
Readers Read, Readers Write: A Methodology for the Study of Reading Practices in Media Convergence

Scholarly and Research
Communication

VOLUME 5 / ISSUE 2 / 2014

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Abstract

In this article we propose a set of methodologies to study emerging reading practices in narratives developing simultaneously in various media. We have taken the data left by readers of the Spanish-Argentinian project *Orsai* in the form of blog comments, download rates, and print-run volumes as “reading traces.” We believe these traces shed much light on what is sparking readers’ attention (narrative developments, frequency of publication, interaction with other readers and authors), and in what fashion (comment frequency, volume, and type). Our methodology includes network analysis and visualizations of reading traces in the comparative setting of our case study, and is susceptible to being adapted to other convergence media projects.

Keywords

Reading; Readers; Convergence media; Narrative; Methodological approaches; Distant reading; Magazine; Weblogs; Publishing models; Spanish language; Network analysis

Introduction

The study of reading and readers has always been a research challenge. Readings, as Peter Stockwell calls them, are organic and developing phenomena (2002). Readers and reading, however, have been widely theorized as abstract notions, or as functions of a text (Booth, 1983; Ingarden, 1973; Riffaterre, 1983) as opposed to empirical subjects or as particular happenings embedded in a time, a place, and attached to a reading

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CCSP Press

Scholarly and Research Communication

Volume 5, Issue 2, Article ID 0201149, xx pages

Journal URL: www.src-online.ca

Received December 30, 2013, Accepted January 20, 2014, Published September 8, 2014

Ortega, Élika, de la Rosa, Javier, & Suárez, Juan Luis, (2014). Readers Read, Readers Write: A Methodology for the Study of Reading Practices in Media Convergence. *Scholarly and Research Communication*, 5(2): 0201149, 17 pp.

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material. The difficulties of theorizing the figure of the reader have complicated our views about what flesh and blood readers do. The immediate challenge for a concrete study of reading is the instability and lack of access to what goes on when an individual reads, for example, a story. Readings leave very few traces that can be studied, among them sales rates, marginalia, and letter or diary records (Manguel, 2006). When available, it is not uncommon that these records belong to well-known individuals and, as a consequence, studies of reading based on such records are inevitably the exploration of a particular person's readings.

The turn of the twenty-first century has seen the development of many diverse electronic reading platforms onto which large amounts of data are deposited by a multitude of readers (number of downloads, e-readers' underlining features, Twitter hashtags, blog commenting, etc.). The affordances of newer reading platforms extend our idea of the practice inasmuch as they redirect readers' approaches to various textual materials in two ways. On the one hand, reading is not subscribed to print books or periodicals, and on the other, new text materialities foster distinct forms of interacting with a text and other readers. The inclusion of adjacent practices (commenting, downloading) into what constitutes a basic notion of reading radically modifies the characterization of readers beyond the sole act of decoding written signs. Further complicating our notions of what reading and readers are in literary contexts is that much of the content published in electronic media moves on the still-problematic margins of the literary, the fictional, the autobiographical, and the informational.

Additionally, in the last couple of decades we have witnessed an ever more intricate media ecology affecting not only the distribution of content and the boundaries of media industries but also the production and the consumption of narrative contents. We take media convergence as "a historically open-ended migration of communicative practices across diverse material technologies and social institutions" (Jensen, 2010, p. 15), which nonetheless is "not just about bringing about transformation through the dissemination of new information, but also about maintaining relationships, about maintaining the continuity of cultures through time" (Meikle & Young, 2012, p. 10). Ultimately, in the narrative realm, we follow Henry Jenkins' (2006) definition of convergence as "the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want" (p. 2). We sustain that in media convergence narratives, distinctive kinds of reading take place in each medium where the story unfolds. Nonetheless, the fact that narratives are weaved together across diverse media by the cohesion of their story world makes it necessary to see the connections or disconnections between specific, yet convergent, reading processes.

In this article, we take advantage of the proliferation of media used by authors and editors to tell a single story and the data poured into each one of its reading platforms as "reading traces." The specificity of the types of data found in each platform offers the possibility of looking into distinct facets of the complex act of reading in media convergence. Information obtained from reading traces (mostly in written form) might provide limited access into what readers do; however, it does open the door for the exploration of a broad spectrum of practices based on data from a wide variety of

readers. Many media convergence narratives following the transmedia model and largely based on TV or film are difficult to theorize in terms of reading; examples of this are Jenkins' exploration of *The Matrix* (2006), Karin Littau's studies on *Alien* (2011), or Angela Ndalanian's work on *Lost* (2012). Other convergent narratives, however, continue to be based on text, albeit rendered in various print and electronic media. Among them, blogs have stood out for facilitating and encouraging reader comments, a valuable source of reading traces. Our analyses set the ground for the study of media convergence narratives as comparative studies of reading in electronic and print platforms too. The methodology can, thus, be extrapolated to similar convergent media reading phenomena.

Overview

We take as a case study *Orsai*, a Spanish-Argentinian literary and journalistic project. The project's history is fundamental to appreciate its relevance in the context of media convergence narrative, and its potential in reshaping readerly practices. *Orsai* started as Hernán Casciari's personal blog in 2004 and, since 2010, mutated into a complex media convergence project. In September 2010, *Orsai* became a print magazine distributed online, by preorder, and in packs of ten: a business model that fostered the formation of small reading communities around the extended Spanish-speaking world. The blog turned into a "backstage," where magazine news, information, and distribution schemes were announced and managed. Within a year, *Orsai* started publishing other print books, launched the bricks and mortar Orsai Bar in Buenos Aires with support from reader investors, and though intermittently, published Kindle and iPad versions of the magazine. For its second year, *Orsai* shed its blog platform and migrated to a more complex one. In the new website, the original blog was split into three content-based ones: Redacción (editorial department), Orsai (Casciari's creative space), and Bar (where events were announced and reviewed). Another section compiled Web versions of the magazine articles, inviting readers to comment on them as they would on a blog. The online store was also integrated into the site. Later on, an iPad application was launched, and the magazine and other print publications were consistently published on Kindle as well. The same organization held for the project's third and last year. In *Orsai*'s history of media change aside from the print version, only the free PDF magazine, released shortly after an issue's hard copies were distributed, remained constant from the beginning. *Orsai*'s history is characterized by media transformations leading to cumulative involvement from readers who became not just an audience to the project, but its collaborators and allies. Furthermore, its history provides fertile ground to examine how readers reacted to and adopted the media progression of the project and how they read the different incarnations. The project's history is even more relevant because many of the writings deal with *Orsai*'s own developments – its *story*. In other words, the uniting transmedia narrative of the project is *Orsai* itself.

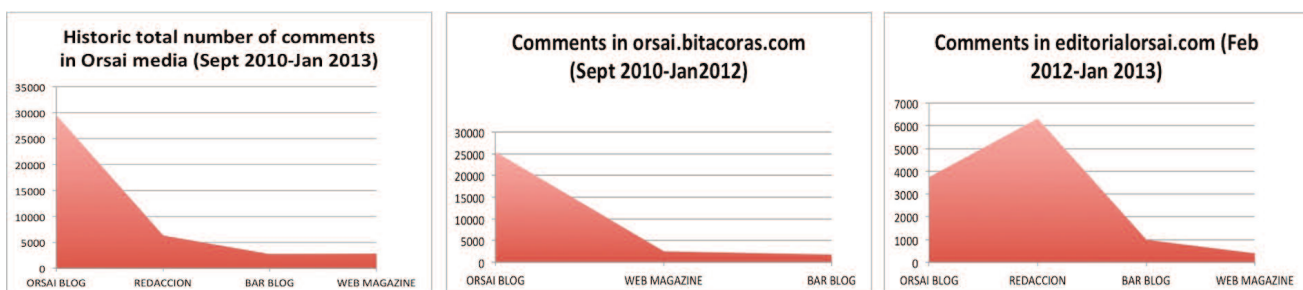
The role of the reader and the borders of what reading entails in *Orsai* are even more complicated by the fact that readers crossed over and became magazine collaborators, investors, distributors, publicists, etc. Of course, not all of the ways in which readers engaged with *Orsai* can be taken as a reading trace, but some did denote a readerly intention. Out of the different facets mentioned, we take three as reading traces 1) comments left on all the media that allow it, 2) print magazine purchases, and 3) downloads of the PDF version of the magazine.¹ Our dataset comprises 709 "main

texts” or “pieces” (all of the articles, blog posts, and miscellaneous writings published under the *Orsai* name); 104 authors; six “media” (print *Orsai*, Web magazine, PDF *Orsai*, Orsai blog, Redacción blog, Bar blog); and over 42,000 reader comments left by 6,833 individual readers (identified as a user who commented at least once, anywhere in *Orsai*). Collected data covers over two years of *Orsai* development from September 2010 to January 2013. Using this dataset we have been able to carry out four types of analyses: comments distribution, network analysis, reader permanence, and comment depth. Our methodology seeks to offer answers to questions such as what kinds of media or narrative content piqued more reader interest? How long was reader attention sustained and under what mechanisms, both technological as well as narrative? And who was reading what, in what media, and in what fashion? An approach such as the one presented here remains, by necessity, limited by the availability of data. Nevertheless, the fact that our dataset was not obtained under an experimental model but draws on the organic development of the project, does provide many insights regarding the emerging and changing reading practices in media convergence narratives.

A methodology for the study of reading

The first type of analysis aimed to see whether each distinct media originated unique or similar kinds of interaction as seen in the amount and distribution of comments, both temporally – according to each of the project’s development – and in each medium. Not surprisingly the distribution among the four blogs – including the Web magazine – follow Clay Shirky’s power law (2003). Orsai blog received the most comments throughout the period under examination, which is partly due to the fact that Orsai blog had been active the longest. Nevertheless, when we put into consideration the project’s ongoing media development, especially its migration from its original blog platform to the new convergent site in February 2012, the distribution of comments starts varying (see Figure 1).

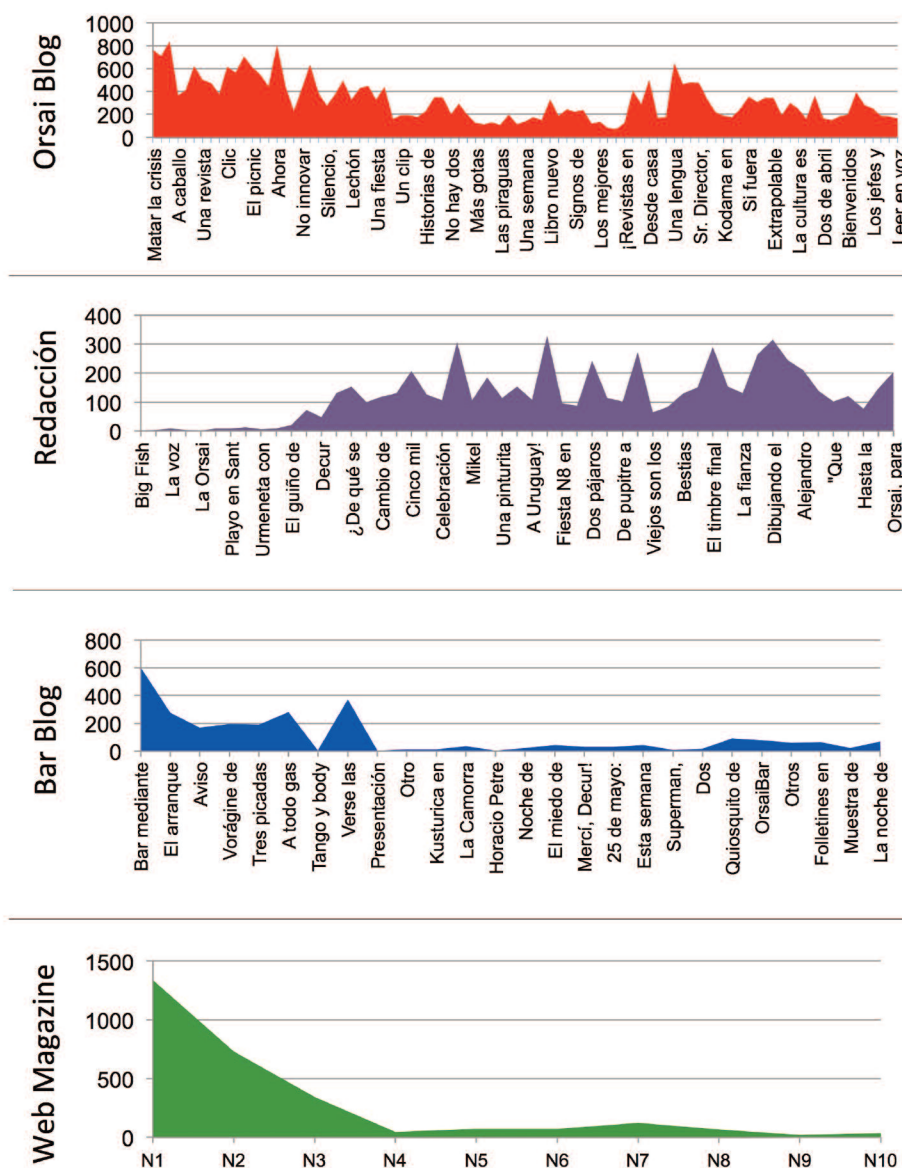
Figure 1: Total number of comments reflecting Orsai’s historic media development.



The move to the new website followed two phenomena caused by the limitations of the original blog platform in contrast to the growing success of the project: on the one hand, too much reader participation in the project that resulted in website malfunctions; and on the other, *Orsai*’s uninhibited media development and its parallel narrative. Moreover, the move was also a reorganization of the contents narrated in *Orsai*. Orsai blog went back to being Casciari’s personal creative blog space, while Redacción took the place of the project’s backstage; Bar blog dealt with the events and developments concerning the physical location of the project and, finally, Web magazine gathered all of the issues published up to that point in a single site with

commenting tools like the other blogs. An individual look at the comments left in each medium sheds more light on readers' practices (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Total comments per piece organized by the piece's publication date.



In this first approach we only consider the total number of comments left in each medium, but even at this entry-point level of analysis it is possible to observe where reader attention was directed. In contrast to Orsai blog and, later on, Redacción, the other two platforms received little reader attention. The larger amount of comments, initially found in Orsai blog, moved to Redacción upon its launch. The flow of reader comments from one medium of publication to another signals that shifts in reader attention were influenced by the media developments of the project. However, given that each of the three blogs and the Web magazine have a particular content focus, this first approach also points to reader content preference, and how increased attention in one blog over others might be the result of a specific type of content being published there. As seen in the graphs above, the prominence of Orsai blog dwindled once the

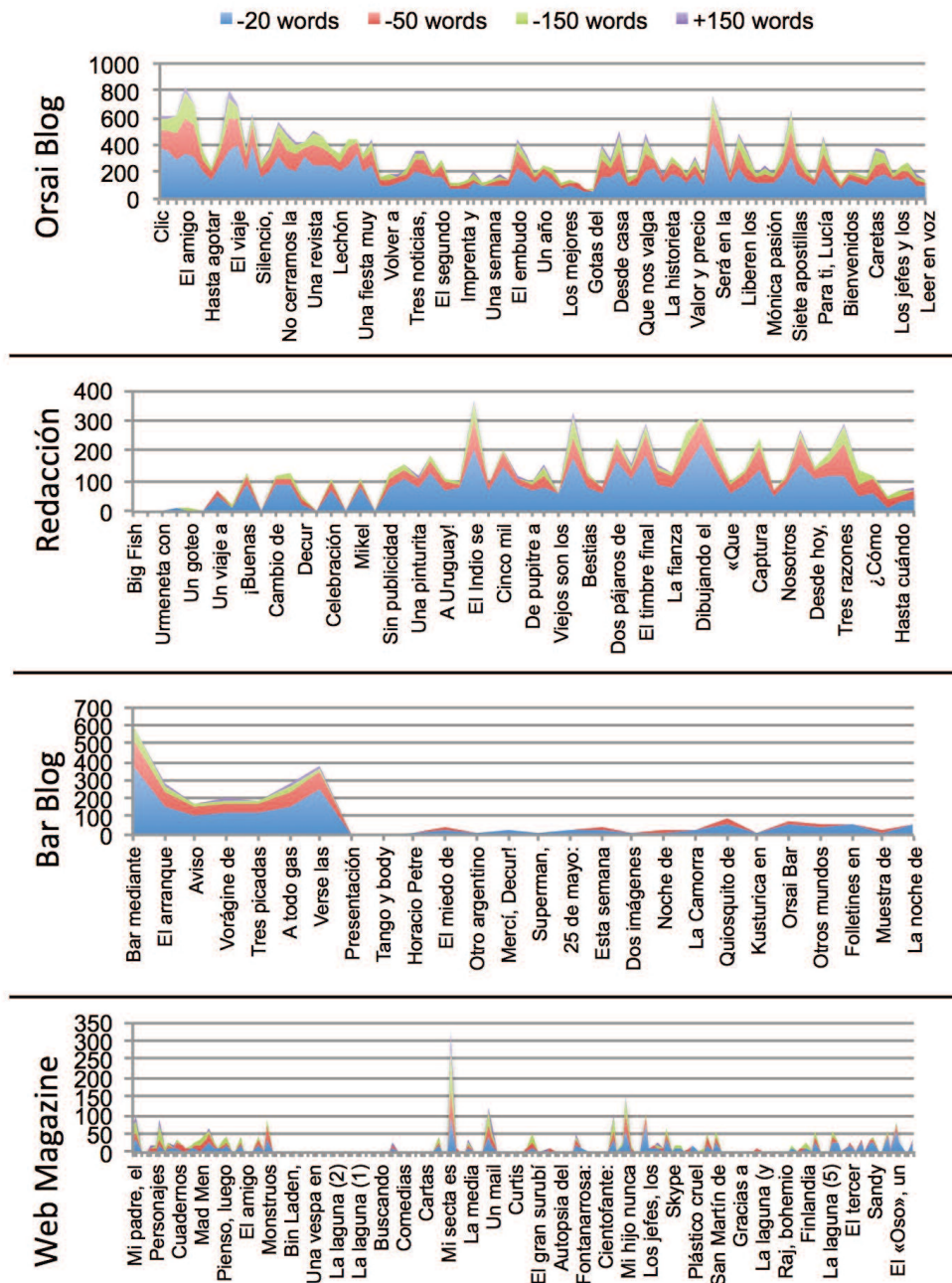
project's developments became the subject matter of Redacción blog. We take this as a token of how the unfolding of *Orsai's* story, published in the *Orsai* and Redacción blogs, elicited much more reader interest and participation than the content of the magazine – articles, chronicles, stories, et cetera – or other developments such as the physical bar.

As can be seen in Figure 2, in the period under examination, both the Bar blog and the Web magazine received relatively few comments. Our theorization regarding this difference is that these two media functioned as the electronic repositories of their physical, off-line instantiations: the print magazine and the bar. Although the bar constituted the main avenue of face-to-face interaction in the project, its digital correlate did not carry much weight. The need for a real-world component in order to ensure the sustainability of online communities has been established for quite some time now (Shapiro, 1999). However, while *Orsai Bar* was a radical actualization of the project, it would seem that its area of influence remained in the off-line world and was not mirrored online. It could even be theorized that in regards to the bar, readers were divided by the off-line component, which made it not available to everybody, thus explaining the decreased levels of participation in the online venue of the bar. The geographic location of the bar limited the amount of readers that were able to partake in the online dialogue since the discussion depended on the bar events. This constituted a deep variance from the worldwide scope of the *Orsai* and Redacción blogs, which only existed online.

Most intriguing, however, are the equally low rates of comments in the Web magazine. It is clear that readers opted out of this commenting avenue, which was very popular for the first three issues, but seems to have been mostly abandoned from issue four onwards. It can be speculated that the decline of online discussion of the magazine was caused by a combination of three factors: 1) consideration of the texts not related to the project remained embedded in their original print medium of publication as opposed to the larger narrated *Orsai* world, and thus, appealed to individual and private reading practices; 2) discussion of the texts took place in smaller face-to-face communities formed during the early stages of the project; or 3) readers did not experience the same kind of exchange between them and the magazine's authors – especially in comparison with Casciari's own involvement – and, thus, were less inclined to comment.

The drastic differences in reader participation in each of the online media could suggest that some platforms were successful while others failed. Conversely, we suggest they be seen as an indicator that each medium fulfilled its particular convergent functions. While the *Orsai* and Redacción blogs were clearly successful at keeping readers' ongoing interest alive, the more reduced, and allegedly local, involvement in the Bar blog catered to a smaller demographic that, nonetheless, remained active. Finally, low rates of reader participation in the Web magazine might be indicative of how the magazine – primarily a print medium in the project – functioned as a less-public medium for readers and passed on this feature to its online instantiation. Consequently, low comment rates in the Web magazine might be an indicator that practices more closely associated with the print medium does not include commenting on the pieces, at least not at the same rate and rhythm as other online media.

Figure 3: Total comments per piece plotted by the posting date of the last comment.



A temporal outlook at the distribution of reader comments illustrates a diverse rhythm of publication and reading. Magazines were published every two to four months, while blog entries were posted every few days. In this fashion, speedier publishing might have been fostering a bigger sense of urgency to participate. As the development of the project had been gestated and narrated in the Orsai and Redacción blogs, readers sought to be at the frontline, anticipating and witnessing what would come next almost as it happened. In order to explore this, we carried out a comparative temporal distribution of blog posts and comments looking for correspondences between date of publication and commenting. Plotting articles chronologically with their total number of comments, as in Figure 2, we are able to observe which ones were commented on the most. Plotting articles according to the last comment they received, we are able to

see which ones have been commented on the longest (see Figure 3). When compared, the graphs in Figure 2 and Figure 3 are almost identical for the Orsai, Redacción, and Bar blogs, but radically different for the Web magazine. Similarity between totals and temporal distribution indicate that the total of comments per post was done very close to the original date of publication. The dissimilarities reveal that comments were made at different times.

A comparison of these graphs suggest that the relevance of a blog post in Orsai, Redacción, and Bar – measured by the last comment posted on it – did not carry on much longer after its original publication date. Reader attention in these media was intense and short-lived. In the Web magazine articles, however, this was quite different. The preference for the first three issues is clearly indicated when we observe the totals, but the fact that articles published in these early issues continued to excite reader activity long after they were published signals that reader interest in them lasted much longer. A look at only the totals might wrongly suggest that the Web magazine almost stopped receiving reader attention after the third issue when, in fact, readers did not cease to comment on it. While the constant updates in blogs motivated much more participation in real time, they were not revisited long past their publication date. Conversely, the slower process of the magazine publication seems to have fostered a longer and more gradual response from readers, at least as can be seen from the reading traces left on the Web version. The number of comments left on the Web magazine suggests that its area of influence was not online but in other media avenues. As a matter of fact, rates of print magazine purchases and PDF downloads reveal that the magazine was read much more than it was commented on (see Table 1).

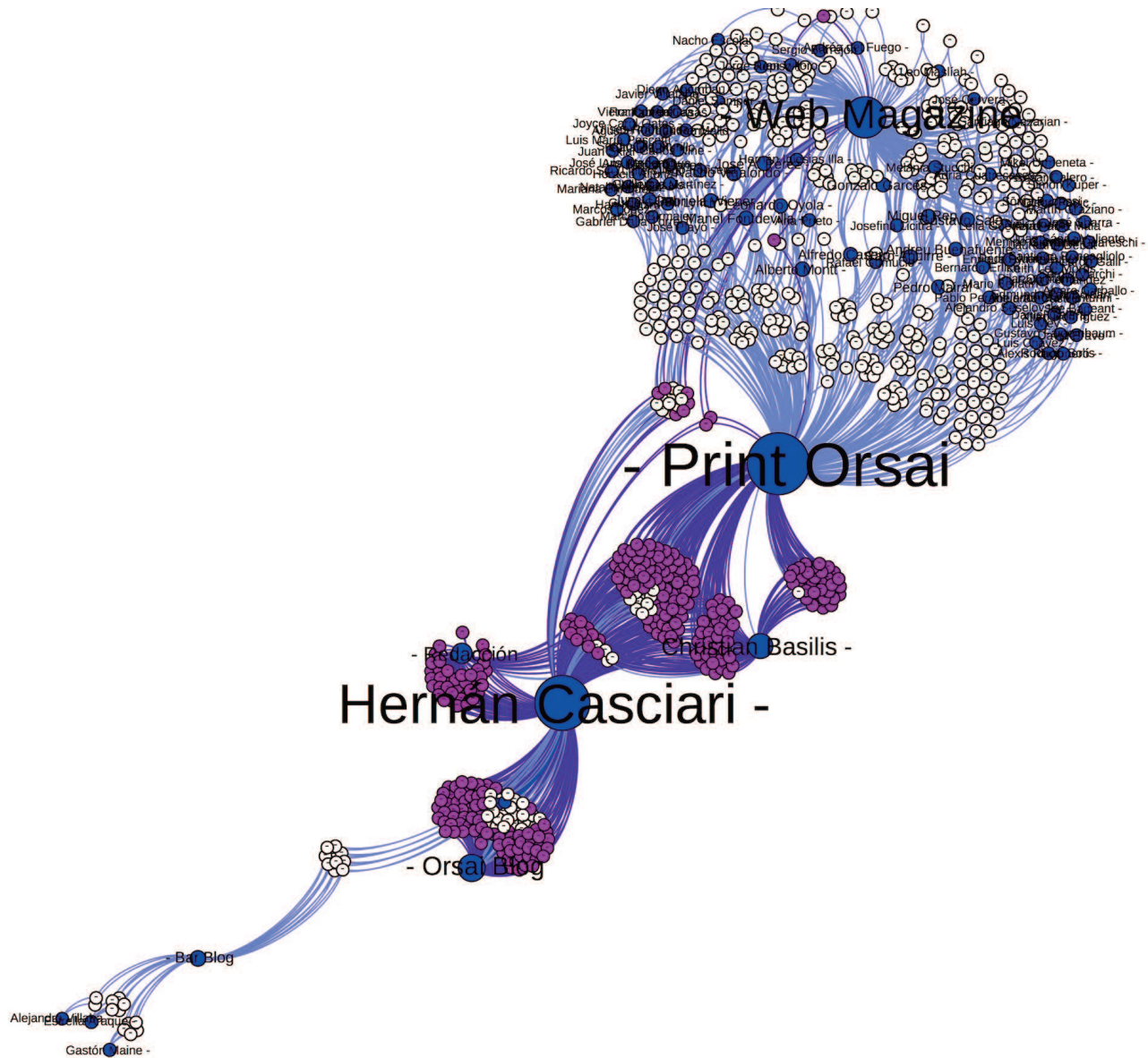
Table 1: Print runs and purchases, PDF downloads, and total comments for issues 1–10.

Issue	Print Run	PDF Downloads	Comments
N1	10,080	85,505	1338
N2	6,000	474,851	730
N3	10,000	356,580	342
N4	7,000	455,452	44
N5	6,000	530,947	73
N6	6,000	101,839	72
N7	6,000	129,179	123
N8	6,000	176,508	67
N9	6,000	65,743	21
N10	6,000	61,390	33

The PDF version of the magazine attracted much reader attention, and the impressive number of downloads can partly be attributed to the fact that it was distributed for free and almost simultaneously to the print issue's launch. Through the metrics offered by the *issuu.com* site² we have been able to corroborate that the circulation of the magazine was much broader than could originally be expected from the comment totals in the Web version, and even from the individual issue print runs. Once again, the disparity seen in reader participation in the Web magazine, especially in light of its apparently massive readership, suggests that in *Orsai*, as is ideal in transmedia models,

“each medium does what it does best” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 96). Of course, downloads do not equal readings, but they do denote a readerly intention more akin to the print version than to the Web one. The magazine, thus, seems to have caused just as much reader interest as the other *Orsai* media, but the practices it fostered and the traces of such readings remain for the most part out of our reach.

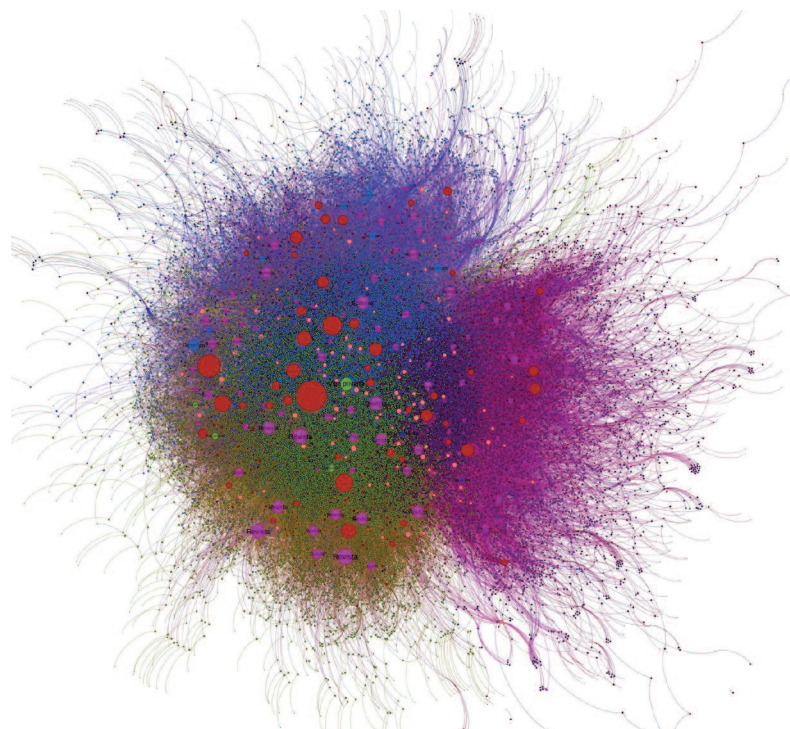
Figure 4: Network view of *Orsai* media, authors, and pieces only showing the distribution of self-referential texts, coloured in magenta, throughout.



The second approach through which we have examined our dataset is network analysis. Measures of centrality and in-degree have shed light on what “pieces” received the most comments and in what medium. In the graph database, each “piece” was marked with the genre assigned by *Orsai* editors. Although each blog and the magazine had their own set of categories or genres, we have compiled a composite list, and further marked each genre as either “self-referential” – writings dealing with the developments of *Orsai*

– or “non-self-referential” – those dealing with matters outside of the project. The division of the dataset into these two particular subsets follows close reading observations as well as the texts’ authorship. As it would be expected, the vast majority of the self-referential texts were penned by one of the editors, whereas non-self-referential pieces are the work of over one hundred guest writers. Furthermore, it is also interesting to observe that the self-referential dataset and, indeed, the editors’ pen were, in different degrees, present in all of the media (see Figure 4). The well spread-out distribution of self-referential texts is a clear mark of how *Orsai*’s story was the uniting narrative crossing the entire project, though clearly more prominent in the Orsai and Redacción blogs, and in the print magazine. The reduced presence of self-referential texts in the Web magazine along with the lack of comments in that medium, again, points toward a heightened reader interest in the project’s development narrative.

Figure 5: Network view of Orsai including readers and comments. High-commenting readers are coloured in red and sized according to their output (out-degree). Highly commented articles are sized by amount of comments received (in-degree). Those coloured in magenta belong to the self-referential dataset, while non-self-referential ones are shown in blue, purple, and green.

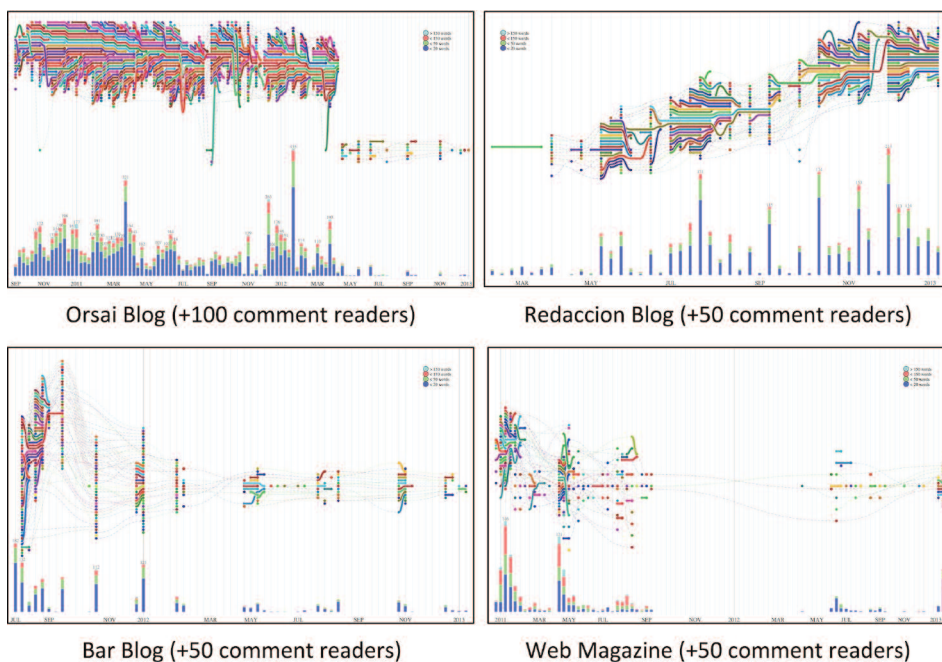


Visualizations, including the large amount of comments (over 42,000) left by more than 6,500 readers, made it evident that the scale of readers’ influence in this project is impossible to overlook (see Figure 5). This analysis has allowed us to explore the appearance of very strong reader figures – high-volume commenters with upwards of one hundred published comments. The presence of these readers showcases how a reduced circle exercised a very large influence in the network and, arguably, in the project as well, since they might have been collaborating as distributors, for example. Nevertheless, due to the massive volume of readers with lower commenting rates – about 4,500 of them only commented once or twice – it also becomes obvious that the

success of the project does not rely exclusively on the support of a few readers, but on the combined contributions of a few thousand. Furthermore, one of the two top highest commenters is Hernán Casciari himself, who monitored the interactions around the Orsai and Redacción blogs and engaged in many discussions, both literary as well as practical, when it came to the project. His constant engagement in dialogue with readers was, no doubt, a magnet for further reader participation. Anatoliy Gruzd (2012) has observed the celebrity status of authors – which we measured in terms of network centrality – in other literary online communities. For Gruzd, the figure of the author continues to incite much audience participation, and we argue that Casciari's presence in the blogs' comment sections was determinant to the distinct forms and patterns of interaction seen in each *Orsai* media. The fact that the magazine's guest writers rarely lent themselves to dialogue with *Orsai* readers might be another explanation of why reader participation was so diminished in the Web magazine.

Network analysis has also proved that it is the self-referential subset that attracted the most reader engagement. With a few exceptions, in-degree measures in the network are consistently higher for the genres belonging to the self-referential subset. Reader focus was, thus, very much aimed at the development of *Orsai*: a project they felt they had helped shape. This preliminary conclusion should not be taken to mean that self-referential texts were more significant to the project than the rest, but that they fulfilled the fundamental task of maintaining reader attention on a regular basis. As a matter of fact it would be risky to theorize that self-referential texts were more important on the grounds that they offered more reading-traces data, when we lack comparable amounts of information about what kinds of reading practices were elicited by the non-self-referential subset. Moreover, in *Orsai*, just as we can observe a division of media, it is also possible to distinguish the development of different narrative threads, one of which is evidently the project's narrative, but others – specific stories and magazine sections – might have had a smaller area of influence.

Figure 6: Storylines showing high-commenting readers' presence throughout the time they have been active.



Similarly, the appearance of a reduced circle of readers commenting heavily should not distract us from the contributions of the thousands of readers who did so only a few times. Although it is easy to see the stark relevance of high-commenting readers, it is fundamental to keep in mind that it was, in fact, the impulse of low-commenting readers that gave the project its stability and robustness. In order to explore the relevance of high- and low-commenting readers in each medium, we have plotted a timeline of high-commenting readers using Storylines (see Figure 6). Originally developed to visualize communities of software development (Ogawa & Ma, 2010), we have adapted Storylines to explore commenting dynamics. The aim of this particular exploration was to observe the permanence of returning readers. Though similar to metrics of returning visitors on website analytics, in this visualization we aimed to see how constantly high-commenting readers really commented, and whether their participation was spread out for the duration of the project, or if it had come in spurts.

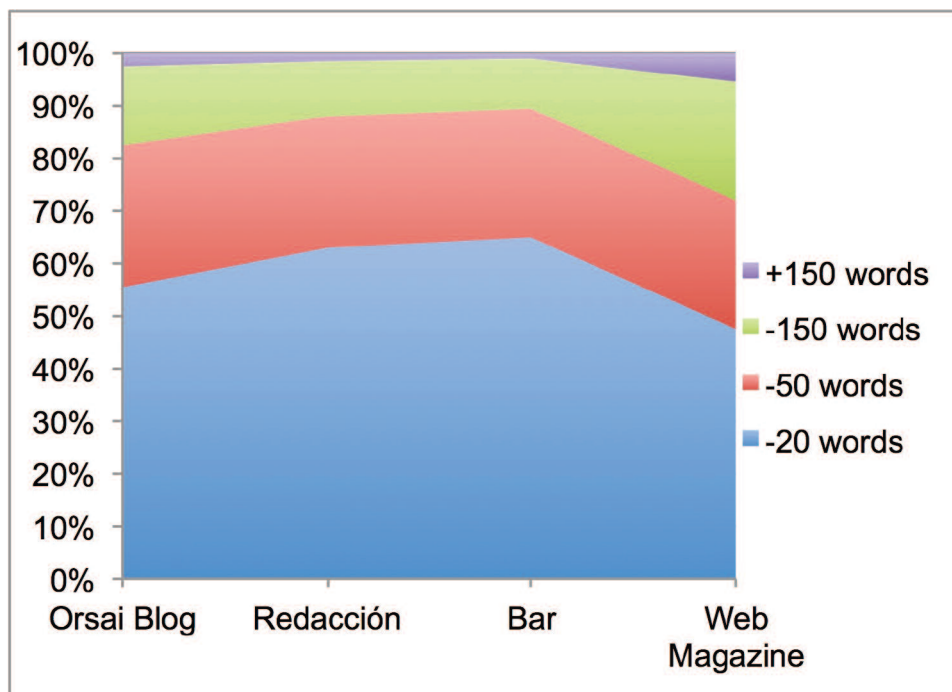
The visualization follows a timeline from left to right that is divided roughly by week. Each colour line represents one high-commenting reader and the flow of her activity during the period. Parallel lines indicate individual readers who commented simultaneously. As seen in Figure 6, we have observed reading traces in each separate medium and used two distinct measures (+100 comment readers for Orsai blog and +50 comment readers for Redacción and Bar blogs and the Web magazine). This distinction was based on our previous observations regarding total amounts of comments published in each medium and sought to reflect analogous dynamics, though at their particular scale.

In terms of loyalty, through Storylines we have been able to observe that there was indeed a very reduced group of high-commenting readers spanning the whole 28-month dataset. However, there have also been noticeable fluctuations, and high-commenting readers both abandoned the project and joined at different moments. Furthermore, from these visualizations it is undeniable that the high-commenting readers' fields of action were the Orsai and Redacción blogs, whereas Bar blog and the Web magazine attracted high-commenting reader attention intermittently. We argue that the resulting "gaps" are the result of two phenomena: 1) although high-commenting reader contributions were rather constant and widespread, especially in the Orsai and Redacción blogs, they were not uninterrupted in the overall dimension of the project. Gaps in these visualizations – moments when there were other readers commenting on any of the platforms – suggest that at such times it was up to low-commenting readers to maintain the constant, large amount of overall participation. In the Bar blog and the Web magazine, the dynamics, though similar, can be observed at a much smaller scale. While it is true that these two media have fewer reading traces, it is possible to infer from them that the dramatic blank spaces signal the relevance of low-commenting readers participation much more evidently; 2) the second phenomenon observable in these visualizations is the media developments *Orsai* has undergone. The migration of reader attention from Orsai blog to Redacción early in 2012 following the launch of the new site is noticeable. Also worth noting is the decrease in postings and in comments in Orsai blog and the slow adoption of Redacción during its first few months. Additionally, in the Bar storyline we can trace important "episodes" as suggested by higher levels of participation. A close look at the posts published at these times revealed their correspondence with project landmarks, such as anniversaries and

launch parties for magazine issues – an indication of how this particular medium functioned in direct relationship to its off-line counterpart.

Although these gaps reveal the importance of low-commenting readers, the issue of how to account for their contributions is hard to resolve. Certainly the prolonged success of the project during three years signals the importance of low-commenting readers and silent readers alike. An individualized look at each comment seems close to impossible; nevertheless, we have taken a pattern approach that seeks to include manifestations of reading traces as diverse as possible. From Figure 3 it was already possible to see that comments were divided by number of words into four categories: -20 words, -50 words, -150 words, and +150 words. We use this categorization as a model of reader engagement depth. Although limited by necessity, these measurements provide a working background to observe certain generalities (see Figure 7). The first results are that most comments are very short interventions of -20 words, while the least common are comments of +150 words. Interesting in the chart below is how, proportionately, there is both a smaller amount of -20 word comments, and a larger amount of -150 and +150 word ones in the Web magazine.

Figure 7: In this chart it is possible to observe how even when longer comments are equally scarce across platforms, there is a slight peak in the Web magazine.

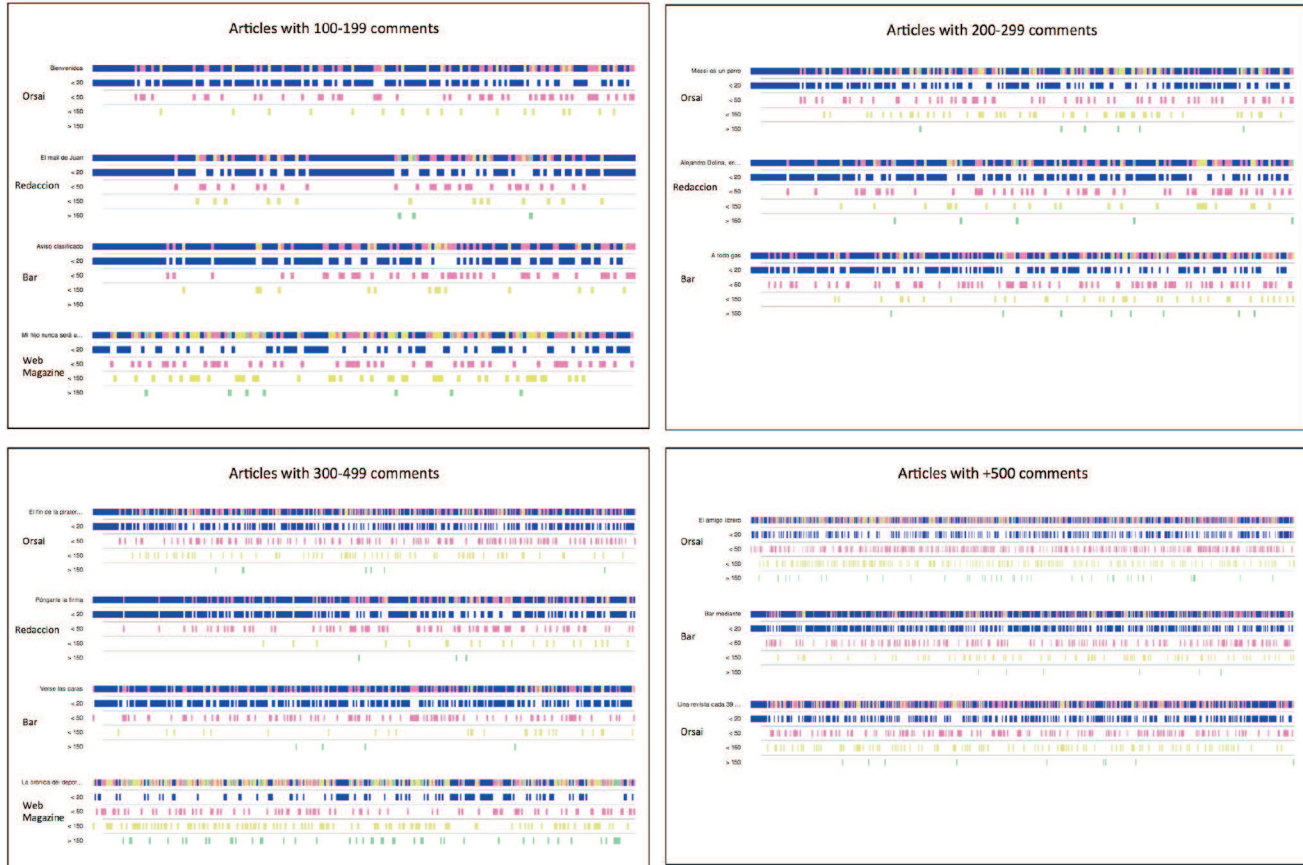


A deeper look into samples of each medium provides a clearer idea of how types of comments are distributed, and how readers approached specific articles in each medium. Using these categories we separated the main texts dataset according to medium and comments totals. Because of different commenting rates in each medium, subset borders were adjusted to account for the subtleties of each medium. At the same time, we aimed to provide an analogous frame for a fair comparison between texts eliciting a broadly similar response, but much more nuanced when looked at in detail. As it would be expected, as the comments totals increased in any given text, so did the

diversity among the different types. The resulting depth-time series (see Figure 8) provide several insights into the dynamics of each medium and of *Orsai* as a whole.

Figure 8: Depth-time series chronologically plotting the publication of readers' comments in each medium. Each colour corresponds to one of four comment categories (-20 words, -50 words, -150 words, +150 words).

Types of Comments Arranged Chronologically in Sample Articles



Close examination of samples belonging to each category has shown similarities in the content and tone. Simply put, -20 word comments posted immediately after the main text's publication tend to be congratulatory and thanking remarks. They also include readers' emerging practices, such as the PRI game, which is a competition to be the first one to comment on a just-published text. Comments belonging to the two in-between categories (-50 words and -150 words) usually follow in time and show many overlaps in content and focus. In these, readers usually commented on particular aspects of the post giving a short impression. Finally, comments longer than 150 words are mostly either "letters" to Casciari, reflections on a controversial topic a post might touch upon, and readers' glosses on the text. While this is a generalization applicable to the dataset in its entirety, an even closer look into each medium allows us to see that the pattern outlined above is more evident in the Orsai, Bar, and Redacción blogs, where a bigger number of -20 words comments are posted.

In contrast, even in articles with lower comment rates, reading traces in the Web magazine are noticeably more varied and longer. Together with the previous argument of how readers kept returning to the magazine's texts long after their original publication dates, the incidence of longer comments also suggest a slower, even more reflective reader involvement with the main texts published in this medium. Also worth noticing is the lower incidence of +150 word comments in proportion to the total number of comments. In articles with 100–199 comments, the samples from both the Orsai and Bar blogs did not receive a single longer comment. We argue that, though essential for the everyday dynamics of *Orsai*, such as reader-to-reader “passing” dialogues, shorter comments are mostly uninvolved with the main texts. As a matter of fact, a token of this is the above-mentioned PRI game, which, due to its time-sensitive nature, surely entailed commenting without first reading the post. Nevertheless, they are also indicative of the extended practices emerging apropos the reading of a narrative and the creation of a media convergent environment. Conversely, though they might be more closely tied to the contents of a piece, longer comments seem to resemble a more conventional approach to reading (close and deep) followed by a well-thought-out reflection.

Conclusion

By taking download rates, print run issues, and blog comments as reading traces, we have proposed an examination of readers' changing practices. At the heart of this article lie simple questions relating to such practices: who reads what (focus on content), where (focus on medium of publication), when, and how (temporal distribution and pattern). In that way, our study provides a framework for the comparative study of readers' practices in various media. As elaborated through our analysis of *Orsai*, even though the distinct media types seem to be fostering the same kind of activity – commenting – the outcome is quite unique to each one. Focusing on content, we have suggested that increased attention is closely related to the happenings being narrated, mostly the uniting *Orsai* narrative. Perhaps due to their constant and varied forms of involvement with the project, readers flocked to that narrative line as they considered themselves protagonists and even co-creators of it. Temporal distributions of comments have illuminated patterns in reading practices, which we can link to the content poured into each media as well. Happenings taking place synchronically received rapid and short-lived attention, while magazine content pieces fostered slower and seemingly more reflexive readings. We further argue that the temporal distribution of reading practices can be attributed to residual conventions both in print as well as electronic media. The intense and rapid exchanges seen in the Orsai and Redacción blogs are radically different from the slower rhythm seen in the Web magazine. We propose the idea of residual conventions – a development of Meikle and Young's (2012) principles of contestation and continuity – as a fundamental one in media convergence narrative where practices “exclusive” to each medium inform and modify what goes on in the others, but still retain some of their deeply ingrained habits. Parallel to this is how *Orsai*'s connecting story was illuminated and rearranged with every new media instantiation.

Media convergence narratives are becoming more and more popular, thus marking a development in our general reading practices and competences. Reading, in this context, comprises much more than just decoding written signs, it means encoding

them, too, within the field of interactions delineated by the scope of the convergent narrative, and the group and individual dynamics it fosters. Additionally, because of its distinctive components, a narrative like *Orsai* is a laboratory in which to test and observe changing reading behaviours. Many aspects of reading and reader practices remain locked and inaccessible to researchers, and much work still needs to be done. Nevertheless, important developments and insights are being reached thanks not only to the very progression of reading media and the fact that it facilitates the collection of data closely aligned to reading practices, but also thanks to innovative tools and analytic methodologies that aid in the understanding of the complex figure of the reader, such as the ones presented here.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Canada Foundation for Innovation. We would like to thank Hernán Casciari who has facilitated this research and provided much data from his project.

Notes

1. Purchases and other data from Kindle and iPad versions have not been included in our research due to the intermittence with which they have been made available. Similarly, though Hernán Casciari himself has provided data, analytics information has not been made available to us.

2. Since we concluded our data collection in May 2013, *issuu.com* has stopped offering metrics regarding a publication's number of "impressions" (i.e., how many times it has been downloaded). Therefore, it became impossible to continue tracing up to what extent the PDF version of *Orsai* is current.

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