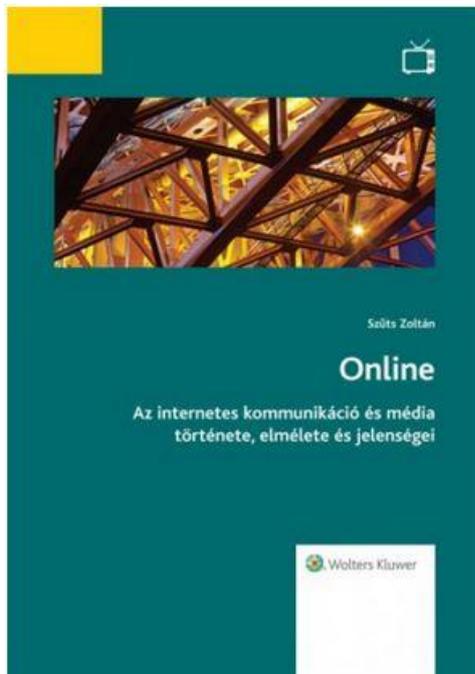**András BENEDEK**

Review: *Online – The history, theory and phenomena of internet communication and the media (*Zoltán Szűts)

Wolters Kluwer, Budapest, *2018, 478 p.*

Online – short, striking and meaningful address! The sub-title, however, is much more complex: the history, theory and phenomena of internet communication and the media. All this in an offline, printed form in massive hardcover, with 961 traditional foot notes and many electronic references. With a photo on the cover page showing a stable steel structure (either a bridge or a dome) – indicating the importance of the essential structural interconnections of systems. A multisense "steel network" that, beyond its own stability, also demonstrates a bit of constancy in a continuously changing scope.

For that matter, and this is a subjective remark, a personal impression: there are two types of books that are really popular these days: direct-indirect biographies of considerable length (from Churchill through Kissinger's autobiography titled Diplomacy to Michelle Obama) – owing to their extent; these books offer something to read for a long time as well as a special picture of the certain era and personality. The other type is short stories, accepting an easy style, offering distraction from the world of swift days and roaring nights.

In terms of the content of the work/volume/book, Online deals with one of the important phenomenon history of the latest century, and in terms of its type or genre it diverts from those mentioned above; it mainly offers orientation or intellectual impulses for the reader by providing, often wiki-like, descriptions of thoughts connected to some interrelations and associative titles or, and this proved more interesting for me, essayistic reflections and the introduction and elaboration of the author's opinion.

However, the way the pleasingly widening professional and partly boulevard publicity, that has intensively promoted the book during the previous weeks, reacts to the book is paradoxical; it casts light upon the tendencies of the mid 2010s in terms of the specialities of online and offline presence and communication. This book is fresh; it does not only introduce development historical continuity with several interesting details and authentic references, but by asserting the latest professional aspects, it also casts light upon some phenomena hiding serious dilemmas: the nature of fake news, the contradictious feature of some of the new phenomena in internet communication, the more and more awkward character of security in the narrow and the wider sense for both the user and the author and the today puzzling jumble of cyber war. Although the author keeps emphasizing his freeness of politics, he considers the politically sensitive topics, "technologies" and application methods that are apt to manipulate pubic sentiment and opinions, in some cases meaning a serious challenge even for the so called democratic elections. Interestingly, the topic dealt with by the media in the most sensitive way is the phenomenon we could call, with some simplification, the Facebook-fright, the growing distrust that leads us when looking at the manipulative dangers of community media.

Although the interrelations are very complex, I am examining a more peaceful field: I wish to investigate the impact and future opportunities of online culture in terms of education through this book. The venue provides a frame for this (we are talking at the Teacher Training Centre of the BME) as well as the latest phase of the author's personal life path, which has been tied to teacher training and, to an increasing extent, to BME and vocational teacher training. To me this means an organizational context and an atmosphere that is always open to new technologies, thus the application of internet communication in teacher training, as well. We have another actuality, and it makes the purpose of the initiation clear; our academic research group (with the polysemous name Open Educational Content Research Group) deals with a topic – vocational education, the modernization of its content and the development of the students' motivation – in terms of which traditional pedagogical structures are now definitely unapt, therefore the new solutions are intended to connect the possibilities offered by online, interactive and collaborative teaching and learning to the change of practice and the innovations in its content and methodology.

Some chapter titles that raise really interesting thoughts from the aspect of education development are:

- Online existence – virtual reality / Interactivity
- Secondary written literature, with special respect to the extension of visual opportunities – digital photography, image creation, editing and sharing
- The parallels of the Gutenberg galaxy and the world wide web
- You have the right to know
- New image turns

Today's generations, especially the very young, are absolutely open to comic books and short, micro content-like messages. Receiving these is much easier than reading and understanding monstrous and rigorous texts. Our research group deals with the issue of learning content development in a special field of education. In vocational training, relevant knowledge is changing fast, and it is very difficult to make the learning material keep up with this pace both in quantity and quality. But it is an even more serious problem that a considerable part of the students in vocational training are disadvantaged, or cumulatively disadvantaged, and their motivation to learn is of a critically low level. Well, in these cases the main challenge is how we can transmit the learning content in a more up-to-date form, interestingly, in a way diverting from the traditional methods so that the activity level will not decrease during their studies but improve. It is not by chance that the discussion we are having now has been initiated by our research group that realized the importance of image learning and interactive-collaborative teaching and learning. The pedagogical construction scope of the online world offers great possibilities for devoted development activities, therefore, the new communication technologies and phenomena that this book deals with are of outstanding importance for us.

Although the narrow cultural elite may be irritated by this simplification, highlighting the essence, giving a clear definition of the structures and the notions forming them into systems and revealing the existence and importance of relations is really important, especially in terms of the learning materials. It is probably not by chance that the originally new part of the National Core Curriculum, which has been revised five times since 1995, is striving to implement a more intense integration of the digital culture and that the debates of the latest months have affected exactly this endeavour the most deeply. In this respect, the encyclopaedic projection of the book is extremely valuable since it provides us with an essential summary through the history of the forming of the notions and the description of the core elements. At the same time, it is important to place all this into context, and in this respect the chapters, forming smaller independent thematic units, are apt to give an explanation of the wider segments of the conceptual network. For today's human being, who is served by but also exposed to enormous floods of information, it is a real challenge that however motivated, interested and hard-working (s)he is, in case (s)he is not given support in systemization, (s)he may easily come to have only

mosaic knowledge. His/her education, even vocational education, will not become a coherent whole. Or to put it clearer: (s)he will know interesting stories but will not get the essence of the whole narrative. The book 'Online', taking after the conventional forms in its title and content, opens a symbolic window on the world we have to wander in, in which the relation of the part and the whole is a conceptual challenge; through the everyday use of keyboards and touch screens the content read may help us a lot to face this challenge: it inspires us as well as warns, in terms of opportunities and dangers, as well.

Here are some concrete references that make the aspects of education and teacher training sensible:

From a pedagogical point of view, the third chapter of the second part, which deals with online presence, is outstandingly interesting. The theoretical background is directly connected to education science when referring to the thoughts by the teacher-media researcher Sándor Forgó. The "shift" towards the notion of virtual reality, however, can rather be understood from the aspect of the aesthete; it leaves open several questions that interest the reader from a pedagogical point of view. I mention this fact with a special respect to the concept of interactivity since the researches implemented by our department pay special attention to the methodological application of interactive-collaborative technologies; concerning these, and supposing we have the biggest bandwidth, we search for the opportunities of improving the learning efficiency of the human-machine interaction by expanding the relation system of traditional human interactions into a new dimension. No doubt that in relation to the analyzation of the problem of online speed and the issue of virtual reality the problems of the disappearance of authenticity and steadiness indicate the future possibilities from the aspect of education; thus, like in a special open work, referring to Umberto Eco, it will be the reader's task to consider the interrelations…

One chapter of the second part deals with the parallels of the Gutenberg galaxy and the era of the world wide web. These parallels are thought-provoking; the coexistence of past and the future, which is typical of today's education, let's just think of the century-long development of the genre of school books, from Comenius until our days. The new technologies are present at schools, students have them in their pockets, they are continuously using them – in many cases at a higher level than that of the infrastructure provided by the institution. Despite this fact, there has no valid and accepted response been formed to the aspect and presence of "my media" on behalf of pedagogy. The educational system and pedagogy are making allegoric endeavours, the basic curriculum and framework curriculum structures are changing, however, quantitative objectives, hardware fetish and the world of the more and more closed and centralized software, serving the hope of safe operation, do not necessarily put everyone's heart in a flutter, neither warrants activity and especially local innovation.

Finally, I would like to refer to a striking moment, apt to be offered as a game for the reader's fantasy. This is the last chapter, number X, that also refers to the game show with a high popularity index that meant so much for so many in the past and may go on like this in the future. But in a more abstract way, I can refer to the series titled X-Files that started a quarter of century ago and partly played in the world of esotery. The essence of this, again, is that complex stories are not finished or closed. Referring to Umberto Eco again, the Online is an open book for the reader, it urges us to think the topics further and draws our attention to the diversification of the connection of hypertexts. Thus, although the closing part seems to be the Roman X at first sight, in fact it points to the future, it is thinking further and writing further.

Well, I wish you joyful reading, perhaps not the whole at once but in parts, by interesting episodes to get intellectual impulses that might help many of us in getting to know new books, new programs, new apps and new application cultures.