁰ Interviewed on May, 30, 2006.

But almost half of the newsroom was fired, because there was no need of people guarding the equipments, and one person can do most jobs, with the help of the technology. The reduction in personnel had as cause also the very bad financial condition of the radio stations between 1999 and 2005, the year the industry finally benefit from large investments. The advertising revenues started in 2005 to look more promising for radio, as the TV is saturated with expensive commercials.

Thus, the Internet, with the hourly agency news feed, both written and audio, led to less people outside the newsroom, gathering the information. In the newsroom, one reporter can both read news live and do the job of the sound producer (from recording to editing), with the help of the computer.

In the radio networks, the local radio stations are like clones: they take everything from Bucharest (music, sound effects) and the newsroom is formed by one person that sells advertising time and makes local news. The centralized system indicated for all local stations the times to put music or advertising, and the times to leave the national program roll.

The radio journalist now had to know how to edit sound, besides editing text on computers, but there is a good offer on the human resources market of such competencies. The former DJs that lost their jobs are now producers, specialized in commercials, because they have a better ear and know better how to work with editing software, compared to the average radio people.

Other than journalists, IT managers were hired everywhere.

The radio staff gets consulting in how to use dedicated software or how to use equipment, but consultants for the content and for technical aspect can be hired, from abroad, at very high costs.

- Constantin Burloiu, Director, Technical Department, the *Romanian Radio Society* (public service)¹¹

The *Romanian Radio Society- SRR* sent the first sound signal in November 1928. Now it has 9 radio stations: *Radio Romania Actualitati*, *Radio Romania Cultural* and *Romania Muzical*, *Radio 3 NET* (that transmits exclusively on the Internet since 2004), *Radio Romania International* in Romanian (RRI 1) and *Radio Romania International* in foreign languages (RRI 2), *Radio Bucuresti* (regional) and *Romania Regional*, *Antena Satelor* (for the rural area).

¹¹ Interviewed on June 7, 2006.

The year 2000 was the year *SRR* stated being modernized with specific equipments. Thus, the territorial stations were digitalized in a proportion of 80%, along with a series of production and emission chambers in Bucharest.¹² The PC was used in *SRR* for the professional audio production only since 1995-1996, says Burloiu.

In 2004 an integrated informatics system was introduced and since July 2006 a new software developed for very large radio operations will start being used in all processes, including planning broadcast programs and daily programs, planning production costs, personnel, managing copyright royalties, on the one hand, and distributing audio files and editing files, on the other. This new program implies a change in mentalities.

Constantin Burloiu states there is a difference between digitalisation and informatisation. Digitalisation refers to changing the production, transmission and archiving support: transforming the equipment from analogical to digital. Due to the software, developed to replace and reproduce the same functions of the analogical equipment, the changes are not essential. The technical staff can perform the same operations in the same way. With digitalisation, the quality of the product is raised: it can be multiplied without increasing the noise, as it was the case with analogical multiplication.

The quality of the media product delivered to the audience depends nevertheless on the transmission and on the receiving equipment that has to be also changed to be compatible with digitalized production equipment. The analogical technology could produce results of similar sound quality, if correctly used. In the case of *SRR*, the transmission is done by a different society that owns the infrastructure, explains Burloiu, this is the *National Society of Radio-communications*.

The informatisation process brings dramatic changes, as it has new elements that change the technological chains, the rhythm and the newsroom's efficiency. The processes of informatisation and digitalisation can be done separately and the system can function as a hybrid, both analogical and digital, as it was the case of *SRR*. There are still islands of analogical equipment used. The archive, for example, is not digitalized yet.

The informatisation, as compared to digitalisation, is very hard to be assimilated, especially by a large corporation, as *SRR*, with 2700 employees that would not give away their old reflexes. "In any public radio institution the large and complex structure and the higher inertia, than in private radios, are important factors in the assimilation speed." The smaller stations of *SRR* can evolve faster, but *SRR* as a whole cannot.

The production informatisation means the raise in efficiency, because reporters must work directly in the final production. "Before the computers appeared, the technical personnel were working with the tape, the scissors and the mixer. Now, theoretically, it is not complicated for the journalistic staff to work on the PC to edit the

¹² <http://www.srr.ro/despre/istoric/>, visited June 7, 2006.

materials. But (1) because it seems very easy, the editing process is done badly, because they don't have the patience and the interest to see what is behind the technical phenomenon and (2) the journalists don't find the time to do the editing. Thus, the result is just a change in the equipment for the technical staff". In SRR, until now, the job structure was not radically modified, even if the systems exist for 10 years now and can be operated by the journalists without any help.

SRR was forced by financials, on one hand, to give up the analogical equipment, and by following the competition, on the other. The analogical studios are very expensive, because it is a niche market. "There is not an explosion of public radio stations", shows Burloiu. The tape is not produced anymore, and the islands of analogical equipment that is still used in the SRR works on the distributors' stocks. But the new technology for the audio digital broadcasting is also expensive, as it is meant to be changed every five years and the maintenance demand is constant. The digital systems are highly instable and the failures can appear anywhere. The reduction in costs can be done in the personnel departments, thinks Burloiu, if the journalists decide to get involved in producing their materials.

Since 1995 there was a systematic in house training for the technical personnel. Now, the entire technical production personnel is ready to assimilate and can use the new technology.

For the new integrated software there was a basic training with the key users from all departments, of 2 weeks spent with the software company representatives. Then, each key user sustains trainings for one week with all journalists (in turns, because it is a whole training week). For selected future users, there is another training of two weeks for producing radio material and integrating it in the database.

Burloiu thinks that, besides this software specific training, there is a need for training in:

- voice and prosody
- sound messages' usability
- digital editing.

The Technical Director of SRR identified two target groups, which have a different relation to the computer. The young have a tendency to find their way with the computer, and loose patience easily in courses. The older people, that used dedicated audio production equipment so far, have a major adaptation problem if the new applications do not reproduce the limited specific tools available before. If there are too many options, the working time is far longer than with the analogical equipment. Thus, the dedicated programs for radio professionals, even if they have simpler and fewer tools, are more expensive than the evolved, generic software. The dedicated software ensures stability and execution speed.

Television

At this very moment, Romanian media market has no less than three all-news TV stations with national coverage (*Realitatea TV, Antena 3, N24*), and 6 stations broadcasting general programming (*Pro TV, Antena 1, Prima TV, National TV, B1TV, and OTV*). The public sector includes the main state-owned channel, *TVR 1*, plus *TVR 2* and *TVR Cultural* channels. There are two channels targeting Romanians living abroad (and generally, foreign audiences): *Pro TV International* (private) and *TVR International* (part of the public broadcast system). Last, but not least, there are several niche stations, the most visible being *Acasa TV* (movies and soap operas), *The Money Channel* (financial and business information), *Favorit TV* (folkloric music), *MTV Romania*, etc.

The oldest station (apart from the public channel) is *Antena 1*, being on the market for more than 12 years now [one of the first Romanian private television, *Tele 7abc*, was closed down in 2004 by its owners, due to huge financial losses].

For the purpose of this analysis, the case of state-owned television will be addressed separately, as there are many features differing from the private sector. In order to have a broader and deeper view of the topics in discussion, the interviews included professionals from both private and public sector, and independent specialists.

All interlocutors have extensive knowledge of the market, with significant present and past working relations with almost all TV stations active on the market. Also there were interviewed not only technical specialists, but also editorial staff like senior editors, producers, and correspondents of news agencies.

Digitalisation of Romanian private television sector

When first private TV stations started to operate at national level, in spring 1994, this was done based on linear technology. *Tele 7abc* and *Antena 1* were built on Betacam and Umatic systems, and the broadcast was done based on terrestrial relays. For the first two-three years, the issue of equipment was secondary to the editorial development, an expected state of facts, if one realizes that private TV journalism was at the very beginning in Romania. Therefore, special attention was invested in having motivated and hard-working reporters, writers and anchors, while the technical staff was, generally, recruited from the public sector, using better payment as main incentive. The public channels were using same linear technology like the private station, and this ensured a smooth integration of personnel.

Starting with 1998-1999, first non-linear equipments penetrated Romanian professional market, for example digital satellite receivers and even AVID editing platforms (at the public channel). Already, the existing TV stations were broadcasting through satellite, meaning using digital uplink/downlink technology. Still, the TV production was entirely done on Betacam, Umatic and even S-VHS, including gathering footage, image editing, broadcasting and archiving. In one case (*Tele 7abc*), Umatic technology was still used at the end of the 90s, mainly due to financial problems that prevented the station to extend the use of Betacam equipment. But generally, all stations were using a hybrid system which included all three main linear systems: for example, editing suites were equipped with Betacam cassette recorders and Umatic and Betacam cassette players, in order to cover all operational needs; where S-VHS cameras were used, special copying units were established for transferring footage from S-VHS tape on Betacam, in order to be edited.

Digital cameras and non-linear image editing platforms were introduced beginning with 1999, both in private and public TV. The transition was hampered by objective and subjective factors, for example lack of financial resources and, respective, administrative and bureaucratic opposition (affecting the public broadcaster, see *infra*). For a couple of years, linear technology was paired with nonlinear one in every TV station – a situation still existing in both private and public sectors, as the interviewed specialists have indicated. Even now, there are no TV stations fully digitalized, despite the clear efforts made in the private sector (*Antena 1* and *National TV* leading in this matter; *Prima TV* recently purchased four AVID platforms; almost 80% of TV production companies are already using digital technology¹³).

All specialists interviewed declared that, generally in the private sector, digitalisation goes well, even if not very fast. But Romanian professionals started already having access to state-of-the-art non-linear technology, at same levels as their peers in Western Europe. Another argument for the success of transition is the age – most of the workers are young people, open-minded and oriented towards progress.

It is important to note that, when mentioning transition to non-linear systems, almost all sources questioned have pointed out the lower cost of this technology, in comparison with linear one. But the availability of money does not imply directly a sustainable development, in both strategy and management – as Radu Soviani¹⁴, producer for *The Money Channel*, said. “The simple fact that there are so many TV stations in Romania should be considered as a good indication that «black money» is available in large amounts. So, in many cases, investing in equipment (and, by consequence, switching to digital technology) shouldn’t be a problem. Still, the slogan of many TV managers is «the things are working just fine» and changes were implemented at a slow pace. And this is also a problem of standards, both technical and editorial”, said Soviani, giving the example of *Tele 7abc*, a station for which he worked for a couple of years, in the 90s: “In the news department, we were experiencing so many

¹³ Data compiled through interviews and informed sources from respective stations.

¹⁴ Interviewed on June 7, 2006;

technical difficulties, that the accuracy of information was the last concern we had. This was because no matter how good journalist one is, television means technology first of all”.

The lack of preoccupation for quality standards at technical level was mentioned not only by Soviani. Sorin Gasca¹⁵, Art Director associated with more than one TV production companies, considers that to be a big problem for the private TV stations. The reasons are connected with having poorly paid, less motivated and untrained personnel, including the middle-management levels. “When the standards are not upheld by the superiors, all excuses are good from failing as a professional – not being well paid, working for too many hours, not being trained sufficiently. But the very root of the problem is the recruitment system and the lack of training before and during employment.” Gasca says that, anyway, it is impossible to train yourself while working because “employees are intensively used: the staffing schemes are always barely covering the shifts, the workload is big, overtime is not paid and the pressure of production, especially in news operations, makes the quality rules less constrictive, only to have the news story «on air»”. By comparison, Gasca said, the TV/video production companies are working exclusively with professionals, as a sign that they are really basing their survival on professional performance, not on “money from the owner’s pockets”.

More details on this issue were given by Olimpiu Gheorghiu¹⁶, correspondent of *APTN* in Romania: “This situation was encouraged by the explosion of electronic media in Romania. This created a sort of «Brownian movement» on the market: each new TV station has attracted some staff from the previous one(s) and the respective staff was replaced with newcomers, 99% of cases less prepared and trained than those which departed. After 6 months or one year, this happens again, this time with the “second generation” of personnel, and other poorly trained workers are entering the profession. One shall add to this the relatively poor level of payment which, in a vicious circle, is encouraging the mediocrity and generally low professional standards”.

All interlocutors agreed that the main problem for private televisions is the fact that training of new recruits for technical departments is done only “on the job”. The professional knowledge is “stolen”, metaphorically speaking, by the newly employed technicians, because there are no other ways to acquire skills and abilities other than apprenticeship. Some TV stations are asking, when hiring people, only for basic technical knowledge, but there are plenty of cases in which simple drivers were “transformed” in cameramen, DSNG operating staff members or broadcast technicians, based on their on the job acquired skills. Practically, the commands of the editing facilities or cameras are learned automatically, without profound knowledge of technology. Everything is done based on routines established by those possessing the technical knowledge (usually, personnel with more experience, in terms of years spent on the respective job): “like monkeys, some people simply learn what button to push when this or that light goes green, and what code to dial into the machine if this or that LED is pulsing red” (Olimpiu

¹⁵ Interviewed on June, 8, 2006.

¹⁶ Interviewed on May, 28, 2006.

Gheorghiu). On the other hand, workers are not motivated, poorly paid, and heavily used, so they become tired of learning more than what they need for daily work.

The lack of knowledge affects editorial staff, too: for some of them, according to one interlocutor, “the difference between linear and digital TV, meaning BETACAM format and the DVCAM one, it is represented only by the dimensions of the cassettes!” Most of those situations are affecting small-level TV stations, but the general attitude regarding training personnel seems to be conservative and lacking a vision for the future. The respondents underlined that translation from linear to digital is only complicating the things, as the stations undergoing such evolutions did not update their approach on training human resources.

A good example is given by Nicoleta Ghighilicea¹⁷, who joined *National TV* in late 2002, as Senior Editor for the Foreign News Desk. She worked previously for several years with *Tele 7abc*, as Foreign News writer and editor. *National TV* started its operations in the summer of 2003, after extensive and expensive preparations. From the very beginning, the promotion campaign in the media has emphasized the technological level of the station, in comparison with its competitors on the television market. The technical facilities of *National TV* are entirely of digital type – meaning professional video cameras (DVcam), editing suites (using Avid nonlinear digital software), and special facilities for digital graphics and Digital Satellite News Gathering vehicles (DSNGs).

When the station started to hire personnel, both editorial and technical staff members were selected based on their competencies and experience in professional television operations. “Having in mind that most of the *National TV* equipment was something new for the Romanian market, it was impossible to find many persons having significant experience on such technology”, says Nicoleta Ghighilicea. In 2003, in order to train the cameramen and footage editors of the news department, the company that provided the equipments offered a series of trainings, using British instructors. Anyway, these trainings ended when the company has finished the job of putting in place the equipments; consequently, newly employed people, including those needed to ensure the launch of the sister-station, *N24*, did not benefited from such trainings. Few of the editorial staff received training, since this was not considered as mandatory by the managements of the News Department.

The story of *National TV* is, by all means, a good one. In most of the cases, in-house training is considered sufficient. “I’ve never heard of someone [from private stations] being sent abroad for training purposes on digital TV issues”, says Olimpiu Gheorghiu. Same answer was given by other interlocutors. Radu Soviani acknowledged that he was involved in a training abroad, but through an NGO, (the *Center for Independent Journalism*), and the training was focused on editorial issues. While working for *Tele 7abc*, in 1999-2000, Gabriela Georgescu¹⁸ have known cameramen (former drivers) who were coached on using (linear) cameras for a couple of weeks, trough a project implemented by the same *Centre for Independent Journalism*.

¹⁷ Interviewed on June, 9, 2006.

¹⁸ Intervied on June, 8, 2006.

Connected with this issue, it was revealed by interlocutors that not only a single private TV station has a specialized library, be it a technical or editorial-focused one. Also, the operating manuals are, usually, kept “confidentially”, and only some people are benefiting from it.

Generally, there are no foreign experts or specialists brought in by managers, for training/coaching activities. According to some respondents (Gheorghiu, Soviani, Gasca) such initiatives are regarded as “useless ways of spending money”. When a TV station is launched, the training courses offered by domestic or foreign companies in charge with setting-up the technical systems are, usually, considered not so important. “The future technical staff members are already hired at that moment, so if they learn the basics of operating the equipments, it is considered OK – nobody will bother to impose them to become specialists”, says Radu Soviani, mentioning his experience at *Tele 7abc* and *B1TV*.

According to Soviani, “stations managers are seeing only the present, not the future, so there is little planning, especially for training needs”. Gheorghiu added “such investments in human resources are considered risky, given the fact that a lot of workers are switching between TV stations quite often. So, employers are interested only in minimizing the costs, sometimes even by hiring people on short term contracts or with no contracts...”

Apart from the poorly addressed issue of training, the transition from linear to non-linear has brought visible improvements and great advantages.

One good example came from Nicoleta Ghighilicea, Senior Editor with the Foreign News Desk for *National TV*. Unlike the reporters and writers for Domestic News Desk, foreign news staff is not in contact, on daily basis, with the effect of digital TV technology used in the field (cameras, DSNGs, etc.). “But working with satellite footage feeds from providers like *Reuters TV* implies a lot of things being done differently, and better”, explains Ghighilicea. “For example, the scripts detailing the pictures are available on *Reuters* website, and no more received through a serial printer, like it was the custom in TV stations couple years ago. The same for the news stories we are getting from *Agence France Presse*, which are available on *AFP* website, together with graphics.” But the biggest development regards the footage received from *Reuters TV* satellite: the images are now downloaded directly into a server, from which various workstations may process the footage, saving a lot of time and allowing greater flexibility for the editorial work.

In terms of digitalisation, Gabriela Georgescu (Editor/Archive Coordinator, News Department of *N24*) thinks that archives domain benefited a lot. The process made clear to television professionals that archiving means not only to store tapes and cassettes, but also to have them always ready to use. “Without computers and electronic databases, this is impossible”, she thinks, “not to mention that editorial concepts are really enhanced by the simple idea of having such archive footage at hand”.

Gabriela Georgescu entered television in mid-nineties, at *Tele 7abc*, one of the first Romania private station. She was associated from the beginning with the Foreign News Desk, as part of a team of “versatile people” – able not only to produce news stories, but also to keep archives of information and footage and to provide other desks with access and support in using these facilities.

“At *Tele7abc*, information was stored mostly on paper. We use to have huge files with printouts of news stories and background material received from press agencies – *France Presse*, *Reuters* – or printed-out from internet. It was a nightmare to go through it!” remembers Georgescu. Same was with the logs for the archive tapes. “Even if we wanted, back then, to use computer files, the main problem would have been the hardware. We had only a few computers, old and always in need for repairs”.

Georgescu says that working for *N24* means truly working in a digitalized environment. “The advantage of using proper equipment goes in multiple directions: you have more speed, more information, and more knowledge. And you control better your tools (Internet for example) and databases”. For the Foreign News Desk, using archives of information and footage is a daily business. “There are always plenty of sources of information, but you need the information to be available and concise”, explains Georgescu. “One cannot re-learn each time the history of a conflict like the invasion of Iraq by USA; and it is mandatory to know permanently what you or your colleagues have said in a news piece broadcasted yesterday and day before yesterday... Having records available and easy-to-access in digital format ensures maintaining the coherence of the coverage”.

Georgescu stressed that besides controlling the information, managing the video archive records it’s a vital part of the job. “Our desk is not having a designated person in charge with the video archive. We are working in shifts, and everybody is contributing in storing properly on tapes the most important images, and in recording their location in a specific digital text file. The file is stored on multiple PCs, as back-up, and also printed on paper.” The video archive of day-by-day news is not the only one used by Georgescu. *Reuters TV*, the footage provider of *National TV*, has made available for the News Desk an archive on tapes, with special searching software, covering practically all significant events of the 20th century. “This kind of database with famous pictures from all over the world is of tremendous importance”, says Georgescu. “And this is a result of digitalisation, because otherwise, without the indexing software, would be impossible to benefit from such tool”.

All respondents agreed that Internet is also getting more and more importance in the day-by-day work, especially for documenting stories and gathering background information. Accessing Internet is, both a problem of hardware and of training: one needs state-of-the-art computers with high data-processing speed and complex software, but this requires people able to use it properly and efficiently.

The introduction of digital technologies has influenced neither the speed of production, nor the quality of news – this is the conclusion expressed by most of respondents. The speed increased due to the big number of competitors, everybody trying to be the first, was said. It is not clear if the future fully digitalized TV stations (*Antena 1*, most probably) will benefit from speed increase based on non-linear technology.

Regarding the content and package of the news, there are no great influences, also. For example, in the news stories, special effects are seldom (because there is no time to use them) and a lot of graphic packages are still clumsy built. The reason may be poor training and/or lack of imagination and talent. “Machines are machines, and penetration of digital technology means nothing without human performance”, says Sorin Gasca. Olimpiu Gheorghiu agrees: “I’ve seen great things done on linear platforms, and stupid things on non-linear. Everything depends on people”.

Radu Soviani thinks this is another side-effect of lack of training: “The image editors who are trained «on the job» will always know only what they were coached by their peers, so their imagination will be blocked by lack of deep understanding of opportunities offered by the very equipment they are working with”. Sorin Gasca believes the same, namely that “apprenticeship works for carpenters, but not for image editors” and says that a young trainee needs at least one year to learn the tricks of the trade of image editing.

According to most of the interlocutors, digitalisation did not brought more respect and consideration for the technical professionals, from the part of external public (including managers and editorial staff). Some people think this is connected with the low standards used for recruitment (Gasca, Soviani, Gheorghiu): practically, anybody who passes the basic test of operating editing platforms will be hired, if the station need to cover a position in the staffing scheme – no matter if the person maybe did not even graduate the high school.

As regarding the staffing scheme, digitalisation has not changed much. According to our respondents, some positions (like sound technician, associated with a camera crew) became obsolete but were not deleted from the list. Other positions required more qualified personnel, especially in the area of maintenance desks/departments, and were upgraded accordingly; seldom, such departments were decreased as staff, because digital equipment is usually serviced by the production companies, therefore defective machines are simply shipped to the respective company for repairs.

Despite being relatively optimistic for the future, the professionals interviewed expressed unhappiness with the current status of the transition, especially the issue of training.

“Apart from in-house training, there are only few possibilities, meaning academic courses and/or vocational courses, offered by specialized companies or training institutions. But at the University, such knowledge is not made fully available”, says Sorin Gasca. Reforming the curricula will take years and will involve expenses, on buying equipment, software etc., which universities may not be able to support. “On the other hand”, says

Gabriela Georgescu, “with so many new people, there are fewer possibilities to train personnel, in-house, at professional level. It is impossible to coach everybody in-house, especially when the work speed is so high”, she concluded.

Nicoleta Ghighilicea also thinks that digitalisation has increased the general need for specialized training on technical issues of digital TV production for the writers and reporters.

“I was told by colleagues that in 2002, the initial concept of the *National TV* was to hire reporters and writers competent enough in operating computers in order to be trained in professional video editing... I guess this idea proved to be too revolutionary for its time”, said Ghighilicea. Anyway, she thinks that in nowadays television, digitalisation it’s a must, and this means training staff accordingly, be it editors, reporters, writers or technical staff. “There are so many young people entering the business and not having opportunities for training, that this is delaying their professional development. <<One the job training>> cannot be a long-term solution. Generally speaking, we all need professional training, to perform adequately.”

Digitalisation of Romanian public broadcasting system

The story of Romanian public TV broadcasting system, after 1990, is by all means a special one. There are many factors imposing a strong difference between state-owned channels and the private TV operations, including the social role and perception, dimensions (as logistics and staff) and working legislation-connected issues.

Information connected with how digitalisation process is evolving in the public TV channels (identified here simply as *TVR*, *Televiziunea Romana*) was obtained from all those interviewees who had in the recent past or still have working relations with the broadcaster.

The answers collected from interviewees, about *TVR*, are generally supporting the image of a media colossus, with specific rules regulating its activity. Therefore, many features of, for example, recruiting process, or of production process, are significantly different from the ones of private TV stations.

According to interviewees, the coming of digitalisation created unhappiness and even panic among technical staff of *TVR*. “In 1998-99, when non-linear equipments started to arrive, some people thought that they will loose their jobs”, remembers Sorin Gasca (back then, video editor at *TVR*). Finally, some people left, not being able to adapt themselves, but this was the case of mostly young persons; the aged technicians were kept, as a social protection measure. Radu Toader, Coordinator of Field Cameramen for *TVR*, thinks that transition to digital was “expected with interest by most of the people”.

Currently, *TVR* uses both Betacam and DVcam, a complete transition to the non-linear system being scheduled for 2007. Radu Toader is convinced that switching to digital equipment represents normal evolution, for being

able to compete on the European market. According to him, most of the non-linear cameras and editing equipment were already purchased by the broadcaster. “We prepare for joining European Union, so the Romanian public broadcaster must be up to standards, if we want our production to have a chance on the market”, said Toader. “For example, the stereo sound will be the norm”, explained Toader.

The presence of old equipment induced a sort of working division inside TVR: the old technicians are working on linear technology (Betacam) until the moment of retirement. On the other hand, the recruitment process involves testing ones abilities on both systems, linear and non-linear; for the first period after being hired, new technicians (e.g. video editors) are working on linear systems. This situation is reflected in the payment system: those who have the command and work on both linear and non-linear systems are better paid, and the less money will get those able only to operate the linear technology. Some bonuses are offered to outstanding performances, but salaries are limited to certain maximum and minimum levels, for each position in the staffing scheme.

When is about hiring new technical personnel, *TVR* has strict rules of competency, which are mainly determined by the working legislation. Therefore, there are no situations of professional trajectories starting with somebody entering *TVR* as driver and finishing as cameraman. There are professional qualification requirements and job descriptions established for each position in the staffing scheme, and there is a practical exam every candidate is passing through. Same system is used for advancing in career, for example from cameraman to director.

Still, this brings no guarantees that new employed technicians are able not only to work, but to perform and to bring added value to technology. According to Sorin Gasca, despite the practical exam they go through, newly recruited people need up to one year to adapt to the working environment (including digital technology). From this perspective, the most advantaged are the young adults (under 30 years old), who are getting integrated faster.

TVR seems to be much more careful in keeping its broadcast in line with high technical standards. Mistakes and errors are not overlooked, and may bring penalties. In some cases, technicians may be shifted from a position to another one, less exposed. Anyway, the legal system, very complex (not to mention the existence of a powerful union) make relatively difficult to discharge less competent people. On the other hand, *TVR* was for years a source of trained technicians for private TV stations; the main reasons for leaving were the bigger salaries promised by private stations and, to a lesser extent, the opportunity to work on ambitious editorial projects. It is clear that the phenomenon of “human resources hemorrhage” is diminished now, but in the past, “it was regarded as unavoidable and few things were done to stop it”, says Sorin Gasca.

Another topic addressed by *TVR* with considerable more attention than private sector is the issue of training staff.

First, there is a system of training inside *TVR*; courses provided are ranging from operating PCs to more specialized, like sound and image processing, illumination for TV, etc. For example, Sorin Gasca did

acknowledged that in four years of working for *TVR* he was recipient of one specialized training on AVID platform operations, in 2000; the training was for three days, four hours per day, and it was delivered by a trainer from outside *TVR*; in exchange, Gasca was asked to sign a contract obliging himself to continue working for *TVR* for another year, or to reimburse the cost of the course if he leaves the institution (the money to be paid in such eventuality were around 5 monthly salaries, or 1,000 US dollars).

Second, *TVR* is sending people abroad for specialized training, to companies in Switzerland, through the network established by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). Such trainings are, in theory, for the benefit of the station, since the incumbents are supposed to act as trainers for their colleagues; however, this intention is seldom taking shape of vocational, in-house trainings. Anyway, *TVR* do protect its investment through contracts, forcing the incumbents of such training programs not to resign for 3 to 5 years.

Other interviewee, Daniela Zeca-Buzura¹⁹, thinks that such trainings should be longer and more consistent, in order to address appropriately the process of digitalisation. “A journalists of *TVR* needs to have the best possible relations with the computer, and to know how to operate video editing software. The pressure is big, because the producers are forced, by the nature of things, to know how to edit the productions. From outside, this looks unfair, because the journalist is already under editorial pressure. It is not clear how this issue will evolve, but some times the journalist fails under pressure, simply trying to perform two jobs”. Zeca-Buzura believes that the pressure of the so-called “complete journalist” is fuelled by the private TV stations’ policies, which encourage the principle of «those who adapt will survive». But the public service cannot work like this, because this pseudo-complete journalist is not ensuring the quality standards people expect from *TVR*”.

Inside *TVR* the university studies are highly regarded. Daniela Zeca-Buzura is a PhD and holds also a Lecturer position with the Press Department of Bucharest University. According to Radu Toader, great majority of his subordinates are either having university diplomas in TV and cinematography, either are expected to graduate soon. “We have supported our people to follow university courses, even by establishing special shifts so the students would be able to attend classes and to work, to pay the taxes”, said Toader. “One needs theory, not only practice, in order to become a complete professional and to be able to use the equipment with competence. Even the students in journalism should have a minimum knowledge about TV technology, to master the professional jargon used by the technicians”.

Still, on the job training is very important. “I was an apprentice, too, at the beginning. Everybody learns from somebody, otherwise one cannot reach performance”, says Radu Toader.

¹⁹ Interviewed on May, 31, 2006.

The access to relevant technical information is another issue. In *TVR* there is a library with technical guides and manuals, but it is used seldom, and the librarians or managers are not having a coherent strategy to improve this situation and to encourage their staff to use this opportunity.

From the perspective of archive record, *TVR* has a hybrid system. TV programming and content is stored on VHS and Betacam tapes, miniDV cassettes, DVDs and on dedicated server (for the News Department).

Last but not least, the discussion with Radu Toader revealed a sort of nostalgia in regarding the future abandon of Betacam format. This feeling is expressed mostly through operational arguments. “Digital cameras are more complicate and sometimes they do what they want, not what you want them to do”, says Toader.

Daniela Zeca-Buzura believes that the changes brought by evolving technology, including digitalisation, have a certain emotional and psychological impact on media professionals over 40 years old. “This generation is composed by many graduates of philology, philosophy, history departments, and generally resent technology. This is a supplementary impact, as they were already forced to adapt to the media profession, later in their lives”, says Zeca-Buzura. “They are many senior journalists who have not adapted to the use of digital cameras with mobile hard-disks, which are common now for news production in public television”, adds Zeca-Buzura. “Best people are, from this perspective, those between 25 and 30 years old”.

Regarding the involvement of universities departments of journalism in training media professionals, Zeca-Buzura thinks that such courses should be established in a partnership with media institutions, in a way to provide comfort and training to aged journalists and technicians. “It is necessary to organize classes based on age criteria, because I was told by many colleagues things like «I’m not going there together with a bunch of youngsters, age of 20, who will laugh on me». This trauma should be avoided, and it is easy to be avoided”.

Zeca-Buzura is convinced that television professionals are more flexible than other media workers, when is about adapting to new environments, be it editorial or technological ones. “One acquires skills during years of work, and those abilities are enhanced by technology. But we are sometimes confronted with cases of using technology in abusive way such are the costly live transmissions from low-profile events”.

Convergent media group

- Toti Marinescu, Executive Director, *InfoPro*, *Compania de Radio Pro* (part of *Media Pro* trust, private, AV, print, on-line- “a trans-media brand”)²⁰

Mediafax, one of the two most important news agencies in Romania, is part of a group integrated both horizontally and vertically. Thus, vertically, the group has both text producers (*Mediafax*, a recording studio and a film studio, for example) and text distributors. Horizontally the group has several TV stations, radio stations, publications and Internet sites, both local and national. In an effort to rationalize the production of news, the local correspondents of the group prepare a package of the same news to be used in as many as possible group products- a sound version for the radio stations, a video version for TV stations and a written version for *Mediafax*.

Toti Marinescu, one of the executive directors in the group, explains: “We do a sort of radio with TV nuances, to put it this way. Style, searching subject, sound illustration, and especially live transmissions. We’ve trained our people to be capable to speak freely, with no text, for any type of event they go to. So, the moment they go to an event, they stay, they look at, and they can go live directly. We look for colourful inserts and avoid static information. After the live transmission, the journalist comes in the newsroom and writes it in radio module, and eventually sends it also for *Mediafax* news agency, if the agency was not at the event. The journalist is practically an universal soldier of the news. He comes and edits alone or in team, if he has a camera or a camera man with him (we tried to buy some video cameras, but we have not reached the point the journalist can film and transmit live information in the same time). Then he edits the video news, down in the TV room, makes it in a radio format and, eventually, gives it to the agency. The whole process takes a maximum of three-four hours.”

The group provided intensive training for the local correspondents, so that they can perform this complex task. This is the highest degree of integration in a newsroom in Romania, as far as the authors of this paper know. The other leading press agency, *Rompres* (state financed) started in 2005 to train the local correspondents in taking pictures, and in 2006 the agency website acquired a sound section.

²⁰ Interviewed on Sept., 29, 2005.

Media industry providers

- Silviu Sirbu, Chief Technology Officer, *Softure* (soft developing company)²¹

Softure sells software for media sites to be used in content management (content management systems- CMS) and advertising management (Ad Server), both in Romania and abroad. The CMS manages the newsroom process, from creation to site publishing. The Ad Server is a system that manages the advertisements viewed by Internet users, based on demographic data, dimension of target group (reach) and viewing frequencies required by the advertiser. *Softure* had the first banner ad served in 2001, and now they serve over 1 billion ads every month, in Europe, Asia and America.

The human and financial investment in a site depends on what the owner wants to do with it, explains Sirbu. Anyone can do small sites. The medium sites are done by those who want to have a media product sustained on the Internet (like a newspaper with a site- copy of that newspaper). For medium sites, the owners can use generic software, that has to be installed and for which the future users need training.

The more complex sites are done by those companies that know exactly what they want from this investment. The software and hardware solutions have to face millions of pages and millions of users in the same time. *Gazeta Sporturilor*- a daily specialized in sports, *Publimedia*, group that delivers printed and Internet media products, linked to *Media Pro*, and *Realitatea TV*, news based television, are the examples presented by Silviu Sirbu. These Internet sites have own business plans and own staff devoted to them.

The software solutions are of two types- the licensed type (that is bought) and the hosted type, that is installed somewhere else, and the user pays a tax to use it. Thus, there is a group of companies that work together for a large site:

- the editor (the media company)
- the technology provider
- the Internet service provider
- the advertising broker (that uses the Ad Server).

Besides new business types, there are new jobs inside a newsroom- the DTP person is now web-designer and on-line editor. The workflow for *Softure* is the following: design of the future web pages (on paper), translation to

²¹ Interviewed on May, 30, 2006.

html (displays data), translation to XML: EXtensible Markup Language (structures, stores and sends data) and XSL: Extensible Stylesheet Language (arranges data).

The newsroom has adapting problems to the Internet specificity, says Sirbu, to on-line storytelling and to on-line pagination that should enable more banners to appear, without tiring the user (new and exciting information must be turned by every click) or sending him or her away, through outside links. The adaptation includes:

- understanding the Internet specificity
- understanding the need to work in real time, and to make effective use of technology
- using mobile technology.

General training should be done on content generation for Internet, believes Sirbu, not on using specific software. "It is better not to be trained in using software until one use it effectively... General training on one software solution is indoctrination".

Silviu Sirbu considers that having an Internet site was, in the last 4 years, very trendy for Romanian media, but very few manage to cover the expenses they have with these sites. In the future, they may start bringing profits to the media companies with the best business plans.

Bibliography

Coman, Mihai, 2003, *Mass media in Romania post-comunista*, Polirom, Iasi.

Gross, Peter, 2004, *Mass media si democratia in tarile Europei de Est*, Polirom, Iasi.

Mello, Robin, 2002, "Collocation analysis: a method for conceptualizing and understanding narrative data", *Qualitative Research*, vol. 2(2), pp. 231-243.

Annex 1. List of interviewed media representatives

Print

Val Vilcu, Senior Editor, *Adevarul*, SC ADEVARUL SA

Alina Miron, Editor-in-chief, *Familia mea*, *Lucru de mana*, *Edipresse AS Romania*

Florin Dobre, Reporter, *Cotidianul*, *Catavencu Media Group*

News agency

Andrei Pungovschi, Photojournalist, *Mediafax* (Romanian private news agency)

On-line

Manuela Preoteasa, General Director, *EurActiv Romania*

Radio

Ionut Samoila, independent consultant, radio networks

Constantin Burloiu, Technical Director, *Romanian Radio Society* (public broadcaster)

Television

Radu Toader, Field Cameramen Coordinator, *Romanian Public Television* (TVR)

Daniela Zeca-Buzura, Manager, Romanian Public Television, *TVR Cultural Channel*

Nicoleta Ghighilicea, Senior Editor, Foreign News Department, *National TV*

Olimpiu Gheorghiu, Correspondent, *Associated Press Television News- APTN*

Gabriela Georgescu, Editor/Archive Coordinator, News Department, *N24*

Sorin Gasca, Independent Art Director

Radu Soviani, Producer, *The Money Channel*

Convergent media group

Toti Marinescu, Executive Director, *InfoPro*, *Compania de Radio Pro* (part of *Media Pro* trust)

Media industry providers

Silviu Sirbu, Chief Technology Officer, *Softure* (software developing company)