

Relevant innovations for implementing methods of collecting external information for mass media

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Abstract. From the very beginning, journalistic activity has been based on three methods of collecting information: observation, interviewing, studying documents and sources. Until recently, this was quite enough. However, modern age of information technology requires serious modifications, corrections and innovations.

Since methods of collecting information are visualized, technified and scientificed, along with established methods new ones have appeared: audiovisual recordings, inspections, investigations, etc. New methodology allows us not only to receive scientifically proved accurate result, but also is capable of designing further optimal format for information implementation.

The publication provides a thorough analysis of relevant for mass media methods of collecting information in the comparative context of forensics and open possibilities of modern rationalism and determines that the main basis for collecting information is problematic contradiction of social reality, and methods are used according to well-established scheme of scientific activity in the format of classical article: thesis, arguments, facts, expertise, conclusions and recommendations.

Key words: method, information, journalism, forensics, science.

Journalism is not only publication, but also careful collection of information. No material, even the simplest, can be created without sufficient data. To some extent, quality of collection is also an indicator of level of social democracy and freedom of speech. Until recently, arguments and facts in post-Soviet countries were stated and offered “from above”. In the age of information technology, journalism has become synergistic and self-sufficient, but censorship return on ascertainment is still preserved and enforced by propaganda technologies of information space in countries with armed conflict status. Unfortunately, Ukraine also belongs to such countries. As a result, population here needs a true picture of the world, but does not receive it precisely because of lack of positive transformations in the system of collecting information.

The outlined problem has been studied by I. Lubkovych, V. Zdoroveha, T. Shumalina, I. Dzialoshinsky, O. Kuznetsova, M. Kim, O. Tertychny, V. Gorokhov, I. Mykhailyn, O. Lavryk, E. Fichtelius, M. Lukina, L. Vasilieva, V. Hitlyarovsky, A. Rubinov, M. Koltsov, A. Gudimov, L. Noda, V. Oleshko, B. Grushin, L. Kashinskaya, S. Korkonosenko, G. Lazutina, O. Tertychny. Scientists have described observations, interviews, documents’ studying and their immediate transformations: experiment, questionnaire, etc., but they have not considered the latest opportunities

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through visual methods, inspections, journalistic and forensic investigations, etc. and have not suggested improving universal methodology in accordance with today needs.

We offer to eliminate existing gaps and consider methods of collecting external information as a result and project of synchronous modifications of rationalism in the context of information technology age, the first marker of which should be considered comprehensive scientification and identification with forensics.

Science tools, including legal and media, were formed much earlier than their journalistic counterparts. They are as old as human history and mass communication. Even in the Law Book of 1497-1550 years, which was based on “Russian Truth” (XI-XII centuries), it was a question of recognizing documents as authentic in the process of examination. Before the Age of Enlightenment, it was forensics and other sciences that dealt with issues which are now in charge of journalism. At the beginning of the new era, in response to the growth and diversification of crime, new scientific methods of investigation appeared (in modern language – methods of collecting information and establishing facts), before that they were used only by the Inquisition. In the field of science, they also collected information, but it was allowed only for special, who themselves permanently suffered from the “fight against heresies.”

Among the earliest revolutionary methods of forensics– “adaptation of anthropology to identify individuals, introduction of fingerprinting, registration of persons involved in crime, creation of data banks, development of handwriting and tracing, photography as a way to capture evidence [Shepitko, 2010, p. 30].

With appearance of books and publications on the topic of breaking the law, there were professionals who were engaged in investigation, crimes solution and prevention, as well as their assistants, who recorded and covered high-profile cases “not for archive” [Kosyuk, 2018]. Forensics, described in detail not only detectives’ work, but also criminals, comprehensively studying patterns of formation, solution, ascertainment, evaluation and use of information.

Being recently born, journalism tried to duplicate jurisprudence in many ways, although some factors, such as behavior of criminals, could be described only in the field of fiction, which was published in newspapers only occasionally [Kosyuk, 2018]. In information and analytical media activities, it was considered a gross violation of standards.

Functions and tasks of forensics and journalism are almost identical: ascertaining (recording, description, accumulation of information); interpretive (disclosure of inner essence of phenomena, elucidation of their causes), heuristic (discovery of previously unknown); prognostic (prediction of possible consequences); applied (prevention of probable threats); communicative (dissemination of knowledge and obtaining information); training (information transmission); educational (formation of social behavior); critical (detection of errors / inaccuracies in theories / practices).

In forensics, as well as in journalism and mass communication, there are universal and professional tasks. General scientific methods here combine the sensory, rational, empirical. Observation, description, comparison, experiment, and modeling are considered to be sensually rationalistic. Analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction, hypothesis, analogy, idealization, generalization are considered logical. Measurement, calculation, geometric construction, etc. are considered mathematical [Pyaskovsky, 2015, p. 43].

Research process in both areas begins with observation, measurement and description. Observation is the oldest and most universal method of collecting information. It has obviously never been started as a separate category of activity, because it has always been inherent by humans. Each of us, if a person is not deprived of sight, contemplates something. And this process does not depend on desires. Rather, it is a guarantee of adequate orientation in space. However, not all people are equally observant. And not everyone sees the same thing (there may be a difference even in color differences and angles).

Observations are used not only in legal and media fields. It is a necessary component of creative, scientific and any other activity. However, the frequency of its use by journalists can compete only with similar applications in criminal investigation. In addition, forensic scientists and journalists are guided by very similar criteria and divide observations into four categories: open, hidden, participant, non-participant. These varieties are combined binary: open non-participant and hidden participant.

Open (everyone knows that observation is carried out) non-participant (no one perceives the observer as a representative of their community) observations occur even when we do not plan them, because no one walks with their eyes closed and forced to contemplate the world around them. However, without planning to review and look closely, we omit important details and do not record the data properly. Structured open non-participant observation is especially effective when the object of observation is publicly available and simple.

Hidden (known to the least number of people) participant (conducted as if by a member of the community) observations (in other words - espionage) are radically different and closer to the experiment. They are applied to searchless, falsified and hard-to-reach objects. Therefore, before using this method, you should read the law. For journalists, it is usually more flexible, so this type of observation combines efforts of forensic scientists and media. Effective, when an observer-journalist for a while becomes part of the object under study, and a professional detective insures it and analyzes the facts.

In modern realities, the implementation of observation program should begin with outlining the goal, which automatically narrows perspective, allows you to define tasks, formulate hypothesis, find out how to observe, fragment the object and, if necessary, select necessary equipment. Because only eyes are used at first, and later more complex devices, in jurisprudence there are simple and qualified (using technical means), direct (through investigator's eyes) and indirect (through others) observations. Qualified observation gives fairly accurate general picture of crime. Indirect, on the other hand, very often contains flaws and high degree of subjectivity.

For obvious reasons, journalists do not conduct qualified observations, but order them to specialists.

Objects of legal and journalistic observations also differ. For criminologists, these are elements of material world: traces, documents, objects; people, signs of appearance, features of character; actions. Journalists do not elaborate on appearance, as it is a very complex reality, and do not use services of psychoanalysts and physiognomists – such information is inaccurate and not for general public. Trace analysis is also not the competence of mass media. All the rest can be observed by representatives of both professions, although media professionals should improve application of method taking into account modern technology and following partners with legal education, who have more experience, resources and legislative opportunities, but less freedom of expression and disclosure.

Despite the fact that observation is the simplest method of collecting information, it is also the most common, as it is an integral part of comparison, experiment, measurement, sources studies.

Forensic scientists use description separately as a method of collecting information. This is a record of what is observed in the protocol of investigation. The description can be direct (made by investigator) and indirect (created from other people's words, for example – a photo robot). The parameters of this comprehensive, objective, consistent method are defined by Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine. In some ways, it resembles a journalistic report. In addition to the protocols of investigators, this method may be present in expert opinions, statements, in criminal proceedings, etc. As description of journalistic genre is losing popularity, it should probably be used more actively as method of collecting information.

Comparison is method which is not natural for journalism and has rather supplementary function. In forensics, on the contrary, this method is very important, especially for pre-trial investigations. In this case it is important for compared objects to have strong connection (for example, cycle of identical crimes – evidence of seriality). Also, only significant aspects need to be selected for comparisons. In jurisprudence size, form, density, weight, color, a way of crime commission, etc. are compared. As a rule, additional features are compared with existing ones, for example, confiscated items with stolen ones. Data of outlined comparisons are ordered to experts by investigative journalists.

However, in the media, this method “got a second life” as a journalistic inspection and “filler” of Internet materials in the form of in-text and final references. Both varieties of this method originated in the Postmodern Age, when recording and stating facts ceased to be the privilege of scientists and criminologists.

Journalistic inspection lies in collecting specific information about establishment, institution, organization, etc. and comparing collected data with norms established in society and world community. Prices, service level, order, interior, appearance, etc. are estimated.

In Ukraine, inspections have been carried out by “Revizor” program for a long time: by journalists Olha Freimut, Vadym Abramov, Mykhola Tyshchenko, Volodymyr Ostapchuk. And subjectivity of inspections was balanced by companies’

owners in the show “Passions with Revizor”, which was broadcast after the main issue of the program. Objects for first inspections were restaurants, shops, hotels, supermarkets, sanatoriums, water parks, beauty salons, beaches, kindergartens, historical and cultural complexes. Later inspections have expanded on medicine, security, education and prominent people of Ukrainian cities (“Inspector. Cities”) and villages (“Rural Revizor”) and the following places appeared in the center of attention: schools, kindergartens, clinics, local councils, post offices, community centers, shops, farms and enterprises, roads and street lighting, etc. Inspections took place not only in Ukraine, but also, only for comparison, in some establishments in Austria, France, Italy and Great Britain.

Inspection was carried out by a journalist who was not an expert in these areas, but worked according to established criteria. The results of inspections were reflected in a certain scale. Thanks to photos, videos and availability of ratings, the effect of professional presence was created. To enhance objectivity, the media arrived at the inspection site without warning, used surveillance to collect the most part of information, and used interviews, document studies, and experiments as additional sources.

This method was also used for “stuffing” Internet texts. Additional “insertable” sources are taken mainly from your own database, because references on others do not guarantee readers’ return to original sources. In addition, there is a rule of varying analogies: alternating verbal elements, diagrams, documents, videos, etc. Monotonous inserts are absolutely not effective. Here, for example, the average lapidary correspondence “Mirrors of the Week” (“In Kiev, another COVID record - more than 1,700 new patients”) [Khmilevskaya, 2020] contains as many as 5 additional resources: previous materials (“in Ukraine there are more than 16 thousands of new cases of coronavirus”, “Residents of Kyiv region mostly complainto Ministry of Health contact center against coronavirus”, “G20 Leaders promise fair distribution of coronavirus vaccines”), mayor Vitali Klitschko’s appearance at Telegram channel with a separate insert in the form of picture of journalist’s own photo “Today in Ukraine there is a “weekend quarantine”. Final references are of quite different nature. They characterize the published from other angles and perspectives and occasionally fix theoretical basis of new material. Therefore, in order not to use competing materials of other media, “Mirror of the Week”, for example, instead of such references offers a number of tags: COVID-19, record, Lyashko, Kyiv, Ministry of Health, research, mayor, Klitschko.

Forensic experts interpret experiment almost in the same way as journalists: “reproduction of phenomenon or event to study its relationship with other phenomena” [Pyaskovsky, 2015, p. 45]. This method allows to consider in detail the nature of processes, their origin, transformation, etc. This is how realities are highlighted and defined, their causal relations are determined. In forensic activity, the method is implemented mainly in the form of investigative experiment (Article 240 of the CPC of Ukraine).

In the world of journalism, experimentation is also considered one of the most popular methods of collecting information. And although it is rarely used in Ukraine, it has found its reliable place in the structure of journalistic investigations.

Unappropriated usage of this source is explained by necessity of serious technical equipment that would ensure creation of natural environmentequivalent.

“Investigative experiment – is a separate investigative action, which consists in conducting experiments to verify whether certain conditions could occur under certain conditions and in what way” [Shepitko, 2010, p. 246]. Forensic scientists believe that this experiment is very similar to the scientific one, because in both cases the experiments are relevant. But, unlike scientific, legal experiment does not reproduce phenomenon completely but only conditions under which events took place, so it can be carried out not at the scene of the crime, and sometimes without witnesses and potential defendants.

In all areas of operation, there are countless types of experiments, among which scientists and mass media employees distinguish between natural and technical. And lawyers emphasize possibility of “penetrating through a certain hole and takeout certain objects through it” [Shepitko, 2010, p. 284], to take action for a certain period of time, to establish certain skills of a person who committed a crime, to determine how the event took place ...

All types of experiments are prohibited if they humiliate or threaten person’s life. The program of perfect investigative experiment looks something like this: to determine purpose and conditions (especially – the sequence of research steps); invite participants (accused, testifiers, witnesses who have good eyesight, hearing and other valuable qualities, etc.); choose equivalents of physical evidence – means, tools, materials, because evidence itself can not be used in the experiment; prepare so-called “investigative suitcase” – a package of forensic tools for appropriate action; draw up a plan of experiment indicating time and place, number of participants, method of their location: explain essence of process.

It is advisable to repeat experiment several times at the crime scene and in the most similar conditions. In addition to verbal-protocol incarnations, it involves presence of photo- and video-cameras that clearly state the facts.

Carrying out journalistic experiment, as some scientists believe, slightly different actions should be activated. First, object of study is determined, then – subject, or – angle, later thesis-assumption is pronounced, after that the program of observation is performed to reveal object condition before experimental interventions. Furthermore, purpose is determined and provocation tasks are formulated (at the levels of witnesses, experts, victims) to verify the assumptions. At the next stage, necessary equipment is prepared. In the end, the experiment itself is conducted. But this is not the end. Postscript – analysis of results is done and at least two more control tests are carried out (they are divided on: pilot, basic and confirmatory experiments). Journalistic materials are created only at the end of all these stages. During the experiment, journalists also consider it necessary to change conditions and people, because not everyone reacts equally to everything.

Interviews and all its varieties (interview, survey, partly – reporting) as a way of collecting information also need to be improved in terms of approach to forensic strategies. This was discussed in detail in one of our previous publications, the content of which can be viewed at the reference [Kosyuk, 2019, p. 847-852].

Much more involved in criminal investigations, compared to journalistic, can be considered also modeling: “method of studying objects from their models” [Pyaskovsky, 2015, p. 45]. Conceptual-theoretical images are used primarily in cases where real reproduction can threaten someone’s health and life, and lawyers, of course, have much more such situations than journalists. Therefore, they divide modeling into material (sensory construction) and ideal (formulas, descriptions, etc.), which, in turn, might be imaginary (development of versions for investigation), clearly defined (modeling), mathematical (digital calculation of process development conditions). As a separate type of modeling forensic scientists consider reconstruction – recreation of original condition of something from the remains and descriptions.

In journalism, research results are mostly modeled when they are “embedded” in the format of certain genre. Inconsistency of information with its implementation is the most common violation of journalistic standards, for which, unfortunately, there are no penalties. Nevertheless, it is genre inconsistency that nullifies everything done in the media sphere. Most often, instead of an article, they write a problematic essay, in which objectivity, expertise and factualism are not enough to complete the picture.

Among the group of logical methods, jurisprudence, journalism, mass communication and other sciences distinguish the following: already significant (since the time of Arthur Conan Doyle) deduction, analysis, synthesis, induction, analogy, hypothesis, idealization, generalization ...

Deduction is used when something general leads to concrete: for example, general scientific postulates – to practical implementation. Deduction considers experimental data and “weaves” them into theory. This method is usually used because of lack of required amount of evidence, in this case the construction of versions should be based not on analysis of evidence, but on general assumptions. Since there are no direct facts, the researcher forms several versions and tests them sequentially.

In the media, deduction is used in article structure (when experts’ views are balanced), in comments (when voicing different opinions), in reporting (involving experts’ opinions, witnesses, victims), in a problem interview (during conversation with unique information), in reports (stating the procedure of controversy), in surveys (for analysis of existing concepts), in reviews (as a factor of refutation), even in problematic journalism (when required amount of source data is missing).

In parallel with deduction, induction is activated, on the contrary, provided that you want to unify data of the experiment or observation. It means that this method usually applies to practice and moves the facts – from specific to general. Although there is scientific induction, which, in addition to formal generalization, provides additional substantive justification of truth.

Analysis and synthesis are manifested specifically in criminal and media spheres. The analysis allows to fragment process of investigation, to make it step-by-step. And synthesis helps to bring processes and evidence together.

Abstraction is also important for search operations. It allows you to focus on the most important and not pay attention to the accidental. However, everything is much more complicated in journalism: insignificant here can radically change perspectives and vary importance of the problem, as in the situation of describing

terrorist act in Lutsk in the summer of 2020, during which journalists carelessly produced videos in the format of terrorists briefings and published everything in social networks.

By using it, they not only dismiss everything unnecessary, but also endow processes with probable facts and signs – creating a sort of fantastic reality that allows us to make assumptions. In journalism, such obvious falsification is prohibited by law.

Analogy helps to fill the gap of uncertainty – it is a technique of making assumptions based on comparison of similar realities. Since this is an artificial transfer, analogy gives accurate and plausible knowledge. Using this method, versions, search actions, typical situations are considered. Due to the schematic nature of transfers, analogy sometimes turns into modeling. The method of generalization is also based on aspects of common, which emphasizes similar features and characteristics, reduces everything that is repeated into a single whole – a kind of synonymous row.

In addition to general philosophical methods, modern forensics and journalism actively use methods of other sciences, mostly – mathematical: calculation, measurement, specific modeling, geometric constructions. This usage has always existed. Although it is especially relevant right now, due to challenges of scientific and technological progress. In order to conduct the simplest investigation, you need to count available, measure it, simulate the source situation, etc.

Physical, chemical and biological methods and approaches are no less popular, because composition of substances (especially poisons, in the context of the Violinists, Navalny, etc.) is also crucial for investigations, alongside mass, speed and gravity, as well as hair, skin particles and eye color. All this is ordered to specialists by journalists, because, unfortunately, they do not have the appropriate expert status for such research.

However, priority in terms of methodological use, obviously, should be given to psychology, anthropology and sociology, without which it is extremely difficult to define collection of relevant information – every second investigation involves examination of bodies, psychoanalytic features, accounting data and others. Of course, statistics, unlike criminologists, are primarily important to journalists. Other information is also provided by invited experts.

Recently, visual methods of photo and video capture (which probably separated from the main ones) have been used more actively to obtain fast data and make decisions. At the same time, however, there is a debate about whether they are really worth noting. The fact is that truly scientific statements are most often presented in the form of formulas and complex schemes and can be read mainly by scientists, but media audio and video data are extremely accessible to a wide range of recipients. Scientists agree that visual methods are not self-sufficient and can only be the basis for representative research.

However, despite the debatable possibilities, visualization is improving: along with improvement of images, the problem of their reliable identification is solved. Search engines are working on this. And even today the average user can check the image for originality.

Journalists and experts have the most in common dealing with documents, because it concerns reliable data identification. Category of documents, according to International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation, includes “everything that can be used as evidence, any source of information capable of study and transmission, as well as that has legal force” [Palekha, 2009], or according to the Law of Ukraine “On Information”, “the law provides material form of obtaining, storing, using and disseminating information by fixing it on paper, magnetic, film, video, photographic film, or other media” [Palekha, 2009].

Data in documents are clearly organized, structured and generalized. The average source contains not only information but also attitudes towards it. Stable objects’ condition allows to conduct repeated procedures, but their filling is of secondary importance and not directly related to reality, it also depends on format, scope, position of the author, who often captures not only actual but also past. After all, a document cannot always be presented in the media literally, verbally modified – it can lose its meaning. Separately, in the context of the media, we should talk about identification of fakes. This procedure, unlike all the previous ones, forensic scientists borrow from the media, not vice versa.

False documents, if their originals are recorded somewhere in the network database and open for use, are easy to identify, just click on the suspicious source and right-click in Google Chrome to select “find this image in Google”. The search engine will certify the original source. In other browsers, you must first install a special shoot, such as Who stole my pictures. It will search not only Google, but also Yandex, Rambler and other search engines.

Keywords for suspicious videos and photos should be entered into You Tube database. The system must certify the original sources and falsifications, all this should be checked by date of appearance. Thus, we come to the originals. You can also turn a video into a picture and send it to Google to search for previous pattern. If someone has already noticed the fake, they should record it and write something about exposure.

When document has only a paper image –you should find serial number on the back and check in the database of the organization, who, when and how issued it, and then rely solely on the opinion of forensic experts, because only they can competently determine the originality of handwriting (if handwritten), seal, signature and stationery.

External analysis of documents involves studying historical context and access to related sources, which characterize document features, place of its appearance, identify author’s personality and initiators, purpose of creation, authenticity and reliability. Internal analysis concerns the document itself: differences between factual and literary content, level of author’s competence, his attitude to the facts.

There are many types of documents: formal, informal, statistical, verbal, iconographic, written, phonetic, collective, originals, copies, etc., among which there are those that require processing with specific techniques and intervention of highly specialized experts.

Method of expert assessments is singled out separately, which is used when specialists’ opinion is required, who can provide comprehensive unique information

about object and subject of research. In such cases, it is necessary to check service provider's education, his occupation, work experience in a particular field. The list of experts should be constantly narrowed and, if possible, updated. To this end, both forensic scientists and journalists use methods of self-assessment and collective assessment, but the best way is to combine all of them.

Is it possible to justify specific "methods" of collecting information such as bribery, use of special equipment, hidden records, fabrication of information, etc.? It is difficult to answer ... However, it is safe to say that lawyers have much more opportunities here, and it is better for journalists to refrain from "temptations", because it is about their status image and responsibility to the audience.

Thus, procedures for collecting external information are usually implemented in several stages: preparation of field documents: questionnaires, protocols, instructions; pilot attempts; basic research; computer mathematical processing; analysis of results; writing media materials.

Since the basis for collecting information is a problem (contradiction of social reality) – use of methods is based on algorithm of creating a classic article: thesis (assumptions), arguments, facts, expert discussion, conclusions and recommendations. The most scientific hypothesis should be based on already partially proven statements and verified facts and be open to verification. If there are several assumptions, they, unlike facts and expert opinions, should not contradict each other. If necessary, an additional journalistic investigation should be conducted.

In general, fact-finding rarely requires a single method or approach, more often it involves alternate methodologies in the context of similar to criminal journalistic serial investigations, which balances on the border of single genre and hyperlocal multimedia conglomerate.

According to well-known investigator Oleksandr Glushko, "valuable information can be contained in a short newspaper article, in a letter, including anonymous one, in an official message. The topic is often born after analyzing statistics, talking to acquaintances or strangers while working on journalistic material. Many investigations begin with a denunciation of incriminating documents [Glushko, 2006, p. 72]. According to John Ullman, the investigative journalist "should see all the trees in the forest, then the forest as a cluster of trees, then every single tree in order to return to the concept of forest again" [Ullman, 1998, p. 44-45].

Open, and sometimes common, databases allow modern media and forensic scientists to unite efforts in fact-checking format, which takes place according to the scheme of scientific activity: object of research, evidence base, access to competent sources, expert comments, logical conclusion. The fact-checking paradigm is modified according to changes in matrix of modern rationalism. Technologies are improving ... But human mental activity invariably remains the main source.

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