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## RESEARCH

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# THE ROLE OF AUDIOVISUAL PRODUCTION RESEARCHER IN THE TREATMENT OF AUDIOVISUAL DOCUMENTATION

*El rol del audiovisual production researcher en el tratamiento de la  
documentación audiovisual*

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## ABSTRACT

The roles in the treatment of audiovisual documentation have a great variety of denominations. Among the most common are Production Researcher, TV Researcher, Film Researcher, Program Researcher, and Video Librarian. Although the names vary, the functions are limited to the processing, storage, custody, and dissemination of audiovisual collections. The definition of a new role that in addition to carrying out the activities of the previous ones, participates in the audiovisual production process, will overcome the limitations presented by the audiovisual documentary filmmaker. The objectives of the study were: 1) identify the traditional roles of the information professional in the treatment of audiovisual documentation, 2) to base the Audiovisual Production Researcher as a new role in the treatment of audiovisual documentation. The present study classifies as descriptive with a theoretical contribution. The analytical-synthetic, historical-logical, inductive-deductive, systemic-structural, and classical documentary analysis methods were used to obtain results. The role of Audiovisual Production Researcher is defined as a professional with an active role in the development of audiovisuals. Participates in the conception of the idea (planning phase), writing the script, and uses metadata or descriptors in the conception of the

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idea; Guaranteed greater organization for the subsequent work of realization and processing.

**KEYWORDS:** Audiovisual Researcher Production - Audiovisual processing - Audiovisual documentation - Audiovisual production - Processing of audiovisual information

## **RESUMEN**

Los roles en el tratamiento de la documentación audiovisual tienen una gran variedad de denominaciones. Entre las más comunes se encuentran Production Researcher, TV Researcher, Film Researcher, Programme Researcher y Video Librarian. Aunque las denominaciones varían, las funciones se limitan al procesamiento, almacenamiento, custodia y difusión de las colecciones audiovisuales. La definición de un nuevo rol que además de realizar las actividades de los anteriores, participe en el proceso de producción audiovisual, permitirá superar las limitaciones que presenta el documentalista audiovisual. Se plantean como objetivos del estudio: 1) Identificar los roles tradicionales del profesional de la información en el tratamiento de la documentación audiovisual, 2) Fundamentar el Audiovisual Production Researcher como un nuevo rol en el tratamiento de la documentación audiovisual. El presente estudio clasifica como descriptivo con aporte teórico. Para la obtención de resultados se emplearon los métodos analítico-sintético, histórico-lógico, inductivo-deductivo, sistémico-estructural y el análisis documental clásico. Se define el rol del Audiovisual Production Researcher como un profesional con un papel activo en la elaboración de los audiovisuales. Participa en la concepción de la idea (fase de planificación), elaboración del guion y emplea metadatos o descriptores en la concepción de la idea; garantizado mayor organización para el posterior trabajo de realización y procesamiento.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Audiovisual Production Researcher - Tratamiento audiovisual - Documentación audiovisual - Producción audiovisual - Procesamiento de la información audiovisual

## **O PAPEL DO AUDIOVISUAL PRODUCTION RESEARCHER NO TRATAMENTO DA DOCUMENTAÇÃO AUDIOVISUAL**

### **RESUMO**

Os papéis no tratamento da documentação audiovisual tem uma grande variedade de denominações. Entre Os mais comuns se encontram Production Researcher, TV Researcher, Film Researcher, Programme Researcher e Video Librarian. Apesar de que as denominações variam, as funções se limitam ao processamento, armazenamento, custódia e difusão das coleções audiovisuais. A definição de um novo papel que além de executar as atividades dos anteriores, participe no processo de produção audiovisual, permitirá superar as limitações que apresenta o

documentarista audiovisual. São definidos como objetivos do estudo: 1) Identificar os papéis tradicionais do profissional da informação no tratamento da documentação audiovisual, 2) Sustentar o Audiovisual Production Researcher como um novo papel no tratamento da documentação audiovisual. O presente estudo se classifica como descritivo com aporte teórico. Para a obtenção de resultados usaram-se os métodos analítico-sintético, histórico-lógico, indutivo-dedutivo, sistêmico-estrutural e a análise documental clássica. Se define o papel Audiovisual Production Researcher como um profissional com um papel ativo na elaboração dos audiovisuais. Participa na concepção da ideia (fase de planejamento), elaboração do roteiro e emprega metadados ou descritores na concepção da ideia; garantindo maior organização para o posterior trabalho de realização e processamento.

**PALAVRAS CHAVE:** Audiovisual Production Researcher – Tratamento audiovisual – Documentação audiovisual – Produção audiovisual – Processamento da informação audiovisual.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Audiovisual documentation can be defined as "the discipline that aims to study the communication process of audiovisual sources to obtain new knowledge applied to research and audiovisual work" (Cebrián, 1995, p. 32). For Cuadra (2007) the audiovisual document is a set of images and sounds that accompany them (perceptible through interposed technology). Regardless of the formal technical aspects that become audiovisual, they produce the sensation of perceptible moving images.

Audiovisual documents have characteristics that other documents do not have. The above added to the fact that their analysis, processing, and conservation also differs from other documentary typologies and deserve a detailed observation of their qualities. Professors Alfonso López Yepes, Rodrigo Sánchez Jiménez, and José Ramón Pérez Agüera point out in this regard (2003):

... Audiovisual documents understood as that lasting material support in which, through visual and sound codes, information on the activity of man is

intentionally transmitted, so that it is disseminated and lasts in the memory of humankind... (p. 40).

As previously indicated, the characteristics of the audiovisual document are different from other sources. "While the textual document is simple, uniform, transparent, autonomous, clear, and stable, the audiovisual document is characterized by being multiple, multiform, incompatible, dependent, opaque, and ambiguous" (Pérez, 1996, p. 122). For the analysis of the previous quote, the contribution of Hidalgo (1999) is used where he develops the following four characteristics of audiovisual documents:

- Duality: audiovisual documents contain sound and image, so the audiovisual document could be split into two, one sound and the other visual, each providing its information and which on certain occasions can be physically presented separately, as can be the case of double band cinema.
- Ambiguity: the sound and visual information are sometimes complementary, so there are no references and the information can be understood in various ways or admit various interpretations.
- Opacity: their content is not readable or directly accessible. The use of reading devices (*moviolas*, video recorders, and monitors) is necessary. They are documents dependent on technical means.
- Incompatibility: since they are recorded on multiple supports and different formats, so it is necessary to have the right reading device in each case.

Since the first appearance of the first tape recorder in 1956, the industry has been in a constant struggle for formats. The foregoing has favored the development of this typology in files of various supports whose content can only be viewed on obsolete players. In many cases, there are no spare parts, so they are forced to migrate or continually knock down these supports.

Authors such as Eugenio López de Quintana (2014), Caldera and Arranz (2013) have made a classification of audiovisual documents on television. López et al. (2003) stand out because they meet different criteria:

- According to the type of support: from chemical supports to magnetic supports.
- According to the origin of the information: cinematographic, television, independently produced documents.
- Depending on the transmission system used: fusion of the image with the sound, although priority can sometimes be given to one of these two codes, the visual or the sound.
- According to the type of message: 1) by thematic content: fiction messages (movies, series, cartoons) and non-fiction messages (such as news, reports, or documentaries).
- According to their extension or depth of content treatment: short, medium-length, and full-length films are distinguished in movies. In the case of

informative video documents, a difference is made between daily or weekly informative.

- According to their periodicity: not subject to fixed periodicity (such as films) and periodic documents (daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly, or yearly).
- According to their diffusion or accessibility: geographic scope of local, regional, national, or international production, institutional location, self-made documents or someone else's production, organizational membership, private institutions, which are more difficult to access, or public bodies, which are easier to access.

Audiovisual documentation on television also has a double value, as Caldera and Nuño (2002) have pointed out:

- Exploitation value: audiovisual documentation services have their reason for being in making the information known to their users. For this reason, reuse is the main resource for setting up these centers. By using images already recorded for previous programs or information that is kept in the archive, it is not necessary to send a team to record new material, which represents an economic saving for the company. Among the modes of reuse of archival material, the reuse of extracts in different productions, reissue, and sale is distinguished, so that the audiovisual documentation center also has a commercial value when it puts its funds up for sale.
- Heritage value: the audiovisual documents kept on television can have a heritage value for historians, sociologists, or communication scientists in the short, medium, and long term, which will condition their conservation, as well as their selection policy. Fundamental to this heritage value are those audiovisual collections kept for 10 years or more, thus creating an audiovisual heritage memory.

Based on the above considerations, it can be established that a correctly processed audiovisual document influences the saving of means, time, and production expenses in a general way. Proper processing allows images to be reused without the need to record new ones. The above is directly related to its exploitation value. This type of documents can have heritage value, as they reflect personalities, places, historical, cultural, social events, among others of importance for the future.

Audiovisual documents on television can be classified taking into account their origin or degree of elaboration. Regarding their origin, Hidalgo (2003) states:

- Documents that have been produced or generated by the company itself.
- Foreign production documents, acquired by the company abroad, either for production and broadcasting.

Taking into account their degree of elaboration Caldera (2003) differentiates:

- Primary audiovisual documents: those that have not undergone any type of modification for their conservation. These are raw (images recorded by reporters, unedited), and live shows.

- Secondary audiovisual documents: those that have undergone various modifications by adding voice-overs, editing, post-production, etc. In this sense, any news product would be a secondary document as it is the result of previous primary documents.
- Tertiary audiovisual documents: these are the so-called “archive montages”. They are made from secondary documents and in this the information is extracted from other products already issued or kept in the archive.

The functions performed by audiovisual documentation on television are also indicated. According to Suing (2011), these functions can be:

- a properly informative function, when it contextualizes the information and the documents contribute their testimonial and evocative value;
- a complete function, in the news that has information gaps;
- an illustrative or symbolic function, to illustrate abstract subjects or that lack their own images, such as to support sound text or graphic information.

The information professional or documentalist is currently essential in any of their spheres of action (administrative and historical archives, consultancies of any kind, companies, publishers, libraries in their broadest typology, information, and/or documentation centers). The development of hypertext and Information and Communication Technologies have favored the actions of the information professional (documentalist) to expand and diversify. For Cano (2015) the Information Science specialist can be seen from seven points of view:

- Librarian and archivist or information retriever: works with a collection of documents on which he has built a retrieval system.
- Site builder: as an expert in content classification, the documentalist solves the aspects of the organization of the pages and their hierarchy. The process it develops is called information architecture.
- Information manager: the documentalist will work with the database to restructure it in a technically optimal, natural, and easy-to-consult way. It is capable of collecting all the necessary information.
- Competitive intelligence technician: in this facet, the documentalist does not work with data and internal information of the company, but rather systematizes and maintains a process to detect external events of interest.
- Content Curator<sup>2</sup>: This feature has context on the web. It consists of the reception or search for new content related to the theme of each site, the subsequent critical selection of it, and the publication.

This last aspect can be using a simple link to the sources or from own contents reworked from them:

- Community manager: it is largely the professional image of the company, organization, or event. From the point of view of the users or clients, he is the

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<sup>2</sup> The cited author also calls this facet of the information professional or documentalist as a content curator or content intermediary

representative and everything he publishes and mentions is signed by the organization. It works as a response booster in the followers of the company or brand to achieve a certain objective or maintain a certain level of attention.

- Data analyzer - specialist assistant: in this sphere, the documentalist works mainly with data. Explore its facets and characteristics in search of meaningful relationships. It is an ideal task to support other specialists (in the area of marketing, strategy, management, etc.) when they have a set of raw data.

Due to the increasing technological development in the audiovisual system, the information professional in this field has advanced in terms of representation. At the discretion of the professional community *Dokumentalistas* (2016), this professional would assume other functions such as:

- Audiovisual archivists: professionals normally linked to an audiovisual production company, among whose main tasks are the analysis of the material: the description of the image itself or the show, reportage, etc., as a whole for its subsequent recovery to the service of the company they work for.
- Audiovisual librarian or video librarian: manages the audiovisual funds of a library with multiple supports not necessarily linked exclusively to the world of the image.
- Information retrieval specialist or researcher: the information retrieval specialist would be in charge of searching for documentation in any documentary support for a journalist, filmmaker, film director, usually responsible for audiovisual production, be it film, advertising, or television.

It should be noted that the information professional must be in constant learning and improvement. The authors Muñoz, Meana, and Sáez (2014) consider that the audiovisual documentary maker is the professional who has undergone the greatest transformation, becoming a key part of the system. Caldera and Freire (2016) consider that “the documentary maker is changing his role as a direct intermediary, to be system manager. Their job function is not in danger, but in constant change”. The profession of documentalists in the audiovisual sector has great prospects. The digital age supposes a leading role for the professional in this environment.

The information professional, in terms of audiovisuals, has a high degree of specialization. They must carry out tasks that ensure the new challenges of processing and acquire knowledge in terms of equipment and tools necessary for the optimal development of their role as a professional. In the opinion of Hernández, Martínez, and Paz (2017), the video librarian must be constantly updated regarding the new techniques of making television. They must understand the television codes to detect, locate, and retrieve the content that will be part of the digital archive of the television channel. In addition to deciding the documentary treatment that each type of show requires.

They must use tools that help them represent audiovisual content, in such a way that it allows access and retrieval by users (journalists, filmmakers, audiences). The

authors Muñoz et al. (2014) consider that the audiovisual documentary maker is the professional who has undergone the greatest transformation, becoming a key piece in the system. Many television stations prefer their insertion from the beginning of the production process, considering that the documentary treatment is now at the beginning and not only at the end of the chain.

The assignment of roles in the treatment of audiovisual documentation varies according to the institutions where the professional in charge of this work is located. From the above, there are role names such as Production Researcher, TV Researcher, Film Researcher, Program Researcher, and Video Librarian. Although the names vary, the functions are essentially the same: to process, store, and guard the collections of audiovisual documents in both digital and printed formats.

Besides the functions mentioned above, they must also search and retrieve audiovisual information to satisfy the needs of users and clients. The definition of a new role that, besides carrying out the activities of the previous ones, participates in the audiovisual production process, will allow overcoming the limitations that the documentary maker presents in the audiovisual field.

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

Identify the traditional roles of the information professional in the treatment of audiovisual documentation.

Establish the *Audiovisual Production Researcher* as a new role in the treatment of audiovisual documentation.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

The study that is presented is classified as descriptive with a theoretical contribution. It focuses on establishing the fundamentals of Audiovisual Production Researcher as a new professional role in the treatment of audiovisual documentation. Methods are used at the theoretical levels:

Historical-logical: the evolution of the roles of Production Researcher, TV Researcher, Film Researcher, Program Researcher, and Video Librarian is analyzed from the appearance of the different audiovisual formats.

Analytical-synthetic: the conceptualizations contributed to the roles of Production Researcher, TV Researcher, Film Researcher, Program Researcher, and Video Librarian, designed and implemented in various contexts to make inferences, were examined. Starting from the conceptions of the mentioned roles, the aspects that must be present in the foundations of the role of Audiovisual Production Researcher are analyzed.

Inductive deductive: assisted in the analysis and interpretation of the data obtained, which allowed arriving at inferences related to the object of the research, especially in the existing roles in the treatment of audiovisual documentation.

Systemic-structural: it allowed the logical structuring of the content, criteria were ranked taking into account the generality of the concepts, and the information presented was organized starting from the general to the particular.

At the empirical level, the classic documentary analysis is used from the consultation of sources and specialized databases on the topics that are addressed. The technique used was the document review. This facilitates the location of theoretical references on the subject in question from an exhaustive documentary analysis.

#### **4. RESULTS**

Researchers work in all genres of television production: cinema, newscasts, sports, current affairs, documentaries and factual programs, children shows, sitcoms, soap operas, or dramatic series and unique dramas. There are many definitions used to categorize specialists who work in video libraries, media libraries, cinematheques, or with independent audiovisual production companies. Some of them are: TV Researcher, Program Researcher, Production Researcher, Video Librarian, Film Researcher (Cuadra, 2013), among others.

The existence of so many concepts or roles does not represent a significant difference between them. On the other hand, many times the differences between the concepts is the limitation of the specialist's functions to a specific format, such as film or television. The nationalities of the researchers who have theorized about the functions exercised by audiovisual documentation specialists are different and therefore their terminologies are different.

Researchers of Spanish origin Bailac and Catalá (2003) point out that the audiovisual documentary maker is a related specialization. Regarding the previous criterion, Caldera (2015) establishes that the specialty arises in the field of the moving image, film, and television; whose denomination in the Anglo-Saxon world is Archivist, Video Librarian, and Researcher. The author highlights three subspecialties in this matter:

- documentalist or audiovisual archivist, who would be the one who performs the analysis of audiovisual information.
- the librarian or documentalist, who would manage the audiovisual information of institutions not specially linked to the media
- and the specialist in information retrieval of the audiovisual for audiovisual companies, in most cases, and for the generation of new products

There are also profiles such as Media or Multimedia Asset Management (MAM) for analog platforms and their evolution in Digital Asset Management (DAM). These specialists have more flexible tasks as they are closely related to changes in the audiovisual media. Basically, their work involves the inclusion of metadata, information management, search and retrieval in systems, and, especially, the storage of digital data.

Through the development of this study, ambiguity has been identified in the description of the roles related to audiovisual documentation. In the existing scientific literature, there is a predominant scarcity of published references on each of the roles and their specific functions. The main scenarios for finding job descriptions for these roles are on career training plans or employer websites.

This research proposes and theorizes about a new role: the Audiovisual Production Researcher. This professional would take over the basic functions of the Production Researcher, Film Researcher, and TV Researcher. The profile requires the knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies of Information and Communication specialists. For the development of the functions of this profile, the study "Production Research: the new professional role for new times in the management of audiovisual information" by Caldera (2015) is analyzed.

The aforementioned author mentions that the most appropriate profile to assume the new stated role would be that of a graduate of Information Sciences (Documentation). The role of the Audiovisual Production Researcher could be performed by a social communicator with prior training regarding the processing of audiovisual information.

Starting from the few existing sources on the roles and functions of professionals working in the field of audiovisual documentation, the roles and functions of the Production Researcher, TV Researcher, and Film Researcher are described. The figure of the Production Researcher according to Caldera (2015) is not so standardized and it is a much more active and integrated role in the tasks of creation, control, and production of audiovisual information. "The knowledge that this professional profile must include is based on knowing the different types of audiovisual information sources: their physical characteristics, structure, production, and generation, and their forms of access and use" (Caldera and León, 2010, p. 67).

Such a professional must be an expert and knowledgeable about audiovisual collections, as well as their thematic content and scope. They must identify the tools to satisfy the research needs in the audiovisual field and detect the different needs that a research project and/or audiovisual production entail. The professional must determine the best formulas for the search for information of both an audiovisual and textual nature; In short, they must be able to search for the required information regardless of its nature (Caldera and Arranz, 2013).

The Production Researcher is a professional with sufficient and necessary skills to be able to evaluate the recovered information on time. In a world where infoxication<sup>3</sup> is a reality and therefore a problem, the Production Researcher must have the ability to discern between the truthful and the uncertain. They must weigh what is most useful and relevant. The specialist must also have the skills to know the documentary structures. Be a good user of the information services of the different audiovisual entities regardless of their nature.

The professional must be very clear that document management is not the same on television as in audiovisual production companies, in information agencies, or public or private audiovisual collections. The Production Researcher is an expert information finder. They specialize in audiovisual information sources, sources that will be both public and private, institutional and personal.

Other concepts that can be found in the published bibliography are the Media Researcher or Program Researcher. Both professions, as well as the Production Researcher, are more general. Their skills allow them to work in all areas of audiovisual production: film, television, and independent productions. However, there are again limitations in their performance, as they do not have a high degree of specialization in technical documentary processes.

The Program Researcher, for example, has to support the producer and the production team of a television, radio, film, or online project. They can work on a variety of shows or within a subject area. The job is often seen as a stepping stone to a producer role. Note then that it is one of the most complete roles, but it is more inclined to the production of live shows.

The role can also be known as:

- Live images specialist or images researcher
- Transmission assistant, or
- Assistant producer

The work of the Media Researcher is not very different from the Program Researcher: in this case, it is more attached to the production of an online project. The Media Researcher must search for the right partners and find their contacts. Research the material needed for production and be aware of the film crew as well as the budget.

The TV Researcher, on the other hand, will work researching and entering information for digital projects. It focuses solely on the television medium. They are expected to conduct their own research. They should consult industry websites and

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<sup>3</sup> Infoxication is a trend of the unbridled growth of information on the Internet since we live in an oasis of information sources that can lead us to what is known as information overload (Herrera, 2013).

scopes daily, as well as other news and customer sources, to ensure that the site has the most up-to-date information available. The ideal candidate should have:

- Good communication skills.
- The ability to be proactive and take initiative.
- A high degree of knowledge about the television industry.
- Knowledge of the television development cycle.
- A keen eye for detail.
- The ability to manage large amounts of data and information in a timely and accurate manner.
- The ability to work well with a team, as well as independently.
- Experience working with data collection or content management systems.

Film Researcher is a profession that has gained much prominence in recent years. The Film Researcher is in charge of searching external documentary sources to obtain information that is often very difficult to locate. According to the existing scientific literature "the Film Researcher, the one that obtains the information by interrogating image banks outside the institution itself, regardless of its geographical scope" (López, 2013).

It should be noted that the figure of the Film Researcher is more focused on cinema and the analysis and treatment of film material. This figure is necessary mainly for cinematographic production that often needs very detailed information, and, other times, on the contrary, very little defined and even ambiguous.

The competencies that the role of the Film Researcher must cover at the discretion of Caldera (2015) are:

- Know the systems, products, and resources necessary to carry out documentation work on film materials.
- Possess documentary analysis skills of audiovisual backgrounds.
- Have search skills in audiovisual files.
- Know in-depth the documentation process of a cinematographic product.
- Know and be aware of the problem of the preservation of cinematographic audiovisual collections.
- Know the casuistry of image purchase management.
- Know and be aware of the legal aspects of audiovisual information.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Unlike the other roles, its abilities only involve film materials, which is a limitation. The Audiovisual Production Researcher is a specialist whose professional skills allow him to work in film, television, and independent production companies. The skills of this professional provide them with skills to work throughout the audiovisual documentation process, as well as in all stages of the information life cycle.

The Audiovisual Production Researcher will be responsible for generating or developing show ideas, based on their knowledge and understanding of industry requirements. They will also be able to present their findings to decision-makers at the big television companies. They will also be a fact-checker and writers of "briefs" for screen presenters. They can be employed by radio stations, television stations, or work independently.

Producers or other decision-makers can brief the Audiovisual Production Researcher on ideas from the show. Alternatively, they can produce original show ideas for consideration by producers, broadcasters, production companies, or others with decision-making power. They identify relevant data, collaborators, locations, archive material, among others. They collect and evaluate information from various sources and ensure that legal, compliance and copyright requirements are met.

During preliminary telephone and / or face-to-face interviews, they evaluate the potential usefulness of the collaborators for their inclusion in each show according to their genre and format. They check the availability of collaborators and organize their appearance within the limits of time and budget. They may also be asked to identify location requirements from show scripts or schematics and assess the suitability and cost of the locations.

Various factors are taken into account including the need for permits and licenses. They identify and select suitable sources for the archive, still images, or audio materials, within the limits of time and cost. They should present all their findings to the decision-makers. Any information that is offered to directors and producers must be presented clearly, concisely, and consistently, both in writing and verbally.

The Audiovisual Production Researcher can contribute to the development of scripts or other written content by writing drafts or informing others who write so that they can deliver what is required. They may be asked to verify the accuracy of the final written materials and suggest amendments helpfully and constructively. Before production begins, the Audiovisual Production Researcher must identify, negotiate fees, and finalize copyright clearances. They should identify the legal issues related to all materials used in the shots, including archive materials, intellectual property, or music.

Audiovisual Production Researchers may also be asked to prepare production materials for external use, including fact sheets, books, and brochures to accompany productions and advertising materials such as production invoices, press releases, related websites, and text pages.

The Audiovisual Production Researcher constitutes, therefore, an overcoming of the previously mentioned roles. He is a professional who can integrate the functions of the Production Researcher, TV Researcher, and Film Researcher.

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