In 1990 Garcia, now a professor at Syracuse University, and Dr Peggy Starke Adam, who were both working at the Poynter Institute in Florida, came up with a method to figure out how people read newspapers called Eyetrac. By attaching small cameras which look into the eyes of readers and recall their eye movements, they could tell what readers were attracted to, how long they would read and how they navigated information. This method has been repeated with online readers in a new survey this year. Part of the driving thought behind the research was the hunch that because of the speed of delivery of breaking news by digital and broadcast media, many people already know the news before they come to read it in their newspapers. A recent survey he did of Wall St Journal readers showed that 60% of them know the news before they pick it up in this paper.

The survey involved 600 print and online readers in four US cities, Minneapolis, St Petersburg, Philadelphia and Denver, reading dailies and news websites on “ordinary days” involving no extraordinary news events. 100 people read the StarTribune and 100 the StarTribune.com; 100 read...

Mario García, the great guru of newspaper redesigns worldwide and exponent of WED (writing-editing-design) as a newspaper construction philosophy, was at the World Newspaper Congress and World Editors’ Forum in Cape Town, to tell both sets of participants just how online media is being used by tech-savvy users. His conclusion – for those who may be worried – We do read!

“Rhodes University’s Journalism degree provides one with a solid footing when entering the workplace. It has, without question, allowed me to pursue a challenging and adventurous career path that would otherwise have been more difficult to realise.”

Sherwin Bryce-Price
Weekend Live: SABC 2

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Interactive elements need to be emphasised and if advertising takes up a full page readers ignore it. Graphics get eye attention: but, says Garcia, "books killed sermons." And for those who continue to worry about reading as an issue: "We have not lost our ability to read in depth, and, in fact, reader attention spans have not shortened dramatically or irreversibly.

But when they move online they combine these two types of reading more evidently than they do in print. "People have not lost the ability to read in depth, they are now more selective. One becomes a methodical reader if the content seduces us," but, "you must also create opportunities for scanners, as scanners can turn methodical".

4. In terms of design and navigation of text, Garcia says "online and print are two worlds apart". He still believes that design is aesthetically important for print media but "not so critical" for online reading. Online readers, he believes, are "not into beauty, but utility".

He also made the following points:
- In the 1990 survey of newspaper readers, he and Starke found that teasers were important in luring readers to stories. The 2007 survey shows that they remain important for readers in both print and online.
- Photographs and headlines remain important as drawcards to pages in both environments but in the case of photos they must be "action" pictures – "live" pictures get more attention than staged shots. In the case of headlines the personal address to a "You!" is noticeably useful.
- Graphics get eye attention: but, says Garcia, they have to be explanatory and accessible, charts are difficult to read.
- What about opinion pieces? Print and online, readers are interested in what other readers have to say, and not really in what editors think. In print the letters pages attracted "more attention than we expected".
- Interactive elements need to be emphasised and given attention so that readers can use them.
- If advertising takes up a full page readers ignore it, if it's surrounded by content it gets attention. Colour "is a big draw".

Garcia now has a new philosophy: he punts for how to deal with breaking news: begin online and on mobile technology with the first version of the story, then move it to print, then move it back online with more details. He calls the first version "the report", the print version "the story 1" and the fuller online version – with interactive possibilities – "the story 2". The rationale is "assume the reader knows more than you do" and certainly that by the time the breaking news story reaches the print pages it is already known to readers. The idea of the "newspaper of record" is no longer sustainable in a new technology regime, you have to "begin the record in some other medium" and Garcia says "online is important as drawcards to readers into pages and stories."

Navigational guides like teasers, tips and summaries remain important devices for luring readers into pages and stories.