

## **From academy are educated teleworkers**

### **De la Urbe Digital case**

**By Herlaynne Segura**

**Digital journalist and communicator, teacher and teleworker**

**Graduate Teaching Electronic Journalism at the Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana**

**Masters in Digital Communication at the University of Vic, Barcelona**

**Student of Masters in Information and Knowledge Society of the Open University of Catalunya**

**Representative of the Foundation Cetelco Medellin (Colombia)**

**[hersysegura@gmail.com](mailto:hersysegura@gmail.com)**

**Medellin, Colombia**

### **ABSTRACT**

The newspaper of the City University School of Digital Communications at the University of Antioquia, trains students in the dynamics of digital journalism university through a constructivist methodology that guides the learner to apply the concepts learned in a real medium in which the product of their work is published.

This document describes the experience of this electronic means since its founding in 2003 until 2007. Four years of work, which because of the context of digital journalism in Colombia, resources and knowledge on Information and Communication Technology-ICT- were still emerging and institutional support for an initiative of this kind was scarce. Teleworking has become the methodology that enabled the project to move forward and form professional journalism, which is currently engaged in part-time and sometimes full-time.

**KEY WORDS:** telecommuting, digital journalism, journalism college, digital media, education, information and communication technologies.

### **CONTEXT**

Colombia, like other countries in Latin America, has been slowly incorporating Information and Communication Technologies in different environments such as education, trade, and labor.

It has not been an easy road, taking into account the digital divide, the skills needed to exercise, resistance to change, the paradigms that exist in front of the face and virtual reality, and the lack of political will, a matter which is not unique in the region.

However, telework has been expanding, and it is part of the academic discussions; investigations have been made that give clues on the state they are found in, and in the case of Colombia, they have been addressed.

According to research by [ICT Usuaría](#) with the participation of scholars from different countries of South America, including members of the [Foundation Cetelco](#), it is difficult to identify the number of teleworkers in Latin America and specifically Colombia because there is a lack of knowledge on the subject. Many people work through this practice but are not aware of it, as well as other notable businesses.

## **ADJUSTMENT**

In 2007, Senator Claudia Castellanos Rodríguez proposed to the Colombian Congress the regulation of telework as a way to lower unemployment rates. According to the National Statistics Department-DANE, December of that year there was 9.9% unemployment rate, and January 2009 it rose to 14.2%. In April, the unemployment rate stood at 12.2 percent, 0.1 percentage points higher than what was recorded in April 2008.

Finally, in July 2008, Act 1221 was enacted, "which sets the standards for promoting and regulating the Telework and other purposes." Thus, the outlook for exercise support telework in Colombia is legal before the law hindered the development of its functions and left in limbo such as companies and teleworkers in terms of occupational hazards, social security responsibilities and assignment of wages.

Obviously not all economic activities can be carried out through telework, such as medical care, nursing, transport and equipment operators, but there are many others that can incorporate this methodology in journalism, education, design and technical support.

Teleworking is exercised usually by people with special circumstances: they are mothers or the adult in charge of a household. Almost always people who have resolved their emotional lives and in their priorities is not the interacting face to face with their colleagues. [3] (Finquelievich, S. 1998).

## **THE CASE OF THE URBE DIGITAL UNIVERSITY NEWSPAPER**

For about eight years, I was a teleworker, initially part-time while working for a public university in Medellín, where I taught in the morning, attended meetings, and conducted an online journal. In the afternoon, I was at home preparing lessons, reading, writing, reviewing student work, and coordinating the activities of the medium. I then try not only my experience but try to extract some lessons that I hope will be useful for those starting in this discipline.

During my work as a teacher, I formed an online newspaper with thirty students dedicated to journalism, the organization of academic events and the marketing and dissemination of digital media. All of them graduated with majors in Communications and Journalism. Most teleworkers are engaged as part-time digital communicators. This is evidence that the academy is capable of forming methodologies of telework, social paradigms that can begin to break down early, and dependent or independent professionals entering the labor market with skills and a mindset that allows them to work under this mode.

[De la Digital Urbe](#) emerged in 2003 as an initiative of Undergraduate Journalism School of

Communications at the [University of Antioquia](#) , a public institution of more than 200 years of traditional education that is attached to the government of Antioquia, Colombia.

Like the others previously founded, De la Urbe and De la Urbe Television and Radio, City University School of Digital Communications was created to fulfill the functions of laboratory practices for students with a desire to learn to do reportería, which includes writing and publishing content in an environment that actually exists in cyberspace. Thus, the learner identifies the processes that must be addressed in the world of work from the academy.

"(...) Constructivism has a long history in philosophy and education, as an alternative positivist epistemological tradition. Its central argument is that the meaning of the world is imposed by the individual; therefore, there will be many ways of structuring the world and many meanings for each event "(Duffy & Jonassen, 1992) [2].

When Urbe Digital was first created, digital journalism was just barely beginning in the Colombia, let alone Latin America, with many doubts, fears, uncertainties, and little credibility. This matter was already difficult for digital journalists doing their work in major news media in the country, which has doubted this professional quality. There were no digital journalist job guarantees until the beginning of the decade. It was the reporters who were interested in the topic and had taken it upon themselves to study it on their own, more from a observation empirical science sense.

City University School of Digital Communications is installed in this context: public university, Faculty of Communications with tradition in print, with teachers nationally recognized for their career in traditional media, few economic resources, lack of knowledge, and little credibility by managers, teachers, and students.

"I want to learn *written* journalism" to which I replied: "Everything is written journalism, the only thing that changes is the medium, they argued."

"Electronic digital journalism... doesn't exist!" paraphernalia that is technological, have added supported by working journalists.

In 2005 was when digital journalism began to become more popular. The interest is placed on the instrumental. How do I mount a picture on the Web? How do I make a platform for a newspaper? How do I put a link? What do I click on?

Then the paradigms were that internet texts should be short, because the reader does not have time to read; if I publish online, my item is lost because no one will read it. The internet is to publish what does not fit in the print edition.

"I do not care what the authors say about digital media and their transformations; I want to learn the tool because that's what they're going to ask for when I go out to work."

Figure 1

Against this background, students would like to pretend that publishing in City University School of Digital Communications was quite an ordeal, even though in the academic program was referred to the theoretical and practical course and Writing IV Reportería dedicated to digital media, its language and its dynamics. It should make at least four deliveries of content for digital media, but do cost discussions which eventually disqualify the teacher towards the course and even the student to claim respect for his decision "not to waste his article being published on the Web.

### **HOW TO CONVINCe STUDENTS TO WANT TO BE PART OF THE DIGITAL URBE IN THIS CONTEXT?**

Four students began working from the School of Communications; none were undergraduates in Journalism, but in Social Communication and Journalism graduate who was about to graduate had been converted into three undergraduate degrees journalism, communications and audiovisual communication.

These four students held **chats** at home to form committees that succeed in positioning the project partners, attracting more attention to the directives they set their eyes on, and creating the conditions for the project to continue:

Records were made of the chat, as well as the meetings that were held in person. After reviewing the conditions, the conclusion that was reached was that it was necessary to lead committees:

- Public Relations Committee:

Achieving invitations of radio programs, television and print media publication in digital reproduction of material from the Digital Urbe other digital media.

Construction of a mission, vision, and objectives

Appreciation letters

- Committee discussion with the presence of experts to raise awareness on current issues, articulate journalism, and digital journalism.

Bi-weekly chats with experts in subjects related to journalism, digital communication, or an issue, such as presidential elections, for example.

Coordination and logistics: implementation of audiences, microphones, guest transportation, etc.

Disclosure via the weekly newsletter published new notes.

Register the site in search engines

Use of tags (labels) to index the site in search engines.

- Tour Outreach Committee:

Stands in the various faculties of the University of Antioquia

Stands at academic events

Distribution of flyers

Recollection of databases

- Editorial Committee on special news related to national and local context.

Groups that review and revise texts before submitting to the editor for publication in the network.

Special circumstances: "Remembering Armero" for the 20th anniversary of the tragedy of El Ruiz volcano in Tolima. This special won honorable mention Circle of Journalists of Antioquia.

## **ACTIVITIES:**

### **1.DLUD chats**

This activity was carried out monthly with experts.

### **2.Organization and event coverage**

In each event, one of the reporters wrote an article summarizing the arguments presented by the guest.

### **3.Outreach Tour**

Initially, this tour focused on the campus and intended to raise awareness of the environment in the various faculties within it. Each month they organized a booth with a computer and two employees responsible for disseminating the activities taking place at City University School of Digital Communications. Thanks to the Tour, the database was increased and sends weekly electronic newsletters with articles published and likewise invitations to events of the City University School of Digital Communications.

#### 4. Weekly Newsletter

Weekly, a newsletter was sent to a database of more than 4,000 emails from the university community, academics, entrepreneurs, and the general public. A total of 180 newsletters were sent.

#### 5. City University School of Digital Communications Radio

Radio Information Space in Altair, a digital station of the University of Antioquia in which the themes were expanded in the edition of City University School of Digital Communications and that it had invited the presence of expertise in the subject or the same source that had been consulted for articles.

### INDICATORS

Activity	Amount
Publication of unpublished journalistic	2033
Chats made	15
Web Site Visits	An average around 6,000 visits per week, according to Google Analytics. October 2007
Academic events with national and international speakers	9
Acknowledgments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Nominated for University Journalism Award.2005.</li><li>- Honorable Mention awarded by the CIPA to the special <i>Remembering Armero</i>, August 2006</li><li>- Honorable Mention awarded by the CIPA to the special <i>fund solutions expected Moravia</i>, August 2007.</li><li>- Honorable Mention awarded by the first version of Petrobras Award - Special Week <i>Moravia expected to fund solutions</i>, October 2007. Works were selected from 700 traditional media and academics.</li></ul>
Weekly newsletters with news	180 to a 4231 database mail

All activities were conducted in personal computers for each student computer labs at the University of Antioquia and Internet cafes.

## **FURTHER MANAGEMENT OF ENTHUSIASM OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT**

Each student began to lead each of the committees and get their friends and those closest to become partners. A team of up to 30 students was formed, including other disciplines outside of journalism. This allowed the project to be created. For four years where we were integrating the team in journalism, organizational communication, digital communication and TELEWORK methodologies.

Telecommuting is understood as "a new system of work organization in which the person develops a major part of their work outside the company and by computer." Teleworking only requires a personal computer, a modem, and an Internet connection. The specific needs of each practitioner vary according to their activity "(Boiarov, 2009) [1].

Documents, news, discussions, academic events were shared to keep up with what was happening not only in ICT but related news of the impact of City University School of Digital Communications which the city could not ignore.

The use of Information and Communication Technologies was constant. He was often called from another city while on vacation and said: I am in a theme park, "I can write about that? I'll go to a conference, I brought my card Urbe From Digital and introduce me as a journalist to cover the event ... or "teacher: the Pope died," we must make a special edition. Keep in mind that Pope John Paul II died on Easter, when students are on vacation.

Juan Carlos Morales, social communicator, journalist who adapted both Joomla versions that were published in the contents of City University School of Digital Communications is an entrepreneur from the age of 21 while still a student, currently an advisor Ministry of National Education - MEN a project that seeks to create technical and technological programs in distance mode, virtual methodology and hires some of its partners through teleworking. Now at 27 he refers to their experience and learning about telework:

"As a student of Social Communication - Journalism, associated with City University School of Digital Communications, had the opportunity-and commitment-making multimedia publications on the website of the medium.

One day, at dawn, the city, Medellin, he was awakened by a strong earthquake caused alarm in the region. Immediately, he jumped out of bed to the computer and typed in *Google* a few key words that led him to a Seismological Laboratory in the U.S., which had registered the movement and gave an approximation of the epicenter.

I then phoned the authorities of disaster prevention and care of the city in search of relevant information. The investigation lasted no more than ten minutes.

Data already in hand: figures, maps and testimony, entered the Content Management System of the City Digital. I wrote the story, See map, I noted references and official sources. Within 15 minutes we had last-minute information.

Then I visited some media in the country and found no relevant publications. As they say in

journalism, we had "chivado" the event.

This is achieved through the possibilities of tele-working. If my job as a journalist would have forced me to do my work in person, perhaps by noon or later I would have that information. I closed the computer and continued sleeping. "

This enthusiasm was infectious. I knew that it was necessary to keep the spirit high, make them see the benefits of teleworking, and how they might get to exercise it. This was not only given through academic and "work", but also emotionally, by listening, supporting, and guiding them. A key issue was to empower them to highlight their achievements and accomplishments publicly. There was enthusiastic management.

Obviously there were difficulties in implementing the project of City University School of Digital Communications. The lack of support from the administration because of lack of infrastructure, disruptions in interpersonal relationships, personal situations, and the pressure of each semester course load did not always meet their commitments and often were abandoned. The exams seasons, holidays and end of semester were difficult for maintaining the organization.

## **FORMALIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE**

One aspect was clear that this experience could not stay in operation because of all the work involved with organizing events, sending newsletters, and other activities already mentioned. Although they had managed to position the medium in the city and the country, it was necessary for students to interject what they were building and for each term to be used in the theme of conscious and non-digital product out of habit.

Concepts discussed: journalism and digital media, digital journalism university, knowledge management, networking and teleworking.

To manage the knowledge generated, the members of DLUD began to write manuals on their activities. Thus, upon graduation, their successors would have basis to pursue the activities and innovate.

After each academic activity, one student wrote an article summarizing the arguments presented by the guest, thus formalizing what was shared and learned during each lecture.

The experience was advantageous for each member. They were able to share it with new members; therefore, the project was able to continue.

## **THE EX MEMBERS OF THE DIGITAL URBE, TELEWORKERS**

By the end of 2007, those who are part of the City University School of Digital Communications were busy doing it for several reasons: academic, personal and labor.

Nine of the students, who formed the more permanent project, are currently involved in work related to journalism and digital media. They telecommute part-time, some in greater proportion than others, and at times have had freelance jobs that allow them to telework full-

time. Their average age is 23

Virtually the following questions were formulated to 11 students, nine of them responded. (Virtual communication. May 12, 2010):

1. Are you telecommuting today? Part-time or Full-time?
2. Did City University School of Digital Communications help you become teleworkers? Did you already know?
3. Did you identify the concept of telecommuting before joining City University School of Digital Communications?
4. Do you use the term telework often?
5. Do you take the initiative in your peer group to do work through teleworking?
6. Would you like to be telecommuting full-time? Explain.

Respondents: Juan Carlos Morales, Diana Grajales, Camilo Arango, Cristina Serna, Sandra González, Alejandra Agudelo, Marta Patricia Giraldo, Lina Vanegas, Pablo Rendon.

Answer to Question 1: 8 of the 9 has a conventional job but allows them to telecommute part-time.

Answer to Question 2: Everyone agrees that it was in City University School of Digital Communications where they learned to telework.

Answer to Question 3: They all agree that they use the term. "All the time. It's what I do every day and often I have to explain to others what it is, "Camilo Arango

Answer to Question 4. All use it consciously. 5 of them use it often, while the remaining 4 use it less frequently.

Answer to Question 5. All of them promote telework to optimize time.

Answer to Question 6. 8 of the 9 agree that they do not want full-time teleworking and the importance of physical contact. Sandra Gonzalez is a single mother of a two year old girl. Sandra Gonzalez wanted to telework in order to be near her daughter. Pablo Rendon: "No. While I understand what teleworking is and even defend and advocate its benefits to working that way at times, I think from my humanist position that physical contact will always lack. Seeing your partner's eyes, pausing for coffee and talking about other topics, going to lunch with him or even come to feel the pressure of a boss, are, I think, necessary and complementary activities in developing a job "

## **CONCLUSIONS:**

It is possible to carry out projects through telework. City University School of Digital Communications proved that by being sustainable in all their activities through the work of students and coordinators connected via the network.

City University School of Digital Communications, newspaper of the School of

Communications at the University of Antioquia, is evidence of training in methodologies of teleworking from the academy. Current practitioners who have had experience and applied these methodologies in their daily lives have been part-time telecommuters in this practice.

The articulation of the concept of telework to the execution of the practice is strengthened by the academy. Hence the professionals that were formed from the academy have an easier time adapting this methodology in their working environment and promoting it.

The full-time telework is a method by which the people can exercise their social and emotional conditions, such as heads of households, responsibility for elderly people or infants. While these are social groups that often work through teleworking, City University School of Digital Communications showed that university students can acquire the elements to telework from the academy.

## REFERENCES

[1] Boiarov, Sonia. [On line].Telecommuting. Buenos Aires. Available at: <http://www.slideshare.net/ConsejoJoven/sonia-boiarov-teletrabajo> [Accessed on May 27, 2010]

[2] Jonassen, David The Constructivist DESIGN ENVIRONMENTS LEARNING. University of Pennsylvania. Available at: [http://files.procesos.webnode.com/200001307-56d1f57cbc/Diseño% 20of% 20entornos% 20constructivista% 20aprendizaje% 20of% 20U% 20III.pdf](http://files.procesos.webnode.com/200001307-56d1f57cbc/Diseño%20of%20entornos%20constructivista%20aprendizaje%20of%20U%20III.pdf)[Accessed on May 28, 2010]

[3] FINQUELIEVICH, *Susana*. Between the capsule and the planet: the transformation of urban spaces in the era of telematics In: The city and its ICT: information and communication technologies. Bernal: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 1998. p. 67-90.

---