Chapter XIV

Electronic Journalism in Peru

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ABSTRACT

This chapter introduces electronic journalism as a new trend in the news services that have recently been boosted by Internet diffusion. It makes a presentation of electronic media pioneers in the world and the challenges they faced to deliver news to their traditional and Internet-based customers. Mainly, the chapter focuses on the description of the beginnings, evolution, strategies, and current state of Peruvian information media, focusing on Web-based journalism. Finally, the authors offer some conclusions about the approaches to develop Web news services adopted by traditional and virtual media, and suggest the need for future research in different countries in order to compare results and define the media trends in the Internet era.
BACKGROUND

Online journalism dates back to the end of the '70s when Knight-Ridder launched an initiative to develop a videotext service called Viewtron, which it later dropped in 1986 after realizing losses of US$50 million. Still, Knight-Ridder’s interest in online information services remained unwavering and, in 1988, it made a decision to buy Dialog Information Services, Inc., a leader in information retrieval. Only a year later, the first signs of success already appeared (Díaz & Meso, 1998).

By the end of the '80s, Gannet — USA Today’s publisher — launched a daily summary comprising 18 news pieces in text format it called USA Today Decisionline. Almost simultaneously, Dow Jones published The Wall Street Journal and Barron’s on Prodigy, or directly on the Internet, with interactive multimedia features (Díaz & Meso, 1998).


Although each type of medium — whether print, radio or television — publishes information in a different way responding to its specific characteristics and peculiarities, its respective approach, and the specific type of message receiver, (Romero, 2000), each one’s Internet versions all seek new schemes to refresh the contents and reach audiences with new formats. Now, Internet-enabled readers can read newspapers, listen to the radio, and watch TV from anywhere in the world (McClung, 2001).

After defining journalism as the job of compiling and disseminating information (Gargurevich, 1999), electronic journalism stands out for four features: it uses multimedia resources (text, image, audio, databases, and executable programs), it breaks down the sequence of information because it uses hypertext and hypermedia, it breaks down periodicity because it allows access to information at any time without need to wait until the next edition, and it is interactive, allowing users to access information of their interest (Díaz & Meso, 1998). Thus, electronic journalism uses every Internet resource to disseminate information and taps into this medium’s unlimited capacity to hold contents and to provide ongoing updates. Moreover, the Internet is the first truly global-reach channel making it possible to
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