

Memory and forgetfulness in journalism

From paper to digital dematerialization¹

Memória e esquecimento no jornalismo

From paper to digital dematerialization

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Introduction

Front pages of printed newspapers inspired home pages, their digital equivalents in network journalism (HEINRICH, 2011). In the 1990s, during the early days of the commercial Internet, Mc Adams (1995) noted that news media transposed to their websites the same concept adopted by printed newspapers. The main page, or home page, should present the most important news pieces highlights. Headlines and subheads on those pages are still written according to the same principles as those of printed newspapers; that is, in accordance with the newsworthiness criteria established in the professional culture of journalists.

However, despite such continuity, there are also discontinuities (FOUCAULT, 2015). Among them is the ephemerality of home pages. Since the publication flow is continuous, several front pages or recombinations of them are edited non-stop. Home pages refresh interval reveal a rupture from the 24-hour cycle of the printed newspaper. As an example, in 2011, *O Globo's* online front page was updated every 10 minutes while *Extra's* was updated every 12 minutes (BARSOTTI, 2014).

In fact, the construction process of the online front page is actually its own deconstruction. Successive updates decree the ephemerality of news pieces considered as the most important of the day (or the moment) just a couple of minutes earlier. In addition, its construction does not start from a blank page, as in printed newspapers. It is always made and remade from the rubble of

¹ This article presents the partial results of research conducted during the author's doctorate.

previous front pages, since a home page is never updated as a whole at once. To what extent does this acceleration of productive routines contribute to the forgetfulness of the home page? After all, there is no “the” online front page of the day, but several of them.

New reading habits have also contributed to the forgetfulness of home pages. The expansion of smartphones, as well as social networking sites and news consumption through search engines have given rise to a phenomenon called “distributed content”.² Links have become more important and independent than websites home pages and users access them according to the interest and sense of urgency they produce, be it through search engines, news aggregators, social networks or mobile notifications. Google and Facebook account for 38% and 43% of the access to the world’s 400 largest news websites respectively.³

Meanwhile, printed newspaper front pages, which inspired home pages, are now far from reverberating like the voices of paperboys who announced their headlines in the past. In the last 15 years, daily newspapers penetration among the Brazilian population dropped from 53%, in the year 2000, to as little as 17% in 2015.⁴ However, through them, journalism has contributed (and remains doing so) to the formation of collective memory (ZELIZER, 1992).

Considering the trajectory of front pages – from the paperboys’ shouts of the past to the silence of online home pages of today –, what kind of connection can be established between the dematerialization of journalism media and the forgetfulness of home pages? On the other hand, to what extent can printed newspapers front pages be more memorable because of the paper they are printed on? The aim of this article is to analyze the articulation between memory and forgetfulness, triggered by the act of reading front pages, both printed and digital, and their consequences for journalism. To achieve these goals, a combination of methods was used: bibliographical review and in-depth interviews with 10 journalists who were or currently are editors of front pages and home pages of major newspapers (WOLF, 2009) in Brazil.

² The term appears in the Digital News Report 2016, a study conducted by Reuters Institute. Retrieved November 20, 2016, from: <<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Digital-News-Report-2016.pdf>>

³ Retrieved November 20, 2016, from: <<http://fortune.com/2015/08/18/Facebook-Google/>>

⁴ These are data from Ipsos Estudos Marplan, which can be found on the National Association of Newspapers website: <<http://www.anj.org.br/penetracao-dos-jornais-diarios-2/>> Retrieved February 2, 2017.

From the symbolic value of durable media to the “economy of the ephemeral”

Nowadays, as new reading habits are adopted, the front page – both printed and online – suffers from the effects of its ephemerality and forgetfulness. However, one distinctive feature must be highlighted between printed and online front pages: the medium in which they are transmitted and how it influences communication practices. Without disregarding that media convergence is a process of cultural transformation – and not only technological (JENKINS, 2009) – it is impossible not to notice the influence of materiality as a propelling agent of ephemerality and forgetfulness of the online front page, as well as the perennality of the printed front page, depending on the media in which they are transmitted.

Innis (2011), McLuhan (2011), Chartier (1998), Debray (1993), and Mouillaud (1997), among others, claim that the materiality of the media can affect the transmission of the message. According to Innis (2011), each civilization, besides having its dominant form of communication, also has a bias toward time or space. For him, societies with a bias toward time were those dependent on “durable media” such as stone, clay and parchment. They went into decay before those who adopted “lighter and easier to transport” media, such as papyrus and paper, with a bias toward space.

Influenced by Innis, McLuhan (2011) focused on how the media influence thoughts and actions. This theorist understands that the media– or technologies – expand existence, capacities and the human body. His most famous aphorism – “the medium is the message” – suggests that the technologies we use play a fundamental role in our way of communicating, thinking, feeling and using our senses.

McLuhan pointed out that each medium became the very content of that which came to replace it: the manuscript became the content of print; photography and the novel became the content of film; film became the content of TV. That is, a medium was incorporated or represented in the newer one. This remediation process was recently explored by Bolter and Grusin (2000), who analyzed the different degrees in which digital media remediated the previous ones. Manovich (2003) points out that the new media feed on the old ones, thus becoming meta-media.

Chartier (1998) also emphasizes the influence of the medium in the understanding of meanings. He notes that a Balzac novel may be seen differently if it is published in a feuilleton, a book or included in a volume of complete works (1998, p.138). Reflecting on form and content, Mouillaud observes that “at first sight, the packaging and the object can be separated without the

object losing its identity; however, a perfume remains a perfume without its bottle? The material limit is evident, but what about the symbolic limit?”, he questions (1997, p.29). He sees the newspaper as a “socio-symbolic operator”, which produces meaning on a daily basis through the constitution of “a whole whose parts are coordinated” (1997, p.50-51).

For Debray (1993), culture has always been intrinsically conditioned by its materiality. He recalls that in Ancient Egypt the symbolic value of a text was associated with the rarity of the medium. Leather (from parchments), – more expensive than papyrus, which in turn cost more than stone or clay, – was the medium by which the most sacred messages were spread (1993, p. 208). He points out that, at the beginning, paper was not considered reliable, so much so that universities remained using leather diplomas in their graduation ceremonies. Later on, pocket books sparked indignation in literary circles for they were seen as a desecration of the conventional book medium. Therefore, Debray concludes, one should not underestimate the symbolic value of media.

In the media transformation process, Debray notices a path from the more rigid and heavy to the lighter and more flexible as we reached the era of electronics, when we can see a transition from miniaturization to dematerialization. Debray points out that the adoption of lighter and more flexible formats has walked hand in hand with the multiplication of copies, due to the reduction in media costs. The more media exist and the cheaper their reproduction costs, the greater the abundance of content to be expressed. After all, there would be no way “to express oneself diffusely or to digress with an iron chisel and a marble column” (1993, p.210).

In the theorist’s opinion, the availability of the media in each media environment gives rise to an “economy of the monumental and the ephemeral”. In other words, the media environment determines what is memorable and what is disposable (1993, p. 210). Thus, the more disposable the media, the more ephemeral the messages. From that perspective, the media lost their “aura” (1993, p. 225), as they ceased to relate to saving, and became associated with abundance and fragility, with an ever shorter life cycle.

From built to reflected memory

Mayer-Schönberger (2009) argues that, since the early days of our society, forgetting was the norm and remembering was the exception. Due to digital technology, however, society’s ability to forget has been suspended. The theorist notes that digitalization, cheap storage, and

easy retrieval have made the act of forgetting more expensive than remembering. In the analogue age, remembering was costly and time-consuming. One should choose carefully what to print due to paper and printing costs. Today, why should we take the time to delete some photos in a digital archive when we can keep them all at a minimal cost? (2009, p.47).

The problem, according to Mayer-Schönberger, is that digital memory affects our reasoning ability. He points out that the act of remembering implies experiences and ideas that re-emerge in our minds, influenced by context and our experiences (2009, p.27). Therefore, our memory is ever changing. Collective memory builds individual ones in a dynamic process (HALBWACHS, 2006). Digital memory, in contrast, is unique: it is as if we all had a single common denominator. The past is no longer built, but reflected (2009, p.19).

Even with Gutenberg's invention, when our external memory entered the era of mass production, remembering was still more expensive than forgetting. Books were still restricted to an elite (MAYER- SCHÖNBERGER, 2009, p.39). With the advent of the press, this scenario started to change. By reading newspapers, shared social memory emerged as the publications help us build memory of events we did not witness (ZELIZER, 1992). The same happened later with the radio and TV.

The relationship between journalism and memory has been studied by several authors. Erll (2011) argues that cultural memory is unimaginable without the media. Zelizer (1992) states that the narrative of the past is crossed by what the media chose to remember:

The story of America's past [or any other country's past] will remain in part a story of what the media have chosen to remember, a story of how the media's memories have in turn become America's [or any other country's] own. And if not the authority of journalists, then certainly the authority of other communities, individuals, and institutions will make their own claims to the tale. It is from just such competition that history [and one can add, culture and memory] is made (1992, p.214).

Olick (2014) asserts journalism's central role in the construction of social memory. He argues that "journalism enters into the flow of events and shapes them" and that "we remember journalistic images and events, and these are major features of public memory" (2014, p.28-29). Schudson (2010) states that the role of journalism in building memory goes beyond notorious events. He argues that journalism is both a vehicle and an agent of social memory by revealing, above all, how people behave in their daily lives. Ribeiro (2000) also noted that the journalistic discourse produces an idea of history that articulates on two temporal levels. Beyond that which relates man to his past, there is that which connects him to his everyday life:

The idea of history resulting from the first level is defined, in common sense, by the coincidence that individuals have of the social process in which they are inserted. It is the so-called lived history, recorded daily in newspapers (RIBEIRO, 2000, p.36).

In addition to the risks of digital media for the formation of collective memory pointed out by Mayer-Schönberger, Edy (2014) notes that the contemporary scenario of journalism, with the proliferation of media channels, may influence the mechanisms by which society remembers (2014, p.66). In the post-broadcast world, as he refers to the current context, the idea of a dominant or mainstream memory begins to sound problematic as the media becomes fragmented (2014, p.70).

“Pages for History”

Front page headlines used to be shouted out by paperboys on the streets, but their shouts were not ephemeral like various news of the day destined to be forgotten in the face of the incessant flow of events that follow day after day on the newspapers covers. Their echoes are preserved and contribute to building social memory. Front pages are displayed as historical documents in films, books and exhibitions. And, until today, despite the drop in circulation and audience of printed papers, they are remembered on social networks, either reproduced by media channels themselves or shared by users. In a remediation process (BOLTER; GRUSIN, 2000), they become meta-media (MANOVICH, 2003).

There are even Twitter accounts created by newspapers exclusively to publish their historical pages, such as @OnThisDayNYT, by *The New York Times*, and @EstadaoAcervo, by *O Estado de S. Paulo*. Journalist Alberto Dines believes that front pages are composed of “intermittent and frayed fragments” that “become history”:

In the headlines and highlights, in this system of hierarchizing and relating the new to what is known, the art and science of journalism are summarized. Despite so much care, once the validity and vibration of the edition is gone, it becomes expendable and disposable. After some time, the miracle: the phoenix is reborn, those intermittent and frayed fragments add up and become History (DINES, 1997, p. 6).

In a text published in the book *Front page: 95 years of history on the most important front pages of Folha*, Frias Filho also emphasized the role of such “intermittent fragments” pointed out by Dines. In the journalist’s opinion, what he calls “trivialities” printed on the front pages build “the subcutaneous tissue of history”. “It is natural that the utilitarian, pragmatic and therefore ephemeral reading elements appear on the front page, addressed after all to the next day reader, not to the

researcher of the future”, he says (2016, p.7). The journalist’s statement is supported by Ribeiro (2000), who pointed out how the past and everyday life are articulated in newspapers.

Journalist Janio de Freitas, columnist for *Folha de S.Paulo* and former editor of *Jornal do Brasil*, *Correio da Manhã*, and *Última Hora*, also highlighted the significant role of the front pages in registering everyday events “for the benefit and also detriment of historians”. For him, they are a fundamental source for understanding, above all, “the circumstantial environment”. But there are risks, he warns:

Anyone who looks at an old newspaper today immediately imagines that those were the subjects of the moment, which is not necessarily true. Newsroom journalists have always served their employers’ political interests. Front pages reflected the politics of their companies, omitting certain things, highlighting others that were not so prominent.⁵

In the journalist’s opinion, a critical reading of what is printed on the front pages is necessary to understand the power relations behind them. Despite that, the journalist believes that newspapers and front pages also play a fundamental role in the construction of archives of memorable events, as pointed out by Zelizer (1992). He notes, however, that journalists “don’t think about it when they are working on the newspaper”. Therefore, memory and forgetfulness, in his opinion, are intrinsically articulated in the productive routines that result in front pages.

Ricardo Noblat, former editor of *Correio Braziliense* between 1994 and 2002, also shared the belief that when editing front pages, journalists are not yet aware of what will remain as a narrative of memory building. Noblat even advocated that editors should not have this concern when selecting and ranking the news, as they should not be commitment to history, but to journalism. “Historical document will be what I have offered. If I do a lot of good things readers will have me as a reference,” he argues.⁶

To be the “eyewitness of history” was a catchphrase perpetuated by Reporter Esso which, as noted by Ricardo Boechat, is linked to “the journalist’s mystique” and to the self-referential discourse according to which journalism endorses history by witnessing it.⁷ Being in charge of the front page of *Jornal do Brasil* in 1987 and 2001, he pointed out that in 45 years of journalism, he had never witnessed “anything”. For Boechat, the role of a journalist is not to witness history, but to report it

⁵ Personal communication on July 5 at the author’s home, complemented by personal communication over phone on September 29.

⁶ Personal communication on July 29, 2016, at the interviewee’s home in Ipanema, Rio de Janeiro.

⁷ Reporter Esso was a newscast that debuted on National Radio in 1941, sponsored by Esso do Brasil, and was broadcast until 1968. The newscast also migrated to Tupi TV from 1952, remaining to be broadcast until 1970. Retrieved November 5, 2016, from: <<http://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/em-destaque/testemunha-ocular-da-historia-reporter-esso-fez-sucesso-no-radio-na-tv-19930939>>.

and format it according to the accounts of those who witnessed the events that will be turned into news:

The real witnesses, the citizens, witnessed the facts and told us, right? And what did we do? We formatted, narrated, edited, illustrated and, above all, disseminated them, we gave mass scale to the narrative of facts that we had not witnessed, but that had been told to us.⁸

Apparently, the lines of Jânio, Noblat and Boechat place the role of the front pages in the formation of the collective memory in the background. However, they are in line with reflections made by Zelizer (1992), Schudson (2010) and Ribeiro (2000) on the role of journalism in the formation of memory, providing a common denominator for events that we do not even witness and serving as a vehicle and agent of memory. The use of the terms “format”, “record” and “offer historical documents” by professionals is also symptomatic and reinforces the importance of what is registered and kept for posterity on printed front pages.

Journalist Aluizio Maranhão, — author of a book on *O Globo* cover collection in celebration of the newspaper’s 80th anniversary, who was also editor of the opinion pieces section and director of *O Estado de S.Paulo*’s newsroom between 1992 and 1998, — unlike his peers Noblat, Jânio and Boechat, stated that it should be the editor’s concern to produce front pages that contribute to the memorial narrative. For him, the editor should use “emotion” when designing the newspaper front page, but “without neglecting the future implications of the fact”.

In the edition of the book, it is clear that he guided himself by the main historical facts of the period of the collection to choose from them the most “memorable” front pages, including the Wall Street Crash of 1929, the suicide of Vargas, the beginning and end of World War II, the resignation of Jânio Quadros, the assassination of Kennedy, the overthrow of João Goulart, the AI-5, men first landing on the moon, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, among others. But there are also front pages about carnival, the motor races that mobilized the city between the 1930s and 1950s, and tragedies like the Hindenburg zeppelin disaster in New Jersey in 1937.

He recalls that, while researching the pages that would make up *O Globo*’s collection, it caught his attention that, back in the 1930s and 1940s, photos and headlines with large letters already occupied the entire front page. He noted that such resources are once again employed nowadays, since, in the context of current consumption with the rise of digital media, the task of the newspaper of the following day is no longer to report first-hand. Therefore, he said he believed that

⁸ Personal communication over phone, 7 June 2016.

the unfolding of events would gain even more relevance than the news itself, which reinforces the role of the front page in the construction of memory. For Maranhão, “it must be the editor’s concern” to create pages “for history”:

It is interesting that nowadays, in times of digital competition, the same resource is used again. As everyone already knows what happened, we use emotion correctly, without neglecting the future implications of the fact. Example: in the impeachment edition, the headline was “What now, Temer?”, below “Dilma gets impeached”. A front page for history. Which should also be a concern of the editor.⁹

In other words, Maranhão reinforced the articulation of front pages with memory by believing in the symbolic power of paper (DEBRAY, 1993; CHARTIER; 1998; INNIS, 2011), further reinforcing its importance in the digital era of dematerialization of media in network journalism.

Dematerialization and forgetfulness

In the contemporary scenario, successive updates throughout the day inscribe and erase headlines and subheads in minutes. In the past, those were printed by newspapers in a 24-hour interval. That characterizes the dematerialization of online front pages. If, on the one hand, online front pages are fluid and constantly changing, on the other hand, the links that lead to the news stories featured on websites home pages are perennial: everything is indexed and archived in search engines or databases owned by media channels themselves.

From which we conclude: the fuel for social memory continues to be produced. However, such memory in network journalism is now more fragmented. In digital collections of newspapers, it is possible to browse front pages – many of them memorable – according to dates or subjects. In network journalism, however, there is no *one home page* of the day, but several of them as events unfold. None of them, however, is archived.¹⁰

Ascanio Seleme, former editor of *O Globo*, stressed how journalists themselves contribute to the forgetfulness of home pages in the process of editing online front pages:

There is no memory of online front pages. They disappear. Unless you take screenshots of all the pages. And we here accelerate these changes a lot because we want the home page to be dynamic, even if the number of readers coming from it is getting lower and lower.¹¹

⁹ Personal communication on June 22nd, at *O Globo*’s newsroom.

¹⁰ At The Internet Archive, a non-profit organization, it is possible to retrieve billions of home pages from newspapers around the world, but not all of them.

¹¹ Personal communication, on 26 July 2016, at *O Globo*’s newsroom, when he was still working as director.

Interesting to note that, for Ascanio, the preservation of the memory of home pages would only be possible with screenshots, making an allusion to what would be the correspondent of the paper format on the Internet and reinforcing the symbolic value of the medium (MOUILLAUD, 1997; DEBRAY, 1993).

The paradox between the excess of memory in network journalism – all links are indexed on the web, as already pointed out – and the absence of it in relation to home pages was observed by Ali Kamel, director of journalism of Globo TV Network and former editor of *O Globo* newspaper. The journalist stressed that it will always be possible to know how the media channels approached the issues through the links to the news stories, but the “visual” will be lost:

We still have paper nowadays. But on the Internet, we have a home [page] every 30 seconds. There will always be a way to find out “how did *The New York Times* report a given matter”. There will always be a way for me to search and find 900 news stories. Then we won’t lose that role. But we’re gonna lose the look and feel, the image.¹²

By mentioning that the “look and feel” of online front pages will be forgotten, one notices an alignment between the journalist’s argument and Mouillaud’s metaphor of the “bottle”. The content is, therefore, inseparable from its packaging. On the other hand, the journalist also points to the abundance of online messages when referring to the “900 news stories” that will not make us forget about the approach of newspapers on certain topics, helping to reinforce in our minds a “reflected memory” (MAYER-SCHÖNBERGER, 2009), as the media become cheaper and more abundant (DEBRAY, 1993).

Commenting on the problem of the ephemeral nature of online pages, he stressed that the challenges for historians, who often use news media as a source of research, will be enormous as the media become more evanescent:

Historians will continue to have us as their source. They have a lot more problems than we realize. Letters have been replaced by e-mail, for example. And, nowadays, we have the exchange of thousands of e-mails. When you wrote a letter, you were focused in the beginning, middle and end. Today there are short notes, WhatsApp.¹³

Journalist Eleonora de Lucena, who was in charge of the front page of *Folha de S.Paulo* (among other attributions) from 1992 to 2010, said she believes that the memory of journalism and society itself will be damaged as a medium changes and becomes extinct, as was the case with the floppy disk, she recalled. For her, the lack of systematic home page archives is “a big problem”:

¹² Personal communication at the headquarters of Globo TV, in Rio de Janeiro, on July 19, 2016.

¹³ Personal communication at the headquarters of Globo TV, in Rio de Janeiro, on July 19, 2016.

That's a big problem. Soon, computers as we know them will be gone and where does it all go? Do you remember the floppy disks? Technology is evolving very fast and the physical bases, the archives, are being lost. It will be a problem for memory and will affect historians in the future.¹⁴

Being aware of the complexity of the topic, journalist Fabio Victor, former editor of *Folha de S.Paulo*'s front page, stated that "it is still a puzzle" and pointed out the need for network journalism to offer "a somewhat static account of events." That does not mean he advocated for less speed in updating the home page, but rather that editors may choose to highlight "two or three" most important home pages a day for their readers – or even just one. After all, he recalled, our daily biological time remains 24 hours.

I believe that's still a puzzle. Maybe we'll need a couple or three daily clippings from this curatorship for a more precise portray of events or just one because, after all, we keep counting our biological daily time in 24 hours chunks.¹⁵

The lack of home page storage routines also worries *O Globo* journalists. As they made the arrangements for the newspaper's 20th anniversary event, celebrated in July 2016, newsroom journalists were faced with the absence of online front pages on emblematic dates to be displayed for the occasion. Former executive editor Silvia Fonseca said that the topic was being discussed and that one of the considered options was to choose a couple of home pages to be archived, "on key moments of the day" or "relevant events" for Brazil and the world. Copies of such pages are supposedly made and archived in a section of *O Globo*'s Archive:

We probably have, on average, eight or ten headlines throughout the day. This is really a distinctive feature in relation to print from the historical record point of view. There's no way to archive them. I believe that's a problem for newspapers all over the world.¹⁶

Concerned about registering the newspaper's big scoop of the year in 2017 — when columnist Lauro Jardim revealed that one of JBS's owners, Joesley Baptista, had recorded President Michel Temer giving his go-ahead to buy the silence of then President of the Chamber of Deputies, Eduardo Cunha, to prevent him from making compromising revelations against the government — *O Globo*'s editor Alan Gripp says he made a point of registering the website home page, where the news was given first-hand, on a pdf file:

In the future, it will be possible to retreat great moments by searching the web, but it is different. Printed front pages help organize those moments. I was one of the great advocates for the JBS scoop

¹⁴Personal communication at Livraria Cultura Conjunto Nacional, São Paulo, on July 11, 2016.

¹⁵Personal communication at Pasv restaurant in São Paulo on July 12, 2016.

¹⁶ Personal communication at *O Globo*'s newsroom, in Rio de Janeiro, on July 14, 2016, when she was still in office.

to go online. But we “photographed” this web front page and kept it in PDF to create a historical record. Even if in a slightly loose way, I believe historical content in journalism will continue to be relevant.¹⁷

Aluizio Maranhão had not yet reflected on the loss of memory in network journalism home pages. At first, he did not see any problem, as he connected the memory of journalism to the links indexed in search engines and to the printed editions that have already gone through digitalization and today make up newspapers digital collections. When asked about the absence of the “home pages of the day”, he also pointed out as a solution to archive home pages at key moments:

I hadn’t thought of that. Maybe we should record home pages in key moments. Something would have to be thought of for the websites. But the cost of storing it must be very high. Who knows with the evolution and falling costs of cloud computing? That problem didn’t exist before the digital. It arrived, solved a lot of issues, but created new ones¹⁸.

The statements made by Eleonora de Lucena, Silvia Fonseca, Fábio Victor, Alan Gripp and Aluizio Maranhão are also permeated by allusions to paper: “freezing”, “storage of home pages in digital collections”, “PDFs of pages” and “risk of loss of physical bases” point, once again, to the relationship between memory and forgetfulness and the media on which the messages are conveyed, indicating a tendency among journalists to associate the perennality of messages to the printed medium (DEBRAY, 1993; MOUILLAUD, 1997).

O Globo’s social media editor, Sérgio Maggi, who also edited the newspaper’s home page, minimizes the consequences of the lack of archiving of home pages for memory. For him, since the ways of accessing the news are changing, readers may not feel the need for news stories to be organized in a home page as an archive:

The record is lost online. But since people are consuming the news in a different way, I’m not sure if they will miss the record of historical moments so much. Probably a lot of people who read important stories didn’t even see how they were displayed on the website home page. The reader may have clicked the link published by us on Facebook or Twitter. I don’t know if we will lose or if we will find other ways to preserve these historical moments from the point of view of journalism.¹⁹

Ricardo Noblat, who believes it should not be the journalist’s job to worry about the generation of memorial records, argued that this paradigm, inspired by the printed newspaper, should be broken. He also pointed out the contradiction of the fact that there is no memory in home pages but, in contrast, there are records of all news stories separately, accessible by search engines or digital databases:

¹⁷ Personal communication at *O Globo’s* newsroom in Rio de Janeiro on July 3, 2018.

¹⁸ Personal communication on June 22, in the newsroom of *O Globo*, in Rio de Janeiro.

¹⁹ Personal communication on July 8, 2016, at *O Globo’s* newsroom in Rio de Janeiro.

That's a silly concern. Let's let the books do the register. And you have all the links on the Internet. It's all registered. Either you break a lot of paradigms or you won't renew anything.²⁰

Ricardo Boechat agreed that network journalism need not be afflicted by the absence of home page archives. "Even if the Internet news do not cultivate this habit, or purpose, there will be plenty of those who do. At the end of the day, without loss for future research," the journalist says. "There are so many resources for storing news pieces, with a focus on building historical memory, that perhaps we can accept that the online gives up this task", he pointed out.²¹

Maggi, Noblat and Boechat minimized what other interviewees considered a problem for the preservation of memory in network journalism. The three of them believe that the "packaging" that is lost in the new ways of browsing, through links, as well as the lack of organized and systematic archiving of homes, will not result in the loss of the social memory that journalism helps to build. By stating that "everything is registered", they are in line with the thought of Mayer-Schönberger (2009).

Final considerations

Front pages have helped to conform our hearts and minds about events that we often do not witness. Shouts of paperboys were not ephemeral and echoed (or still do) for decades in our lives. Headlines have occupied (and still occupy) a prominent place in the collective memory imaginary.²² The hesitation in the conjugation of verb tenses reflects here uncertainty about the place in memory that will be reserved for them in the future.

As the dematerialization of media becomes more pronounced and new ways of consuming news emerge, ephemerality can threaten to render online front page ineffective as a communicational tool and agent of memory formation. However, to what extent are we already saturated with archives as our culture increases its storage capacity?

Journalists' statements quoted on this paper dialogue with such dualism of remembering and forgetting that journalism triggers. Perhaps it is more appropriate not to see a pessimistic scenario in the face of the fact that the media used for memory preservation have changed over the centuries. All of them, whether in museums or in our daily communication practices, will

²⁰ Personal communication at the journalist's apartment in Ipanema, Rio de Janeiro, on July 29, 2016.

²¹ Personal communication over phone on June 7, 2016.

²² Of course, news pieces in other media also make up this imaginary, but the emphasis here is deliberately given to newspapers because they are the focus and scope of this paper.

continue to generate discourses that will dispute space in our minds. However, collective memory will be crossed by more discourses and there may be the risk of “memory silos”, as pointed out by Edy (2014).

In network journalism, the question is: with hundreds of online front pages created and deleted each day, can any of them be memorable? On the other hand, in the early days of paper, as already pointed out, it was not considered a reliable medium because it was cheaper and reproducible. Who knows if the dematerialization of media in the digital age might not trigger other symbolic values over time?

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Abstract

Journalism has always contributed to shape shared social memory. The front pages of newspapers fulfilled an important communicational function, helping to build our imaginary about events that we do not even witness. In the early days of the internet, they were transposed to websites as home pages. In contemporaneity, however, we have seen a drop in the penetration of printed newspapers and the emergence of new forms of navigation, through links, which can affect the way in which we remember the news. The purpose of this article is to analyze the articulation between memory and forgetfulness that are triggered by reading the front pages in their printed and digital media and the consequences of dematerialization for journalism. To achieve the objectives, in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 journalists who have already edited or still edited the front pages and home pages in leading newspapers in Brazil.

Keywords: Memory. Forgetfulness. Network Journalism.

Resumo

O jornalismo sempre contribuiu para a formação da memória social compartilhada. Primeiras páginas de jornais cumpriram uma importante função comunicacional, ajudando a construir nosso imaginário sobre acontecimentos que sequer testemunhamos. Nos primórdios da internet, elas foram transpostas para os sites como home pages. Na contemporaneidade, entretanto, assistimos a uma queda na penetração dos jornais impressos e o surgimento de novas formas de navegação, por links, que podem afetar o modo pelo qual recordamos as notícias. O objetivo deste artigo é analisar a articulação entre memória e esquecimento que são acionados a partir da leitura de primeiras páginas em seus suportes impresso e digital e as consequências da desmaterialização para o jornalismo. Para atingir os objetivos, foram realizadas entrevistas em profundidade com 10 jornalistas que já editaram ou editam primeiras páginas e home pages em jornais de referência.

Palavras-chave: Memória. Esquecimento. Jornalismo em rede.

Resumen

El periodismo siempre ha contribuido a la formación de la memoria social compartida. Las portadas de los periódicos cumplieron una importante función de comunicación, ayudando a construir nuestro imaginario sobre los eventos que nunca presenciamos. En los primeros días de Internet, fueron transferidos a los sitios de noticias como home pages. Sin embargo, en la contemporaneidad, hemos visto una caída en la penetración de los periódicos impresos y la aparición de nuevas formas de navegación, a través de enlaces, que pueden afectar la forma en que recordamos las noticias. El propósito de este artículo es analizar la articulación entre la memoria y el olvido, que se desencadenan al leer las primeras páginas en sus medios impresos y digitales y la consecuencia de la desmaterialización para el periodismo. Para lograr los objetivos, se llevaron a cabo entrevistas en profundidad con 10 periodistas que editan o han editado las portadas e home pages en los principales periódicos de Brasil.

Palabras clave: Memoria. Olvido. Periodismo em red.