

grassroots editor



*A journal
for newspeople*

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

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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
postage 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 50, Issue 1, Spring 2009

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

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Rural weeklies persevere despite special challenges

By Isaac Roelfsema

Editor's note: For this issue of Grassroots Editor, we take a look at how 12 weeklies in Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Wyoming, Montana, New Mexico, and Alberta are coping with the recent newspaper crisis. To some extent, their rural isolation shields them from several of the problems the mainstream media have been experiencing the past year. As one editor so aptly puts it, "While the rest of the nation is in a recession, we've been in a recession for the last 50 years, so it won't affect us as much."

These weeklies, however, face their own set of challenges — declining population bases, a shortage of retail businesses in agrarian communities, staffing issues, and attempting to sell advertising and subscriptions on fledgling Web sites. A few of these papers have the smallest circulations in their states, yet they persevere. Here are their stories:

'Not much profit' to make for father-son team in Wymore, Neb.

Dale and Michael Crawford, a father/son team, work together to produce *The Wymore Arbor State*. Dale owns the paper, and Michael is the editor and publisher. They moved to Wymore, Neb., six years ago when Dale decided to get back into the newspaper business. He found the paper for sale on the Greensheet — a Web site that posts classifieds — and decided to go for it. *The Wymore Arbor State* is 126 years old and has had, as Michael says, "many, many owners."

Sixteen hundred people, most of them older than the 22-year-old Michael, live in Wymore. The paper has fewer than 1,500 subscribers; only 500 live in the town, which has limited businesses: a grocer, a dollar general, a gas station, and a few other stores.

The Wymore Arbor State faces strong challenges in the Internet world. "There's no point in getting a subscription to a small newspaper," Michael said, "when you can go online and get the same news." He admits that "some people like the nostalgia of holding a paper," but ultimately he claims that small papers are "becoming a dying breed."

To cope with this bleak outlook, the Crawfords distribute their paper via PDF emails to subscribers who don't desire that nostalgic feel. "It's needed if we want to stay alive," Michael says. He believes the paper must adapt to the digital age in order to maintain relevancy.

"The best thing to do is to try and build community pride for it," Michael says about the paper. Pictures of the elderly and children around town are sure to keep some people coming back to the paper. Michael wants *The Wymore Arbor State* to feel like "part of the routine." Residents who have always bought it will continue to buy it.

Owning and producing a small paper is not easy, according to Michael, and you don't do it to get rich. The capital gains from *The Wymore Arbor State* are slim pickings once the Crawfords pay employees and for printing. Dale Crawford employs his son as publisher/editor, a fulltime typist, and a part-time ad manager. "There's not much profit," Michael says. "It's really not something you get into to make a profit; you do it because you like doing it."

Michael plans to work at a different newspaper some day, a bigger paper than *The Wymore Arbor State*. He attends a community college with the intention of finding a larger paper to work at when he graduates. When asked about selling the paper, he said, "I think it would be really hard." For any entrepreneurs out there, Dale Crawford is thinking about selling the paper.

Beatrice, just 12 miles away, is the closest city of size with a population of around 13,000. *The Wymore Arbor State* covers the basic area, but Beatrice has a paper too. Michael said most people who buy his paper also have a subscription to the *Beatrice Daily Sun*.

At age 23, Gerri Peterson is youngest newspaper owner in Nebraska

Gerri Peterson, the youngest newspaper owner in Nebraska, runs the *Hooker County Tribune*, a newspaper more than 100 years old. Peterson grew up and went to high school in Mullen, the only town in Hooker County. After graduating college she returned to work at the *Hooker County Tribune* for Lanita Evans. She worked for about a year and then decided to buy the newspaper in July 2008. At the age of 23, Peterson became the youngest newspaper owner in the state of Nebraska.

Cynthia McCall wrote an article about Peterson in *redwire*, a journal produced by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's College of Journalism and Mass Communications. When *redwire* heard Peterson was

just 22 years old when she bought the paper, they sent McCall to interview her. McCall wrote that “Peterson followed her childhood dream of returning to Mullen, where she began working toward her second childhood dream: purchasing her hometown paper.”

The *redwire* article tells the story of how Peterson managed to purchase a newspaper at such a young age. When the bank denied her request for a loan to buy the paper, the former owners financed her. McCall quotes Peterson: “They’re tremendously wonderful people. They’re my angels.” The article can be found at <http://www.unl.edu/redwire/vol71/hooker.html>.

Mullen has a population of just 491, but the *Hooker County Tribune* has a circulation of almost 900. About 300 subscribers have a Mullen address and 100 more reside in surrounding areas. The other 500 copies mainly are sent throughout the state of Nebraska.

In 1877, Buffalo Bill Cody established ranch headquarters in what later became Hooker County. Peterson refers to Mullen, nestled deep within the Nebraska Sandhills, as a “thriving small town” where the nearest McDonald’s is 70 miles away.

Peterson works in the newspaper office by herself, but she does have several people who report and take pictures for her. Mullen is small enough that Peterson must go to a nearby city to have her paper printed every week. The smallness of Mullen and its distance from any other cities makes competition for the *Hooker County Tribune* weak, if it exists at all.

North Platte — about 70 miles south of Mullen — and Valentine — about 70 miles north of Mullen — are the nearest cities of size, and they contain the closest Wal-Mart. For a small town, Mullen does not feel isolated. It boasts a large grocery store, two banks, a library, several places to eat, five churches, a school, and a place to buy insurance.

Peterson looks to the future with confidence. She has no fear of the paper failing. As a weekly paper with no local competition, there is little chance for the business to go under. Her biggest challenge right now is a slight decline of advertisers wanting to buy ads in her paper.

The *Hooker County Tribune* does not have an operable Web site. However, Peterson posts some pictures on the Internet for the viewing pleasure of the community.

When asked if there was a market to sell the business, Peterson sounded as if the thought had never crossed her mind. The *Hooker County Tribune* might be an attractive addition to a newspaper group from a neighboring city, but as long as Peterson owns it there is no need to worry — the paper will not be outsourced. She makes it clear that she enjoys her “thriving small town.”

Couple publishes three small weeklies in South Dakota

In 1993 Greg and LeeAnne Archer purchased *The Hamlin County Republican* in Castlewood, S.D. “We were living in Minnesota and wanted to get back to where we came from,” LeeAnne Archer said. Before long the Archers also bought papers in nearby Hayti and Estelline. Each town has its eccentricities, and covering the news relative to each community every week keeps LeeAnne busy.

“[The papers] are all in the same county, so we do have a bit of overlap,” LeeAnne said. *The Hamlin County Republican* was the paper she knew the most about. They live in Castlewood and travel about 15 miles to each of the other towns to cover sports and other local stories. Castlewood has a population of about 700, and the circulation of the paper is around 500. The Archers send their paper 15 miles to Watertown (population 20,000) every week to get it printed.

“The majority of the people work in Watertown,” LeeAnne said. “We have a typical main street.

“When we first started in ‘93 we were the youngest business owners,” she added. “That’s kind of switched now. We have a lot of people who graduate and come back when they want to raise their family. We see them come back once they want to buy a house and raise a family.”

The Hamlin County Republican needs the young people of Castlewood to return and support their hometown paper. Every month or so an elderly subscriber



dies and a returner hopefully fills the gap. Returning young people do not bolster the paper’s profits inherently.

The Archers are adapting to a new way of publishing. “The challenge for us is that we keep the younger generations reading the paper whether through the Web site or with the regular paper,” LeeAnne said. “We implemented digital photos in 2002, eliminating our darkroom.”

The Archers also started a Web site in 2007. “Probably within this next year we will have online subscriptions,” LeeAnne said. They hope that digitizing the paper will attract a younger audience used to getting information from the Internet.

Right now the Archers don’t feel a lot of pressure to put their entire paper on the web. “For a small town like us we won’t put too much content on the Web site,” she said. “I don’t really have that competition yet where I feel I need to put that much content on the Internet.” But if it comes to the point where they want everything online, that’s where we’ll have to go.”

Internet subscriptions are still a ways off. “I still feel in a small town the people want to get the paper and cut out pieces,” LeeAnne said. “The families still want to get that paper in the mail and read it.”

When the Archers purchased *The Hamlin County Republican*, LeeAnne was not completely prepared for the work of a publisher. “My husband has a background in journalism, and I have a background in retail,” she said. But together they make a nice pair. LeeAnne thinks a publisher of a small-town weekly needs other attributes more than a degree in journalism, such as being from the town and having a close attachment to its people and history.

The person interested in buying one of the Archers' papers would need more than experience in journalism. "It would have to be the right person at the right time, someone in our community," LeeAnne said. "Five or six years ago we tried to sell one and there wasn't much demand for it."

For now the couple will continue to commute between towns and publish three papers. They do a lot of the writing themselves. "We have one full-time reporter," LeeAnne said. "Being a small-town paper we do every aspect of the paper."

Subscribers outnumber population in Edgeley, N.D.

Englishman Richard Sykes came to the United States in 1881 to check on his land holdings. He founded Edgeley, N.D., and named it after his birthplace in England. By 1887 the small town had a community newspaper.

Patty Wood-Bartle owns *The Edgeley Mail* today. "We have a very active community," she said. This explains why her circulation (900) is significantly higher than the population of Edgeley (less than 600). "We have a very active alumni association," she said. They are people around the state and country who formerly lived in Edgeley and still subscribe to the hometown paper.

Edgeley distinguished itself in 2003 by its proximity to North Dakota's first and largest site for wind farmers. Just eight miles from the town you will find the tall windmills that generate green energy. The windmills supply jobs to people in the community but little energy. "Most of the energy is being transmitted out of our area," Wood-Bartle said.

The people of Edgeley are proud to pioneer North Dakota's renewable energy even if the energy never reaches their houses. "We did two special sections," Wood-Bartle said, "as the towers were being put up." On Edgeley's Web site you can see pictures that show rows upon rows of modern windmills with a colorful sunset in the background.

Sometimes technology provides news to write about; sometimes technology's easy access to news hurts small-town papers. *The Edgeley Mail* faces challenges with the Internet world. The younger generation is in the habit of accessing information via digital media.

"As our elder population dies off, so does our subscription base," Wood-Bartle says. "And a lot of our subscribers are on fixed incomes." As her costs go up, she can't raise her rates much. The support of young people in and around Edgeley is becoming increasingly important.

Reaching the younger generation is necessary if *The Edgeley Mail* hopes to have a vibrant future. "It's getting harder to attract young people," Wood-Bartle says. In an attempt to reach her younger audience, she is thinking about emailing PDF versions of the paper to online subscribers. "I'm just beginning to explore that option."

There appears to be a trend of the younger generation leaving Edgeley, but new people are also moving into the town. "We are seeing an influx of people with elementary age children," Wood-Bartle says. Those who want to raise a family in a small-town environment find the Edgeley community attractive. For this reason, she is "very optimistic" about the future of her paper. Her subscription base may be dying off, but prospective customers continue to move into town.

There is little competition for *The Edgeley Mail* in the surrounding area. There are two weekly papers relatively close — 15 and 20 miles away. But since the Edgeley paper covers news specific to that community, Wood-Bartle does not worry too much about print competition. *The Edgeley Mail* has a Web site for community pictures, but no information or stories are on it yet.

Wood-Bartle offers other printing services for the community. She designs letterheads, rubber stamps, booklets, and business cards for individuals and companies in the area. All the printing is done in nearby Jamestown — a city 40 miles away with 15,000 people.

Isolation helps largest weekly in North Dakota

Located just 10 miles south of the Canadian border, Rolla, N.D., boasts the state's largest weekly newspaper.

"I have a really strong staff right now," said Jason Nordmark, who owns and publishes the *Turtle Mountain Star*.

Nordmark, president of the North Dakota Newspaper Association this year, also publishes eight other weeklies in the state including the Lake Metigoshe Mirror in Bottineau County, which he and his wife started in 2005.

Rolla's population is just 1,371, but the *Turtle Mountain Star* has a circulation of 3,500. Most of the papers are sold over the counter to Native Americans. The Turtle Mountain Reservation, just six miles away, is a good source of news, and the 75 percent Native American population provides a solid customer base.

The *Turtle Mountain Star* was founded in 1888, the same year that Rolla became a town. Nordmark is just the eighth publisher of the 120-year-old paper, which has a history of publishers and owners who put everything they have into creating the best possible paper for the community.

Nordmark praises his predecessor, Roger Bailey, as a man who "took the paper to another level." At the height of Bailey's ownership the circulation reached more than 4,000. Nordmark attributes Bailey's success to his hard work and perseverance. "Roger Bailey gave it his all for a quarter of a century," he said.

Nordmark attributes "a strong sense of loyalty" in the community to helping promote the *Turtle Mountain Star* and providing the income to continue producing a quality paper.

The *Turtle Mountain Star* does not have a Web site. Nordmark argues that online news sources are inferior to printed papers. The Internet does not have the same accountability for facts or quality of reporting that printed papers have. He says "people get exactly what they pay for" and the free information provided on the Internet is worth exactly what it costs: nothing. Quality comes at a price, and people are willing to pay when they see the difference.

One of the paper's biggest challenges right now is keeping up with technology. Nordmark says he ushered the *Turtle Mountain Star* "into the digital age." They can send the paper out digitally to subscribers who prefer to view it that way. However, Nordmark values the physical touch that the paper provides for consumers. He says people spend more time with something they can pick up and feel. "As far as me putting most of the paper online? Absolutely not."

Rolla citizens emphasize support of the local merchants. With a population barely over 1,300, Rolla has a surprising number of businesses to support: two grocery stores, two clothing retailers, a large hardware store, a discount retailer, a big car dealer, eight to nine restaurants and seven churches. In all, Rolla has more than 80 businesses including a privately owned clinic — not bad for a small town. Nordmark says Rolla is the "retail hub for the county."

Nordmark does not worry about the future of the *Turtle Mountain Star* in these precarious economic times. He realizes that larger papers are laying off employees, but "the people who truly love journalism will stay in the business." He does not have to worry because his goal of getting "better every week" necessitates a quality paper. He also cites Rolla's isolation and the paper's weekly instead of daily status as a reason for low competition.

The publisher was born and raised in Rolla and attended the University of North Dakota and Minnesota State University Moorhead where he received a degree in print journalism in 1993. He worked at the *Watertown* (S.D.) *Public Opinion* and the *Mason City* (Iowa) *Globe-Gazette* before purchasing the *Turtle Mountain Star* in 1997.

The decision to switch from dailies to a weekly was simple. "I decided that if I'm going to work this hard, I'm going to work for myself."

Two years ago a tornado hit Rolla on a Monday afternoon, the day the *Turtle Mountain Star* hits the newsstands. "My paper came out on noon on Monday and was irrelevant by three o'clock," Nordmark said.

On that day the greater needs of the community for safety and solace took precedence over news. Nordmark's house sustained minor damage, but several of his neighbors lost their roofs. Houses were damaged and destroyed, but no one was hurt. "It was surreal, quite surreal, to see that tornado coming towards my house," he said.

Ever the reporter, he took a few pictures of the twister before he headed fo

the basement. That Wednesday Nordmark published and distributed a special edition covering the tornadoes that hit the area.

Today, everything is back to normal. The *Turtle Mountain Star* remains North Dakota's largest weekly newspaper. "We're fine here," Nordmark says. "They have confidence in me."

Collectively, small Wyoming papers stay in business

The Immigrants' Washtub was a place on the Oregon Trail where pioneers stopped to clean up. That place became Guernsey, Wyo., when a New Yorker bought the land in 1880 and named the developing town after himself. The *Guernsey Gazette* originated more than 100 years ago, shortly after the town was established.

Vicki Hood, editor of the paper, uses the paper's history in each new edition of the paper. "I have a section called Turning the Page, where I go back to older editions," she said. Recalling stories and pictures from the past helps Hood connect with her older audience. As in so many small towns, the young people in Guernsey leave for college and only come back to visit. "We don't have a lot of skilled office jobs that people seek when they get out of school," Hood said.

The biggest employers are the National Guard and the railroad. Guernsey also has a school, grocer, credit union, real estate office, several bars and a couple of gas stations. These are not the kind of businesses that attract many college graduates. The influx of new people is not great. "We've got a few younger people and some retired people," Hood says. The town is trying to solicit new residents; on its Web site are relocation packets that tempt dissatisfied people to move to "a scenic town of 1,150 friendly people."

Hood did not begin in the newspaper field. "I have a degree in accounting, but I've always had an interest in journalism," she said. Hood loves writing and sometimes wishes she would have majored in journalism, but she accepts and enjoys where she is now. "Had I [studied journalism] I probably would have been working at a much bigger paper and I could not have had the amount of freedom that I have here. Maybe that's the way it was supposed to be."

The *Guernsey Gazette* is owned, along with several other papers in the area, by Wyoming Newspapers Incorporated, a part of News Media Corp. The company gives Hood sovereignty over her paper. "I have a tremendous amount of freedom for what goes in this paper," she says. "I write all the primary news stories."

Hood is the only regular employee in her office, but she does receive assistance — the corporation takes care of all the advertising and a few other individuals take pictures and write small sections.

"Our biggest stumbling block," she said, "is getting the smaller businesses to afford the advertising to support the paper." The more successful papers in Wyoming Newspapers Incorporated help to keep the less profitable papers afloat. Hood believes the *Guernsey Gazette* will be around for awhile because the other papers keep it viable. "Quite honestly," she said, "I think our paper is carried by the other papers." Collectively the papers succeed; individually some of them would fail.

Right now the *Guernsey Gazette* has a circulation of 500. This number is up from two or three editors ago, as Hood and her predecessor have had to work to rebuild the paper.

Hood is confident in her writing. Before she became the *Guernsey Gazette* editor, she free-lanced at other papers. "I worked off and on at a couple smaller newspapers," she said. "I do feature stories — that's my forte. In the smaller places you can walk in and say, 'Hey, want a story?'"

The *Guernsey Gazette* Web site has been up and running for about two years now. "I put a few stories on each week," Hood says. "It's a full story, but it's kind of a teaser." The site is supposed to draw readers into purchasing an online subscription to the paper, which is available via email in a PDF format. Hood likes it because she can post color pictures, while her paper is limited to black and

white photos to save money.

Most subscribers like the physical nature of a newspaper. "They would rather pick up a paper and hold it in their hand," Hood says, "than see it on the screen. I think that's coming, but right now people still like the paper."

Hood can imagine a time when the *Gazette* and all other papers will be online. She's interested in watching that evolution. "I don't really think so right now," she says, "but I don't know about down the road. Is there ever going to be a time when everybody will have the access and the savvy to go online to get their news?"

'Always something to write about' in Montana

The town of Valier, Mont., was created because of Lake Frances; or maybe Lake Frances was created for the town; either way, the man-made irrigation lake and the town both exist in northwestern Montana.

In Valier, population 461, Trina Jo Bradley edits *The Valerian*. The town and its history have been on her mind lately. "This year is Valier's 100th birthday," she said. "This year is going to be the big birthday bash on Homesteader Day. Valier was founded in 1909. The first issue [of *The Valerian*] that I have is May 6, 1910."

Bradley is confident that there are previous issues that she does not have. The paper is within months of being as old as the town, which makes Homesteader Day a double celebration for Bradley.

There are few businesses in the town: "We have a gas station, hometown cafe, a butcher's shop, a bank, a really nice restaurant that people come to from other states, a clothing store and a hardware store," Bradley said, also pointing out that there were places to buy feed and fertilizer, as well as a real estate office.

The community is largely agrarian. "In this economy, those who advertised a lot now can only afford a little," she said. "We have noticed a big drop in advertising."

The paper's biggest struggle is dealing with the loss of revenue from advertisers. "As far as competition for business, I don't think there is any," Bradley said. "My paper competes with one other out of Conrad."

Conrad, 25 miles from Valier, has the weekly *Independent-Observer*, but Bradley isn't worried. "Most Conrad businesses will advertise in both papers, and most Conrad residents subscribe to both papers," she said.

Bradley faces the Conrad challenge by producing a better paper, in her opinion. She is confident that hers is better; just ask her. Brian and LeAnne Kavanagh own *The Valerian* and a couple other papers in the area. "They owned the *Cubank Pioneer Press*," Bradley said. "They started there, and they just expanded." She said the Kavanaghs would like to own the Conrad paper, too, but it's not for sale — yet.

"I started working here five years ago," Bradley said. "They hired me first to be a reporter." She moved through several positions and eventually became the editor and the only writer in her office. "This is a very, very small newspaper, so I'm the only employee." Every week she sends the Kavanaghs stories and pictures so that they can produce and print the paper and send it back to her for distribution. "I format the pictures and articles so they can just pull them off the page," Bradley said.

The Kavanaghs have the final say on what goes into the paper and how it looks. But Bradley rarely runs into situations where they interfere. "The boss basically gives me the freedom to do what I want. If she has suggestions, she calls and tells me. The nice thing about small weekly papers is there's always something to write about."

The Valerian has had a Web site that has been developing slowly for the last four years. "Most of the front page stories are on the Web, the sports, and some pictures. Eventually, I'm hoping we can put the whole paper on the Web so we can charge subscriptions."

The Web site is mainly for the younger people in town, but "we don't have a

whole lot of young people in this town,” Bradley says. “Most of them don’t come back because there really is nothing to come back for unless they are going to take over the family farm.”

And the older people? Well, they like having the printed paper. “We have a whole lot more people who like to hold it and cut out the pictures and put them in scrapbooks or send them to relatives,” Bradley says. “The people want to have a paper.”

Revenue may be down, but Bradley is not worried about the paper or her job. “As far as the direction it’s going, I don’t know. I think as long as there are people here I’m going to have a job. There’s always something to write about.”

Terry, Mont., has been in a recession for 50 years

“I’m very optimistic,” says Kay Braddock, editor of the *Terry Tribune* in eastern Montana. She grew up in Terry, went to college in Idaho, then returned to work at her hometown newspaper. “It’s a small agricultural, ranching town,” she said. “My father was a water well driller.”

Braddock returned to Terry after college, but that is not the typical trend. She didn’t intend to return. “It just happened that way,” she says. “Young people, when they graduate, leave, because there is nothing to keep them here. It hurts everything in town.”

When she graduated from Terry there were more than 100 students in the school; now there are 35. But Braddock remains positive; she is confident in the older generations that make up her subscription base. “A lot of retired people move in,” she said.

To reach the technological generation, the *Terry Tribune* recently added a Web site where visitors will find whole articles on community news, sports, school issues, editorials and obituaries. It’s all free. Braddock says advertising on the site makes it cost effective. They offer complete stories, but not the complete paper. Braddock is confident that the older generations “want that newspaper in their hands, they want that pile,” so they can go back and check the facts.

The 102-year-old newspaper is owned by Yellowstone Newspapers, so the only investments Braddock makes are of her time and skills. Having been editor only a year and a half, she looks positively toward the paper’s future.

“We’re probably the second-oldest aged county,” she says, referring to Prairie County. Terry is the county seat and the only newspaper in the county. This helps keep competition to a minimum. The only hurdles Braddock faces right now are the regular tasks of meeting deadlines. “I don’t know of any struggles,” she said. “We’re the only paper in Prairie County.”

“While the rest of the nation is in a recession” Braddock said, “we’ve been in a recession for the last 50 years, so it won’t affect us as much.” The *Terry Tribune* circulation of 850 exceeds the 560 people who live in Terry. About half of the papers are mailed throughout the state and around the country every week. Most of these recipients are former Terry residents or they have close connections to people living there.

There aren’t many businesses in Terry: a clothing and hardware store, a gas station, and a store that sells Montana-made merchandise. Braddock has to print the *Terry Tribune* in Miles City, about 40 miles away. Miles is the closest city of any size with a population around 9,000.

Braddock’s concern for Terry and the paper was obvious. Neither will survive without the support of the younger generations. Her concerns don’t outweigh her positive outlook. “I am very optimistic.”

Grassroots editor produces two papers in Montana

During the 1996 Montana Freeman incident, Janet Guptill learned firsthand how the national media could misrepresent a small town.

Guptill, editor and publisher of the *Jordan Tribune*, said the media “blew it way out of proportion.” The 81-day standoff between the Christian Patriot group and U.S. Marshals ended peacefully after the FBI cut power to the Freeman Ranch.

“CNN called and wanted an interview,” Guptill said. “I stayed up all night

writing a concise paragraph that would go nationwide.” Her paragraph ended with “I hope that it can end peaceably.” Later, news crews came expecting to see a bizarre spectacle of humanity or blood and guts or any story that would shock and sell. When Guptill repeated to them her statement for CNN, they were incorrigible. She condemned their desire to distort Jordan’s humanity for the entertainment of the masses.

Guptill strives to be the conscience of her community. “I worry that as our grassroots editors go, what’s going to happen when we are phased out? I worry that that grassroots knowledge will be shut up. Because it’s going to happen; it is happening.”

The *Jordan Tribune* was founded in 1913, when people came to the community to homestead. Guptill worked for the newspaper from 1971 to 1982, then left to start a shopper called *Tradewind* serving 13 counties in Montana. With a circulation of 3,770, *Tradewind* evolved into an agricultural paper with tips for cooking and farming. “Most of the information in *Tradewind* comes from research,” Guptill says. “Very little comes from private sources.”

“There came a need for a local paper,” she added. “In 1990 we started a paper and went head to head with the *Jordan Tribune*.” Guptill’s new community paper quickly took over the *Jordan Tribune*’s readership. Her new paper eventually merged with the *Jordan Tribune*. Now she produces both *Tradewind* and the *Jordan Tribune*. “I do the ad filling for all of it,” she said.

The circulation for the *Jordan Tribune* is around 500. “The *Tribune* probably has the distinction of having the smallest circulation in the state,” Guptill said. The smallness of the paper does not decrease its value. Small, local newspapers carry on the grassroots knowledge that Guptill believes is so important. “It’s in us to be here,” she says. “Even though our numbers are not large, we do count.”

Neither of her papers has a Web site. “I don’t see how you can give it away and gain it back through ads,” she says. Both papers are printed in Miles City (population 9,000), 85 miles from Jordan.

Guptill has no formal training in journalism. “These communities are so intertwined. We are not related to anyone here. It puts me in a unique position to do news.”

Maintaining population base is town’s greatest challenge

Scot and Lisa Stinnett own the *De Baca County News* in Fort Sumner, N.M. “I grew up in the newspaper business,” Scot said. “My great-grandfather was a printer in Texas.” Scot Stinnett’s ancestors decided to homestead in New Mexico. “They lived in a half dugout [a sod house that is partially underground],” he said. “My family is still in the newspaper business today.”

“I guess my first job was a substitute paper boy. I worked my way up,” Stinnett said. Paper boys were supposed to be at least 12 years old, but Scot started at the age of 11. He’s 53 now and still working in the paper business like his father, his grandfather, and his great-grandfather. He and his wife moved to Fort Sumner in 1992 and bought the *De Baca County News*.

Since half the population of De Baca County lives in Fort Sumner, the Stinnetts don’t have to worry about competition. “One of the benefits of living in Fort Sumner is that there’s not a lot of people here,” Scot Stinnett said. “That’s one of the detriments, too. It’s 60 miles to the closest Wal-Mart, if that gives you any idea where we are.”

The *De Baca County News* has a circulation of 1,000 and, according to Scot Stinnett, is one of the oldest papers in the state. The paper has been around 108 years. Based in Fort Sumner, the county seat of De Baca County, the paper addresses the needs and news of Fort Sumner and the surrounding area.

“If you really want local news you have to go to the *De Baca County News*,” Stinnett said. “We feel like we’re in 99 percent of the homes, but there just aren’t enough homes.”

The biggest challenge for De Baca County is maintaining population. “The farms are getting bigger,” Stinnett said, “and the ranches.” As farms and ranches get larger and more technologically advanced, fewer people are needed to run them. “All those things where you used to have help, you don’t have to have help

"The school is the No. 1 employer," Stinnett said. "We've got around 300 children in the school system. We have a good school." But other than the school, there aren't many attractions or jobs to pull in the younger generation. "Ranch families usually come back," Stinnett said. "We don't see a lot of kids return after they graduate because there aren't enough jobs or things to do or they can't make here what they would make in a city.

"If we can maintain population, I think we'll be fine," he added. To reach a wider audience, the Stinnetts recently started a Web site for their newspaper. "We're still in the first six months of that," Scot Stinnett said. "We eventually want to sell subscriptions online."

The Web is uncharted territory for someone used to a physical paper. "We have an older population that is uncomfortable with the Internet," Stinnett said. "I don't like it because I'm 53, and I've grown up reading the paper all my life." But he recognizes the Internet as an opportunity to reach a younger audience that might otherwise slip away.

Fort Sumner had a July 2007 population of 983, indicating a 20 percent population decline since the 2000 census.

"It's kind of a historic place," Stinnett said. "In the 1860s the government hired Kit Carson to round up all the Navajos. They put them on a reservation here. They kept them for five years and tried to teach them to farm. The Navajo still consider that period in the 1860s as their holocaust. We are only now getting back to having good relations with the Navajo."

Fort Sumner has three museums, one of which exhibits historical information and artifacts relating to the life and death of Billy the Kid. He is buried in the old military cemetery in Fort Sumner.

"Billy the Kid would come and visit the Maxwells [a local family at the time]," Stinnett said. "When he escaped the last time they caught him at the Maxwells and shot him."

Fox Creek Times: One of the few remaining independently owned newspapers in Alberta

"Every town should have a local paper," says Betty Kobe, owner of the *Fox Creek Times* in Fox Creek, Alberta. "The daily papers, TV and the Internet are sources for what is happening in the province, country or world, but they do not inform one of what is happening in their own community.

"People want to know where to register their kids for sports, what other clubs are available, or who to contact if they have a municipal issue. Local papers are also a source of information for those considering moving into an area. Like what medical facilities are in the area, what is the housing situation, is there a school for my children. This type of information is only available through a community newspaper. It's also a means to record the history of the town."

Kobe also works for another paper in Valleyview, where she lives. She produces the *Fox Creek Times* in the evenings and weekends. Fox Creek is about 50 miles from Valleyview. The *Times* employs one full-time and one part-time reporter and an office administrator who also designs most of the ads. Kobe does the layout and is currently training an assistant. A weekend off is only a dream, so they miss publishing for one week in August and two weeks over the Christmas holidays to give all some much-needed down time.

Brandi Bedson is a reporter and photographer for the *Fox Creek Times*. She's worked at the paper since 2005 when Kobe first bought it. "I cover the town council; anything that's going on with the town," Bedson said. "There's another reporter that works part-time."

Working at the paper takes up a lot of her time. "As a reporter you don't have a Monday through Friday, 9 to 5 job," she said. "A reporter has to be there when the event is happening, then meet the deadlines."

Fox Creek may be small but its newspaper staff works hard. "We were actually characterized as one of the smallest papers but with the biggest heart," Bedson said. Kobe thinks the Fox Creek community deserves a similar description: "When disaster strikes, everyone comes to help; when there is a celebration, all

come to take part," she said.

Kobe said in the five years the *Fox Creek Times* has been operating, it has won the special section award for "Fire Prevention Week" for three consecutive years and an honorable mention once. "Small we may be, but we can still compete with the big guys," Kobe says. "Even though we are the people who put the paper together, credit also goes to the businesses and people in the community who support us."

Fox Creek's population is 2,500 with 800 households. "It's just kind of in the middle of nowhere, 50 miles away from next centre," Kobe said, "so our circulation is small."

The town has several hotels, restaurants, service stations, a hospital, seniors' centre, an indoor arena, outdoor pool, a first-rate golf course, a major grocery store, and several retail outlets. There are also some popular recreation sites such as lakes and rivers in the area. The town sprung up because of an oil patch, but has since diversified and is now a vibrant community.

The *Fox Creek Times* does have a Web site, but "it's not a big, elaborate one," Kobe said. "It carries the front page, contacts, and businesses operating in the area. It also offers an online subscription. Personally I don't like reading things online, but many do." The paper has had a 20 percent increase in subscriptions since the genesis of the Web site.

Kobe prefers the printed product, but she can imagine a time when she might have to put more of the *Fox Creek Times* on the Internet. "If the printing costs keep going up, I might have to," she said. Currently, printing costs make up about 60 percent of operating costs. "This past March we started charging a dollar for the paper; it used to be free. I didn't really want to put a price on it, but the cost of printing forced the decision."

The *Fox Creek Times* has other struggles, too. "Being a small, isolated community, growth is limited," Kobe said. "The growth of a newspaper is directly related to its advertising base. If that base does not increase, then that reflects directly on the growth of the newspaper. Until the town acquires more land to accommodate more businesses, our struggle to stay viable will continue.

"The *Fox Creek Times* is one of the few remaining independently owned papers left in Alberta, so it has to stand on its own," she added.

Circulation of paper 500 more than town's population

The *Consort Enterprise* was established almost 100 years ago. According to the paper's Web site, "the Canadian Pacific completed the railway to Consort in 1912 at which time there was a large influx of homesteaders." Today Dave and Carol Bruha own and publish the paper.

"The original person who started the newspaper was Henry Oke," Dave Bruha said. "The first edition was printed on Dec. 12, 1912. He printed the first edition while the press was still on the railway car." The Web site continues the story by saying that "he walked up town and distributed this single sheet among the people in the stores and on the streets."

A newspaper museum on Main Street in Consort contains Henry Oke's original press. "It's kind of preserving a snapshot of the paper's history," Bruha said, adding that if he wanted to, he could go in, fire up the press and print a paper on it.

Carol Bruha's parents funded the museum building. "There was a vacant lot and they gave us permission to build a building there," Dave Bruha said. After the museum was completed it was donated to the city. Now people can visit the newspaper museum for free and see the press that printed the original *Consort Enterprise*.

In 1914 Mabel DeWolfe took over the paper. "DeWolfe became the first woman to operate a weekly paper in Alberta," Bruha said. Seven years later she decided to marry and start a family. Her brother began operating the paper at that time. According to the paper's Web site, DeWolfe's brother was "a righteous and God-fearing man who fought drink and debauchery through the columns of his paper. His motto under the masthead was, 'A Paper With A Mission and Without

continued on page 8

The truth about Truth or Consequences

By Brennan Stebbins

With the newspaper industry seemingly in a tailspin and big city dailies closing with alarming frequency, there might be a glimmer of hope under the radar.

Gone are the *Denver Rocky Mountain News* and *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, at least in print. But *The Herald* and *Sierra County Sentinel* in Truth or Consequences, N.M., are doing just fine.

* * * *

When Ralph Edwards announced his radio program, "Truth or Consequences," would travel to the first town renaming itself after the show, Hot Springs, N.M., didn't hesitate. It was then in 1950 when Truth or Consequences went on the map — literally.

The town already had a newspaper, *The Herald*, which had originated in either 1923 or 1932 (details are sketchy). Two years before the radio program came to town, Mike Tooley's father purchased the paper and employed his son when he was 6.

Fast-forward to 1967 when Myrna Kohs' late husband walked into their house and asked what she thought about starting a newspaper. Kohs said she didn't read newspapers and two weeks later the first issue of the *Sierra County Sentinel* hit the streets.

* * * *

Truth or Consequences today has a population of about 7,000 and still supports the two newspapers. *The Herald* has a circulation of around 4,000, while the *Sentinel's* is 4,800.

Mike Tooley, who publishes *The Herald* today, said the situation is good for competition.

"You strive to have a better product," he said. "The citizens benefit."

The days of competing papers in small towns may be over in many places, but Truth or Consequences appears to be bucking the trend, thanks in large part to the rivalry between the two publications.

"I don't know of very many small communities that have two newspapers, but I can guarantee you that T or C has two of the most stubborn editors, one at each newspaper, or we wouldn't be fighting each other after 45 years," Kohs said.

Though both owners handle questions about the rivalry differently, it's clear the papers have a healthy dislike for each other. If not for what Kohs described as an inferior product in *The Herald*, the *Sentinel* wouldn't even exist.

"When we started, *The Herald* was not what you would call a top quality newspaper," she said "They were putting out a very inferior product. Full blank pages or full black pages. We felt they were a little one-sided on their news." Kohs' opinion of her competitor doesn't appear to have changed much since then.

"I don't even call them competition," she said. "There was a gentleman who came into town about three of four years ago to buy up newspapers and then sell

them to make money. The way he described the *Sentinel* and *The Herald*, he called *The Herald* a glorified high school newspaper and he called the *Sentinel* a real newspaper."

Tooley takes a more conservative approach in dissecting the relationship. "I really couldn't tell you," he said. "They just put out a different paper than we do, that's all."

* * * *

Both papers obviously pride themselves on their local coverage.

"Fires, spot news, features and then a lot of club news," Tooley said. "We support the schools great; we have two sports pages usually filled with photos and stuff going on at the high school."

"People want to read local news," Kohs said. "If they want to watch what the president did or they want to watch what Kennedy did, they watch TV or they go on the Internet. But to see that Mrs. Jones had a baby boy or Mr. Jones died, you're not going to get that on the Internet or TV or most radio stations, and I think that's one reason we've continued to grow."

Still, beyond the similarities in coverage there are several prominent differences between the papers. *The Herald* publishes on Wednesdays, and the *Sentinel* comes out Fridays. As Kohs recalls, the *Sentinel* originally came out on Wednesdays with *The Herald* following on Thursday. Then *The Herald* moved to Wednesday and the *Sentinel* switched to Tuesday. When *The Herald* then moved to Tuesday, the *Sentinel* jumped to Friday.

"Now *The Herald* has moved back to Wednesday and we've been told they tried to move to Friday but the printer wouldn't print them on Friday, so it's kind of follow the leader," Kohs said.

According to Tooley, the current arrangement best serves the readers. "Both of the papers used to come out on Tuesday and then the *Sentinel* moved to Friday, so that actually benefits the people of the town because now they get everything that happened over the weekend early and Friday the *Sentinel* has anything that happens between, so it's not like we scoop each other but we can get different stuff."

At the moment *The Herald* runs a Web site, though the paper doesn't make any money from it. Tooley said he puts six pages on the Web site at a time for people to access, but doesn't charge. "We're getting ready to go to a paid subscription, then we'll put all the pages up," he said.

The *Sentinel* also operates a Web site, though Kohs has a different opinion on newspapers and the Internet. She said her Web site serves only to bring exposure to the paper, and no ads or news content are placed on the site, although a free newspaper can be requested.

"That was the downfall of the newspaper industry," she said. "Putting news on your Web site was the downfall of the industry. Why pay for something when you can get it for free?"

* * * *

Both papers say they haven't felt the economic crunch yet. Kohs is worried, however, about what she believes is "big media" scaring people by constant reporting on how bad things are.

"We're in rural America; we don't feel the crunch yet," she said. "We will when everybody else starts cutting back, because like I said the big media has scared everybody to death."

Tooley said he has noticed advertisers reducing their ads or going out of business, and while he can tell the difference, it hasn't gotten bad yet.

Both said the majority of advertisers are good about spending money with both papers, though there are some that go strictly with one publication.

"If they're mad at me today they won't advertise with me," Kohs said. "If they're mad with *The Herald* they won't advertise with them; they'll advertise with me. I do know we are consistently a bigger paper, more pages, more ads, more news, and we have been for a number of years. That's a proven fact; that's not just bragging. But I worked my hind end off to get to that point."

"We sell our papers every week," Tooley said. "That's all that counts to me."

The Herald also does commercial printing to help stay afloat.

"It just seems to keep going," Tooley said. "Just keep providing a service for the people and I think they'll keep buying the product. We stick mostly with local promotions and happenings; we don't run a lot of the wire service and stuff like that."

* * * *

Dana Bowley, executive director of the New Mexico Press Association, said he was quite familiar with the rivalry in Truth or Consequences.

"They both work hard at what they do, and in a lot of small towns there's a couple of newspapers that will be kind of friendly rivals, but here in T or C they're really competitive, particularly for the limited advertising dollars," Bowley said.

"Those two newspapers are very competitive," he added. "It's kind of an odd community too, where there are competing interests in the town. And usually with a situation like that you find one group supports one paper and one group supports the other."

Bowley said Truth or Consequences is one of few cities left in the state that still supports two newspapers. Socorro has two papers, one of which Bowley used to manage; Taos has a weekly and a monthly; Las Cruces has a weekly and a daily;

Santa Fe has a weekly and a daily, and Santa Rosa has two weeklies. Socorro at one time had five or six papers, Bowley said, even as recently as the 1920s, and Albuquerque once had six or seven.

"Even Albuquerque is a one-newspaper town basically," he said. "There are some niche publications and an alternative, but just one regular daily newspaper."

"If a town can support two newspapers I think it's a great habit because it makes them both work a little harder," he added.

* * * *

Both publications have rich histories within single families and with multiple family members on each staff. It might be a reason neither paper has plans to test the newspaper market. Tooley and his brother, Bob, ran *The Herald* after their father died in 1970, and today it's all Tooley and his 12 full-time and part-time employees, including his stepson who serves as editor, Tooley's wife, Loretta, and his sister-in-law Maureen.

"I have no idea," Tooley said when asked how easily *The Herald* could be sold. "We've never put it up for sale. Haven't even thought about it yet; I've still got a lot of family here that works for us."

The *Sentinel* has 14 employees, including Kohs' husband, Patrick; daughter and granddaughter. Kohs also operates a radio station two blocks away, and some employees split time between the paper and the radio.

Though she has no plans for trying to sell her paper, Kohs said she does have a price tag.

"My husband and my daughter have been asking me that a lot lately," she said. "They say 'Mom, don't you think you ought to maybe think about selling it?' Anything I have is for sale if somebody comes in with the money. I have a price tag, \$8.5 million. You walk in here with \$8.5 million and I'll walk out, but nobody's going to walk into T or C with \$8.5 million and say I want to buy you out."

Kohs was offered \$4 million several years ago, but declined the offer.

"I wasn't for sale then and I'm not really for sale now, but everybody has a price if the price is right. Am I for sale? No."

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Rural weeklies persevere despite special challenges from page 6

a Muzzle." Carol Bruha's parents ran the paper from 1957 to 2006, when Carol and her husband took over.

Carol grew up in a newspaper family, so the transition from a paper owner's child to a paper employee and then to a paper owner was natural for her. Dave married into the newspaper business. "I've always been an avid reader of newspapers," he said. "But my education and background has nothing to do with newspapers."

The *Consort Enterprise* has a circulation of 1,250, and the population of Consort is 730. "Along Highway 12 there are a lot of smaller villages," Bruha said. The paper covers those communities as well as the town of Consort. But the paper circulates farther than those villages. "Probably almost every town and city in Alberta gets a couple of *Consort Enterprises* each week," Bruha said.

The Alberta Weekly Newspaper Association (AWNA) recently decided to increase its Web presence by encouraging all its members to create a site for their paper. That's why the *Consort Enterprise* has a Web site. "I look at our Web site as a necessary evil," Bruha says. "It's an intro to what the paper actually is."

The Web site has not helped business at all. "In our community they don't

want online subscriptions," Bruha said. "We have a grand total of one Internet subscription."

The *Consort's* overseas subscribers tried the Web version, but didn't like it. "They will wait a month for the paper in the mail and pay over \$200 for it rather than read the online version for about \$30," Bruha said.

The Bruhas also offer commercial business printing — cards, envelopes, promotional posters and custom forms — that brings in 20 to 25 percent of the paper's revenue. The *Consort* is printed in Wainwright, 62 miles north, which allows it to run color. "We were one of the first in Alberta, and that includes the dailies, to produce full-color papers," Bruha said.

"The biggest challenge facing all subscription papers are free circulation papers," Bruha said. He doesn't see the Internet as a big competitor. "Most subscribers read their weekly paper because they want their hometown news."

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The little paper that could — and did — for three years

By Patricia Berg

Listen to the story of the Atwater *Sunfish Gazette* and you will hear echoes of struggling farm communities across the Midwest. Empty barns, consolidated school districts, and fading Main Streets. But living in those towns are some very determined people.

Atwater sits on the edge of the prairie about 80 miles west of Minneapolis. From an editor's point of view, its location midway between two thriving county seats is a cruel trick of geography. Turn off its eerily quiet downtown street onto Highway 12 and drive 14 miles west to Willmar, the Kandiyohi County seat and home to the nearest daily. Go a few miles in the opposite direction and you hit Litchfield, the Meeker County seat.

Like so many farm towns hit by the 1980s farm crisis, Atwater has felt its identity slipping away. The school district consolidated with two others in 1996. And right around that time Atwater's local paper, the *Herald*, folded. From 1996 to 2005, the only paper covering Atwater was the *Willmar West-Central Tribune*, a Monday-Saturday daily (circulation 16,300) owned by Forum Communications of Fargo, N.D.

Atwater had lost its source for news about the local goings-on, and it bothered people.

It bothered people so much that in spring 2005, about a dozen of them decided to launch their own newspaper. It would be a non-profit, community effort. It would take its mandate from the community, much like a food cooperative or public radio.

From October 2005 to September 2008 this tough group of volunteers put out the *Sunfish-Gazette*, a non-profit, community-owned, biweekly paper. There was nothing in it for them except community pride. At its peak, the *Sunfish-Gazette* was circulating nearly 2,000 copies in and around a town of a little more than a thousand inhabitants.

"People went into it with the idea of it being a community builder, so people could feel more connected," said Dave Johnson, a retired English teacher who helped found the *Sunfish-Gazette*.

Johnson and the others started by rounding up resources in the community. Board member Bob Meyerson, vice president of the Atwater State Bank, donated office space. They filed for 501 (c)(3) non-profit status. Startup money came from a \$1,000 grant from the Southwest Minnesota Foundation and a fundraiser hosted by the local Lions Club.

By September they had hired Sandy Grussing, a veteran of two nearby weeklies, to edit the fledgling paper. She jumped right in, driving the paste-ups over to the printer in a neighboring town where she would wait for the print run, wrap the papers, throw them in her car, and deliver them at drop points around town.

Meanwhile, board members sold ads door-to-door, proofread copy, made coffee, sent out ad billings, and talked up the project at every opportunity.

The founders knew that the more people invested in the fledgling paper, the more they were likely to care about its success.

Board member Connie Feig, director of a non-profit block nurse program in Atwater, said she brought a "Margaret Mead" approach to the project. It's the same tactic she brings to her job. "I talk to everyone in the community to see what

will work," she said.

Even the newspaper's name was the result of a community effort. The board invited citizens to suggest names; the winning entry was a nod to the wealth of sunnies in the nearby lakes. Coming in second was *Walleye Street Journal*.

"We were grassroots from the start," said Margaret Weigelt, a librarian and organic foods certifier who was in on the effort from the start. "If we put this in their hands, we were so sure we could get buy-in."

So they circulated a flier at the Atwater town festival in mid-June, asking for suggestions. The word came back: People wanted thorough sports coverage; news about who was visiting with whom; obituaries, showers, weddings and engagements; graduation open houses; church schedules and pastor columns; city council minutes; and school board news.

In other words, they wanted what every good local weekly provides.

Grussing approached her job as "community education." Readers have three important interests, she says: city council, schools, and churches. She made it her business to cover all three.

"Those are the three focal points of community life," she said, adding that within a few days of setting up shop, people were coming in to the office to share recollections of the 1996 school district consolidation.

The founders had to decide whether to produce an actual paper, or save the printing costs by publishing online. They never reached consensus on that, but concluded that an online-only publication in Atwater would go mostly unnoticed.

"There was a really strong feeling that we needed something that people could hold onto," said Weigelt.

A good chunk of Atwater residents are middle-aged or seniors, people who still want to hold an actual paper. The founders decided to print an actual paper, and to post PDF images of each issue online.

"We needed a physical product," added Johnson. "I don't think a purely online paper would have gone over."

Another big decision was how to grow a reader base, and that presented a chicken-and-egg problem. The founders knew they had to capture a broad base of interest, so they sent the paper free of charge to every household in the Atwater ZIP code, about 1,100 people.

It was an expensive gamble, but a calculated one.

"We started out with the idea that we were going to get the paper into the hands of everyone in the ZIP code," explains Joe Carpenter, a United Methodist pastor who served for a time as the board's chair. "If we'd started with subscriptions instead..." His voice trails off. "But on the other hand, we had to have that coverage, right from the start."

While offering the paper for free, the board tried to build a sustainable financial base by soliciting sponsors in the community and then publicly recognizing those who donated \$30 or more annually. The founders were able to bring on approximately 500 such supporters from Atwater and the surrounding area.

Ultimately, even the Herculean efforts of the board weren't enough to keep the *Sunfish-Gazette* swimming. Weigelt, who is active in the food cooperative in nearby Litchfield, compares that effort to the *Sunfish-Gazette*. It takes 40 active volunteers to sustain the food cooperative, she said, adding that it would have

Besides a larger group of volunteers, Weigelt and Johnson said the paper would have needed a \$6,000 reserve, or about three months' worth of operating capital, to act as a cushion until it was strong enough to sustain itself. The paper took in \$1,600 to \$1,800 in ad revenue for each issue, enough to cover the cost of printing and the editor's salary. There was just never enough money to build up a reserve.

The effort to raise capital got off to a great start. A letter campaign in early 2007 raised \$6,000. But donations fell to half of that in 2008. "That was the canary in the mine," said Weigelt.

As a matter of philosophy, the *Sunfish-Gazette* relied on a broad, grassroots base of small donor/subscribers.

"We were dependent on small donations," said Weigelt. "That was our idea — you are giving us a mandate that you want a paper."

Reflecting back, the founders say that people valued the paper, but started to take it for granted after awhile, perhaps because it was coming to their homes for free.

"People just assumed it was going to be there, and didn't see a need to make sure it was there themselves," said Carpenter.

The experience suggests to Carpenter that a community will step up to support something new. The trick is to keep the public's interest after the initial shine has worn off.

"I don't think many of us realized that people will be more generous about donating to something new than to keep something going," he said.

Maybe nothing could have saved the *Sunfish-Gazette*. Grussing noted that cars driving along Highway 12 are far more likely to stop in Willmar than in Atwater, which once had five places to eat, but now is down to three, including the bowling alley and the convenience store.

The three years spent putting out the *Sunfish-Gazette* was a labor of love.

"A lot of adrenaline was flowing," remembers Johnson. "We were excited. It was tough to lose it after putting so much into it."

Feig goes even farther.

"A paper is a social structure," she said. "It's about people talking to one another. It's life."

After nine years without a paper, followed by three years of the *Sunfish-Gazette*, people are left thinking about what a local paper means to a town like Atwater.

"When the town doesn't have its own paper, the feeling of community is diminished," said Carpenter. "If people don't have announcements of community events, they start to forget."

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Lessons for American professor: Ukrainians provide clues on universal journalism standards, global education

By George A. Gladney

When people at the U.S. Embassy in Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, asked if I wanted to teach a two-day journalism workshop in western Ukraine, my first thought was: You've got to be kidding.

What would a journalism professor from the University of Wyoming know about how journalism is taught in a distant, alien place like that? Besides, I thought, don't journalism students there speak and write in the Ukrainian language?

Embassy officials told me not to worry: I would be the "co-leader" of the workshop with a Russian-speaking instructor. Umm, I thought, that'll be a big help.

A few months later, in May 2007, I arrived in Lviv, a city of 732,000 near the Polish border. When I left a few days later, on my way to Kiev to do some university lectures on freedom of speech and press, I had a radically different impression of newspaper journalism in this former Soviet state.

Journalism not alien

Rather than discovering an alien journalism, I felt right at home with the standards and practices my co-instructor adopted for the workshop. I'm not sure about the state of health of democracy in Ukraine and other countries of the former Soviet Union, but if the workshop was any indication of the health of journalism, the situation is looking up.

The workshop also raised a question in my mind about the possibility of universal values and standards in journalism in this era of globalization. The experts are not agreed on that question, but my research and subsequent travels to eastern Europe in 2008 indicates that journalism education globally is moving in the same direction. The model is decidedly Western.

My introduction to Ukraine came in 2006, a year before the workshop, when I traveled with a colleague to Kiev. We had rendezvoused in Warsaw, Poland, where I was a U.S. Fulbright scholar at an English-speaking graduate program connected with England's Lancaster University and the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Old stereotypes dispelled

Before that first trip to Ukraine, my impression of the country was shaped by childhood stereotypes. I knew Ukraine was the birthplace of former Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, and I thought of Ukraine and Russia as archetypal of a Soviet totalitarian Communism featuring a rigidly controlled state-owned press that strictly served as an instrument of party orthodoxy. How, I wondered, could the legacy of that system result in a healthy journalistic environment? I knew that since the break-up of the Soviet Union almost 20 years ago, democracy and free enterprise had taken root, but it seemed a stretch that Ukrainian journalism would have much in common with American-style journalism.

My re-education began the first morning of the workshop, held in the Hotel Dnister, a four-star, 10-story hotel that in Soviet times was where foreign visitors were required to stay under supervision. Present were 14 twentysomething students — 13 females and one male — most of whom were early in their careers

working for weekly newspapers or in public relations or public affairs.

The fellow instructor, Oleg Khomenok, was a 41-year-old Ukrainian journalist who hails from Russian-speaking Crimea in eastern Ukraine. He speaks native Russian but also Ukrainian, the predominant language in western Ukraine; he and about half the students speak fairly good English, too.

Savvy to Western standards

My role as co-leader was facilitated by the presence of a translator provided by the embassy, and the fact that Khomenok had organized the workshop's agenda and materials.

I quickly learned that Khomenok was savvy to Western standards of journalism.

Although all his handouts were in Russian, I discovered that he and I were on the same page. We had no opportunity to plan the workshop together, so naturally I followed his lead.

The first day's agenda included a Russian-language film ("Getting the Story"), which, with the help of my translator, I judged to be of equal quality to films I would show to my American students. Later, I learned it was provided by the U.S.-based Center for Foreign Journalists. The remainder of the day involved topics that I discuss with my first-year journalism students: What is professional journalism? What is news? What's the difference between hard and soft news, and readers' wants and needs? We discussed several ethics case studies remarkably like the case studies I use in my journalism ethics course.

On the second day, students came prepared with story ideas to present at a mock newsroom meeting. The day's discussion included development of news sources, working with documents, interviewing techniques, protection of news sources, copyright and libel law, use of photographs, and news writing techniques (inverted pyramid, nut graphs, the *Wall Street Journal*-style anecdotal lead, and headlines and captions). We talked about writing tightly, the ideal of objectivity, and methods of attribution and authenticity. Some topics Khomenok and I presented together; other times, we took turns going solo on select topics.

'Capacious' paragraphs

After my return home with a stack of workshop handouts in Russian, I wanted to find out exactly what the handouts said. Fortunately, one of my graduate students was a young Russian woman, Alexandra Sukhomlinova, and she agreed to translate. From her I learned that most of the handouts contained familiar journalistic concepts, principles and methods. Only a few words were lost or warped in translation. "Rubric" was the term for standing head, and "capacious paragraph" was the expression for lead paragraph (with capacity for lots of information). Generally, however, the handouts offered familiar instruction.

For example, on the subject of writing "capacious" leads, students were told to consider the five Ws and H, to make the lead inviting, to create an impression of urgency, and to evoke interest. They were urged to try to make the lead or lead-in objective, keeping themselves out of the story. They were warned not to cram too much information into the lead, lest "chaos instead of accord" result.

The handout ended with a caveat I wish more of my American students would heed: "The lead is expected to inform, not puzzle!"

Sukhomlinova, who interned at the Poynter Institute and now is a reporter for the *News-Record* in Gillette, Wyo., managed to track down Khomenok's professional resume. It revealed why so much of the journalism Khomenok teaches is akin to what is taught in American journalism programs. It also provided a revealing glimpse of the international nature of journalism education today.

Cross-border training

Khomenok is an independent media consultant and journalism trainer who is print media adviser in Ukraine for Internews Network. Internews is an Arcata, Calif.-based private organization devoted to international media development through training in all phases of independent media operation. At the time of the workshop, Khomenok was print media adviser in Ukraine for IREX (International Research & Exchanges Board), a private Washington, D.C.-based organization that aims to strengthen independent media through training, consultancy, and leadership and innovation programs.

Khomenok's international credentials and experience also include training of trainers and consultants through the BBC World Service Trust, World Bank Institute (Kiev), and the Institute for the Further Education of Journalists (Sweden). He was educated at Simferopol State University (Taurida National V.I. Vernadsky University) in Crimea, and he studied journalism at the International Journalism School at St. Petersburg State University in Russia. His professional experience includes work at press offices, news agencies and newspapers in Ukraine, where he is national coordinator for SCOOP, an organization supporting investigative reporting in eastern and southeastern Europe.

Journalistic sophistication

I must admit I was surprised to find such journalistic sophistication at a workshop led by a Russian-speaking trainer in Ukraine. As I have revealed (somewhat embarrassingly), my head was back in the Soviet era. When I thought of Russian-style journalism, I thought of *Izvestiya* and *Pravda*, of gulags filled with dissident writers, of one-candidate elections, of the heaviest forms of censorship and repression.

I began to get a different picture of things behind the former Iron Curtain during my year (2005-06) in the former Soviet satellite of Poland. There I found a country seeming to embrace with gusto the Western lifestyle, capitalism and democracy — as well as inclusion in the European Union and NATO. Warsaw is bustling and vibrant. The cityscape has some of the dull, depressing look of the Soviet era, but much has been replaced by gleaming glass skyscrapers, upscale hotels and condominiums, and fashionable shopping centers equal to America's best.

My students in Warsaw were mostly Polish, but many came from other former Iron Curtain countries. They were students of sociology with an interest in the sociology of mass media, not journalism per se. I was impressed how these students seemed to be so much like their American counterparts — in dress, interests, study habits, academic performance, and in the way they comport themselves. I had expected something more alien.

Polish media impressive

The Polish mass media, too, had the look and feel of its American counterpart. Polish bookstores brim with slick publications of every description. The smorgasbord of movie DVDs (many from Poland's renowned film industry), music CDs, magazines and newspapers is impressive, even by American standards. I didn't need to understand Polish to know that commercial television and radio in Poland is expertly modeled on American broadcasting. Who else but Madonna to do a cameo in a TV commercial promoting Radio ZET in Warsaw?

The situation in neighboring Ukraine — one of the 12 republics of the former Soviet Union — is quite different. Estimates that Ukraine is at least 10 years behind Poland in Westernization are probably optimistic. The look and feel of a stern political regime and a planned economy linger. Make-do and unnecessary

jobs (e.g., elevator operators, cloakroom attendants, babushkas monitoring hotel hallways) persist.

As in Poland, much of Ukrainian growth and modernization, fueled by foreign investment, has been hobbled by political and economic fragility and uncertainty. Ukraine has joined the World Trade Organization, but it remains an EU and NATO wannabe.

Before my first visit to Ukraine in January 2006, I had read snippets of negative press reports of the journalistic environment. In 2000, there was the kidnap and murder of Georgi Gongadze, co-founder of a popular independent Web site. Prior to the Orange Revolution in 2004, the country's increasingly authoritarian regime under President Leonid Kuchma engaged in the practice of issuing directives instructing editors on news coverage. Criminal libel persisted until 2001.

In Russia, the stories were worse. Under President Vladimir Putin, there have been dozens of journalists killed, some drawing global publicity.

Post-Soviet censorship

Christopher Walker of Freedom House, which monitors press freedom worldwide, has written about the return of censorship in the former Soviet states — the so-called Commonwealth of Independent States. Walker observed that "the contemporary form of censorship is achieved through a mix of state-enabled oligarchic control, broadcast monopolies of presidential 'families,' judicial persecution and subtle and overt forms of intimidation...Intimidation, physical violence, and even murder of reporters and editors have become commonplace. Journalists in virtually every CIS country have been victims of contract killings or otherwise met death under suspicious circumstances."¹

Reports such as these seemed severely at odds with a Ukraine enjoying a healthy journalistic environment and Western-style journalism workshops. Leaving Lviv, I wondered just how far American or Western journalism standards and practices are spreading, and with what effect.

The international training and consulting organizations that Khomenok is connected with provide some clues. Internews Network and IREX are large non-profit operations, stretching far and wide; they are sure to have a powerful impact on journalists' practices and thinking. Internews has operated in 70 countries and has offices in 27 countries. IREX, with field offices in 17 countries, provides programs and consulting expertise in more than 50 countries.

Fostering democracy, pluralism

Critics may think that the media development and training by these organizations amounts to cultural imperialism, and perhaps that is so. However, the central mission of these organizations seems to be to foster democratic, pluralistic civil societies. My reading of the situation: The goal of these media development efforts is not to make all media products alike, nor to establish a universal (American/Western) code of journalism ethics. Rather the guiding assumption is that codes may properly vary, just as cultures vary, but that across all cultures, free and independent media are most likely to serve the public interest.

Daniel B. Moskowitz, writing for the Center for Foreign Journalists, observed that in the United States it is "highly unlikely for a reporter to take money from a source to write — or suppress — a story, but in some countries such side payments are an essential part of a journalist's livelihood." He said CFJ's approach is not to urge adoption of U.S. standards, but to explain the how and why of those standards. Journalists from other nations have to decide the appropriateness of the rules for their own countries.²

I have tried to make clear that the journalism I teach my students in Wyoming and the journalism my Russian-speaking counterpart teaches in Ukraine were much alike. However, there were two significant differences. First, in Lviv, there was little or no mention of multi-media approaches to storytelling (audio, video, blogs, etc.), something that is getting a lot of attention in the United States as newspapers migrate to the Web. Second, and more important, the Ukrainians didn't easily relate to the idea of classical democratic theory and how it fits with the

role of a free press. This is the idea, so familiar to Americans, that the people are sovereign, that government was created by the people, that government officials exist merely to serve the people.

Cynicism about self-government

The Ukrainians know the news media's job is to keep the people informed about inefficiencies and corruption in government. However, even though they know that national elections can make significant differences in the tone and direction of government, they seem to think the government will do what it is going to do regardless of the people's wishes. They are cynical about self-government, even though in theory they exercise it.

The Ukrainians thus have a difficult time accepting that, even in a representative democracy, the government is not somehow, ultimately and always, in charge — an autonomous force. For Ukrainians, it is enough that the press reveal corruption and inefficiencies; there is not so much emphasis on educating citizens for the sake of informed, intelligent public deliberation about important issues of the day.

When I returned home, my mind was preoccupied with the question of universal journalistic values and practices. To what extent was the world beyond Poland and Ukraine seeking to adopt Western- or American-style journalism, I wondered. I was not well informed on the subject.

I had a chance to educate myself when I prepared a new course titled International Journalism and Global Media, which I taught for the first time in 2008. My research included an examination of both the state of journalism education and problems faced by journalists worldwide. Afterward, I took five students on a study abroad trip to Germany, Poland, Ukraine, Slovak Republic, Austria and Hungary.

My research indicated no consensus among experts about the universality of journalistic values, standards and practices. Media ethics scholars like to argue over what universal ethics or values "should" be, but their assertions suffer from the most general, vaguest of terms (e.g., truth-telling, responsibility, human dignity, nonmaleficence). Any claim of universality of journalistic norms and practices are strictly theoretical.

Concerns over press freedom

My research yielded a disturbing picture of press freedom in many countries, including Ukraine and Poland. According to Freedom House's 2008 index of press freedom, only 72 of 195 countries (37 percent) have a "free" press, while 59 countries (30 percent) have a "partly free" press and 64 countries have no press freedom.ⁱⁱⁱ

Using a rating system with the most free at 9 and the least at 98, Finland and Iceland ranked at the top in terms of press freedom; the U.S. rating was 17. Poland ranked as free, with a rating of 24, but Reporters Without Borders notes that Poland missed RWB's own ranking of the top 50 countries in terms of press freedom because of rising prosecutions of news media since election of the current regime in 2005. Usage of media as a means to further party interests is still a common problem in Poland and, more generally, in all of eastern Europe.^{iv}

The press in Ukraine, with a Freedom House rating of 53, is categorized as partly free. In its most recent report on Ukraine, the organization applauded Ukraine's media for being increasingly pluralistic, and it noted that since the 2004 Orange Revolution the government "has abstained from direct political interference and has not used media outlets as vehicles for political propaganda and slander against its opponents." However, it noted little progress turning state television into a public broadcaster, adding that wealthy media owners frequently exploit their news organizations to serve selfish political interests.^v

Another problem, according to Freedom House, is that local governments often control local media, and journalists who investigate wrongdoing at the local level "still face physical intimidation." Freedom House observed that Ukrainian journalists "frequently lack professionalism and print politically biased information rather than independently checking all the facts."^{vi} At the workshop in Lviv,

I didn't get much sense of this situation, other than students' cynicism about government generally.

Legacies of Communism

My research revealed that in eastern Europe and many developing nations with a "partly free" press or no press freedom, heavily partisan journalism is common and journalists often face great difficulty gaining access to government meetings and documents. They are hampered by stringent defamation laws and officials who refuse to talk to reporters. The quality of news is affected, too, by "hidden advertising," the practice of reporters secretly accepting money from outsiders to write slanted stories. Much of this is the legacy of the fall of Communism, which almost instantly produced a glut of novice and incompetent reporters.

On-the-job training of journalists continues as the norm in former Iron Curtain countries and the "not free" countries. However, journalism as a discipline taught at the college level is on the rise in many areas. It is safe to say that, except for the most authoritarian regimes, the journalist as state propagandist is fading fast.

Perhaps not surprisingly, media researcher David Weaver, who edited *The Global Journalist* (1998), which was based on interviews with more than 20,000 journalists, concluded that from country to country there are "very large differences in the percentages of journalists who think that different reporting methods may be acceptable." He said "it seems that there are strong national differences that override any universal professional norms or values of journalism around the world, except in the case of revealing confidential sources, where there is strong and consistent agreement that this should never be done."^{vii}

Weaver observed that where there is disagreement, it is most likely to relate to such issues as the importance of investigation of government claims (watch-dog role), journalism's entertainment and analytical functions, and reporting accurately and objectively. He said disagreements are better explained by differences in political systems than cultural, organizational, and individual characteristics.

Growing homogeneity of journalists

Other research points to growing homogeneity of journalists worldwide. For example, a German international study published the same year as Weaver's book concluded that the professional group of journalists is similar, despite different political and social structures. In an earlier study, another group of researchers concluded from surveys of journalism students in 22 countries that journalism seems to be moving from a craft to a profession because of emphasis on journalistic independence and autonomy, as well as changes in education and specialized knowledge of journalists.^{viii}

Communication researcher Mark Deuze argues that disagreement over the existence of universal occupational standards is caused not so much because of disagreement about professional norms and values as "the importance of certain universal standards and what their meanings can be in country-specific circumstances and different cultural contexts."^{ix}

Deuze adds that "even though reporters and editors all over the world disagree on many issues, journalists in many if not most democratic countries share a history of continuing professionalization, culminating in a growing body of knowledge, a deeply felt commitment to autonomy in their work, and a strong awareness of the fundamental role journalism plays in the formation and sustenance of society."^x

So just how influential worldwide are Western, or more specifically, American, standards and values and practices? The evidence is anecdotal and hardly conclusive.

Deuze observed that "internationalization in journalism education...translates into the transfer of Western notions of journalism and its core values to countries all over the world, particularly Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America, because many educators there received their training North America."^{xi} My own

research turned up a basic journalism textbook from Southern Africa that was so much like American textbooks that it would be perfectly suitable for my news writing and reporting classes.^{xii}

Countering Americentrism

My new course in International Journalism and Global Media proved popular with students, and it is being added permanently to the curriculum. Many of my students dream of working as international news correspondents, but for the most part they are woefully ignorant about the world outside North America.

If the new course accomplishes nothing else, it will open students' eyes to a vast world out there. It counters the Americentric worldview fostered by American mass media that eschew foreign news. As might be expected, my students generally overestimate the proportion of Americans comprising the world population. Typically, they will say 10 or 12 or 15 percent when, in fact, it is less than 5 percent.

The course drives home an important point that needs to be understood by American college students and news organizations alike: The United States is not as important in the grand scheme of things as they might imagine.

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The future of the United States

By Douglas Perret Starr

The United States is in jeopardy. Many newspapers have gone out of business and the rest are in deplorable condition.

If the news media shut down, the United States will no longer boast government of the people, by the people, for the people. The government will be in charge, and the people will be its pawns because there will be no free criticism of the government or uncensored report on what the government is doing.

In the United States, government by the people depends upon people's access to information, information that is provided by the news media, mainly newspapers and the World Wide Web, which, so far, is an arm of newspapers and its cadre of reporters, news editors, and copyeditors, all of whom contribute to the accuracy and objectivity of the news story.

The World Wide Web is only as good as the newspapers that nurture it because newspapers provide reporters who cover and report the news in the kind of detail the people need to make informed decisions about what government is doing.

Why newspapers are dying

Newspapers have suffered dire situations before, though not as serious as this one, and it's not entirely the fault of the current economic situation. In the late 1900s, evening television news killed most of the afternoon newspapers, leaving the United States with 1,400 of the 1,700 morning and afternoon newspapers. The influence of television resulted in reduced newspaper advertising so that most newspapers reduced the size and the number of pages, providing less space for advertising and for news stories.

Adding to the problem are the computer and the World Wide Web, all of which reduced advertising in and subscribers to newspapers. That, in turn, led to reduction of coverage of international and national news and increased focus on state and local news.

Then, almost all newspapers, and the Associated Press, were forced to cut staff, laying off dozens of reporters and photographers and adding their duties to the remaining few. Now, reporters gather the news, take photographs, shoot video, and take audio statements (sound bytes). They write the story for the newspaper's Web page, for the newspaper's print version, and for broadcast, and, in some cases, they read their news story on radio or television, and all with no increase in salary.

Because advertising in newspapers — what keeps all news media operating — is decreasing, lowering revenue, three dozen newspapers announced intentions of shutting down. *The Christian Science Monitor* abandoned its print version in 2008 and offers an online version only. *The New York Times* and the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* warned that, without an increase in revenue, they would shut down, and the *Rocky Mountain News* shut down without much notice.

Opinion in news stories

Newspapers took another hard hit, resulting in another decrease in numbers of subscribers. Unexpectedly, reporters were making up information and plagiarizing for their news stories and plagiarizing for their opinion pieces. They were found out and were fired; which is as it should be. But they never should have deviated from the public trust in the first place.

During the 2008 presidential campaign, radio talk show personalities Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity — who took sides openly, which they could because their shows were blatantly opinion-based — repeatedly referred to newspapers as the “drive-by media” and the “Obama press,” saying news stories were plainly

biased toward Barack Obama and Democrat Party leaders.

And readers seemed to agree that no longer were campaign news stories balanced; that no longer did newspapers and television carry the same amount of information about each side in the campaign.

Worse, if that's possible, during the campaign, reporter opinion began showing up in news stories. To compound that, subscribers noticed and walked away, but the newspapers' news editors and copyeditors seemed not to notice, and no one was fired.

Readership changed, from readers of news — the older generation — to readers of entertainment and opinion and mostly on the World Wide Web — the younger generation. Today's readers are not subscribing to newspapers because they are not interested in hard news. Today's young people are interested in feature stories and stories about actors and musicians and other entertainers, and sports, and the view of a news event in an unedited personal blog on the World Wide Web.

As a result, in a time when more information is available to more people than ever before in history, people are less interested. And newspapers are compounding the situation by catering to that lack of interest, by providing entertainment rather than news and by letting opinion creep into the news stories, all of which puts in jeopardy the very bases of the United States of America: government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

What would be lost

Consider what the country would lose without newspapers. In any country, the press protects and empowers the government, whether it be a dictatorship or a democracy. In a dictatorship, the government is one person; the people are, at best, puppets. In the United States, as in any democracy, the government is the people, all the people.

Without truthful, factual news coverage, people would be unable to form educated opinions and to take remedial action. It is no accident that the first action taken by incoming dictators — like Hitler and Castro — is to seize control of the country's newspapers and dictate the editorial stance and the news that will be published. The only thing worse than government control of news is no news at all.

Some people say they don't need newspapers because they get their news from the World Web and from television and radio.

True, the World Wide Web carries news stories that are thoroughly detailed. But those Web stories usually are long and wordy. Because most readers don't read past the fifth paragraph of any news story, they miss a lot of detail.

Stories on the Web are difficult to read because the type is small; the computer screen blinks, and stories are surrounded by flashing, changing, and disruptive advertisements. Moreover, reading from a vertical screen, instead of from a horizontal page, is difficult. On some hand-held devices, reading news is even more difficult because of the small size of the screen.

Most radio and television news stories are no more than 60 words long, two or three newspaper sentences, providing little more detail than a newspaper headline, certainly not enough information for listeners to arrive at an informed conclusion.

Suggestions

Now, more than ever in history, the guarantees of government by the people depend upon the people and upon newspapers. So, for the good of the United States, for the good of all the people, these things must happen:

Reporters, regardless of the news medium, must present terse, concise, accurate, objective get-to-the-point accounts of the news of the day. That way, people will know that the news stories are true and correct.

Newspapers must ensure that their reporters live up to the traditions of reporting the news, and must do what county weekly newspapers have been doing for generations: cover their geographic area, focus on what local people are doing.

People must read state, national, and international news in detail every day, either on the World Wide Web or in a newspaper that they subscribe to. That's the only way that people can understand what's going on in government and in the world; the only way that people can be active citizens whose votes are meaningful and who can be in control of their government. And being a subscriber is the only way to keep newspapers in business.

It is too expensive for newspapers to assign their own reporters to cover state, national, and international news. The Associated Press and other news services provide general, but adequate, coverage of those three areas at far less cost to newspapers. And, the AP will provide coverage of specific news events at the request of member newspapers.

People in large cities, as well as in small towns and on farms and on ranches, want to know what people are doing. People want to see news stories and photographs of neighbors doing things, of children in school and at play, of high school

sports, of civic club activities, of family activities, of church activities, of...well, of all aspects of life all around them.

Daily newspapers can provide more local news, even if they reduce publication to the weekend and a few weekdays and reduce the number of pages and the size to tabloid. They can do that by following the lead of weekly newspapers by keeping their copyeditors and news editors and supplementing their reduced staff with less expensive but professional free-lance reporters, photographers, and columnists, and with paid or unpaid journalism student interns.

People must recognize the overriding importance of the free press and the value of news and the newspaper in their daily lives. People must subscribe to newspapers and read the news every day.

The end result could be increased circulation and, after the economy settles down, increased newspaper advertising and maybe even more newspapers.

But whatever is done must be done quickly; the future of the United States depends on it.

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Published by the
International Society
of Weekly Newspaper Editors

Institute of International Studies
Missouri Southern State University
3950 East Newman Road
Joplin, MO 64801-1595
(417) 625-9736
www.grassrootseeditor.org