

Josep Carles Rius i Baró, dean of the Association of Journalists of Catalonia

‘Journalism is not a technical job. It is a job entailing a commitment to society’

Josep Carles Rius i Baró combines his post as dean of the Association of Journalists of Catalonia with his post as chief editor for the weekend edition of the newspaper *La Vanguardia*. Born in Valls in 1956, he is also a lecturer in journalism at the Autonomous University of Barcelona.

Where are journalists working these days?

First at conventional and traditional media, namely, newspapers, television and radio stations. But there are increasingly more journalists working in press services at companies and institutions. In recent years, we consider them ‘source journalists’. Thus, there are media and source journalists.

What competences do people need who want to work in journalism?

Three things: a solid intellectual educational background, the tools of the trade and, an extremely important factor, attitude. Journalism is not a technical job, but rather a job that represents a commitment to society, which fulfils a democratic mandate. This entails a series of conditions that other professions just don't have.

What does this ‘commitment’ consist of?

The journalist's commitment is very clear: he has to fight for the truth. It is a profession that is at the service of society and journalists have to be critical.

What shortcomings are you seeing in new journalists?

In present-day education, I find that they are greatly influenced by the technical side, by tools and by method, and less by content. That is, we teach them how things must be said, but we don't teach them what they have to say. We have to reflect on this distinction both from the Association and at universities. We have to create journalists who know how to communicate extremely well but, above all, who participate when it is time to decide on what to actually communicate, because they have the obligation to do exactly this. Journalists have a lot of pull in creating contents.

How does the current market situation affect the role of journalists?

At news desks of traditional media, journalists have lost a lot of freedom and decision-taking power. During the transition and until the beginning of the 90s, journalists' decisions had a lot of weight in the media, now corporate decisions have this weight. There are exceptions, but in general, a lot of power has been lost. On the other hand, there is the whole Internet scenario, which offers immense possibilities, but has still not found the formulas to create high-quality journalism. Not for doing it, but for obtaining prestige on the Internet. The Web is full of noise, of unverified information, lacking solidity... and this ends up contaminating everything a little bit.

How will this situation be resolved?

We don't know. When the financial crisis ends, will advertising return to the printed press? Will the printed press become solid again? Or is there advertising that is already used to the web, with its extremely low prices, that will never go back to traditional print media? The scenario is wide open.

And the multiplication of so many television channels, Internet sites, media sources, local and regional media... Aren't they providing more opportunities?

Yes, job posts are being created in these scenarios, but they are very low quality. Precariousness is brutal. Whoever wants to start out in journalism and is ready to fight for it, can triumph, if they have good foundations... However, the sacrifice required is extremely high. It has nothing to do with the sacrifice required in other professions.

Noteworthy quotes:

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