

grassroots editor



*A journal
for newspeople*

**Published by the
International Society
of Weekly Newspaper Editors**

Weeklies with local cartoons are ‘truly blessed’

By Marcia Martinek Pages 1-3

Funding of journalism remains the Holy Grail

By Anthony Longden Pages 4-6

**Fighting spirit: Competing hyperlocal sites
outmatch regional newspaper’s community coverage**

By Barbara Selvin Page 7-11

**Extension journalism: Teaching students the real world
and bringing a new type of journalism to a small town**

By Al Cross Pages 12-18

Shared views: Social capital, community ties and Instagram

By Leslie-Jean Thornton Page 19-26

The EMT of multimedia: How to revive your newspaper’s future

By Teri Finneman Pages 27-32

Editor: Dr. Chad Stebbins
Graphic Designer: Liz Ford
Grassroots Editor
(USPS 227-040, ISSN 0017-3541)
is published quarterly for \$25 per year by
the **International Society of Weekly
Newspaper Editors**, Institute of
International Studies, Missouri Southern
State University, 3950 East Newman Road,
Joplin, MO 64801-1595. Periodicals post-
age paid at Joplin, Mo., and at
additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes
to **Grassroots Editor**, Institute of
International Studies, Missouri Southern
State University, 3950 E. Newman Road,
Joplin, MO 64801-1595.
Volume 54, Issue 3-4, Fall-Winter 2013

Subscription Rate: \$25 per year in
the United States and Canada; \$28 per year
elsewhere.

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Weeklies with local cartoons are 'truly blessed'

By Marcia Martinek

When an 8-year-old girl saw an illustration in the *Altamont* (New York) *Enterprise* depicting her church, which was being closed by the Albany Diocese, she became upset. Forest Byrd, then the illustrator for the newspaper, had drawn the church with a tilting steeple, being strangled with vines as a symbol of what was happening in the diocese.

The girl wrote to the newspaper, and Editor Melissa Hale-Spencer responded to her, explaining the role of cartoons in a newspaper along with affirming the girl's action in writing the letter.

Hale-Spencer, in her response, talked of Thomas Nast and the influence his political cartoons had in the mid-1800s:

"In the 1870s Thomas Nast took on the dishonest Boss Tweed who led Tammany Hall, the corrupt Democratic machine that controlled the politics of New York City. Immigrants who could not yet read English could see Nast's drawings of a fat, well-dressed man who had a sack of money for a head. The machine offered Nast a half-million dollars to stop his drawings. He declined. Tweed was arrested and convicted of fraud, stealing, in modern figures, billions of dollars from New York City taxpayers. When he tried to escape by fleeing the country, Spanish officials identified him from one of Nast's cartoons."

Those weekly newspapers that have their own cartoonists drawing political cartoons on local issues would no doubt agree with Associate Professor Bill Reader from Ohio University: "Community newspapers that get submissions from willing and able local cartoonists are truly blessed."

Chris Lamb, professor of journalism at Indiana University-Indianapolis, is the author of *Drawn to Extremes: The Use and Abuse of Editorial Cartoons* (Columbia University Press, 2004).

"Editorial cartooning is hard work and not a lot of people can do it well," Lamb said. "But cartooning represents the most incisive form of commentary and the most creative form of expression you'll find in newspapers, whether the newspapers are dailies or weeklies."

"The most influential cartoons are local cartoons. You'd think newspapers would be inter-



Michael E. Sprengelmeyer, Guadalupe County Communicator (Santa Rosa, New Mexico), said he has the best cartoonist in New Mexico in Drew Litton, who worked for the Rocky Mountain News for 26 years and now works from Plano, Texas. This cartoon is about a feud on the county commission. In Litton's view, two of the members were taking shots at the county manager (whom they later fired) as a way of getting back at a third commissioner who opposes them.

The Altamont Enterprise - Thursday, May 23, 2013

Editorial

Mark the way of wildness

was out on assignment, taking notes on a dead, when a bug landed smack-dab in the hite paper. I was to squash it. I am big; it was my way.

I myself. I was in the midst of covering the reclamation of Pine Bush lands. All the Farnsworth Middle-School seventh-graders about the specifics of an eco-system. ed in the ways of the wild were guiding

He knew the birds not just by sight but by their calls. He can tell a catbird from a goldfinch, a swallow from a mallard just by listening. Gifford is attuned to the natural world in a way most of us aren't. He explained to the kids, "Every bird has a distinctive song to attract a mate. The male says, 'This is my spot; stay out.'"

He also understood how the bird in his hand was feeling. "Imagine if you were surrounded by 12 tigers," Gifford said. "He's scared. We've got forward-facing eyes; that tells him we're predators."

and changing our very climate — can overwhelm us. Farnsworth science teacher Allan Fiero has for 15 years led his students to do meaningful work in the Pine Bush — from girdling invasive aspens to raising Karner's butterflies. Working with the preserve commission, Fiero and his students are now embarking on a pilot project that will have tangible benefits for us all.

As the state over the years has allowed the expansion of the Albany landfill, the plan has been to eventually cap the filled sections and return the land to a state similar to the adjoining Pine Bush.

The restored parcel will serve as a model for how ravaged lands can be reclaimed. Fiero's four classes of seventh-graders will return three or four times a year to work with preserve staff in monitoring and returning birds and aquatic life as well as in testing the waters and capturing photographic images of the evolving terrain.

Whether the capped dumping grounds — "It's the biggest dune in the area," said Fiero — can be restored remains to be seen.

The students will be part of that discovery process. The lessons they are learning, though, are wider than the Pine Bush. Beyond the technical skills of identifying aquatic life, or measuring the pH of water, or tracking birds, they are learning their place in an ecosystem. They are learning the value of restoring a balance to nature as well as reclaiming land. Those are lessons from which any of us could benefit.

If not, we'll be squashed like a bug.

I took a closer look at my bug and discovered it was not an insect at all. I counted its legs and found it had eight, not six, so it was a spider. I lowered my notes and let the spider crawl to the reclaimed ground.

—Melissa Hale-Spencer

For behind the students loomed a mountain of garbage — the Albany landfill.

I was reminded of Henry David Thoreau's statement: "In wildness is the preservation of the world." That statement had hung on the wall of my room at college, not far from Walden Pond, which I liked to visit on my bicycle.

Life consists with wildness," Thoreau wrote in *Walden*. "The most alive is the wildest. Not yet subdued to man, its presence refreshes him."

A century-and-a-half ago, when Thoreau wrote those words, there was still wildness to refresh mankind. Now we must fiercely protect it or, in the case of the Pine Bush project, re-create it as best we can.

For behind the students loomed a mountain of garbage — the Albany landfill. We all contribute to it, or to places like it. Of course we need to use less, and recycle what we can. But the enormity of the ruin we have perpetrated — polluting our water, steeping our Earth in chemicals, filling our

skies with acid,



Page 2 of the Altamont Enterprise (Altamont, New York) is always one editorial and one illustration as shown here. Editor Melissa Hale-Spencer writes the editorial and sends it to Carol Coogan for the illustration, which might or might not involve some back-and-forth conversation.

ested in this. But editorial cartooning, by definition, irritates and angers readers and public officials, who then call and complain — and editors don't want to be bothered with people who call and complain.

"But newspaper editors who don't like to take such phone calls should do something else. And politicians who don't want to defend their actions should also find another line of work," Lamb said.

John M. Wylie, publisher of the *Oologah* (Oklahoma) *Lake Leader*, said he's been hunting for a replacement cartoonist for 20 years.

His first and only cartoonist was his son who was exposed to many local happenings at the dinner table and depicted them in his

cartoons. Payment was in video rentals and after-school pop and snacks. When Wylie's son moved on to other interests, the cartoons stopped.

"I don't want syndicated cartoons because we are local with a capital L, and we don't use anything syndicated (unless a local advertiser uses a syndicated insert)," Wylie said.

Michael Sprengelmeyer, editor and publisher of the *Guadalupe County Communicator* (Santa Rosa, New Mexico), said the same.

"What most publishers don't understand is that syndicated, generic-themed national cartoons attract zero readers, while (our cartoonist) Drew Litton's locally focused cartoons literally carry our paper and make it worth 50 cents or more, even on weeks when our news mix is bland," Sprengelmeyer said.

Finding local cartoonists has never been a problem for Don Nelson of the *Methow Valley News* (Twisp, Washington). He has had a series of them over the years, varying in quality of content and artistry and in political viewpoints, Nelson said.

He communicates weekly with his current cartoonist, going back and forth on current topics.

"They are about 90 percent focused on local issues that have been covered in our newspaper, 5 percent state or regional issues that are topical and have some local resonance, 5 percent national issues. She is good at drawing recognizable caricatures for us so we have cartoons featuring local people," Nelson said.

He also has a backup, nationally recognized editorial cartoonist Milt Priggee (www.miltpriggee.com), who has gone freelance and once did cartoons for Nelson when he was editor of a weekly business journal in Seattle. When the local cartoonist is away, Nelson asks Priggee to fill in.

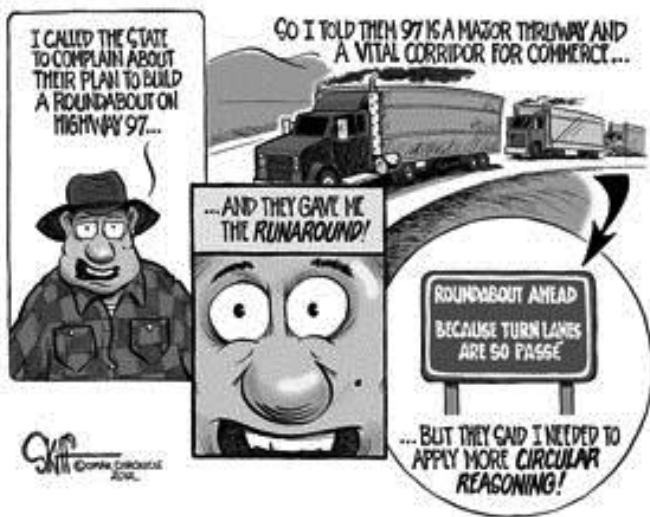
Brian Wilson, news editor at *The Star News* (Medford, Wisconsin), suggests talking to a local art teacher to find a student who would like to draw cartoons for a token amount or just to say that he is published.

He describes a controversial urban-chicken debate in Medford a few years back when a local tattoo artist submitted a series of political cartoons weighing in on the issue as it unfolded.

"He approached us with the first cartoon noting he wasn't good at putting words together in a letter but could draw a picture to show what he thought," Wilson said. "I viewed them as something of a



The St. Vincent Hospital Board in Leadville, Colorado, made a misstep when it not only hired a CEO who had not been completely vetted, but did so through a process that was not open to the community. The Herald Democrat got involved and, shortly thereafter, the employment offer was rescinded. This was around the time a new pope was being selected, and when cartoonist Ron Yudinich saw smoke coming from the hospital, he couldn't resist.



Brad Skiff, art teacher at the local high school, draws cartoons for the Omak-Okanogan County Chronicle (Omak, Washington), including this one questioning the state's plans for a roundabout. Roger Harnack, publisher at the Chronicle, noted that Skiff will not take any payment for his work.

visual VOX Pop (from the Latin *Vox Populi* or voice of the people which is what we call our letters to the editor)."

Roger Harnack, *Omak-Okanogan* (Washington) *Chronicle*, found his cartoonist, Brad Skiff, teaching art at a local high school. Skiff offered his work and has won several awards for it along the way.

"His cartoons are drawn from ideas we offer or ones he generates," Harnack said. "We never offer an angle but let him decide what makes the topic funny, serious, etc... They certainly liven up what is traditionally a very gray page."

The *Herald Democrat* in Leadville, Colorado, didn't have a local political cartoonist until Ron Yudnich, a lifetime Leadville resident, dropped off some of his cartoons one day late last year and asked if the paper wanted to run them.

Yudnich said that he always liked looking at cartoons and, at age 12, was a fan of Pat Oliphant who did cartoons for the *Denver Post*.

Through the years, he's drawn cartoons on his own, getting his inspiration "when something ticks me off," he said.

"It's my opinion, but people look at it and start discussing," he said.

Yudnich said he gets much feedback on his cartoons, and some people tell him that they turn to the cartoon first thing when they get the paper.

When Hale-Spencer lost the services of her previous illustrator, she advertised for a new artist on Craigslist. There she found Carol Coogan.

The *Altamont Enterprise* devotes page 2 each week to a single editorial with an illustration by Coogan. Hale-Spencer writes the editorial and sends it to Coogan. Coogan comes up with the drawing, which might involve a discussion between the two.

"I love the way Carol can make a drawing that combines sadness and beauty and humor all at once," Hale-Spencer said.

When Ross Connelly bought *The Hardwick* (Vermont) *Gazette* in 1986, a retired art professor was part of the deal. Several years after he died, another person contacted the paper, asking if she could cartoon. She has been doing so for more than 20 years.

"Pay is minimal, but none of our correspondents get much," Connelly said. "Such is the market. We are unable to pay what people are worth."

A cartoonist who does local cartoons without being local is Rob Pudim (robpudim@yahoo.com). Pudim was doing cartoons for the *Littleton* (Colorado) *Independent* back in the 1970s when Garrett Ray owned the paper, and he still does cartoons today.

He receives a number of newspapers via mail and over the Internet.

"So, I still read the paper and come up with something specifically mentioned in the newspaper and email it to them," Pudim said. "If they don't like it, they don't print it. If they don't print it, I don't bill them."

"On one hand I envy the guy that does one cartoon and sends it to a bunch of newspapers," Pudim said. "Not a lot of drawing for the money received for it. It would be hard work for me to do it, however, for two reasons."

"One, I would have to come up with a white-bread idea that every paper would like. You know a Father's Day drawing or the fire danger is high in the southwest. No bite, no fun."

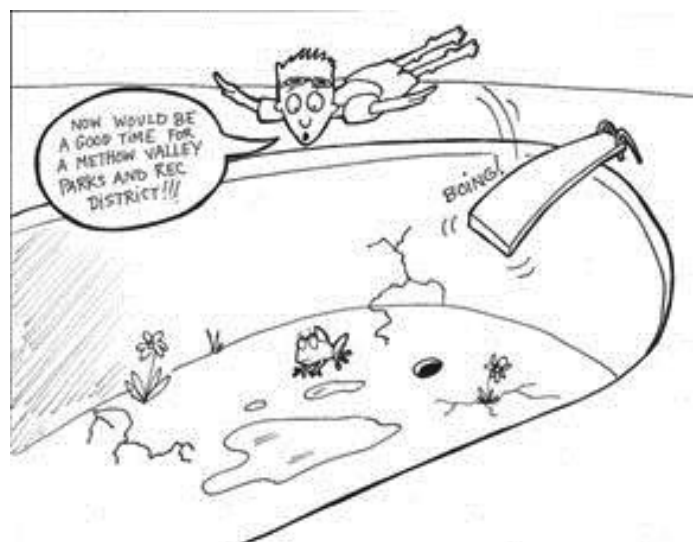
"Two, it is easier to come up with ideas on a specific issue and kick ass on it. (I am an opinionated S.O.B.)"

Most of the editors he works for do not tell Pudim what to draw, although he welcomes suggestions.

"Best of all, no contracts, just a virtual-handshake deal. I love it," Pudim said.

As far as cost is concerned, pay for a local cartoon ranges from \$65 to nothing, according to those contacted for this article who were willing to discuss price. In many cases, the more local the cartoonist, the more likely he is to donate his work.

Marcia Martinek is editor of the *Herald Democrat* in Leadville, Colorado. She can be contacted at editor@leadvilleherald.com.



A big local issue in the Methow Valley is about forming a park district to keep facilities in shape as depicted in this cartoon in the *Methow Valley News* (Twisp, Washington) by local cartoonist Tania Gonzalez Ortega.

Funding of journalism remains the Holy Grail

By Anthony Longden

Editor's note: The second edition of What Do We Mean By Local?, subtitled The Rise, Fall — and Possible Rise Again — of Local Journalism, features a chapter by longtime ISWNE member Anthony Longden. The book looks in detail at the regional press industry in the United Kingdom and its future prospects. Longden provides a critical overview of the recent history of the industry and argues that the launch of free newspapers was a pivotal moment in the context of its current difficulties. Here is his chapter:

I grew up in Uxbridge, a market town on the western edge of Greater London, in what used to be Middlesex. In the early years of the 20th century, it was dominated by King & Hutchings Ltd, a long established newspaper printing and publishing business. It was typical of many such newspapers surrounding London, and it is where I took my first steps towards becoming a journalist — badgering the editor of the *Middlesex Advertiser & Gazette* for a spell of work experience in 1980. I went on to witness — and then helped manage — many and various attempts to keep London local papers alive.

From our austere early 21st century viewpoint, the sheer scale of that old Uxbridge operation almost beggars belief. By the time I turned up, King & Hutchings occupied a sizeable chunk of the town centre, and had been taken over by *Westminster Press*. It was now known as *Middlesex County Press*. There were several buildings — a large printworks; Press House, editorial home to a daily and two weeklies; the advertising department on the other side of the road, and photographic was next door.

The place teemed with life. Lorries laden with newsprint or the finished product, vans and cars streamed in and out at all times of the day and night. The newsroom clattered with typewriters and shook when the presses were run up as final deadline loomed. It all spoke to me of excitement and glamour, of prosperity, relevance, dynamism and power. I wanted a part of it.

All that Glisters is not Gold

By the 1980s, King & Hutchings employed hundreds of people. It had its roots in the mid-19th century newspaper boom, and simply got bigger and bigger. At the start of the decade, staff were producing the *Middlesex Advertiser & Gazette*, the *Hillingdon Mirror*; both weeklies, and the *Evening Mail*, and worked on various contract and small printing jobs. This is the same story as other newspaper companies at all points of the compass around London, all with long histories and august titles — the *Hendon Times* group; the *East London Guardian*; *Oxley & Son (Windsor) Ltd*, which established the *Windsor, Slough & Eton Express* in 1812, spring to mind.

All began as small family concerns, grew, and were then serially swallowed up by the new breed of big publishing company able to turn a profit by use of the economies of scale and modern technological and management practices. Despite years of nay-sayers' warnings about television and radio spelling doom for print, in the early 1980s there was still a voracious appetite for local newspapers. The local press was still a strong vehicle for advertisers, whose loyalty was retained with the arrival of free titles.

But, if we did but know it, the see-saw was already beginning to

tip, and some well-known and popular titles would not make it into the brave new world. The *Evening Mail* was one. It launched in Slough in 1969, and later had a base in Uxbridge for an ill-starred expansion into west London. Despite a valiant effort, it failed to compete with the strong local weeklies and the might of the *London Evening News* and *Evening Standard*, and by May 1982 it had closed.

Next to go was the *Hillingdon Mirror*, another product of the 1960s. This was designed as a lighter alternative to the *Middlesex Advertiser & Gazette*, and made highly effective use of front page colour. It began life as a broadsheet, but later went tabloid. The era of free newspapers was about to begin. Seduced by the potential of a mass distribution free vehicle for advertising, King & Hutchings/*Westminster Press* took the plunge, closing the *Mirror* and launching the *Leader* in its stead. The business case was compelling — advertisers liked the enormous reach of free distribution, although many were keen to keep a foot in both the paid-for and free camps. The marketing looked good, too. Paid-for circulations were by today's standards in rude health, but quoting free print run figures looked even more impressive. Publishers realised they could launch frees against paid-for competitors that had previously enjoyed a monopoly in a given area.

The new strategy of putting tanks on other people's lawns led to the concept of the 'defensive free' — running it alongside an established paid-for to cover the entire market, and protect it from attack. But it also started the internecine rate wars that sent whole advertising markets racing to the bottom as the protagonists, locked in a deadly embrace, endlessly undercut each other. Much later — far too late — publishers realised they had educated their customers to expect to get local advertising dirt cheap, an unsustainable position that permanently ruled out any prospect of a return to profitable rates.

Clouds on the Horizon

The changes at King & Hutchings in the early 1980s left Uxbridge with the *Middlesex Advertiser & Gazette* and the free *Leader*. These soon came under attack from United Newspapers' Informer title, and later another, much smaller, operation, the *Recorder*.

Westminster Press sold out to an ambitious newly-formed company called Southnews Plc in 1986, run by entrepreneur Gareth Clark. Clark and his senior management team wasted no time in streamlining the business. The print works was closed, and the King & Hutchings buildings sold to developers.

Southnews was a success story. In addition to the Uxbridge titles, it had the *Ealing Gazette Series*, the *Harrow Observer* and the *Buckinghamshire Advertiser*. The *Leader* brand was developed across the area, and there was investment in staff and that buzz phrase of the time: 'new technology'. More titles were acquired as the company grew steadily, eventually swallowing up its competitors. By 1991, the first clouds had appeared on the horizon. Gareth Clark wrote to staff on January 31, in a way so wearily familiar to us now, but was completely new then:

"I am writing to let you know how the accelerating recession is affecting us and how our current assumptions will determine our 1991 policies. The economy has been in serious decline for some time, particularly since October 1990. The effects were first felt by our weaker titles in Sussex and North London. These divisions traded at losses and redundancy programmes were actioned in November/December

to ensure their survival. I regret that those redundancies were declared but on the other hand I am pleased to report that recent results look as though the future is assured for these newspapers. Turning to *Mid-dlesex County Press*: as many of us know, the economic strength of paid-for newspapers is recruitment advertising. The decline of these revenues since October '90 has been unprecedented. For example, in January 1991, a typical recent month, recruitment sales were 53 per cent below last year (in turn 20 per cent below the previous year). Such significant losses have a profound financial effect. On the other hand we have made good gains in other categories of business, we have reduced office costs by decentralising and we have reduced prices paid for contract printing. These benefits fail, by a large margin, to compensate for the huge loss of recruitment advertising. Our guiding assumption for 1991 is that jobs advertising will remain severely depressed. We base this on published employment statistics, increased rate of decline of industrial output and the recent sharp drop of notified vacancies in the London region. If this assumption is correct we must take action now to protect the security of the majority of the company."

He went on to outline three action points: 16 redundancies; a pay freeze; and, with admirable transparency, the introduction of a weekly sales report to all staff so that they could monitor progress. He concluded:

In summary, the decline in jobs advertising is severely affecting the revenue base of the company and urgent actions are necessary. I am full of praise for the very real gains that have been achieved in our publishing centres and am sorry to report those gains have been overtaken by market decline.'

By May 1991 things had stabilised slightly, but Clark had further cause to write to staff, telling them the results for 1990 showed a loss of £987,000 which '...represents a severe blow to the finances of the company and explains the need for tight control on both running costs and capital expenditure'.

The fortunes of the London papers were dictated by high yielding jobs advertising. *Southnews* suffered a fall in jobs advertising of £2.6m which wiped out the company's £2.1m operating profit for the previous year. This was my first experience of being forced to slash costs and reorganise accordingly. In those days it worked.

Clark wrote:

We are currently trading off diminished revenues but with a significantly lower cost base. As a result the company is no longer trading at a loss and we can focus on returning the company to acceptable levels of profitability ... I believe that the company is in good shape to stand up to the most intense competitive pressures.

Things did get better for *Southnews*. After 15 years of expansion it sold to *Trinity Mirror* for £284.6m in October 2000.

The London Effect

London has always been a place of change, and in the last 50 years the impact of social fragmentation and increased cultural diversity have been among the biggest. Communities whose second language was English steadily grew, and the appeal of what were essentially white, middle class local newspapers dwindled in direct proportion.

What hope then for the traditional Victorian newspaper model? Not much. Some titles made embarrassing attempts to tailor content to minority communities, not realising that their efforts were invisible, irrelevant and mostly patronising to the very people they thought they wanted to attract. What was the point of scratching together a Bollywood page, merely to maroon it in an otherwise traditional, 'white' newspaper? Local titles struggled to reflect the diversity of their communities both in editorial content and in workforce.

Add to this changing nature of communities, and the very idea of 'community', the revolution in reader habits, tastes, and content delivery methods, and you have the still-shifting landscape in which we now find ourselves. London is where it is in its sharpest relief, but the pattern is universal.

A Question of Attitude

The launch of free newspapers was a pivotal moment. It was the very first glimmer of perhaps the heaviest millstone now slung around our necks — creating the self-destructive illusion that news is a free commodity. What started as a clever wheeze for the industry, was to poison the future in a way we could never have imagined — within 25 years giving truth to the lie that online journalism can be consumed free of charge.

The birth of frees also brought out the worst in a lot of journalists, especially those in managerial positions. I can well remember being told not to waste time on particular stories. 'Oh, we're just going to bung that in the free...' At news conferences the free was invariably dismissed as something to get out of the way as soon as possible. I know, because, to my own shame, I was guilty of seeing it that way, too. The free was not loved, and its role was never understood by those writing for it.

Wrong-headed thinking ruled the day; there was the prevailing misapprehension readers would draw the distinction between the established paid-for and the new free. They would, many journalists believed, still turn to the established paid-for for the stories that mattered. The reality was rather different. Readers developed their own set of perceptions, some fair, some not. The most damaging was the belief there was no point in paying for a local newspaper when you got another one free through your door every week.

The so-called strategy of reserving 'proper stories' for the paid-fors simply failed to acknowledge the power of the something-for-nothing culture that had taken hold. As an editor, I lost count of the times people told me they were absolutely convinced exactly the same news went into both the paid and the free, when there was, in fact, very little overlap. They were cancelling their order for the paid-for, they would tell me. Why buy it when we get a paper free through the door? Eventually, they rang or wrote in demanding that the free wasn't delivered to them either.

With new technology it was becoming easier to produce something that looked like a newspaper, but with increasingly squeezed resources it was becoming more difficult to provide the breadth and depth required to keep readers interested. The growing acceptance that handy savings could be achieved by reducing the number of journalists is a process that continues today.

It also contributed to the 'democratic deficit'. I wince when I hear people waxing lyrical on the vital role played by local papers in holding authority and powerful individuals to account. Perhaps they used to, I like to think they did. But they have shrunk to such an extent many can no longer hope to perform that essential journalistic function to any valid extent. Until the early 1990s, there were enough reporters to attend courts and council meetings. This could be worthy, often dull, but it was proper public scrutiny just the same. With very few noble exceptions, this scrutiny of public bodies at a local level is not happening now.

Editorial v Sales Departments

Journalists have traditionally held a negative attitude towards the commercial side of the business — it is a badge of integrity. The roots of this go deep. Right back to those legendary days of 'Editorial is King'. Journalists have always viewed sales staff with disdain. This is

to some degree understandable — they are chalk and cheese. Editorial independence does not sit easily with the work of selling advertising to businesses that could become the focus of news stories from time to time. There is a natural tension between the two roles and insufficient understanding of their occasionally competing agendas can be disastrous.

Attempts to manipulate editorial on behalf of advertising customers should never go down well with journalists, but that has never justified the kind of battles I frequently had to sort out when I was an editor. This deep-seated inter-departmental discord had another deeply unhelpful effect. Many managing directors and publishers who had invariably come up through sales, had little sympathy with what they saw as haughty editorial departments. This attitude often led to poor, almost spiteful decision-making, frequently to the detriment of what is at the heart of the business — strong local journalism.

An Aside: The Peculiar Demise of the Sub Editor

One of the most bizarre things to have happened in this long period of decline is how such a pivotal newsroom role as that of the sub editor could have collapsed so completely. Early computer software made the practical side of the job so much easier; no more casting off, word counting, font charts, em rules, pencil marks and carbons. Page design was quicker and easier.

However, QuarkXpress and its successors are tools like any other. You cannot hand someone a saw and call them a carpenter but, in effect, that was what happened — the emphasis was now merely on pulling copy into boxes. Anyone can do that, can't they? Traditionally, sub editors had been hugely experienced, and generally quite terrifying journalists. They were the scourge of poorly written copy (and those who produced it). They could spot and remedy legal risks. They worked at a ferocious pace, and they had been rigorously trained as young reporters. They were also a bit older, and there was the rub: many found the transition from paper to computer just too much, and chose to bow out. Almost imperceptibly, sub editing became a secondary activity.

By the late 1990s, I was becoming aware of subs excusing mistakes with: 'We were so busy, we just didn't have time to read the copy.' If subs don't read the copy, then they might as well be replaced by page designers. In essence, that was the beginning of the end. A creeping default approach of 'just bung everything in and get the page

away' emerged. Years later, it was frequently at the root of the many cases I saw while I was a Press Complaints Commissioner. Copy editing is an endangered art. We urgently need to get it back, whatever platform we happen to be using.

The Future

The benefit of hindsight can be that the experiences of the past point clearly to what ought to have been done. That is not the case when it comes to the future of journalism in general, and local news provision in particular. The degree of change has been fast, dramatic, widespread and, in its earlier stages, it was completely unpredictable. As this book and its predecessor illustrate, we have now got used to living with the problem and some very creative approaches are being applied.

Funding of journalism remains the Holy Grail. Some media companies will survive. Some will not. Some will change out of all recognition. This current turmoil is all about platforms — the most effective delivery of the news we have always been writing. The car needs a new engine. That's all.

Once we've figured out how to pay the bill, the journey can continue.

Note on the author

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Fighting spirit: Competing hyperlocal sites outmatch regional newspaper's community coverage

By Barbara Selvin

Introduction

Overview

Over the past few years, online community news has established strong roots in the evolving media ecosystem of the United States (Remez, 2012; Rosenberry, 2010). The online community news space has attracted a variety of players, among them nonprofits, start-up independent commercial ventures, legacy weekly and daily newspapers, and some of America's biggest media companies. Many early ventures have failed, expiring quietly as founders lost energy, interest, money or some combination of the three. Others have achieved a modicum of financial stability (Remez, 2012; Selvin, 2011). And in some communities, the online news space is beginning to get crowded.

A case study of hyperlocal news sites in semirural Riverhead, Long Island, a former regional hub slowly pulling itself out of a decades-long decline, found that competition drives community sites to produce timely news reports on a broad range of local issues and events — so long as their journalistic focus is trained on the town they're covering. Of the four sites currently vying for the attention of Riverhead news consumers, the least successful in terms of local coverage belongs to a regional newspaper owned by a \$4 billion telecommunications company (SEC, 2012).

The players in this market represent four distinct types of new and old businesses mixing it up in today's rapidly changing journalism industry. There are two online-only outlets: Riverhead Patch, an offshoot of AOL's nationwide experiment in hyperlocal content, and Riverhead Local, a two-year-old independent site started by veteran community journalists with deep roots in Riverhead. And there are two legacy news organizations that publish print newspapers in addition to their websites. Here, too, one is part of a much larger, publicly held corporation, and one is locally owned. *Newsday.com*, the website of Long Island's 72-year-old regional daily, is owned by Cablevision Services Corp., a telecommunications and media giant. The *Riverhead News-Review* weekly newspaper has had a series of local owners in its 144 years.

Riverhead sits just beyond the eastern edge of the heavily developed suburban towns of Nassau and Suffolk counties and just west of Long Island's vacation destinations, the Hamptons and the North Fork. Its relative isolation and containment — it is cut off from nearby towns by undeveloped pine barrens and bays — create an ideal setting for the journalistic experiment now under way within its borders. Rosenberry (2011), in a national study comparing coverage on Patch.com to independent online community sites, found that "corporately owned online community news sites pursue different news topics than independent ones." The news report on Riverhead Patch aligns closely with the reports of the other hyperlocal players in this intensely competitive online hyperlocal news environment in terms of timeliness and coverage, suggesting that competition may be one factor driving journalistic performance.

The general agreement in news judgment among the three hyperlocal sites shows that despite their battle for readers, the site editors

have not begun to differentiate their coverage dramatically. The most significant thematic differentiation is in the amount of coverage given to high school sports and, to a lesser extent, to photo galleries of fires. In both of these areas, Riverhead Local has substantially more coverage than any of the other sites.

History and staffing of the four sites in this study

The oldest of the four news organizations is the venerable *Riverhead News-Review*, a descendent of the *County Review*, founded in 1868, and the *Riverhead News*, founded in 1905 (G. Parpan, personal communication, March 6, 2012). In 1976, the *Riverhead News-Review* was purchased by the owners of *The Suffolk Times* weekly newspaper in Greenport, Long Island, 35 miles east on Long Island's North Fork (Gustavson, 2006). The *News-Review*, for decades the primary source of Riverhead news, prints a weekly newspaper that has a full-time staff of four. The company launched its website in 1998 (G. Parpan, personal communication, March 6, 2012). Two web editors oversee the website along with sites for the parent company's other two weekly newspapers and for its local wine-industry guide. (*Times-Review*).

The youngest of the four is Patch.com's Riverhead site, which was launched in September 2010 (H. Powderly, personal communication, March 9, 2012). Like all Patch sites, Riverhead Patch has a local editor who reports to a regional editor (Kirchner, 2012). The regional editor oversees several sites but also contributes occasional coverage. Riverhead Patch uses freelancers, although AOL has cut its freelance budget in the past year (Callegari, 2011; Romenesko, 2012). Riverhead is an unusual choice for a Patch site. Most Patch sites cover relatively affluent communities (Kirchner, 2012; Roach, 2012). Riverhead, with a median family income of \$52,211, only 62% of the Suffolk County median household income, and a 12% poverty rate, more than twice that of the county overall (Census Bureau [a], [b]), is the poorest community among the 40 areas that Patch covers on Long Island.

RiverheadLocal.com is just a few months older than Riverhead Patch. Launched in January 2010, the site is a wife-and-husband labor of love backed by the couple's deep roots in Riverhead and long experience in community journalism. Both previously worked for their current rival, the TimesReview NewsGroup, for many years, she as a columnist and associate publisher, he as a staff photographer. Riverhead Local has achieved a high level of acceptance in the community, particularly among high school students and their parents, who follow it closely on Facebook (Selvin, 2011). In a sign of its financial stability, Riverhead Local was chosen to participate in the 2011 Block-by-Block Community News Summit, which showcased successful sites from across the U.S. (O'Connor, 2012; Selvin, 2011).

Then there's *Newsday*, which has shed about half its editorial staff in the past decade (Twarowski, 2010). *Newsday's* East End bureau once had as many as five full-time reporters Long Island's North and South Forks (Keeler, 1990). Today, a single *Newsday* reporter mans the East End bureau, covering both forks and Riverhead, which sits at their juncture (*Newsday* [a]). Other *Newsday* reporters cover the county legislature, regional transportation, energy and other beats relevant to Riverhead readers. *Newsday's* website, *newsday.com*, has a sepa-

rate editorial staff for its 11 town blogs. One Towns editor is responsible for the eight blogs that cover Suffolk County's 10 townships. The East End reporter contributes occasional postings to the Riverhead town blog. *Newsday.com* is the only one of the four sites examined in this study that has a paywall. For access to the site, readers must subscribe to *Newsday's* print edition seven days a week, subscribe to parent company Cablevision's Optimum cable service, or pay \$4.95 per month for a digital subscription (*Newsday* [b]). Finally, *Newsday's* coverage of Riverhead must be considered in light of the staggering amount of relevant data available on the site. Its extensive databases cover real estate, crime, politics, school districts, lottery winners, sports teams, car ownership by ZIP code, and much more. The site also features interactive maps on a wide range of topics, photo galleries, and both professionally produced and user-contributed videos.

Review of Literature

"Perhaps no part of the American media environment is as little understood as Web-based local news," Hindman (2011) declared in a wide-ranging study produced for the Federal Communications Commission, and yet understanding web-based local news has "acquired particular urgency" (Hindman, 2011, p. 2) as the newspaper industry, the source of most news reporting in the United States, continues to lose both subscribers and advertisers (Edmonds, Guskin, Rosenstein, & Mitchell, 2012). Hindman's study of online local news within the top 100 U.S. television markets found that few online-only news sites in those markets were unaffiliated with traditional media outlets — just 17 of the 1,074 sites he studied. Dismissing other industry observers' enthusiastic talk of a boom in online hyperlocal journalism, he concluded that "local news on the web is fundamentally about consuming less news from the same old sources" (Hindman, 2011, p. 3).

Other researchers retain a more sanguine view of the prospects for online community news sites. McLellan and Durkin have separately compiled lists of independent local news sites have reached, or are close to reaching, financial stability (Selvin, 2011). And Fancher has called the potential for local online journalism "breathhtaking" (Fancher, 2011, p. 29). He noted that J-Lab, a center for hyperlocal journalism and experimentation at the School of Communication at American University in Washington, DC, had funded 52 news startups with \$900,000 in micro grants; on its website today, J-Lab reports having funded 92 local news startups (J-Lab, 2012). And as news consumers increasingly seek news online, "the emerging news ecosystem for community coverage via online hyper-local sites fulfills functions traditionally associated with weekly newspapers" (Rosenberry, 2010, p. 11).

Whether ownership structure makes a difference in the type of journalism hyperlocal sites produce remains a concern. Twentieth-century scholars found that coverage in publicly held chain newspapers differed significantly from coverage in independent newspapers. Chain newspapers tended to avoid controversy and to favor the interests of corporate owners above those of readers (Bagdikian, 1997). Both in 20th-century print newspapers and on 21st-century hyperlocal sites owned by public companies, story selection emphasizes low-controversy coverage and community ritual rather than coverage of business and economy, government, and real estate/land development (Rosenberry, 2011). Story selection on the Patch.com network, owned by AOL, a publicly held corporation, differed "in substantial ways from independent community news sites when it comes to story-topic selection" (Rosenberry, 2011, p. 14).

But Rosenberry looked at Patch in the aggregate. Individual Patch sites may vary in emphasis depending on the interests of their local

editors. After two years as a local editor for the Patch site covering Tarrytown and Sleepy Hollow, New York, communities on the Hudson River in Westchester County, Roach described the Patch experience as initially satisfying: "We were given the opportunity to set our own work schedules and, more important, editorial priorities. Some editors focused almost exclusively on sports and schools, while others preferred hard news and politics" (Roach, 2012, p. 24). But later, he reported, content mandates from Patch's New York City headquarters curtailed his ability to provide the community with the coverage he believed it wanted, and he eventually left the company.

As of March 2012, Patch had 860 local sites in 22 states. Each site is staffed by a local editor who reports to a regional editor, who in turn reports to a senior regional editor who oversees several regions. The Patch model "seems to combine the best parts of an independent local blog (one hard-working local editor who can tailor content to the audience's preferences) with the best parts of a national media corporation (big editorial and publicity budgets, and the potential for national ad buys). On the flipside, critics would say that Patch also combines the worst parts of both (the energy and stamina it takes for one person run a site alone, plus the quotas and constraints of a big company)" (Kirchner, 2012).

In comparing 14 Patch sites with 70 independently owned online news websites — sites not affiliated with legacy news organizations — Rosenberry referred to two key functions of the community press that Morris Janowitz propounded in the 1950s: "(1) that it helps to maintain local consensus through an emphasis on common values rather than on conflicting ones and (2) that it both shapes and reflects the neighborhood social and political structure" (Rosenberry, 2011, p. 12). Rosenberry's 2011 content analysis found that the independent sites had "significantly more coverage [of] business and economy, government, and real estate/land development," categories "more closely related to community structure" than did the Patch sites, which "had significantly more coverage...[of] education, volunteer and non-profit groups, community sports, and personal/social news" (Rosenberry, 2011, pp. 12-13).

Scholars have begun to examine online hyperlocal sites only recently. Few have analyzed whether competition among hyperlocal news sites — between Patch and independently owned community sites or between online-only sites and community news sites run by legacy media organizations — affects story selection. Fancher argued that legacy news organizations must apply a "digital first" approach or face irrelevance. Editors should leverage the interactivity of the web rather than simply posting the same stories that appear in the organization's print version (Fancher, 2011). Stepp suggested that as hyperlocal sites develop, they should specialize in coverage areas rather than try to be comprehensive news sources in the mold of traditional newspapers (Stepp, 2011). And one of the few studies to explore competition among hyperlocal sites argued that differentiating coverage — emphasizing local arts, sports, transportation or health care, say — could create unique value propositions for readers and advertisers (Kurpius, Metzgar & Rowley, 2010).

In general, scholars in the growing sub-discipline of community journalism research argue that maintaining the traditional "chicken-dinner news [such] as community announcements, weddings, obituaries, stories about ordinary people and coverage of how news events affect ordinary people" should be a priority (Stepp, 2004). These scholars celebrate the role of the mundane in connecting people to the communities in which they live: "it is the presence (perhaps the dominance) of the trivial and the routine that provide (sic) observable clues of community connections" (Reader, 2012, p. 16).

Research Questions

RQ1: Do independently owned community news sites in a competitive hyperlocal market emphasize different story types than sites owned by publicly held companies?

RQ2: Do competitive online news sites seek to provide a full community report or to differentiate their coverage through specialization?

Method

This study examined the websites of four community news organizations covering Riverhead, New York, every day for four weeks (February 20, 2012–March 18, 2012). Stories meeting study parameters were categorized by type and recorded by date. Stories that were essentially the same were recorded using identical headlines or descriptive phrases.

The researcher counted bylined stories covering Riverhead government, institutions, fires and crimes; Riverhead-based businesses; issues and trends relevant to local industries; Riverhead schools and their sports teams; local features; and profiles of local residents. These were categorized as “Riverhead News,” “Sports,” “Business” and “Features.” The study’s “General” category included service articles about upcoming or ongoing events. The “County News” category included regional reports on Long Island’s East End and stories about county finances, taxation, governance, and politics; Long Island weather; regional transportation; diocesan news; crimes and court decisions with regional impact such as the fraud conviction of a Long Island mortgage banker; county anti-drug initiatives; and utilities and energy costs.

Each of the sites contained extensive material that did not meet study parameters. Databases, business directories, events calendars, maps, press releases, real estate transfers, legal notices, police blotters, editorials, op-eds, opinion columns, polls, and letters to the editor were not counted.

At the end of the four-week data collection period, the researcher calculated total coverage by story type for each site, and whether the story was “exclusive,” meaning that no other site had carried the story; “shared,” meaning that the same story had appeared first on the same day on two or more sites; or “matched,” meaning a story that had appeared at least a day earlier on a rival site.

Results

Over the four-week study period, the *Riverhead News-Review* website published 148 stories that met the study parameters, the highest output of the four sites. The second-highest output appeared on Riverhead Local with 107 stories; Riverhead Patch came in third with 94 stories; and Newsday.com was fourth with 73 stories.

On Newsday.com, 36 percent of the stories that met study parameters concerned Riverhead directly. (All data are rounded to the nearest percent.) The stories published on the three hyperlocal sites were overwhelmingly concerned with local affairs, with more than 90 percent of the stories on each site dealing with people and events based in or immediately outside the town. Conversely, 64 percent of the stories counted on Newsday.com covered county events and issues relevant to Riverhead readers - 47 stories in the 28-day study period, compared with numbers in the single digits for county stories on the hyperlocal news sites.

On local coverage, *Newsday* lagged in terms of timeliness as well as breadth. Of the 26 local stories published during the study period, 77% were either “exclusive,” meaning that no other site covered the story, or “shared,” meaning that two or more sites had the same story on the same day. Ninety percent of the local stories published by the *Riverhead News-Review* and by Riverhead Patch (130 out of 144 and

79 out of 88, respectively) were either “exclusive” or “shared.” Riverhead Local had a slightly lower rate of first-day stories, with 86% of its 100 local stories running exclusively or on the same day as one or more of the other sites.

Including county news, Riverhead Local trailed, or “matched,” the other sites with 15% of its stories following similar ones published elsewhere at least a day earlier. Of the total output on Riverhead Patch, 12% “matched” stories from other sites. For the *Riverhead News-Review*, 10% of the stories played catch-up. Just 8% of the recorded Newsday.com stories were “matches,” but this must be viewed in light of Newsday.com’s far more intense emphasis on county news (Table 1).

Counting both “shared” and “matched” stories — that is, stories that appeared on more than one of the sites irrespective of timeliness — Riverhead Local had the greatest amount of content that appeared elsewhere, with 53% of its 107 total stories. Riverhead Patch was second with 47% of 100 total stories, followed by *Riverhead News-Review* with 39% of 148 stories. Newsday had both the fewest and the lowest percentage, with 12 of 73 stories, or 16% of its coverage.

The stories most likely to deal with what Rosenberry identified as “community routines and topics of low controversy” (2011), here recorded primarily in the Features and General categories, made up less than 20 percent of the local stories counted on any of the sites (Table 1). Stories about local businesses and market conditions showed greater variation in emphasis among the sites, ranging from 8 percent of local stories on Riverhead Local to 15 percent on Newsday.com (Table 1).

Where the sites’ emphases varied most was in sports coverage. Riverhead Local devoted 24% of its 100 local stories to high school sports, paying close attention to the successful season of Riverhead High School’s Blue Waves girls’ basketball team. The site, however, was not always the first to report sports news. Riverhead Local missed being first (or even tying for first) to post three stories on the Waves’ post-season, including the team’s loss at the state semifinals. Riverhead Patch devoted just 9% of its 88 local stories to sports. The *News-Review* covered sports in 19% of 144 local stories, while Newsday.com covered sports in four of its 26 local stories, or 15 percent (Table 1).

Discussion

RQ1: Do independently owned community news sites in a competitive hyperlocal market emphasize different story types than sites owned by publicly held companies?

Riverhead’s three hyperlocal sites — Riverhead Local, Riverhead Patch and the website of the *Riverhead News-Review* — showed similar news judgment despite differences in ownership structure. Newsday.com’s coverage was so limited compared to the hyperlocal sites, with just 26 stories focused on Riverhead, that it was hard to draw conclusions about its news judgment. All of the hyperlocal sites emphasized community structure rather than social ritual, regardless of whether the site was independent and online-only, part of a locally owned legacy media organization, or part of publicly owned AOL’s Patch.com network. None of the sites shied from covering controversial local issues, such as a proposal to build a 40,000-square-foot YMCA on nine acres of agriculturally zoned land that generated angry comments on both sides of the issue. Patch, in fact, broke the story of a group that formed in opposition to the YMCA project. All of the sites routinely covered drunk-driving arrests, drug-related arrests, bank robberies and sexual predation by local residents, and other unsavory happenings that shed a less-than-flattering light on the community. All four sites published the names of those charged. No site devoted more than a fifth of its output to stories in the Features and General categories.

ries, those most likely to include coverage of volunteer and nonprofit groups. Patch, in fact, had the second-lowest percentage, 15 percent, of features and general items. Thus, in Riverhead, corporate ownership did not correlate with overly cautious or bland journalism.

This case study did not support Rosenberry's broad claim that corporate ownership of hyperlocal sites — i.e., Patch — correlates with an avoidance of controversy or ugliness. Riverhead Patch, for example, gave more coverage to the sentencing of the leader of a local crack gang than any of the other sites.

Differences in scale and timing may explain why Rosenberry's study found a correlation between ownership and journalistic caution among hyperlocal news sites that wasn't evident in the Riverhead case study. As each Patch site is primarily the work of its "local editor," an individual Patch site may reflect the interests and experience of a journalist more or less attuned to community structure or social ritual (Roach, 2012). Riverhead Patch readers may have benefited from an editor with a background in hard news. Further, Rosenberry's content analysis was conducted in mid-2010, when, as he noted, "Patch was just beginning its explosive growth" (Rosenberry, 2011, 5). Riverhead Patch was launched in September 2010, and its editor has had 18 months to develop a deeper understanding of the community structure than might have been available to editors of the Patch sites in Rosenberry's 2011 study. A study that analyzes story selection in the aggregate, as Rosenberry's did, will inevitably miss individual sites that reflect a specific editor's less conforming choices.

The aggregate study didn't differentiate between communities with a competitive online hyperlocal news market and those where either the Patch or an independent site had the field to itself. Competition, along with an individual editor's personal news judgment, may have an effect on story selection, but such impacts cannot be determined in the aggregate.

Despite the presence of stories on controversial and unsavory topics on the hyperlocal sites, much of the coverage was mundane. The volunteer fire department's pancake breakfast, school events, talent shows, local charities, high school sports, profiles of local business owners were all duly noted and amply documented with photos and the occasional video. Thus, Riverhead's hyperlocal sites, regardless of ownership structure, fulfill what Rosenberry called "functions traditionally associated with weekly newspapers" (Rosenberry, 2010).

Newsday.com's relatively dismal hyperlocal performance in this study, however, supports the idea that corporate ownership may have some effect on local news judgment. The difference may lie in the corporation's overall mission. AOL, which owns the Patch network, has focused on becoming a content provider as its once-dominant position as a web portal shriveled. Its acquisition of *The Huffington Post* in 2011, along with its ownership of other niche websites, reflects this focus. Newsday, on the other hand, is a tiny part of Cablevision Services Corp., a company that gets the majority of its revenue from cable television operations. In its 2011 annual report to the Securities and Exchange Commission, Cablevision classified *Newsday* and Newsday.com among its "other" businesses. The "other" category contributed just 6 percent of Cablevision revenues, compared to 54 percent for cable television (SEC, 2012). Newsday's relative neglect of Riverhead leaves the field open for the other three competitors, although readers interested in how decision by county and state government could affect their lives cannot limit their news consumption to these hyperlocal sites. Of the three, only Patch linked out to other news media, and then just for local stories — to neighboring Patch sites and to East End legacy news organizations.

RQ2: Do competitive online news sites seek to provide a full community report or to differentiate their coverage through spe-

cialization?

Riverhead Local, which has a large following among Riverhead High School students (Selvin, 2011), devoted a greater share of its coverage, 24%, to high school sports, 5 percentage points more than the *Riverhead News-Review* and 15 percentage points more than Riverhead Patch. Patch paid somewhat more attention to business stories, though some of these stories matched the content mandates that Roach described, such as asking readers what they would like to see in empty storefronts around town (Roach, 2012). Riverhead Local also covered fires more often than the other sites. Overall, however, each site had a rich mix of story types and presented a full report on the community, touching on government, politics, land and economic development, crime, schools, taxes, volunteer groups, deaths, anniversaries and birthdays.

Does the fact that a majority of the content on each site appeared exclusively on that site indicate an attempt to differentiate coverage? Given the broad range of coverage overall, it appears that differentiation is a minor aspect of the sites' news judgment.

It is notable, however, that none of the four sites published a single story during the study period that dealt directly with the lives of poor people, despite Riverhead's 12 percent poverty rate, among the highest community rates on Long Island (Census Bureau [a]). But inattention to poverty has been a feature of much U.S. journalism for many years (Cline, 2011; deMause & Rendall, 2007).

Conclusion

This case study showed that Riverhead possesses a vibrant journalism market in which at least three of the four competing sites vie to be first with ongoing coverage of community structure and lesser amounts of social-ritual coverage. *Newsday* evinces less competitive drive in its Riverhead coverage. *Newsday*, however, was the only site to publish significant enterprise and investigative reporting, not on local issues specifically but on countywide matters that touched on Riverhead. Between 39% and 53% of the stories on the three hyperlocal sites appeared on a competing site at some point during the study period, showing a strongly similar news judgment among the three editors.

Fancher, in a white paper on the future of local journalism, wrote: "It is increasingly clear that the traditional functions of journalism can and will be performed outside of traditional news organizations. The critical questions concern how good this new journalism will be, what values and standards it upholds and what public service it provides" (Fancher, 2011, p. 38). Riverhead residents, for now at least, are benefiting from the strongly competitive environment for local news in their community.

Table 1

| | | Newsday | RNR | RL | RP |
|------------------------------|-----|---------|-----|-----|-----|
| Total stories counted | | 73 | 148 | 107 | 94 |
| Riverhead local coverage | 36% | 97% | 93% | 95% | |
| Suffolk County coverage | 64% | 3% | 7% | 5% | |
| Topics of local coverage | | | | | |
| Riverhead news | 50% | 55% | 53% | 63% | |
| Sports | | 15% | 19% | 24% | 9% |
| Business | 15% | 10% | 8% | 14% | |
| Features | 12% | 12% | 10% | 10% | |
| General | 8% | 2% | 6% | 6% | |
| Timeliness of local coverage | | | | | |
| Day 1 (exclusive and shared) | | 77% | 90% | 86% | 90% |
| Matched | 23% | 10% | 12% | 10% | |

Table 1 shows the proportion of Riverhead local coverage from each website by topic and timeliness. RNR=Riverhead News Review. RL=Riverhead Local. RP=Riverhead Patch.

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Extension journalism: Teaching students the real world and bringing a new type of journalism to a small town

By Al Cross

Introduction

Since January 2008, students in the School of Journalism and Telecommunications at the University of Kentucky have covered the rural but newsy community of Midway (city population 1,647, census tract and ZIP code about 2,500), about 15 miles from the campus and in the same local telephone calling area, but in another county. Their work has been published on a web site and blog maintained by their instructor, who is an associate professor in the university's Extension Title series of faculty appointments.

The primary objective of the project has been to give soon-to-graduate journalism majors real-world experience in covering a rural community, its issues and its people, in mild competition with a countywide, weekly newspaper that does not publish news on its website. Students are required to cover city council meetings and are assigned beats from which they develop story ideas. Their stories can be presented in straight text, video package, photo gallery or a combination of platforms.

The secondary objective is to provide coverage of local government and public issues, as well as timely features, to a community that once had its own newspaper but lost it 75 years ago. The city government has been highly factionalized, but the weekly newspaper has downplayed that. The project's coverage of council meetings is more detailed, and it does not take no for an answer when seeking public records; when the mayor refused to give a reporter the city budget he had proposed to the council, the project sought a binding opinion from the state attorney general and won, making new law in Kentucky on that point. After the weekly paper published a one-source story about the departing president of the town's private college, the project published a story revealing why the president was asked to resign, and the weekly ran the story.

Another objective is to show the potential value of online journalism to rural communities and perhaps to the county newspaper, which did not put news online at the start of the project but now has occasional Facebook posts and is considering its next online move. The newspaper and the project cooperate; the paper sends its pertinent pages to the instructor when it sends them to its printer, for review by students in that evening's weekly class meeting. The editor of the paper speaks to the class, and occasionally publishes stories by students in the class.

The project also constitutes research into methods and best practices of online community journalism; involvement of students in reporting and photography outside their normal ambit; the direction, supervision and editing of those students; avoiding conflicts between the need to publish information in a timely, useful manner and the need to provide the best instruction; and building and maintaining community relationships that facilitate reporting and readership while upholding journalistic principles. For example, when the instructor told the mayor about the project, the mayor said the city would be happy to take over the website when the project was over; the instructor replied, "I don't think it's a good idea for an agency of government to take over an organ of mass communication." The long-term plan is to largely turn over the project over to a volunteer community board, with continuing oversight and technical assistance from the instructor and continued involvement of students.

Community websites with student reporting are common, but not in rural areas

The idea of a community news outlet with stories reported and edited by journalism students is not new. When the University of Missouri opened the first school of journalism on Sept. 14, 1908, it also started publishing the *Columbia Missourian*, a newspaper that covered not only the university community but the surrounding town of Columbia, which had a population of 5,651 at the 1900 census and a daily paper that had been founded in 1901. Both still publish, and the community is no longer rural; Columbia's population nearly doubled by 1920, exceeded the 50,000 threshold for metropolitan areas by 1970, and at the 2010 census stood at 69,101.

In the last decade or so, dozens of college journalism programs have established websites to provide news coverage of communities that lack their own local news outlets or get scant coverage from outlets that cover a metropolitan area. The form, structure and administration of these sites vary widely, but generally a member of the journalism faculty acts as the *de facto* editor and publisher and students contribute reporting, photography, video stories, audio podcasts, web editing and sometimes copyediting. In some cases, professional journalists and community members contribute content and/or collaborate with student journalists.

Examples of community news sites produced solely by students and faculty include the *Hunts Point Express*, www.huntspointexpress.com, in which students at Hunter College cover the Hunts Points and Longwood areas of the Bronx (one of several such sites in New York City); the University of California's *Mission Loc@l*, <http://missionlocal.org>, covering the Mission District in San Francisco; Texas Christian University's *The 109*, <http://www.the109.org>, covering ZIP Code 76109; California State University's *10 Valley*, <http://10valley.com>, covering the San Gabriel Valley's largely Asian and Latino community; La Salle University's *Germantown Beat*, <http://so-media.lasalle.edu/germantownbeat>; and Columbia College's *Chicago Talks* (www.chicagotalks.net) and *Austin Talks* (<http://austintalks.org>), covering five Central Chicago ZIP codes and "Chicago's largest neighborhood."

Most such sites are aimed at a local audience, though some have a broader mission; for example, *The Miami Planet* at the University of Miami, www.themiamiplanet.org, says it "focuses on South Florida and its environment and is aimed at a worldwide audience."

Few student-produced community news sites serve rural areas. The University of Montana's *Reznet News*, <http://www.reznetnews.org>, covers the six Indian reservations in the state. Perhaps the most rural site serving a single community is *The Rockbridge Report*, <http://rockbridgereport.washingtonandlee.net>, a multimedia site produced by Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia, which has covered Rockbridge County, census population 22,307, since 1985. Also notable is *West Virginia Uncovered*, <http://wvuncovered.wvu.edu>, a site created by West Virginia University to help the state's rural, weekly newspapers adopt and embrace online, multimedia reporting. Students and faculty produce stories and provide training for the papers, but the site does not function as one serving a single community.

Establishing a rural community news site

The challenges of establishing and maintaining a student-produced community news site in a rural area are considerable, including travel time for students and faculty, students' schedules, their initial unfamiliarity with the community, and the lack of cooperation they may encounter with community members who are unfamiliar with the site.

Another obstacle is the availability and commitment of the faculty members involved. Typical journalism-faculty assignments include little time for field work and public service, but assigning, monitoring, editing and publishing student work takes more time than grading typical class work.

In the case described here, the faculty member, this writer, has an assignment that appears to be unique in journalism and perhaps uniquely suited to creating and establishing a news site for a rural community. My faculty appointment in the University of Kentucky School of Journalism and Telecommunications is in the Extension Title series, originally created for faculty who support the work of the federal-state-local Cooperative Extension Service, the 99-year-old national network of specialists who bring new knowledge and best practices to local communities — originally agricultural, then rural, now universal.

My appointment is in the Extension Title series because I am director of the Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues, which was created to help rural journalists define the public agenda in their communities through strong reporting and commentary. The Institute publishes *The Rural Blog*, a daily digest of events, trends, issues, ideas and journalism from and about rural America, at <http://irjci.blogspot.com>. It is a source of information and inspiration for rural journalists, primarily at rural newspapers.

As an associate professor in the School of Journalism and Telecommunications, 20 percent of my effort is in teaching, generally one class per semester. In the fall I teach Community Journalism, JOU 485, a broad course dealing with both the editorial and business sides of community news media but also including a strong reporting and writing component. When I began teaching in the 2004-05 school year, my spring course was on special topics, varying each year but generally dealing with elections and public issues such as the future of tobacco-dependent communities.

In search of a special topic for the 2008 spring semester, I was inspired by two things: my drive to work in Lexington from home in Frankfort, the most direct route for which took me through the town of Midway, population 1,647 (2010 census); and a University of North Carolina news site, *The Carrboro Commons* (www.carrborocommons.org), with student stories about the town of Carrboro, a town of 19,000 bordering Chapel Hill. Creation of the site in December 2006 quickly inspired some Carrboro residents to start a weekly newspaper for the town, which had never had its own paper. *The Carrboro Citizen*, which republished some *Carrboro Commons* stories, ceased publication in October 2012, but some Carrboro residents may revive it.

Could the Carrboro experiment be replicated in Midway? There were several differences: Carrboro is almost 12 times as large as Midway, and is an easy bicycle or bus ride from the UNC-Chapel Hill campus, while Midway is 15 miles and 25 minutes from the UK campus, in another county. Also, UNC's journalism enrollment is much larger than Kentucky's, limiting the pool of available students.

However, there were some similarities: Jock Lauterer, the UNC lecturer who runs *Carrboro Commons* and the Carolina Community Media Project, is a former community newspaper editor and publisher; I had been a weekly newspaper editor and manager during the first three years of my career, in 1975-78, had maintained contact with many community editors and publishers during my career at *The* (Louisville) *Courier-Journal*, which for most of that time included

the entire state of Kentucky as its coverage area. Also, my primary job at UK is to help rural journalists cover issues, much as Lauterer helps those in North Carolina with the craft of journalism, and a site for Midway could provide a laboratory for testing the application of broadly accepted "best practices" in journalism to a small community. My route to work would make it easy for me to check on things in Midway regularly, and I knew there was plenty of news in Midway, a bucolic railroad town with several good restaurants, antique shops and other tourism-related businesses. Finally, a news site for Midway would be a service to a rural community that is geographically isolated from the rest of its county and once had its own newspaper, the *Blue Grass Clipper*, which died in 1938, about the time highways supplanted railroads as the main transportation arteries. Midway residents are reminded of that in every edition of *The Woodford Sun*, the weekly newspaper serving Midway and the rest of Woodford County, which runs news items from old *Clippers* on its Midway page each week.

The *Carrboro Commons*' inspiration of *The Carrboro Citizen* also suggested that a news site for Midway might spur beneficial change at *The Woodford Sun*. The *Sun* has been owned since 1942 by the Chandler family, first by A.B. "Happy" Chandler, who was a U.S. senator, commissioner of baseball and twice governor. His son, Albert B. Chandler Jr., has been publisher since 1957. The *Sun* has a strong news product and a healthy business position; its household penetration in Woodford County (pop. 25,000) is approximately 48 percent, good for a traditional weekly paper published in a near suburb of Lexington, a city of 300,000.

The *Sun* has a website, www.woodfordsun.com, but the only news it offers are obituaries, agendas of government meetings and local club meeting schedules. The *Sun*'s management says putting news online would cannibalize its print circulation of approximately 5,200, which is its only basis for advertising. However, the newspaper serves a county that has some of the highest income and education levels in Kentucky, and a population that is strongly oriented toward Lexington, so its policy may be short-sighted at a time when Americans are increasingly getting their news online.

As a former editor and manager of weekly newspapers, I presumed that the *Sun* might view creation of a news site for Midway as a source of competition, so the first person I approached about the idea (outside the UK School of Journalism and Telecommunications) was Stephen Peterson, managing editor of the *Sun*. In a visit to his office in the county seat of Versailles (pop. 8,568), I told him that our intent was not to supplant the *Sun* as a source of news for Midway, but to supplement it; that we would make student stories available for republication in the *Sun*; and that if we stopped using the site, the *Sun* would have the right of first refusal to take it over. Peterson had spoken to my Community Journalism class, and I invited him to speak to students in the new course, which was titled Advanced Writing for Mass Media: Online Community News Site, JOU 499-401. I named the site Midway Messenger.

The second outside person approached about the project was Midway Mayor Tom Bozarth, because I expected coverage of city government to be a linchpin of the students' coverage and wanted to pave the way for it. Bozarth had been mayor for a year, and one of the issues he was dealing with was the city's website, which needed improvement. When I described the project to him, he immediately suggested that the city could take over the *Messenger* website when I was through with it. I immediately replied, "Well, I don't think it would be a good idea to turn over an organ of mass communication to a unit of government."

That conversation was a harbinger of the Midway *Messenger*'s relations with Bozarth and other city officials, which would be more adversarial than they had been accustomed to having with *The Wood-*

ford Sun — but not as adversarial as the relationship of a metropolitan newspaper to its primary government. In that would be lessons about community journalism.

Turning students into journalists who serve a community

From the start of the project, the initial assignment for students in JOU 499-401 has been to cover a meeting of the Midway City Council. This gives them an opportunity to meet several of the major players in the community, see them in action, familiarize themselves with issues in the community — and do it as a group, which adds to their comfort level. I try to accompany any student on his or her first reporting trip to Midway, and for the first council meeting offer to provide transportation; that gives us an opportunity to discuss Midway, what we see on the road leading to it, and what may happen at the meeting. (Students in the course must have passed a 300-level reporting course that includes coverage of a Lexington city council meeting.)

Each student writes his or her own story about the council meeting, and I blend them together under a multiple byline. The meeting is held on Monday or Tuesday evening; at class on Wednesday evening, we compare the different approaches to the stories and I note common mistakes that they need to avoid. The follow-up assignment is to compare, in writing, their composite story to the one in *The Woodford Sun*.

We are able to do that in real time, because shortly after the project began, Steve Peterson agreed to send me PDFs of the pertinent pages of the *Sun* as soon as he shipped them to his printer, usually late Wednesday morning. He does this each week without being reminded, and a review of those pages has become a standard item in each class session, including those in my Community Journalism class in the fall, as an example of a well-edited weekly newspaper. It almost always provides several story ideas, and such timely tips are invaluable. Stories in the *Sun* also provide an opportunity to background the students on issues and personalities.

Because the project has proven successful, students in the fall class are now given the option of covering Midway as the larger share of their reporting and writing assignments. Other students in the course are also encouraged (or required, depending on class size) to write one or two Midway stories. That has made the project even more successful, because it provides coverage during most of the year.

One pitfall of college-produced community news sites is the lack of coverage during vacations, especially in the summer, which can give such sites a transient, dilettantish feel and lose some of the community connections built up during semesters. My Extension Title appointment, which is year-round, makes it easier for me to take time to cover meetings and write stories during those periods, though the threshold for publishing a story is higher; it must have immediate news value. (I drive to and from work through Midway on most days, just to keep an eye on things, and stop in about once a week.)

For example, I have done vacation-time stories about the city council's actions regarding a failed industrial park that threatened the town's financial stability; the resignation of a former mayor from the council, which began healing a long factional dispute; and the dedication of a Midway branch library, something the town had sought for years.

Even during semesters, it's more practical for me to do certain stories because of my background as a political writer in the nearby state capital of Frankfort. Those include stories on elections, the legislature's change of the city's official classification, and local residents' involvement in state government and politics.

Our coverage is not always done in Midway. Because the town is surrounded by prime farmland, much of it on which Thoroughbred



Student Justin Wright interviews Midway horse breeder Brereton Jones, a former governor, for a story on the area's Thoroughbred industry.

horses are raised, we cover the horse industry and land-use controversies, which have dominated the politics of Woodford County for 40 years. If possible, I accompany students to events and/or initial interviews on such broader topics — to make sure they get the story we need and to give them guidance on reporting and writing.

But on most stories, students just have a discussion with me about the topic and how to approach it, and do at least the initial reporting on their own. Both courses are platform-agnostic, so broadcast students can produce video or audio stories, and those inclined toward photography can do photo essays if the subject matter fits.

A member of the founding *Midway Messenger* class, Monica Wade, wrote in an email, "The experience was invaluable in that it gave us what we really needed as students: the opportunity and freedom to teach ourselves how to be journalists and to watch our hard work and dedication come to life via our publication."

"The workshop, hands-on style of instruction, made it seem more of an internship than a class," wrote Richard Yarmy, a student in successive fall and spring classes. He said his experience taught him "how reporting on a community connects you to that community — events take on more personal importance and heighten your interest level." He said the work also resulted in "honing writing skills in a real time environment covering topics that had significance to a real community, its concerns, challenges and opportunities."

A student from Versailles, Morgan Rhodes, wrote: "I hear students in other majors complaining about how they feel ill-prepared for the real world after their college experience. By writing for the *Midway Messenger*, I felt extremely prepared...I felt confident in interviews after graduation and could pull from my experiences in Midway to answer questions about situations journalists can encounter. Besides the opportunity to gain real experience, a place to publish my work and to adapt my writing to a targeted, online audience, I am also grateful that I was forced to cover a variety of stories. From city council meetings to vultures, I learned how to approach people of different stations and stories from different angles. I gained a lot of confidence in my interviewing abilities and confidence in coverage of events outside of sports.

Rhodes, who was in the spring 2012 course, said writing for an online but small-town publication was especially valuable: "In this job market, it is more important than ever to be able to write live. It truly is an art to keep coverage up-to-date through continuous editing,

links and photographs. Along with online journalism, there is also an art to writing for a small town. I learned that small-town audiences value news just as much if not more than larger cities and appreciate coverage. Seemingly overlooked often, small towns are hotbeds for interesting stories and deserve full coverage.”

For Julia Myers, the course in spring 2013 was a rite of passage: “While all of my journalism courses at UK provided me with useful skills to improve my writing, JOU 499 was the only course that gave me a realistic taste of what being a journalist is all about. The deadlines, source requirements, and the reporter/editor relationship between me and the professor made it feel like I was working in a newsroom. I have always been comfortable writing, but this course really forced me outside of my comfort zone...JOU 499 gave me the tools, experience and confidence I needed to think of myself as a journalist, and not just a student.”

Autumn Harbison, who was in the first Midway class and is now a lawyer, says the concept could be replicated. “I loved my experience writing for the people of Midway. I’m from a relatively small town so I know how rural journalism sometimes has its problems. Every community, no matter how small, has news and its citizens deserve a publication of its own. I’m proud that we could do that for Midway. Blogs are so easy to manage and accessible. There is no reason a publication like this couldn’t be implemented in more areas through university programs or even as a teaching exercise for high school journalism classes.”

A different approach

Because we are attempting to prepare students for almost any sort of job in journalism, the standards for reporting, writing, editing and presentation in these courses are essentially the same as those at metropolitan newspapers and broadcast stations. That means we do stories, and take approaches to stories, that are not found in most rural community newspapers.

One example was a project favored by virtually everyone in Midway, construction of a nursing home and assisted-living housing complex. After 12 years of effort and many disappointments, the city, the developer and local volunteers finally found financing and a suitable piece of property, which needed rezoning. In advance of the zoning hearing, we did a story that not only detailed the volunteers’ efforts but the views of the adjoining farm owner, who had never expected what she called “a subdivision” next to her homestead.

The most continuing example of our different approach has been our frank treatment of the political situation in this little town. For a few years, the six-member council was split between factions aligned with Mayor Bozarth and with Midway Renaissance, a volunteer group that conducted many civic activities and improvements. Our stories mentioned and sometimes highlighted the factional split; one by Dick Yarmy began, “The March 21 Midway City Council meetings unfolded like a drama in two acts. Act 1 was an example of city government at its best. Act 2 showed the strain and tension of two factions reaching to understand each other.”

The Woodford Sun covered the meetings and reported the disagreements and split votes, but rarely if ever referred to the factions. In class, I said that is not uncommon among community newspapers, which may figure that most anyone in a town who cares to know about such a thing knows it already, from observation and word of mouth. But I noted that Midway is a bedroom community for many residents who work in nearby towns and may not be as much into the talk of the town as those who spend most of their waking hours in Midway.

The presence of the factions made covering city government more interesting for students, and gave them valuable experience. In



Student Nini Edwards takes notes at a Midway City Council meeting. Students cover the council regularly and write stories on deadline.

an email, Yarmy said he learned “how to evaluate newsmakers’ personality and communication styles...to identify a source’s agenda in qualifying information, [and] to be mindful not to ‘carry their water’,” the phrase that I often use in cautioning students to take care that their reporting and writing fulfill the journalistic standard of independence.

Making law, and an adversary

Frank, professional news coverage often pleases one side more than another, and in this case it made our relationship with Mayor Bozarth more adversarial. That became even more so after we paid closer attention to the city budget, the government’s basic policy document.

We reported in 2009 that the city was sitting on more than \$1 million in cash though its non-utility budget was less than \$1 million, but our initial report overstated the amount because the student reporter didn’t fully understand the budget and didn’t ask enough questions, and I was guilty of the latter omission.

The next year, when the mayor mentioned at a council meeting that he had sent copies of his proposed budget to council members, I had my student reporter write out an open-records request during the meeting for a copy of the budget. The mayor replied that he did not have to release the budget until the council had approved it, which was a departure from past practice and seemingly a reaction to the previous year’s reporting.

With the help of the Kentucky Press Association, we appealed the denial of the request to the state attorney general, whose decisions in open-government cases have the force of law unless overturned by a court on appeal. There had never been a decision on this exact point, probably because it’s standard practice for local governments to release their proposed budgets, and some earlier decisions did not lean toward openness, so this decision made new law. The city did not appeal.

The next year, when the council openly discussed the budget at a meeting, the mayor refused to give it to us unless we filed a written open-records request, to which the law allowed him three business days to respond. We obtained the proposed budget from a former mayor who had joined the council and the anti-mayor faction.

Earlier, the mayor had started a weekly column on the Midway page in *The Woodford Sun*, and in one edition had praised the newspaper for how it covered Midway and contrasted that with coverage provided by “other publications” from outside the county. (This may

have been one reason that we had a record number of page views, 4,550, in May 2011.)

All this prompted me to ask for a private, one-on-one meeting with the mayor, at which I explained to him that our approach to coverage had to be as professional as possible in order to provide the best real-world instruction to students, and that we were not going to change our approach. Regarding his desire for more positive coverage, I noted several feature stories we had done that reflected well on Midway. We discussed several specific instances of coverage and, I think, left the meeting with a better understanding of each other. I later assigned Dick Yarmy to write a profile of the mayor, the news peg being that he was on the ladder to become president of the Kentucky League of Cities.

Around this time, the mayor had been voicing his displeasure with the U.S. Postal Service and plans to change some of the operations at the Midway post office. This was part of a national plan, which we were covering on The Rural Blog, so I began sharing information with him on that topic that I thought he might find useful. A few months later, he used the last three sentences of his column to compliment the commentary I had delivered the night before on Kentucky Educational Television's election-night coverage. I thanked him for that, and mentioned that Yarmy had completed the profile but I was holding it for a less busy time. He replied, "Thank you. Really enjoy learning about politics in the state."

The frequency of our emails increased. It seemed that the mayor's new statewide role, and mine as a political commentator who writes a fortnightly column for *The Courier-Journal*, had provided us an area of common ground outside Midway.

An unexpected investigation

At 4:35 p.m. on Tuesday, March 20, 2012, I received an emailed news release from Midway College announcing that its president, William Drake, had resigned, saying that he had "largely accomplished" the major goals the trustees set for him when he got the job 10 years earlier, the major exception being a pharmacy school being built 140 miles away in Paintsville in the hometown of a donor who had promised most of the money for it. Two months earlier, the college had announced that the school would be operated by the University of Charleston (West Virginia). "With the shift of that project to now become a partnership with another institution, I feel my work on this initiative from concept to date is complete and now is the time to move on," the release quoted Drake as saying.

The release did not mention a new job for Drake, so the clear implication was that his resignation had been requested — and it was easy to infer that the pharmacy school might have been the reason. I was able to confirm that quickly with sources in Midway, but was not in a position to launch into an investigative story. If that was going to be done, I wanted students to do it. I had two or three students whom I thought capable of doing such work, but we were past midterm, their story plans had been set, and they had demanding class and/or work schedules.

The Woodford Sun ran the news release verbatim on its Midway page. The next week, it started on its front page a 2,000-word story about Drake with only one source: Drake. It accepted his stated reason for leaving, and its only mention of future work was that "He believes he may be called to lead a similar institution," in the same way that ministers are called in his denomination, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

When I read this story, I was very disappointed in the *Sun*, and knew that the *Midway Messenger* had to step into the breach and do the best job it could of telling the community what had caused the

resignation of the chief executive of the city's largest employer and taxpayer. I took the story to class that evening and asked for volunteers to work on the story with me. One of the students I had in mind stepped forward, and two others helped out because they were in advantageous positions. One lived in Woodford County and interviewed students at the college; the other was from a town near Paintsville. He interviewed the donor-trustee, who was not very cooperative, but he also looked up public records on the donor and the pharmacy school building, took pictures of the site and placed it on a map.

We had about a month left in the semester to do the story, and the going was slow, partly because it was a busy time for all of us. I was able to confirm with a trustee I knew that Drake had been asked to resign due to his mishandling of the pharmacy-school project, but the details were still unclear, so we didn't have much of a story. Other trustees wouldn't talk, but word got around that we were making inquiries, and during finals week, we got a call from a source who claimed to know what we needed to know. At about that time, the University of Charleston announced that it would not complete and operate the pharmacy school.

The source met with me and the lead reporter on the story, Cassidy Herrington. The source provided several good leads, some of which I chased and some of which Herrington chased. In a day or two, we had a much fuller understanding of what had happened, and documentation to back it up. We went to Drake's home in an unsuccessful effort to interview him. Herrington wrote the story, which I gave about the same intensity of editing as a similar investigative piece at a metropolitan newspaper. Because I added findings from my own reporting, she acted as a secondary editor.

On Monday, May 7, the day after Herrington received her degree, we published a story that began pretty much as she wrote it: "Midway College's ambitious plan for a pharmacy school in Eastern Kentucky was a ship that sank before it ever sailed, taking the college's president with it. The private college twice withdrew its applications for accreditation of the school, amid doubts from accreditors... The debacle has raised questions about the management, health and future direction of Midway College..."

When I asked former students to comment for this paper on what they liked and didn't like about working for the *Midway Messenger*, Herrington was the first to reply. She wrote:

"Al's class was the most important one I took in journalism school. It underscored the most basic, yet fundamental, principles of journalism: reporting accurately and fairly, crafting a story, and holding those in power accountable. It also gave me hope that journalism, contrary to the naysayers, is definitely not 'dead.'"

"Before writing for the *Midway Messenger*, I understood journalism as noble career path that requires nothing more than a pen, a notebook and a knack for writing. The *Messenger* was a humbling wake-up call. I learned that first, it also requires guts, and second, some people regard journalists as less than noble — more like scum.

"Al Cross began sessions in our newsroom [classroom] with each student announcing what story he or she was covering. If the story was too fluffy, Al didn't hesitate to say so. He had a copy of each student's schedule, and he knew when each writer was out reporting — I knew this because on several occasions, I received text messages instructing me to ask more acute questions.

"Gathering up the chutzpah to call sources after 5 p.m. — or even more difficult, knock on their front door — was a tedious lesson that I'll never forget. To this day, when I'm covering a story, I remember sitting at Al's desk with the telephone positioned between us. The person on speakerphone was lying, and Al kept shooting glances at me to continue asking questions.

“This was the first time that my reporting angered politicians and CEOs. The *Messenger* gave me my first taste of investigative reporting and helped me develop a stronger voice — because I realized the people in this small town needed to hear the story.

“Prior to Midway, my perception of small towns and rural communities was naive (and probably ignorant). The *Messenger* opened my eyes to the corruption and backdoor decision-making that happens in governments of all sizes and at all levels of authority. To the misfortune of this community and countless others, there wasn’t a newspaper to report it.

“But this is where the *Messenger* reestablished my faith in journalism, particularly online journalism. The field is experimenting and rediscovering itself, and I believe that experiments like these will help inspire the next generation of journalists to tirelessly pursue truth — because it has certainly inspired this one.”

The week after the story appeared, *The Woodford Sun* reprinted it.

Summing up and looking ahead

Herrington’s story was so important that it still appears on the home page of the *Midway Messenger*’s website, www.MidwayMessenger.org. Most *Messenger* stories are published only on the blog, <http://midwayky.blogspot.com>, but those about very important subjects or a significant degree of timelessness also appear on the home page.

One of the longest-tenured stories on the page is a multimedia presentation on Midway restaurants and other businesses by Autumn Harbison, who wrote this about it: “Developing ideas for the *Midway Messenger* forced me to think about journalism being alive in a whole new way. That’s what led me to make the multimedia package highlighting the sights and sounds of Midway. I’m still very proud of how that came together since it was my first multimedia piece. Writing for the web is a different animal than writing solely for a hard-copy publication. I’m doing some of that now, but the *Messenger* is how I got my feet wet in learning how.”

Harbison’s package is an example of how students do stories not just for Midway, but for the world. That would be true to some extent even if tourism were not a major business in Midway, because we are online and available to most of the world.

That’s another difference in the *Midway Messenger* and the *Woodford Sun*, but we are not as different as we were when the project started. I’m a little more like the weekly editor and manager I was more than 35 years ago, and the *Sun* is putting some news online via Facebook, as many weeklies have begun to do in recent years.

I asked Steve Peterson to write a few paragraphs for this paper about the usefulness of the *Midway Messenger* to the *Sun* and the people of Midway. Here is his full reply:

“When Al Cross approached me some years ago about cooperating in a rural journalism education project centered on Midway, my first thought was that I would be encouraging a competitor; moreover, a competitor whose overhead costs would be underwritten by a major university.

“As with most print news outlets, *The Woodford Sun* had been (and still is) experiencing doubts about our long-term viability in the face of online news providers, and supporting — at least in principle — a free online alternative to our paper seemed to go against our interests. And while I manage the news side of *The Woodford Sun*, we are

too small an organization for me to ignore important business issues. I do not have that luxury.

“However, I agreed to Cross’s proposal for two reasons:

“First, I felt it was critical that journalism students writing for online publication have a deep understanding of how local governments work — the functions of various elected officials, the breadth and limitations of their authority, what their responsibility to the public consists of — just as we who trained for print media did. A reporter cannot shed light on the critical civic issues they must write about unless he or she grasps these basics.

“In many ways, Midway is the perfect laboratory for a group of students to learn these fundamental elements. It is too small to support its own traditional newspaper, but its elected officials still must grapple with contentious issues of public importance. Being a smaller community, Midway provides a more intimate setting for a student journalist to come to grips with these issues and write about them intelligently. Despite my initial misgivings, I came to understand that an online outlet for these reports made perfect sense.

“Second, I was quite familiar with Al Cross’s work as one of the state’s most respected journalists, so I was confident that his students’ work would undergo scrupulous oversight before it ever appeared on *The Midway Messenger*. That, for me, was a critical consideration. Obviously, I was a student journalist once and know from experience how sloppy journalists-in-training can be. I was fortunate to have a top-notch teacher and faculty advisor in the late Maria Braden, who more than once had to steer me in the right direction. I felt that Cross would fill that role for his students very well.

“On the whole, I have come to realize that the relationship between *The Woodford Sun* and *The Midway Messenger* has been much more complementary than competitive. We are a small weekly with two reporters who have an entire county to cover. I made it a priority to promote Midway stories to a higher prominence in the newspaper when I was named managing editor in 2001, and have done that as best I can. However, as a practical matter, with our limited resources, we cannot place the kind of direct and exclusive focus on Midway that Cross and his students have managed.

“Because of that, *The Midway Messenger*’s stories have frequently drilled down to a level of detail we are often unable to accomplish. To that end, Cross and the *Messenger* have provided us with timely original reporting on several occasions, which we have gladly published. The *Messenger* has also provided those readers who rely exclusively on new media rather than print access to very good reporting about Midway and what matters to its residents. It also provides that information to a potentially much wider audience of readers who may not live in Midway but are interested in what is happening there.

“I cannot help but believe that covering Midway and writing for *The Messenger* has been of great benefit to Cross’s students. After visiting and speaking to Cross’s class nearly every year since the project began, I often wish I’d had a similar innovative learning experience when I was in journalism school.”

That was a gratifying response. So was the comment that Helen Rentch, chair of the Midway Nursing Home Task Force, made to me at the groundbreaking ceremony for the facility: “We’re so happy that you are a part of our community.”

And I am glad to be part of it, too, even if I cannot come close to fulfilling the function of a true community publisher — someone who lives in the town and keeps his finger on its pulse every day. But like

such publishers, I try to publish with the interests of the town at heart.

While I consider the *Messenger* a success, the blog has only modest traffic, about 2,500 page views per month. I suspect the major reason is that I have done very little to promote it, outside the usual online presentations and occasional promotion on social media. That is partly because I know we will not always have the personnel available to cover stories that need to be covered. I tell people in Midway, "You can't always rely on us, but you should always look to us." For example, we do things that the *Sun* can't or won't, such as posting boil-water notices and proposed city budgets and ordinances.

That would be less of a problem if members of the community were involved in the project, and their involvement could also make the project sustainable after I reduce or end my involvement. (I can

retire with full benefits in eight years.) I'm trying to plan for that by compiling a diverse list of Midway residents who could act as both an advisory board and stable of contributors.

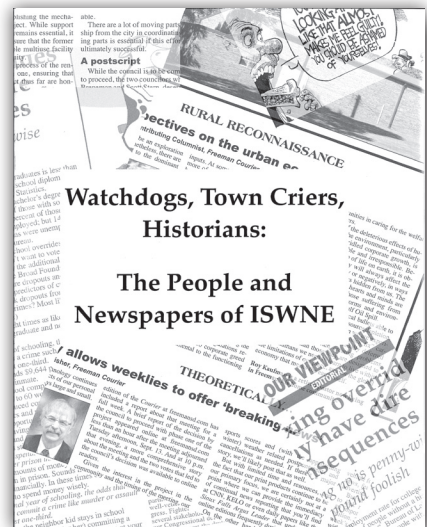
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Shared views: Social capital, community ties and Instagram

By Leslie-Jean Thornton

Each day, millions of images are published through the still growing photo-sharing social media network Instagram, the largest and most popular of its kind. In July, the service reported a level of 45 million posts attracting 1 billion likes each day (Instagram, 2013). It might be said that the images report pieces of our shared global reality from the perspectives of the people posting them (Wonders, 2012; Sontag, 2001). Some of the images show hard news — hurricane damage, likenesses of missing people, wildfire drama — and others are soft news in the extreme: cute puppies, fingernail art, and “selfies,” the results of photographing one’s self with a camera phone. Large news organizations have begun to use Instagram in ways that include crowdsourcing, curating user-generated content, branding, and reporting (Thiruvengadam, 2013; Mendolera, 2013).

Uniform responses from an informal survey of 40 U.S. community newspaper editors and sites representing diverse geographic areas and circulation sizes, however, suggested that Instagram was being overlooked as a resource by smaller organizations. Answers to questions about use ranged from “Huh?,” to scoffing laughter, to “I hope to, but I’m not sure how” (email and personal communication, 2013). None of their newspapers were using it as of early July 2013, although that was not unusual as smaller organizations have been shown to lag larger ones in adoption of digital tools (Greer & Yan, 2011).

Social capital is a concept based on sharing, reciprocating, and being aware of one’s community (Claridge, 2004). For decades, print newspaper readership has been positively correlated to civic engagement, a key expression of social capital, because of the way it spreads awareness. Print circulation has been in a long and significant decline. The audience reading newspapers on mobile devices is growing quickly: up 58% in the average month in 2012 compared to 2011 (Hunt, 2013), and the mobile-exclusive audience grew 83% in 2012 from a year earlier (NAA.org, 2013). Mobile use is the only media platform not trending downward. “[T]he monthly newspaper mobile audience in total could, if it continues at a similar growth rate, surpass the audience for radio news/talk/information and all-news radio,” a Newspaper Association of America report stated (p. 11).

Social media, key components of mobile use and increasingly important loci for news distribution (Hermida et al, 2012), are now associated with social capital. A 2013 Pew report found that “social media is becoming a feature of political and civic engagement” (Smith, 2013). On Instagram, there are numerous archives of images created to bring awareness to causes, from searches for missing people (#missingperson, #4sarai) to environmental responsibility (#environment, #sustainability). A lack of mobile-platform and social media presence on the part of community newspapers represents a reduced level of opportunity for building social capital for the good of both the news organization and the public.

What, then, are news organizations, doing with Instagram? In what ways do those projects or uses contribute to community engagement or knowledge? In the interest of providing models, this study presents mini-cases of such use, identifies aspects of particular interest with regard to social capital, and suggests a continuum of use from growing to mining Instagram content.

Literature Review

The concept of social capital can be broadly described: people who feel connected to each other are more likely to care about each other

and their communities. It’s posited that they will show their regard through helpful and nurturing actions, particularly civic engagement. Aspects of the concept have been interpreted narrowly as well, with numerous niche theories addressing particular uses (McCall, 2002). This paper adopts a broad view.

The idea that newspapers are tied to civic engagement goes back a long way (Tocqueville, 1945). Higher readership is taken as an indication of greater involvement as a citizen (McManamey, 2007). A recent study found that the closure of one small paper (circulation 27,000), *The Cincinnati Post*, had “a substantial and measurable impact on public life” (Schulhofer-Wohl & Garrido, 2013, p.61). No clear consensus arises from numerous wider-reaching studies using newspaper readership as a variable in determining civic participation; where declines are seen, it is unclear whether diminished newspaper access or coverage caused or was caused by a seemingly reduced civic or social interaction. The Schulhofer-Wohl & Garrido study, however, strongly suggests that access to community-intensive journalism is somehow connected to levels of social capital that are greater than would exist should those ties be removed.

One of the challenges faced by community newspapers is that they’re being advised to create social media opportunities and aren’t being told how (Schmeltzer, 2011). Once shown, however, the lessons appear to take hold (Schmeltzer, 2011; Hansen, Paul, DeFoster, Moore, 2011). If experience with locally based electronic forums holds true in their current expressions, active participation adds to and amplifies civic participation and elevates a sense of community attachment (Mesch & Talmud, 2010). There could be economic advantages involved as well. The ability to contribute to a news site, particularly with content submission, is one of the sole significant positive predictors of perceived satisfaction toward community news sites (Chung and Nah, 2009). Social media offerings that can be associated with publishing products increase probability of product purchase (Lis & Berz, 2011).

Making Connections

Journalists in the latter part of the 20th century became interested in the idea of social capital through the work of Robert Putnam and outspoken advocates of public journalism (Friedland et al, 1995; Kennedy, 2013), including scholar Jay Rosen and journalist Buzz Merritt (Thornton, 2009). Putnam, a political scientist, was concerned about what he described as a disappearance of “citizen engagement in community affairs” (Putnam, 1995a). He ascribed the phenomenon to diminished options for social connections, popularly described by him as “bowling alone” (1995b). Social engagement, no matter its nature, was seen as a glue for holding society together, giving people reasons and opportunities to care for and trust one another in reciprocal ways. Rosen suggested journalism could be a force in bringing people together again while reinvigorating — and partially reconceptualizing — the news-gathering and -reporting process (Rosen, 1996). “[G]etting the separations right isn’t the central problem,” he wrote. “This is what public journalism is saying: getting the connections right is the deeper challenge in journalism right now” (p. 81).

Public journalism had a rough reception and gradually faded as a movement. “When the idea of public journalism began to be discussed broadly in the profession in the years after 1994, it was blindsided by the quintessentially modern American demand for instant results,” Merritt wrote (1997, p. xii). But while the prevailing appearance was that journalists had largely rejected the ideas, acceptance had

more to do with the type of journalist holding the opinion. Weaver and Wilhoit's 1992 study of American journalists found a small minority of "small-media, community-oriented idealists" (p. 146) who valued "connecting to the local communities and giving 'voice' to them" (p. 146). Voakes followed up on this. In a national survey in 1996, he discovered that journalists at smaller-circulation newspapers were more likely to find merit in the changes proposed by civic journalism. As one respondent wrote, "People no longer want to be merely observed. People want to be cared about" (Voakes, 1999, p. 766). The responses may have something to do with the practice of community journalism, which is more personal and engaged than the type of journalism practiced in large metropolitan areas (Lauterer, 2004; Reader & Hatcher, 2012).

The advocacy movement to build social capital through journalism predated a strong Internet presence in U.S. newsrooms (Ryfe, 2012). The advent of widespread Internet adoption and the popularity of social media has since spurred research on how those developments have affected public engagement. Putnam held that television and computer use splintered society (1995b), but the Internet, the network of networks, may have provided new opportunities for cohesion (Klein, 1999). A study of Facebook use among college students, for example, found a positive correlation between intensity of use and four aspects of social capital: life satisfaction, social trust, civic engagement, and political participation (Valenzuela, Park & Lee, 2009). A study of Twitter use by mainstream journalists found that regional and community journalists were more likely to be transparent about their jobs, provide accountability, link to external Websites, and engage in discussion through tweets than their national-level colleagues (Lasorsa et al., 2012), which resonates with findings in the pre-Twitter Weaver & Wilhoit study (1992).

Instagram Adoption and Use

Facebook began in 2004; Twitter in 2006; Instagram in 2010. It was popular from its launch, although it was restricted to iPhone and iPad users: "From 25,000 users in the first 24 hours, Instagram grew to 300,000 by Week 3, and then into the tens of millions" (Sengupta et al., 2012). When Instagram extended operability to Android in June 2012, it registered 1 million new users the first day. Three months later (based on ComScore measurements), Instagram overtook Twitter in daily mobile users for the first time. Technology reporter Mike Isaac wrote "That the barely-two-year-old Instagram could rocket up in user engagement and retention in such a short amount of time, eventually surpassing Twitter in the process, speaks to the sheer momentum of the photo-sharing product" (2012, para 7). During that time, Facebook, in April 2012, bought Instagram for \$1 billion (Rusli, 2012). One of the attractions of Instagram for Facebook was the photo-sharer's ability to interface with other services. In a widely reported statement on his Facebook page, founder Mark Zuckerberg vowed to retain Instagram users' ability to post to other social networks ("Facebook buys," 2012).

As of July 2013, with 130 million active monthly users (according to figures posted on Instagram's site) and a reported 10% month-over-month growth rate (Isaac, 2013), Instagram is well positioned, within trends of technology usage, to be on the same platforms as users and potential users. Scarborough metrics indicate the largest technological growth in the U. S. is in social media. Instagram wasn't included in the survey, but the number of people who had accessed Facebook "last month" when compared to the previous year grew 13%, Twitter grew 43%. (SenseMaker, 2013, p. 11). Pew's Mobile Report, with figures compiled as of May 2012, shows that 91% of American adults have cell phones; 56% have smartphones; 28% of cell owners have an Android and 25% have an iPhone; 34% own a tablet computer, and 55%

of all adult cell owners use the Internet on their mobile phones, nearly double what was found three years ago (Brenner, 2013). Of smartphone users at that time, 68% used social networking and 82% took pictures with the phones (ibid). Another study shows a sharp upswing in the use of smartphones and iPads, the devices on which Instagram works. Similarly, the number of people accessing news via those devices continues to grow (Smith, 2013). ComScore analysts used three years of statistics through May 2013 to show, in part, that the number of smartphone subscribers increased 99% over two years ago (Dediu, 2013). The organization's annual summary placed the U.S. in the "late majority" stage of adoption (Lipsman & Aquino, 2013, p. 7).

Digging into how people use digital images, a different Pew report found that "photos and videos have become key social currencies online" (Rainie, Brenner, Purcell, 2012). As of August 2012, nearly half of Internet users (46%) post original photos and videos that they create; 41% said they curate photos and videos found elsewhere online and post them to image-sharing sites. More than half (56%) do one or both and 32% do both (Rainie et al., 2012, p. 2). At that time, 12% of online adults said they used Instagram and 66% used Facebook (p. 3). "The Internet has always been a platform for creators and curators," researcher Joanna Brenner said. "Now, as social media services continue to grow and expand, the tools are more visual and social, and that seems to be attracting special audiences of early adopters" (Smith, 2012).

A November-December 2012 Pew survey researching demographics of five major social media sites, found that Instagram use had risen to 13% with the highest use by females, blacks and Hispanics, people between the ages of 18 and 49, those with some college education, and urban residents. Although Instagram users were represented fairly evenly among household income levels, there were more users in the category for \$75,000+ than in any of the other ranges (Duggan & Brenner, 2013, p.6). While "urban" was the category with the highest representation, combining the "suburban" and "rural" categories (p. 6), more closely mirroring the distinction between metro and community newspaper locations, eliminated an "urban" advantage.

From Poster to Viewers

Although an Instagram image may only be posted (published) from an iPhone, Android phone, or iPad, it can be viewed in numerous ways (viewers such as Webstagram and Instagram-hosted profiles, for example) on multiple platforms, including PC and Mac desktop and laptop computers, and can be distributed via other social networks, including Twitter, Tumblr, Pinterest, and Facebook. The process begins with an image imported into the Instagram app or taken with the Instagram camera. Optional "filter" and border options are available to enhance the photo, which is published in a square space. Comments may be added before and after publication. Users may delete their own comments or comments left on their feed. In the "share" step, options are offered for posting to Flickr, Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Foursquare, sending to email, adding an approximate latitude and longitude via "photo map," and tagging people in photos with "Add People." Instagram frames itself as a "community" and as such has terms of use that set community standards and reserve the right to terminate the accounts of offenders ("Terms," 2013). Instagram provides a "Help Center" with tutorials ("Help," n.d.) and a blog for updates.

The main organizing feature of Instagram is the hashtag (letters or numbers preceded by #), which can only be effectively supplied by the poster. When viewing the post, a finger tap or cursor click on the hashtag will call up the archive. Instagram limits the number of hashtags that can be applied (to 30); the typographic device's main purpose is to direct publication of the image to a searchable archive where it joins other images published with the same hashtag ("Insta-

gram tips,” n.d.). Hashtags are sometimes also used for social expression, as in #greatvacation or #whenwillthisend.

Although the primary venue for Instagram and other cell-phone photos is online, prominent news organizations have taken such images into print as well. In March 2013, *The New York Times* published a front-page photograph, processed in Instagram, of one of the New York Yankees. The photographer’s team series was licensed by Getty and published by *The Wall Street Journal* (Beaujon, 2013). In May 2013, the Poynter Institute published a primer for how newsrooms could use the “community tool,” stressing that Instagram “isn’t just about pretty pictures. It’s about the people they’re interacting with and the stories behind the images” (Thiruvengadam, 2013, para 1). Some organizations use Instagram to drive traffic to their main publications. For example, *The Chicago Sun-Times* reproduces its front pages as Instagram posts (para 17), using them as both outreach and branding tools.

News organizations and photographers have voiced concern over copyright violations arising from publicly shared images, a challenge that has begun to be addressed by the use of watermarks and the creation of apps (many are available at no or low cost) that make them easy to apply prior to posting (Laurent, 2013). Instagram images are published in a low resolution that works well online but produces print reproductions of poor quality. High-resolution versions, however, are saved by the Instagram app to the poster’s smartphone or iPad (“Photo saving,” n.d.). This allows the photographer or news organization to retain control of professional-quality prints, whether for additional publication or for sale.

Research Questions

Arguing that news organizations have both a vested and a civic interest in building engagement and nurturing social capital, and given that social media is effective in both regards, how might Instagram, a relatively new but increasingly popular social network, be utilized in that regard? What are some examples of Instagram integration by news organizations? What elements of engagement and social capital are operationalized, and how?

Methodology

Brief, exploratory conversations, in email and in person, with more than 40 community journalists at newspapers of varying sizes under 50,000 circulation, from major regions across the United States, took place in spring 2013. Many expressed an interest in finding models of adaptable Instagram use. Through prior knowledge, informed suggestions, and digital searches, and with the goal of demonstrating diverse approaches, ten projects were purposively selected for close examination from (or, in one case, related to) large-scale news organizations. Screengrabs and PDF copies were made of all Instagram profiles, and archives were made of Instagram feeds from mid-July 2013 to June 1, 2012 (or the entirety of the feed, if it was not that old).

The analysis drew on Instagram utilizations originating or referenced from *Chicago Tribune*, *Arizona Republic*, *Boston Globe*, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Time* magazine, *Dallas Morning News*, and *Washington Post* feeds. Images from *The Virginian-Pilot* were found through a geomap search (using OnInstagram) as there wasn’t a newspaper account.

The projects were scrutinized to document elements of engagement and nurture (through notes and screengrabs). Such indicators included, but were not limited to, conversations; answers to requests; acknowledgement of filled requests; ways provided for people to connect with each other, such as with hashtags; contact information; op-

portunities to join in shared expressions or observances; republished photos; transparent information about the poster or the organization; ways people could interact as part of a community; and ways people could help or serve a cause. These indicators could be present in the image, comments, hashtags, number of “likes,” and general tone of the post or the project. During the identification and documentation process, emergent patterns were sought. Once determined, they were further synthesized and used to give context to mini-studies constructed from the selected news organizations.

Findings

Overall, there was variety and innovation in the projects. Some concentrated efforts within Instagram itself, while others brought content found on or through Instagram to print and online publications. Some organizations did both.

Most of the organizational accounts had relatively high numbers of posts, while others had few (Table 1). *Time*, with the highest viewership (427,127) had 603 posts and followed 80 accounts. Of the newspapers, the *New York Times Fashion* account had the highest number of followers (331,521), 955 posts and the lowest number of accounts it followed: 26 (there was no official account for *The New York Times* overall). The least-followed account was the *Boston Globe*’s with 604 followers. It had 9 posts, and 50 followed accounts. The second least followed was *AZCentral* (for the *Arizona Republic*) with 1,394 accounts, 253 posts, and 139 accounts it followed. Those two organizations, however, demonstrate high levels of engagement with the Instagram community in multiple ways.

Table 1

News Publications’ Instagram Profiles by Account (July 18, 2013)

| Instagram account | Posts | Followers | Following |
|-------------------|-------|-----------|-----------|
| @azcentral | 253 | 1,394 | 159 |
| @ChicagoTribune | 358 | 7,264 | 399 |
| @NYTFashion | 955 | 331,521 | 26 |
| @WashingtonPost | 789 | 71,194 | 397 |
| @WSJ | 363 | 86,175 | 66 |
| @Time | 602 | 427,127 | 80 |
| @DallasNews | 338 | 3,802 | 316 |
| @USAToday | 445 | 31,640 | 2,417 |
| @BostonGlobe | 9 | 604 | 50 |

There did not appear to be a clear connection between posts-follower-following numbers and depth or range of engagement. *AZCentral* led the field in terms of user-generated submissions with more than 15,000 entries to its ongoing #AZ365 project. The next highest was the *Chicago Tribune* (7,264 followers, 358 posts, 399 followed) with more than 5,835 submissions to its #Trib2013 project. In considering an organization’s overall use, it became clear that one could characterize its existing integrations as predominantly mining Instagram for content or information to be used elsewhere, or as contributing to Instagram in ways that helped the community there grow while also benefiting the organization’s print and online publications.

Elements of Engagement and Social Capital: Cohesion and Outreach

Nine elements of engagement related to social capital were identified and each was categorized into one of two categories: cohesion (mutuality, reliability, affability, and transparency) and outreach (reciprocity, amplification, extension, information, mobilization, and validation).

Cohesion describes ways in which Instagram was used to bring

and keep people together by behaviors and actions of character and personality likely to encourage ongoing and spontaneous interaction. Mutuality, here, refers to establishing common ground between the organization and the viewer. This might be a reference to a shared history (such as the *Dallas Morning News* posting an Instagram photo of its front page report of President Kennedy's assassination), a shared event (New Year's Eve), goal (raising money for bookbags), or sentiment (support for hurricane victims). Reliability refers to ongoing approaches, accuracy, constancy, familiarity, and presence — Instagram images might be sources of needed information throughout the span of a tragedy, for example, becoming a counted-on beacon, comforter, friend, and ally. Affability was seen as friendliness, neighborliness, approachability. This might be conveyed in tone, in the use of the pronoun "our," or in a conversational approach in words accompanying or appearing in the image or comments. Posting photos of staff members and letting people know something about them would be instances of transparency, as would glimpses into the newsroom (a physical orientation) or the journalism process, and offering access with contact numbers, or Twitter and Instagram handles.

Outreach describes practices demonstrating a valued relationship with community members and the community at large, and a desire to enjoy that relationship with an increasing number of people. This can be encouraged through reciprocity (minding one's manners and remembering to give as well as take; conversing; thanking) and extension (going where the audience is, fostering creativity, broadening a conversation). Amplification (by showcasing submitted work or providing organizational hashtags, for example) increases viewership on the publisher's and the submitter's behalf. It also confers validation, a recognition of worth, appreciation, and support. Helping mobilize on behalf of a cause or activity could forge bonds of goodwill for the community's and organization's mutual benefit.

The elements were evident in varying degrees throughout the projects, which will be presented individually and, due to space limitations, briefly and with a minimum of context about the organization's overall use of Instagram.

Examples and Operationalization

@NYTFashion. This feed, dedicated to the fashion beat, reports visually on events, personalities, and styles, capturing excitement and atmosphere. It augments itself with hashtags to which anyone may post and uses the feed to invite submissions, using multiple hashtags so the post will be captured in multiple searches. As *The New York Times* had done with Hurricane Sandy (#NYTstorm — 3,471 posts) and the 2012 election (#NYTelection — 3,318 posts), the best photos submitted to #NYTfashion (2,237 posts) and #NYTfashionweek (31 posts) during Fashion Week were curated using Storify (a free social media tool), embedded as a multimedia showcase on the style section of nytimes.com ("Instagramming Fashion Week"), and profiled in the print Style section. #NYTfashion is where @Fergie (Instagram handle for celebrity singer/songwriter/designer Stacy Ann Ferguson, known as Fergie) posted a thank-you photo for a Sunday *New York Times* article (the photo was of the article) and where jewelry designer Nektar De Stagni posted glee over being reviewed in "On the Runway," a *New York Times* column (Blumenthal, 2013). That photo was of the print article, too. One Instagrammer blogged, "Instagram is incredible: How one of my images ended up on the *New York Times* website" (Fucci, 2013) and posted an image of that to the hashtag. Instagrammers posted star sightings, backstage scenes, street scenes, runway moments, and, predominantly, beautiful photos.

Also of interest, in addition to the front-page photos noted earlier: Lens photoblog featured the Instagram work of Ruddy Royce (@rud-

dyroyce) in the multimedia gallery/story "Bringing invisible stories to Instagram followers" (Richardson, 2013). *The Times* occasionally offers a live feed of Instagram photos, as it did for #NYTelection. The integration was featured on the Storify blog ("Election Day," 2012).

"Faces and voices of Bowdoin-Geneva" and #BostonSnap. These integrations started with Snap, a program that pulls geotagged Instagram photos into a pool that can be viewed, archived, and used as a resource. The Lab projects those images onto a wall (against a map that shows where they were taken) where real-time submissions create a constantly changing reflection of the Boston area. Reporters chose images from one neighborhood, then contacted and interviewed the people who posted them. The result, 40 images and 40 stories recorded in audio to go with them, as part of an in-depth multiplatform series, "68 Blocks: Life, Death, Hope."

The *Globe* also invites hashtagged submissions. To be considered for the popular "Instagram Fashion" series, for example, one hashtags a photo on Instagram to #BostonSnap (106 posts). Abigail Sterling (@thefablifefanatchdisaster) sent in seven, all showing her posing in different ensembles, between May 10 and June 12. On June 16, she posted a photo of the resulting story as it appeared in the Sunday paper, and wrote: "So incredibly lucky and excited to be featured in the Boston globe this morning! And with SJP on the same page...what more could a girl want! Thanks *Boston Globe*! #bostonsnap #fashion #instagram #bostonglobe." Chelsea Quattrone (@bootsachusetts) showed appreciation for her profile the same way. Stories in the series also published on Boston.com.

The @BostonGlobe account was an oddity. Despite substantive Instagram integration by the news organization overall, the feed was essentially unused. It contained only three news photos of Hurricane Sandy and six promotions for "Style."

#Trib2013 and weekly themes. "Happy new year, everyone," the organizer of @ChicagoTribune (Scott Kleinberg) wrote in an Instagram comment for a photo showing "12:00" on a digital clock. The note continued:

Let's ring it in with a new theme, appropriately called new. Anything that says new to you, from a baby to a flower to a sunrise at the end of the day. And instead of changing hashtags week to week, we'll stick with #trib2013 and hopefully have quite an amazing collection to show off when it's time to ring in 2014. And same as always, we might feature your photo in our feed.

The @ChicagoTribune feed showcases images from those sent to #Trib2013 (nearly 6,000). For the week starting July 1, 2013, with the theme of "USA," there were 158 entries. During the week, the *Tribune* reposted three of the photos along with praise, thanks, and instructions for joining in. "To give you an idea of how popular the themes are," Kleinberg posted July 8, "this week's theme, 'up,' was posted this morning at about 9:30. By 11 a.m., we had well in excess of 50 photos." The themes, chosen to release creativity rather than crowdsource content for an article, have themes that are conceptual as well as directive. Healthy, down, fun, flowers, words, snacks, green, rain, future, and colorful have all been used.

#AZ365 and a multiplatform approach: @azcentral. "Telling stories one photo at a time," states its Instagram profile page, adding that the feed features images from staff members of the *Arizona Republic*, 12 News, and azcentral.com. It invites people to "join #AZ365 — an AZ pic a day for a year." People are encouraged to use the hashtag on Twitter and Facebook, where photos may be posted to the azcentral wall. The photos go into a daily slideshow, the link to which is tweeted. TVNews12 monitors the photos and occasionally uses some in broadcasts. A daily photo is chosen and posted on Facebook; at the end of the week, the photo with the most likes is

showcased on Instagram. An AZ365-themed slideshow also ran in the tablet magazine, AZ.

Interaction is evident throughout. Staff and non-staff photographers are praised, congratulated, credited, and reposted on the Instagram feed. When a staff photographer (or any other staffer) has an Instagram or Twitter account, the handle is given. Keri Hegre, who manages the account, frequently likes photos with or without the #az365 hashtag, comments, and suggests photos that could be tagged to the project. “Once people realized that azcentral was interacting,” she wrote, “we started getting tagged in photos to alert us to news tips.” Among the news photos that appeared both on the feed and on Twitter were five from the Yarnell, Arizona, wildfire in which 19 “Hotshots” firefighters died. The “Topsy Tow” text post, a written note that appears as an image, runs during holidays offering help for those who have imbibed and need a free ride. The account co-sponsored photowalks and additional photo challenges for special events. Several times, contributors have been thanked with special Instagram posts when submissions crossed points deemed worthy of celebration: 3,000 in February and 9,000 in April. With nearly 16,000 submissions as of mid-July, the numbers attest to a solid engagement. In June, azcentral launched a daily news update on Instagram. “Smart way to use ig,” @shannonjhernandez commented. “#bravo.”

@WSJ. The primary feed of *The Wall Street Journal* isn’t @wallstreetjournal; that handle’s feed doesn’t appear to have connections to the financial paper — a possible branding lesson in managing one’s name. WSJ is the designated acronym and name on Instagram and elsewhere, showing up in social media feeds (Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest), on *WSJ Magazine* in print and online, in the main Web address (online.wsj.com) and leading off names of at least one auxiliary account (@WSJspotlight) and numerous hashtags (examples: #WSJsoty, #WSJbfast) intended for coverage and submissions. #WSJvote brought in 1,371 submissions, some of which ended up in *Berlin Morganpost*’s Storify curation (along with some from #NYTelection) of how the 2012 U.S. election was being documented via cellphone cameras. The *Journal* used selected photos from the hashtag in its “Snap Tweet Share” interactive map and slideshow.

@WSJ frequently asked for images to go with stories, such as the one about #Selfies (252 posts). In another recognition of the place Instagram holds with many of its readers, #photocritiqueWSJ was set up for those wanting advice from pros on bettering their Instagram prowess. Nine hundred and two photos were posted; selections were critiqued in a live video chat later made available to subscribers along with a map-slideshow of the best. @WSJ is also, however, for news told visually, and a collection of visually varied posts from seeming legal-pad notes to showcases of winning reader photos. Its profile page invites people to send photos to #WSJ, and 8,441 had as of July 22, 2013. It is a feed filled with conversational posts, few of which garner more than about 20 likes, if that. In a post from @julie_hanks, the photo shows a story on the *Journal*’s front page on which there’s been placed an arrow and text that says “GOT A SHOUTOUT IN TODAY’S WSJ!”

@WSJspotlight, a so-far small informal auxiliary feed, has the feel of a walk around town, posting behind-the-scenes photos from social events, often sponsored by the *Journal*.

@USAToday. Bright colors, faces (of humans and animals), promotions featuring “USAToday” in bold print with or without the trademark blue circle, and many photographs featuring circles reminiscent of the logo design: These are visual characteristics of the @USAToday feed. An “I Voted!” design, used in print, online and social

media, reworked the company logo, effectively connecting civic duty with the news company’s brand. In 13 months of near-daily Instagram posts, only two clearly telegraphed emotional distress. One showed firefighters (and you could not see their faces) searching for victims and survivors of a fertilizer plant explosion. The other was of a crying woman, on a phone, trying to get information about her sister — a teacher in Newtown — after news of the shootings. Overwhelmingly, the feed is engaging, with visual stories that are easy to relate to and “read,” especially in the size of an Instagram post on a mobile phone screen.

The use of hashtags shows an attempt to reach out. To promote submissions to #mysuperfood (for Super Bowl Sunday), the tags were #superbowl, #sb47, and #instafood — high traffic, non-branded terms guaranteeing high visibility for the message. There were 62 entries. The #dadinsonword, for Fathers Day, brought in 35 entries. The submitted words were featured in a word-cloud design and posted on Instagram. Additionally, 14 of the dad-photos submitted were showcased in a post that included them all. A slide show of 21 photos was published online.

An auxiliary account, @USATodaySports, had 958 posts, 6,098 followers, and followed 166. Its emphasis on action, triumph, bright color, and drama seemed consonant with its reporting beat, and there was a distinct absence of corporate branding, suggesting a different editor or strategy.

@Time: Happiness and a storm. Two Instagram integrations that resulted in cover stories (and an iPhone photo) for *Time* magazine came from very different perspectives. One, coverage of hurricane Sandy, was regional and specific (Wallace, 2012). The other was global and conceptual: how people all over the world define happiness (Kluger, 2013). On Instagram, the #TIMEhappiness request for submissions brought in 4,995. It yielded a multimedia feature (displayed Pinterest-style), “What happiness looks like on Instagram” (“TIME-happiness”, 2013), with nearly 100 of the submissions.

“Lessons from the storm,” as the issue was titled on the cover, was photographed by five well-known photographers hired by *Time* as the storm developed. They were charged with capturing its approach, presence, and aftermath — with iPhones. Ninety-seven photos were posted on the @Time feed, updated as the images arrived, providing a visual narrative of the storm’s progress as it unfolded and later serving as an archive.

The Instagram account, @Time, posts news photos, requests for hashtag submissions, and images of its covers. The “Happiness” cover drew 7,123 likes. Non-cover photos are popular as well. One, of a woman embracing her cat in the aftermath of tornado devastation, drew 8,264 likes. During selected news events, the number of posts increased, as it did during the Sandy coverage and, later, for a February snowstorm in the New York area.

@DallasNews. The @DallasNews feed is a friendly feed. Viewers are introduced to staffers, praised for their photos (which are reposted), shown around the newsroom, reminded of important events like National Doughnut Day (and urged to celebrate), and invited to join conversations taking place on Facebook. There are lots of weather shots. Memorable images: the Southwest Airlines executive bobblehead collection on a transportation reporter’s desk, and a photo one reporter took of baby birds, survivors of a storm, that she spotted on the way to work. Conversations took place here. On July 19, 2013, Robert Wilonsky, a reporter, posted a photo and news confirming a roller coaster death to his Facebook account. The @DallasNews edi-

tor took a screen capture of the FB post and posted it to the Instagram feed with two sentences explaining the news. The first reaction comment was “Omg!” followed by nineteen other comments in which people tagged each other, asked and answered questions, and generally had a discussion.

The tone of writing in the posts supported conviviality. One photo caption: “Behold, the 24-hour cupcake ATM machine. Sprinkles Cupcakes opened the ATM today at 4020 Villanova Road. #cupcakes #atm #dallas #yummy #treats.” Likes: 240. Comments: 20, with 16 people tagged so that they would see it. There are photo challenges: #DMNForth (for the fourth of July) brought in 83 photos, and the *Dallas Morning News* linked to all of them from a news page, and chose 10 for a collage and story that ran in a “Stories of life in Dallas” section online. The *News* had the only site on which its Instagram handle was listed in contact information and, when clicked, linked to the profile page.

@WashingtonPost. The Instagram profile page promises “the story behind our last photo” and links to an article and image; the content and link change as needed. In various ways, the theme of “story behind” plays out in the feed. Viewers are asked to “tell us a story” along with submitting a photo for #MyDadIs. “What kind of person is he? What has he taught you?” the promotion’s comment asked. Responses were published on a Web page for Fathers Day. Four hundred thirteen posts came to the Instagram tag. While that was a good turnout, other hashtags fared less well: #DCflagstyle brought in 26, #mybestdeal had 16. The heartiest returns appear to come with news stories, as with #SandyDC’s 1,255 (with #SandyVA and #SandyMD, another 610), and with general interest, ongoing tags, such as #WP-summer (723).

The *Post* uses submitted Instagram photos online and in print, as well. When @washingtonpost asked for submissions to #WPsnow, 702 Instagrammers liked the idea, and in the playful comments that ensued, someone tagged a photographer and urged her to send one in. A photo submitted by @sallymaxson was used for a summer promotion, but the @washingtonpost editor misspelled the name, correcting it in a comment. Instagrammer @worldismines pointed out that “the” had been spelled “thw,” too. The response from @washingtonpost was “Yes — small smartphone keyboards, I tell you! Thanks for correcting.” Three hundred and fifty nine people liked the photo. Or perhaps the exchange. Or both. The photos were published online on a dedicated page.

At The Virginian-Pilot and The Virginian-Pilot Library. This was a study of a newspaper without an Instagram feed. It was undertaken because there was, in effect, a feed-of-sorts about the *Pilot*, and it had intriguing examples of engagement. Many, not all, Instagram posts contain geographic data that search tools, such as OnInstagram, use to locate where the photo was taken. There, searching for the two locations in the sub-head, 88 photos were found. Five accounts were responsible for a large portion of the posts, but all the geotagged photos were examined. One Instagrammer, @bthnyb, it became clear, was a graphic artist at the newspaper. She posted beautiful, artistic photos of works in progress, from drawing board to published page. A librarian, @jakonhays, posted photos of an in-house book sale and tools of the trade. “POWERFILES!” he wrote on a photo of cardboard boxes in the *Pilot*’s morgue, which he dubbed “The original search engine.” Another photo carried this explanation: “Old pneumatic tubes that would carry messages from the newsroom to the presses. Sometimes a rat would be shipped in the capsules. Fun times for the recipient. #library #newspaper #EarlyInternet #journalist.” Other posts were from several reporters, another artist, a photographer, an editor, and a sales representative. They posted such things as stories and pages from the

Pilot, what was appearing on a newsroom TV, thriving desktop plants, photo shoots, PR kits, newsroom food, the editor’s shoe, and a Foosball throwdown.

Discussion

Immersion in these varied projects yielded distinct impressions about each organization — each had a personality, in effect — that was tied to its seeming goals and approaches in using Instagram. Conversationally put, @azcentral was a place nice to hang around. The feed had a “voice” that was friendly, talked to people, applauded and thanked them, valued their work, and tried new and helpful ways to relate, inform, and help while publishing beautiful, high-quality photographs that were timely and sometimes tied to breaking news. Engagement, judging by continually increased followers and contributors to #AZ365, was high. The *Boston Globe*, while attentive to Instagram, used it primarily as a rich pool for sources, stories, and content, rather than as an area within which to build community. Rather, it revealed aspects and members of the local Instagram community to *Boston Globe* and bostonglobe.com readers. The *New York Times* took both approaches: Through @NYTfashion, it cultivated an Instagram community that thrived on fashion while bringing those people to its print and online products. In its pages and sites, it conveyed a respect for Instagram as a photographic and publishing medium, showcasing professional work done with iPhones and distributed through Instagram. *USA Today*’s account, which occasionally requested submissions, carried with it overtones of marketing that seemed less like transparency or appreciation than sales pitch. It did, however, provide some remarkable professional photos, clever graphic designs, and excellent examples of image use.

When the cohesion/outreach elements (that emerged in the coding) were identified in specific actions, as detailed in the mini-studies, there was a discernable range of approaches that went from “growing” to “mining” the community, with positive outcomes throughout. Some of the practices associated with growing were: investing resources in high quality content, visually and in text; interacting with others through comments; following, liking, reposting, showcasing, and referring people to contributors’ accounts; and offering frequent Instagram chances for involvement, such as through themed weekly hashtags. Holding, perhaps, a middle ground of practice might be hiring photographers for special event coverage on Instagram (making them more like visitors than residents), and incorporating Instagram content into multiplatform features, although where that placed on a growing/mining continuum would be dependent on context. Mining practices might include solely using branded hashtags, which would likely only be seen on a directed search, as opposed to tagging images to general hashtags, which would increase the image’s visibility. But mining could also refer to crowdsourcing, and curation.

Applicability. A partial goal of this study was to find models of Instagram use that could be adapted by community newspapers. To that end, I offer an example based on Twitter-Instagram integrations encouraged by many, if not all, of the newspapers chosen for study. While none of the 40 small-circulation newspapers contacted in the exploratory query had an Instagram account, several maintained Twitter feeds that could easily be leveraged to include Instagram. The *Daily Courier* in Prescott, Arizona, for example, was the closest community paper to the Yarnell wildfire. At that time, it had an active Twitter feed (@theDailyCourier), as did one of its photographers, Matt Hinshaw (@PrescottPhotog). Hinshaw used Twitter to post photographs from the scene of the fire as well as to the memorial services that followed. Those image-tweets were retweeted by @TheDailyCourier. Had the original images gone from Instagram and been programmed (a

single click would do it) to publish on Twitter at the same time, thousands more people would have seen them as they already included a hashtag. It would have been simple to simultaneously include Facebook as well. That bare-bones use of the social media tool would cost only time to set up the free account and seconds to direct Instagram where to send the photograph with an accompanying comment. The photograph need not have been taken with a smartphone; any image sent and downloaded to an Android, iPhone or iPad could have been posted. Other examples, such as reposting, showcasing, contacting posters for information, requesting submissions, springboarding from Instagram to print and online, maintaining an active account, and providing tie-in between social media tools, are easy to set up and maintain.

Limitations and future research

Instagram, as a relatively new tool, was just beginning to be used by journalists, even at the largest organizations. This study presents overviews that could easily be expanded to full case studies with their relevance to building social capital more thoroughly examined. A growing/mining continuum of practice is under construction as a result of this research. Intriguing correlations between earlier work in public journalism might be made, comparing what was done with the technological tools available then with the multiple digital networking tools available on the Internet since the early 21st century.

Conclusion

Instagram, with its growing pool of people attracted by ease of use, visual appeal, and vital social network, appears to be a tremendous potential resource for journalists, especially in light of mobile communication trends. The low cost of adoption is attractive. The availability of a variety of engagement models might encourage community newspapers to find integrations suitable to their and their communities' needs. The technology, while perhaps initially daunting for at least two reasons — unfamiliarity and natural caution about joining an established social milieu — is intuitive once demonstrated and experienced. The characteristics of engaged Instagram use, as seen in these studies, are characteristics shared by community journalism, which suggests a natural fit between the two.

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The EMT of multimedia: How to revive your newspaper's future

By Teri Finneman

The grim outlook for the nation's newspaper industry continued in 2012 with the release of the State of the News Media report. Although newspapers weren't dying, they also weren't guaranteed a secure future. Weekday and Sunday circulations continued to decline as did advertising revenue. After three years of layoffs, remaining staffers were stretched thin. However, a bright spot remained: online audiences continue to grow as does the use of new media.

For community newspapers, the push to move into multimedia isn't new but, for many, it's an idea that's easier said than done. Believing they lack the Experience, Money and Time (EMT), many community editors assume only large daily newspapers have the resources, skills and audience for multimedia reporting. Using in-depth interviews conducted in mid-May 2013, this paper explores how newsrooms of varying sizes (and with diehard print reporters) ventured into multimedia. This includes the stories of two Nebraska community newspapers that have enhanced engagement with their communities through new approaches to reporting. Discover how the *Hastings* (Neb.) *Tribune* (circulation 9,500) is working to transform its culture from a newspaper to a "media information center." Learn how the *Aurora* (Neb.) *News-Register* (circulation 3,000) uses partnerships and marketing to make multimedia work in a newsroom with three full-time reporters. Read advice on getting started from a trailblazer of multimedia reporting in North Dakota who juggled working for four daily newspapers and three TV stations at once.

The goal is for community newspapers to walk away with tips on how to overcome the Experience, Money and Time obstacles that have kept them from embracing new media. By opening the door to greater citizen engagement and diversified content, publishers and editors can ensure their communities will continue to have viable newspapers in the future.

Findings

The Hastings Tribune

Who: Darran Fowler

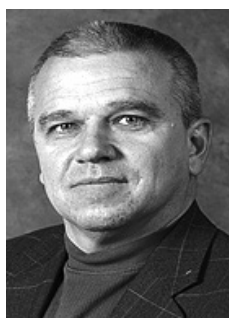
Paper: *Hastings Tribune*

Publication Frequency: 6 days/week

Newsroom size: 12 + Fowler

Circulation: 9,500

Website: hastingstribune.com



Before launching into multimedia, Publisher Darran Fowler had the same concerns as any other community newspaper manager: Who was going to do it? How would they manage with the staff resources they had? How could an operation that was already labor intensive possibly take on more?

"You have limited resources, obviously, just to get the paper out, and multimedia is — I guess I don't want to sound negative," Fowler said. "I view it as a positive. But you have to be smart about it."

Below, Fowler describes how he addressed the experience, money and time concerns of multimedia at the six-days-a-week *Hastings Tribune*.

Experience

Fowler's initial advice to fellow editors and publishers is to hire smarter and to turn to new college graduates with multimedia training.

"You have to hire people with the skillset that's now required to work for a quote 'media company,'" he said.

In the meantime, Fowler acknowledges the shift to multimedia is a "difficult and painful process" since newsrooms are still full of reporters used to only working in print.

"We are newspaper people. I'm a newspaper guy," he said. "Everybody's a creature of habit, and our habit is newspapers. So, what we struggle with is that other component. We always revert back to newspaper and so what that results in is inconsistency (with multimedia)."

Still, Fowler knew he did not want to create a separate multimedia division within his newspaper. Besides the issue of resources, he did not want competition to develop between a multimedia team and the print team. So instead, he's focused on turning his staff into a "jack of all trades." Before asking his staff to do multimedia, however, Fowler decided to try it himself.

"I never felt I could force it on anyone," he said. "I felt I needed to know what all was involved from a time standpoint: not only amount of time, but also time of day."

He primarily taught himself but also received advice from a local college student working part time at his paper. Once he felt more comfortable with multimedia, he began having training sessions with his staff. His reporters now each have a "24-hour toolbox," which includes a laptop, a camera, a portable scanner, a notepad, a highway safety vest and video capability whether via a flip video camera or their smartphones.

"In order to do this (multimedia), we have to provide them with the tools," Fowler said.

For other newsrooms lacking multimedia experience but not up for trial-and-error learning, the *Hastings Tribune* found creating partnerships with outside experts can also help overcome the experience barrier.

Fowler noted the benefits of the Nebraska Press Association partnering with a multimedia specialist at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Supported with funding from the press association's foundation and other sources, this specialist is available to go into newsrooms across the state and provide free multimedia training to reporters and editors.

"He came here, visited our newspaper, found out where we're at, went through the whole video shooting/editing process, helped us with our website and all those kinds of things," Fowler said.

Fowler plans to have the specialist return to his newsroom to provide additional training and support. Community newspapers may

want to discuss with their state newspaper association what partnerships they could form to receive on-site training.

Money

Like other publishers, Fowler was concerned about the financial side of branching into multimedia.

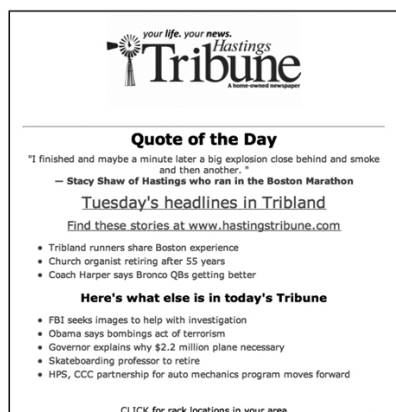
"The newspaper is our core product. It is our most recognizable brand," he said. "It's what really pays the bills...and so anything we do, regardless of whether it's a texting service, an email service, web, whatever, it has to complement the paper. It can't compete against it."

Therefore, Fowler implemented a "hybrid approach" to multimedia. The newspaper typically posts abbreviated versions of all of its stories on its free website: the lead, a support graf or few, and a strong quote. Readers are then advised to read more in the newspaper or the e-edition. However, if other media are covering the same story, Fowler will have his staff post the *Tribune's* full story online to keep readers on its site rather than reading the story on a competitor's site.

After years of experimenting with how much to give away on the web, Fowler said he's found this hybrid approach to be the best.

"Newspaper websites are probably the No. 1 website that people go to (for news)," he said. "So, if you don't have a website, you're opening the door for somebody else to provide the service."

Still, Fowler thinks newspapers need to be smart about multimedia. Every day, the newspaper emails out a news bulletin to anyone who opts in. The bulletin provides the latest headlines on the website as well as teasers to stories in the print edition. Readers can also click to find the nearest rack locations to help them find where to buy the paper. The *Tribune* also sends out bulletins when there is breaking news. Fowler said the newspaper uses mailchimp.com to send these bulletins. He said the service allows the newspaper to track "opens" and "clicks." The fee is minimal (e.g. unlimited emails to 1,000 subscribers for \$15/month), and the emails encourage readers to go to the ad-supported website or to buy the print edition. (Example below.)



The *Tribune* has also embarked on larger multimedia projects to generate new streams of revenue. The newspaper has live streamed regular season high school football games on its website for the past three years and high school basketball games for the past four years. Fowler said the initial setup took some work: getting permission from the school, discussions with school administrators and setting up access to the Internet. There were also concerns from school personnel that the live stream would affect gate revenue. However, Fowler said the partnership has worked out, and there's no evidence the school has lost money.

"The people who want to be at the game will go," he said. "They're

not going to want to watch it on this (computer)...But for those people who can't make it for whatever reason — it could be health; it could be distance; it could be weather — that's who it's really for."

The *Hastings Tribune* places ads around the video player on its website. A video ad also plays every time a user needs to refresh, thus bringing in revenue to support the service. As far as staff resources, Fowler said three people are involved with these games: a newspaper reporter who also calls the game, a photographer and a camera operator to pan the camera up and down the field or court. Fowler said he often runs the camera, but the newspaper has also paid a student to do this.

The newspaper has also live-streamed graduation ceremonies and is open to streaming weddings and other events for a fee, Fowler said. The live stream has been popular with the public, which the newspaper has tracked by analyzing web hits and comments from viewers, he said.

Although the newspaper isn't making big financial gains from its multimedia, Fowler said the public service is important as well as staying competitive.

"If we don't do something, someone else is going to come in and do it," he said.

Quick \$\$\$ tip: For newspapers concerned about the cost of equipment, Fowler advises checking with other media in the state to see if they have plans to upgrade anytime soon and would be willing to sell old equipment.

Time

Training print reporters' brains to adapt to the demands of a multimedia world has been one of the biggest struggles at the *Tribune*, Fowler said. This includes remembering to take time to update the website in a timely fashion.

"You have to be consistent, and we struggle with that. We really do," Fowler said. "If you don't keep things current, it's like any website. It becomes stagnant in the minds of the people who are coming to it, and so what are the odds of them coming back?"

Keeping the website current, the email bulletins and posting to Facebook and Twitter are multimedia approaches the *Tribune* uses that are relatively low in time commitment. Putting refers in the paper to let readers know about video or special copy online also doesn't add up to much staff time but adds to the newspaper's product. Fowler said the paper ran a story about a benefit for a child with a brain tumor and referred readers to hastingstribune.com to read a prior story about the boy in case they missed it or wanted to read it again.

As far as video, Fowler said his staff mostly does feature story videos because the staff has more time for turn around. The reporter can write the newspaper story first and then do video editing later in the day or the next day. Once both are done, then the newspaper will publish the story and include a teaser directing readers to watch the video online. On its website, the *Tribune* has a tab called HTmedia that includes a news channel and a sports channel, where videos are posted.

However, Fowler said the paper is lucky if it posts one video a month. He'd like his staff to do more, but the old habit of only focusing on print is hard to break. Still, he thinks videos can be beneficial to newspapers and are worth the time.

"What multimedia has given us the capability to do is to tell stories in a different way and also provide content that we couldn't provide before, whether it's video, live or just stuff that doesn't fit in the paper that you don't have space for," Fowler said.

“And plus it makes us not just a newspaper anymore. We’re an information center. We’re a media company and so what really is good about that, if you can find a way to do it with the resources you have, is that you’ve got capabilities you’ve never had before. You can break stories at any time of the day or night,” he added.

Aurora News-Register

Who: Kurt and Paula Johnson

Paper: Aurora News-Register

Publication Frequency: Weekly

Newsroom size: 3 full time; 5 total

Circulation: 3,000 (5,200 w/shopper)

Website: auroraneewsregister.com



After attending press conventions and hearing about other newspapers venturing into multimedia, co-publisher Kurt Johnson knew the newspaper he runs with his wife, Paula, needed to get on board with the new media world.

“Because, ultimately, 10 years from now, what remains of our papers I think will be dictated by how we respond to some of this,” he said.

Below, Johnson describes how he addressed the experience, money and time concerns of multimedia at the weekly Aurora News-Register.

Experience

Like Fowler and the *Hastings Tribune*, Johnson and the *Aurora News-Register* benefited from the Nebraska Press Association’s support. The association offered a daylong technology seminar that included learning how to create Soundslides, which are photo slide-shows with audio. After the seminar, Johnson went back to his newsroom, loaded the software and trained his employees. The *Aurora News-Register* also took advantage of the free training provided by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln multimedia specialist.

“That was a very helpful resource. Part of the message here, frankly, is — especially for small weeklies — we know that they don’t have an IT staff,” Johnson said. “It makes a difference to have somebody actually come to their place and say, ‘OK. I’m on your computers. I’m using your camera’...there’s just a confidence boost.”

Johnson also understands that many weeklies with a one-, two- or three-person staff don’t have time to do research and figure out how to do multimedia on their own. Therefore, partnerships between the state newspaper association and experts can help relieve time and financial burdens on individual newspapers.

As far as getting his staff on board with multimedia, Johnson said the whole newsroom was included in discussions. Staffers had an opportunity to provide feedback and figure out how to make it work. Now, they include multimedia discussion in their weekly news meeting to try to incorporate it into regular assignments.

“Although we talk about it, and they know it’s there, especially in the early going, it needs that daily reminder, myself included,” Johnson said. “Because, you know, we’re reporters, some of whom have

been in the business a long time. You kind of have to ingrain that new format of, ‘Hey. Every quarter in the football game, send out a tweet.’ Once you’re doing it, it becomes habit, but you need that support from the publisher level.”

Johnson recommends establishing guidelines to know who is posting to the web or social media so there isn’t duplication or confusion.

Johnson also advises newspapers to not be afraid of the possibility of failure. In January 2012, the *News-Register* launched a mobile site after entering a partnership with a Minnesota company. The partnership also allowed the newspaper to become a mobile provider for local businesses and to earn new revenue. However, the Minnesota company went bankrupt earlier this year, so the newspaper no longer offers mobile services. Still, Johnson is glad his newspaper had the experience, and he’s working to get a mobile site for the *News-Register* again.

Johnson advises newspapers worried about lack of multimedia experience to reach out to their newspaper peers who are doing multimedia successfully.

“Call people, whether it’s the publisher, editor, reporter,” Johnson said. “Then be prepared to return the favor, if you do something that works.”

Money

Knowing your market is an important part of determining how to approach multimedia. Johnson said his newsroom learned that posting sports and breaking news multimedia is more time and cost effective for the audience it serves than creating and posting feature videos.

During the high school sports season, the *News-Register* posts Soundslides that include a number of photos from the game as well as audio from the head coach and/or players or a recap from a *News-Register* staffer. The feature is supported with advertising. The *News-Register* receives a photo from the sponsoring business and a pre-approved script to record. The ad is built into the beginning of the Soundslide.

The Soundslides have also created other new revenue. With room for only one or two photos in the newspaper, using Soundslides allows parents to easily see dozens of photos taken by the newspaper staff.

“When you post 37 photos on a Soundslide, and moms and dads see those, you sell more photos,” Johnson said. “That’s definitely part of the formula. That’s how we’re able to keep that equipment up to date and current and all of those kinds of things.”

The *News-Register* also burns whole sports seasons of Soundslides onto discs and sells them for \$10 each.

“If you’re Joe Athlete, and you want to remember your senior season, this is a real keepsake item,” Johnson said.

The *News-Register* hands out business cards to sources after doing Soundslide interviews to drive traffic to the web feature. The paper also runs house ads reminding the public to check out the Soundslides online.

Video or Soundslides are also posted to auroraneewsregister.com when there’s breaking news. The newspaper staff has three smartphones capable of shooting video. If a story warrants higher-quality video, the reporter uses a newsroom Nikon D300S.

Johnson said his approach of what to post on the web and when has evolved since 2000. Trying to strike a balance between “giving away the farm” and a sustainable business model, Johnson said his newspaper now posts to the web throughout the week rather than just on Tuesdays. However, the paper only posts the lead or short intro of each story and then teases to the print or e-edition.

The approach allows the newspaper to protect the print product, Johnson said, but also to attract younger readers, who want to know basics right away, to the ad-supported website.

Time

Like other community newspaper managers, Johnson's No. 1 concern about multimedia was "byline time." Running a weekly that doesn't receive news hole help from the Associated Press or other wire services, Johnson worried multimedia would impact the print product. However, he's also realized the need to adapt to the changing times.

"As publishers, I think we have to realize that the paradigm of change is not only a constant in our world now, but the pace is picking up," Johnson said. "So you just have to know that every six months, not every two to three years, you have to reevaluate what you're doing, what technology you're using, your protocol."

Tracking web hits is part of knowing whether a certain approach to multimedia reporting is worth the time, Johnson said. However, the public also needs to be aware that the newspaper is now doing multimedia in order to get hits.

Johnson said he's used his personal column to let readers know about the newspaper's transition to multimedia. The column allowed him to "think out loud" and receive reader feedback. He also poked fun at himself as he learned how to use Twitter, with the humor column also serving as a promotion of the newspaper's social media sites. He also found it beneficial to set up a booth at Aurora's popular home show to explain to people the difference between the website and e-edition and to promote the newspaper's products.

"It just has to be a constant marketing effort," he said.

Although training and marketing takes time, Johnson has seen how taking time for multimedia can pay off. Using his smartphone, he expected to capture the emotion of the basketball team as it lost a state championship. Instead, he captured video of a winning shot at the buzzer that generated statewide controversy.

Johnson posted the video from the arena before he left that night and then fine-tuned it back at the office to replace the original with a higher-quality version. The video went viral, generating more than 100,000 hits from people wanting to know if the shot got off in time or not.

"I had a lot of sports fans say that was really cool that you were the one that captured that," Johnson said.

However, Johnson has found there isn't enough traffic on his site for feature story videos to justify the amount of time needed to put together that kind of multimedia.

"We did a couple of those, and it was a good experience," he said. "From a business standpoint, it wasn't worth the two to three hours that it took to produce it."

Friday night football Soundslides, however, have been worth the extra hour of time, he said. Audio for the Soundslides is captured at the same time as the print interview. The audio is then played straight through in the Soundslide, without editing, to save additional time. By noon Saturday, the Soundslide generates enough traffic to justify the extra time to put it together, Johnson said. The Soundslide also teases viewers to the print or e-edition to read more.

"There's an example of how it's not just the same thing in print," Johnson said of the web and print products complementing each other. "Two days later (when the paper comes out), there's more depth."

Johnson knows some publishers don't want a website or to take part in the changing media landscape. He's concerned about what will happen to these newspapers in the future and has seen how a blog-

ger can steal away the audience of a newspaper not willing to change from its print-only focus.

"Our franchise is no longer the printed product," Johnson said. "It is the information that we provide. I just think you have to embrace that. It's a formula that includes multimedia."

Forum Communications

Who: Teri Finneman

Media: *The Forum of Fargo-Moorhead, The Grand Forks Herald, The Jamestown Sun, The Dickinson Press, WDAY, WDAZ, KXMB (North Dakota)*

Publication Frequency: Daily

Circulation: Ranged from 5,400 (Jamestown) to 53,000 (Fargo)



As a newspaper reporter, I had no desire to be on camera or to do videos.

I may be part of Generation Y, but I was trained in old school newspaper reporting. Plus, I was part of the newspaper crowd that stuck their nose up at TV and felt what we did was much more "pure" or "real journalism" than what they did.

A combination of Sam Donaldson and the Great Recession changed my tune on TV reporting, however. After 10 years as a newspaper reporter, I became a pioneer of multimedia reporting in North Dakota from 2010 to 2012 with my work for four daily newspapers and three TV stations. Here are my tips on how to overcome the experience, money and time concerns about multimedia.

Experience

I think the biggest mistake that newspaper publishers and editors make is to expect too much too soon. Their newspaper may try video or other multimedia but then either A.) get frustrated because it didn't turn out like they wanted so they just give up; B.) get frustrated because it was too much to do multimedia on top of reporting work; or C.) get frustrated because not enough readers clicked on it.

The key word here is "frustrated." Editors and reporters forget that they didn't learn how to be a good newspaper reporter in a day or a week or even a year. Yet they expect to be able to do multimedia right off the bat or after just one day of training. There's a reason that it takes a few years to earn a broadcast degree.

In 2009, I spent three months at ABC News in Washington, D.C., where I worked alongside Sam Donaldson and learned the TV business. While there, the Great Recession hit newsrooms hard, and I knew I had to make myself as competitive as possible for a future in the media business. I then spent more than 400 hours working at an NBC affiliate in Missouri to learn local TV reporting while finishing my master's degree.

I'm not telling this story because I expect weekly publishers to send their reporters off to six months of training. My point is that it takes a lot of time to just reach the skill level of a 22-year-old broadcast student. Newspapers need to be realistic with expectations.

Therefore, I recommend newspapers start small to adapt not only their staff but their community to their leap into new media.

First and foremost, you need to have a website that people want to come to. Without that, it doesn't pay to do multimedia. Newspapers that don't have a website or that post only a few sentences once a week are not going to make it when Generations Y and Z get older and become their primary readership base. These generations want information now, not a week later.

With so many people on social media, newspapers also need to establish a strong social media presence and post frequent teasers to stories as well as do live tweeting and/or Facebooking. Being consistent with frequent website and social media postings doesn't take any special skills but is an important foundation for multimedia.

Your community needs to get into the habit of knowing there will consistently be fresh information on your sites. Once your site starts becoming a destination, then you can move on to more complex multimedia.

Now a Ph.D. student at the University of Missouri, I have the same advice for newspaper reporters as I do for my undergraduate students: If you want to learn how to do something, study how the professionals do it. Stop watching TV news for the content. Start watching to analyze how they did it. Notice that sound bites are generally about 15 seconds. Notice that the video images tend to change every three seconds. Notice how images were framed. Notice that their long stories (called packages) are generally 70- to 90-seconds long.

It's great if you can bring an expert into your newsroom or to your state newspaper convention to teach video basics. I recommend it. But if lack of resources doesn't allow for this, turning on your nightly news and paying closer attention can be almost as good and is there every day essentially giving out free advice.

Newspapers can also contact their local universities to find out which Broadcasting 101 textbooks they use and then order them for their reporters to read. Perhaps a broadcast professor would also be willing to form a partnership with your newspaper and provide advice and feedback. Newspapers should also consider hiring broadcast students as interns rather than just newspaper students in order to learn from them as much as they learn from you.

Like the Nebraska newspapers, I agree newspapers should make a point to talk about multimedia during staff meetings to start incorporating it into the regular routine. Communication and support are critical for multimedia to work.

Too many newspaper executives think reporters are supposed to suddenly do the work of five people yet are clueless themselves of what this really means. This can create a lot of resentment and get the multimedia experience off on the wrong foot.

To get started with video, reporters should shoot raw footage that doesn't have to be posted online. Getting into the habit of bringing video equipment along on a story, setting it up and just hitting record is a small victory in itself.

From there, small improvements can be made as the reporter learns what worked and what didn't from the basic footage. Perhaps the sound wasn't good enough in the last video so maybe the microphone placement should be different. It only takes a moment to push the camera angle over to someone else talking and then resume taking newspaper notes. It only takes a moment to zoom in. Soon, your reporters will find they're able to take newspaper notes and run the camera at the same time.

Again, it's taking it slow so that you can have a series of small successes rather than trying to do a TV-style package your first day out and feeling like you can only fail. You don't need this video for a

5 p.m. broadcast. You have time to just practice with it for as long as it takes before posting anything online.

Having smaller expectations with these smaller steps will reduce the stress on staff. Mastering small steps that are achievable will give reporters more confidence as they build upon those skills and gradually move to more complex steps, such as video editing. Then they won't feel as overwhelmed when they reach the final point of being a full-fledged newspaper and multimedia reporter.

If the multimedia doesn't turn out, no one should get discouraged. Learn from it, and try again next time. You wrote a lot of stories before you consistently became a good reporter. Likewise, you will shoot a lot of bad video before you consistently become a good multimedia reporter.

Money

I got my start working for weeklies and understand the concern about "giving away the farm" on websites and social media. However, there has to be compromise in this digital world.

If you're only open for business once a week, people are going to get what they want from someone who's open 24-7. This could be bloggers who can pop up instantly in a community or readers who simply go on Facebook or Twitter and ask if anyone knows who won the local election or football game, thereby bypassing the newspaper completely.

What newspapers should want is, when there is news, readers immediately go to them for information. Not the coffee shop. Not their friends' social media. In this age of instant everything, newspapers have to adapt, or they are going to become irrelevant.

Small newspapers don't have to post full stories on their websites. But they need to get better at marketing. A post on Facebook should not read, "Find out who won the election in this week's paper," and the paper doesn't come out for two days. The coffee shop has told the town by then. The winners of the election have posted that they won on their Facebook and Twitter by then.

Rather, the moment the news comes in, the newspaper should immediately post the breaking news on its website and then tweet or Facebook: "Here are the winners of tonight's election...Get the vote breakdown by visiting (your website)." This directs traffic to your ad-sponsored site and allows readers to get their news from you — the news provider. The web burst and additional social media posts should then direct readers to the printed product to find out what the winners and losers had to say about the election.

That's where newspapers can still succeed: the depth. You can't expect readers to wait four days anymore to find out who died in an accident or how the city council voted. You have to be the news leader. But the coffee shop isn't going to have the details that you have, and that's how the right marketing can maintain the printed product.

Time

It's true multimedia takes away time that could be spent on newspaper reporting. However, this shouldn't always be seen as a bad thing. I'm sure many of you have covered your county fair for the past 20 years and pound your head on your desk trying to find a new way to cover it. Multimedia makes tired stories brand new again. You go in with different goals with a video story.

The rejuvenation is not only good for the newspaper staff but for your readers. They have also read the same story for the past 20 years. If you can give them video of the mayor in the pie-eating contest or of a farmer's wife doing a demonstration on how to make pickles —

teasing in the paper that this video is on your ad-supported website — they will be just as glad to have something new.

To succeed in multimedia, reporters need to multi-task. While video is uploading or converting, reporters should work on their script or newspaper story, not just sit and wait. Reporters should also get in the habit of paying attention to the time codes on the camera to mark the time of a sound bite or of other good video so they can fast forward to that section rather than have to watch the entire video to find the clips.

As reporters get more experience doing multimedia, they obviously become faster at it. Still, the fact remains the reporter is doing the work of four people: newspaper reporter, TV reporter, TV cameraman and video editor. You cannot expect your staff to do this every single day and not have them burn out. You need to pick your battles. Not every story is visual and worth multimedia.

To make multimedia worth the time, newspapers need to do a better job of self-promotion. This includes writing editorials/columns to let readers know about your move into new media. This includes house ads and teasers. This also should include in-person talks with the local chamber and other groups to let them know about the newspaper's plans for revitalization. Newspapers may want to consider hosting a town forum and letting readers weigh in on what improvements they would like the paper to make so readers can have a sense

of ownership and feel part of the process.

You aren't going to get people on board with your new media unless they clearly know it exists. You may have to remind them often over the course of months if your website is nonexistent or barely existent now, and they aren't in the habit of going to your site.

The initial move into new media will take time on behalf of everyone — the newsroom, advertising and circulation. However, as multimedia gradually becomes an everyday fact of the newspaper, the time commitment will go down.

You have to look at this as an investment in the future. It will take money upfront. It will take more time upfront. This is true of any new business venture. But you have to position yourselves now for the future to make sure our industry doesn't get left in the past.

Teri Finneman is a doctoral student at the University of Missouri. She can be contacted at tafxbb@mail.missouri.edu. This paper was presented at the Newspapers and Community-Building Symposium, co-sponsored by the Huck Boyd National Center for Community Media at Kansas State University, the National Newspaper Association and the NNA Foundation at the NNA's 127th annual convention in Phoenix in September 2013.



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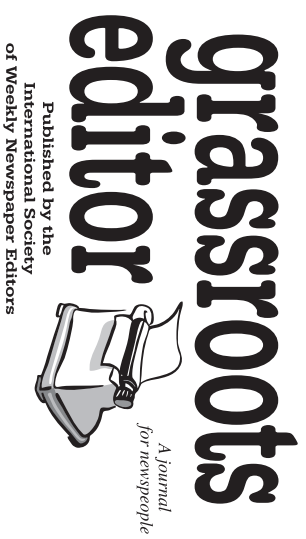
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