

grassroots editor



*A journal
for newspeople*

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Rethinking the reader's role in community journalism

By Susan Brockus

Take this scenario: You open your clothes dryer to discover that someone has left chewing gum in the pocket of a pair of blue jeans. While the entire load of jeans are inexplicably clean and gum-free, there's a webbing of gum baked onto your dryer drum. Grab a wet paper towel and start scrubbing. Now there are bits of paper towel stuck in the gum. While you could try countless ideas, the best one is to head for your computer. Typing "removing gum from dryer" into a search engine string results in roughly 23,000 hits — most of which have been contributed by people exactly where you are now. Five minutes later the gum is gone and you can add your own gum-removal success story to the cacophony of the Web — "removing gum from dryer" hit number 23,001. Remarkable.

So, yes, the World Wide Web is the coolest thing — perhaps ever. It's no wonder that many people have replaced editors with search engines as they hunt for information that fits their immediate needs. But the hunt for information and the community-building mission of journalism are not the same thing. Unfortunately, the only people who seem completely to grasp the difference are journalists, journalism educators, and media critics. This paper strives to map the schism between journalistic ideology and Web reality — particularly in terms of reader participation. This will be accomplished by first exploring the traditional relationship between community journalists and readers, then tracing the development of the Web and online journalism. Finally the paper will present a case study of a journalist who set out to re-invent community journalism by playing on the strengths of both print newspapers and the Web — most notably, without the Web.

The slow evolution of journalism

Despite increasingly intense competition for both advertising dollars and attention span fostered by technological advancement — from radio, to television, to cable television, to the Internet and World Wide Web — journalism has been lumbering along, bringing up the rear with a Fourth Estate banner that people are less and less likely to acknowledge, understand, or recognize. In part this reflects the nature of journalism, which traditionally has assumed a role relating to the maintenance and evocation of a society's values, particular with regard to a community's historical record. Originally, competition between newspapers alone required reporters to seek out sensational news and hard-hitting stories (Tuchman, 1978). With each additional communication option, however, the mass audience targeted by journalists has been increasingly fragmented. This is partly because people did not discard older communicative mediums as new arose, but accumulated sources of news, information, and entertainment to the point of information overload (See Gitlin, 2001; Keen, 2007; and Postman, 1985). The rise of the World Wide Web and surge of social networking in the past five years seemed to trigger some sort of critical mass, with journalists now facing competition not only *for* consumers, but also *from* consumers, who have the ready capacity to gather and produce their own information — rules be damned. Of late, this has led to the widespread realization that the mass market business model that sustained journalism for more than a century is broken.

Journalism once was considered a craft, with reporters and editors responding to the allure of writing well, and the call of the democratic mission and its corresponding ideals (Tuchman, 1978). With the rise of the non-partisan press in the late 1800s, the journalistic norm of objectivity began to take hold. And, as the workforce became progressively better educated in the years following World War II, so did reporters. Today journalism leans more toward a profession, with reporters and editors expected/required to hold a bachelor's degree in journalism or a related field. These are people trained to value nonpartisanship and factual accuracy, as well as to value the voices of official sources (McChesney, 2004). The rise in journalist professionalism has been facilitated largely by the changing nature of newspaper ownership, which has shifted from roughly 75 percent family ownership to 73 percent corporate ownership over the course of the past 60 years (Bagdikian, 2000; Compaine & Gomery, 2000). Consolidation of newspaper ownership has resulted in an increased focus on the means of production, particularly in terms of reducing the somewhat messy, complicated matter of documenting life in a community to a reproducible formula. Correspondingly, professional journalism also tends to require specialized functions that can be applied regardless of place — news processed in an unnatural cycle that routinizes, imposes order, and enforces adherence to deadlines (Tuchman, 1978). That has resulted in journalism becoming laden with rules that govern editorial processes, largely aimed at increasing efficiency and consistency — and journalists who are notoriously intolerant of those who don't play by a largely invisible set of rules.

On Saturday the Red Hat Ladies Met for Lunch...

“Dear Editor,

“Please publish the attached news release from my organization. As a fellow journalist (I wrote for my high school newspaper), I appreciate you getting my organization’s news to the public in a timely manner...”

Surely every journalist has heard the “I wrote for my high school newspaper” line. Rather than building kinship with the helpful reader, this ubiquitous comment tends to bristle the busy journalist, who silently (we hope) fumes: “Excuse me, but I write for a real newspaper with real news and real deadlines. I’ll decide what news is. And your ‘news’ will run when I deem it worthy.” True journalists are trained in particular writing styles and primed to seek out clarity, consistency and accuracy in the conveyance of the news. Stories not written in journalistic style are immediately suspect, as journalists are, to perhaps a great extent, encouraged to be writing snobs. As a result, public relations practitioners also are trained in journalistic writing so that news releases pass the journalistic credibility sniff test. That doesn’t mean that those news releases will be published verbatim, but a journalistically clean news release submitted by a PR practitioner via e-mail may be more likely to reach publication in some relatively intact form than the hand-delivered submission of community news that is hand-written on lined paper and riddled with grammar, spelling and (horrors!) AP style errors. The person submitting the former may be pleased to see a reporter-bylined story, while the latter may be dismayed to discover that his or her four notebook paper pages of news has been condensed into a blurb or calendar item.

This was a journalism that worked well, until there was an alternative source for community members to publish their own news — in whatever form they chose. As *The Sacramento Bee’s* public editor noted in a late 2006 column that explored the many changes facing journalism, “newspapers were the content gatekeepers. We had the monopoly on news and information. If you as a reader weren’t happy with our performance, too bad. You had very few alternatives. Not so anymore, and there isn’t any going back” (Acuña, 2006).

The astounding, confounding rise of online

To figure out just how quickly journalism has been swept aside by the rise of online, it’s important to understand how the world of information and communication has changed. Drawing from the work of Web consultant Vin Crosbie and scholar Françoise Bar, *Online Journalism Review* editor Larry Pryor (2002) mapped out three general “waves” of online communication that are useful in understanding the progression of the Internet and the perceived threat to classified advertising it posed, to the World Wide Web and the genuine threat to the survival of newspapers it all but promises. A modified summary of Pryor’s work (the weapon analogy is my own) follows, with a fourth “wave” added to emphasize how the role of the reader has changed — from passive consumer to active participant in the gathering and conveyance of news — in less than 20 years.

The First Wave — 1986-1993

It is amusing, if not helpful, to categorize the waves of online journalism in terms of the capacity of various weaponry to blow holes in stuff. The first wave thus can be categorized as the “bazooka approach,” in that the emphasis was on the mass audience. Now, imagine that mass audience as a large, red barn, with the bazooka taking out a remarkably large chunk of the barn on the first shot. Much as the bazooka is designed to blow big holes in things, first wave technologies were taking aim at the audiences of cable television and, sticking to the traditional mass-market model, were trying to reach pretty much everyone with the same message. In the first wave, newspaper companies like Knight Ridder and Times Publishing partnered with AT&T to send news via 900-baud modems that sat atop television sets. The news, all text and presented in glorious black-and-white, would scroll down the screen. The system had the advantage of taking control of the television and preventing viewers from watching cable, but it had the disadvantages of being unattractive and slow. For some perspective on how slow, consider the fact that today about as slow a modem that can be purchased is 14.4K.

That’s a transfer rate of 14.4 kilobits per second, as compared to the 900-baud rate of .9 kilobits per second. On a 14.4K modem it would take more than five minutes to open today’s home page for *The New York Times*. Theoretically, because it probably couldn’t even happen, it would take nearly an hour and a half to open the same page while using a 900-baud modem. By way of comparison, many newspaper readers today have broadband connections that take about 20 seconds to fully open a home page the size of *The New York Times*, with most elements appearing immediately and the user barely noticing the download is happening.

The first wave also marked the introduction of chat rooms. In 1984, the Mac had just come out and the PC was beginning to get a hold in the market. The same partnership — Knight Ridder, Times Publishing, and AT&T — came up with technology that would allow people to log in by telephone, facilitated by the leap to 1200 baud. This was a text-based system that allowed people to use their personal computers — including the ever-popular Commodore 64 — to interact with other people. The goal was for people to discuss issues of import to their community, while also being exposed to text-based advertisements. What the media partnership learned, however, was that most discussions in the media-hosted chatrooms tended to be less about public affairs and more about private ones — in particular, sex. The system was shut down. By 1986, a handful of companies, including AOL, Prodigy and CompuServe, stepped in as the media partnership bailed out, basically saying, “hey, if you want to come over and be anonymous and talk about sex, be our guest.” In short, these companies listened to the end users and offered them exactly what they wanted. The early lesson for online journalism was the uncomfortable notion that customers rule.

The Second Wave — 1993-2001

The second wave can be categorized as the “shotgun approach,” in that the emphasis was on mass-customization in an effort to reach parts of the greater audience. Keeping the same large, red barn in mind, think of the shotgun as being able to target various parts of the barn with varying degrees of accuracy. The second wave was facilitated by the invention of the World Wide Web. The first Web browser, Mosaic, was available to the public in 1991 and people had to pay to use the proprietary technology. As a result, the World Wide Web gained only about 50 paying customers in the first two years. When browser technology was unleashed, the Web took off, with more than a million sites online by 1994. During the second wave — the dawn of Web 1.0 — the end user gained control of the network with the assistance of the dynamic duo of self-publishing systems and personal computers. Online journalism was in its infancy at this point, with most publishers recognizing the threat and being very concerned as Web customers rejected ads and registration and demanded more personalization. Newspapers tentatively began making the leap to the Web, with most resorting to “shovelware,” or simply dumping print content on the Web for free.

It wasn’t until 1999 that the World Wide Web began to take off as a source of news, information and entertainment. A turning point was the release of the Starr Report in 1999 and its subsequent posting on the Web. People were encouraged to go online and read the findings of the Starr Commission, the committee appointed to investigate President Bill Clinton. What made the Starr Report so popular on the Web? The salacious details of the president’s affair with intern Monica Lewinsky. The cigar. The blue dress. The interest of the public in finding the Starr Report was helped along by the popularity of up-and-coming search engine Google, which had made its debut in mid-1998.

The Third Wave — 2001-2004

The third wave can be categorized as the “b-b gun approach,” in that the emphasis shifted to the needs and wants of the individual. Whereas the bazooka had the capacity to take out the large, red barn in one shot, and the shotgun allowed for the targeting of specific parts of the barn, the b-b gun analogously took aim at the chicken scratching for feed in front of the barn. The third wave cemented the Web as an excellent source to turn to for breaking news. It began in about the fall of 2001, when people around the world turned to the World Wide Web as

a source not only for news on the happenings of 9/11, but also as a place to post their own images, feelings, and news. Other significant developments of the year included Apple's release of both iPods and iTunes and the debut of Wikipedia.

The third wave of online journalism was characterized by three things: personalization, participation, and partnership. In terms of personalization, Readers now were able to customize news sources and headline feeds that appeared on Web browser home pages such as MSN.com, iGoogle, and Yahoo! The third wave also introduced open-source news sites like OhMyNews and WikiNews that sought "citizen reporters" to add to the news content. Participation became a hallmark of so-called Web 2.0 sites, many of which relied upon crowdsourcing, or the collaborative generation of information. User participation during this time grew exponentially to include blogging, commenting on articles, review of products, generation of wiki content, and the uploading of user-generated photos, audio, and videos. In terms of partnership, the idea in the third wave was that both the end user and the system owner and manager had to give up some power in an effort to achieve cooperative growth. People became more accepting of advertisements on Web sites and the need to register and/or "sign" user agreements before accessing information and features on individual sites. People also demonstrated a willingness to pay for quality services, whether by providing demographic information on registration or buying month-to-month site subscriptions. In exchange for end user cooperation, site owners learned to listen very closely to what the users wanted.

The Fourth Wave — 2004-present

If the first wave of online journalism can be likened to a bazooka, then the fourth wave is akin to a magnifying glass directing a sunbeam onto an anthill. The large, red barn is still there, but it simply doesn't matter as much anymore. The person holding the magnifying glass — the Web user, for our purposes — has turned all attention to the anthill and, after a satisfying kick, is now focusing the attention of the sunbeam on first this ant, then another, in rapid succession. In other words, control of the "weapon" has entirely shifted.

The fourth wave marked the rise of social networking sites, including Facebook, MySpace, Flickr, and Twitter. For perspective in how fast these Web-based communication sites one need only look at YouTube. The now-ubiquitous user-generated video site was started by three people in February of 2005 then sold to Google for \$1.65 billion just shy of two years later. The fourth wave also introduced peer-recommended news sites such as Reddit and Digg, where readers could "vote" for stories they like — stories from any source on the Web — and the stories would be aggregated on the site, ranked by popularity and linked to the original source. In late 2006, *The Sacramento Bee's* public editor pointed to the significant toll the Web already was taking on traditional media:

Part of the uncertainty enveloping the future of newspapers comes down to this question: What do readers want? In my view, they want everything, and they want it free. They want news, and they want it right now and wherever they are. They want audio and streaming video. They want events and issues analyzed and explained in-depth. They want their newspapers to be independent and to be watchdogs of government and the community. They want to know what is happening in Washington and in Iraq. They want to know how their local high school football team played Friday night. They want to know about the best night clubs and the newest restaurants in town. They probably always wanted it all, but couldn't get it until the Internet came along. (Acuña, 2006)

By 2009, the Associated Press was threatening to sue companies that own search engines and news aggregators for copyright violation (Pérez-Peña, 2009). In particular, the AP took aim at Google News, a site that relies upon Web-wide traffic analysis and readership patterns, all tracked by complex computer algorithms, to rank stories by reader interest. Not only did the AP want to halt the mass dissemination of its articles without compensation, but it also wanted to stop independent bloggers from taking large chunks of articles for their own use. An article in *The New York Times* stated that "many news executives, including some at The A.P., have voiced concern that their work has become a source of revenue for

Google and other sites that can sell search terms or ads on pages that turn up articles" (Pérez-Peña, 2009). The article's author noted that, "in essence, The A.P. has taken on the role of acting as a representative for the entire industry, particularly the newspapers — including *The New York Times* and virtually all large newspapers — that are the group's owners." The AP's stance was echoed days later when the British newspaper industry "asked the government to intervene on its behalf to force Google to stop using newspaper articles without paying for them." The traditional media's delayed challenge to Google is eerily reflective of the film "EPIC 2015," produced by Robin Sloan and Matt Thompson. In the nine-minute film, the prediction is made that the "news wars of 2010" will be between Web-based companies like Google, Amazon and Microsoft, and that they will proceed with the notable absence of the traditional media (Sloan and Thompson, 2005). When the "slumbering Fourth Estate" at last awakens in 2011 and sues the fictitious Googlezon (a merging of Google and Amazon), claiming that "the company's "fact-stripping robots are a violation of copyright law," it is too late.

Writer Thomas Baekdal took the "EPIC 2015" idea a bit further, tracking media trends from 1800 to present, then offering some predictions up to the year 2020 based on the rapid changes taking place since 2004. Baekdal (2009) noted that

The new internet is completely dominating our world. The newspapers are dead in the water, and people are watching less TV than ever. The new king of information is everyone, using social networking tools to connect and communicate. Even the traditional website is dying from the relentless force of the constant stream of rich information from the social networks.

While Baekdal is not alone in his claims of a society of information overload, he does make the interesting observation that Web users in 2009 are in a position not just to consume information, but to "be the information." An apt term for this phenomenon was coined in the 1995 book "Being Digital" by MIT professor Nicholas Negroponte, who predicted the rise of "The Daily Me," as digital communication began to allow the intense tracking of personal interests in lieu of mainstream news. In an opinion piece for *The New York Times* that explores the impact of "The Daily Me," Nicholas D. Kristof (2009) noted that "when we go online, each of us is our own editor, our own gatekeeper. We select the kind of news and opinions that we care most about." Perhaps most reflective of the concerns of contemporary journalists, Kristof opined, "if that's the trend, God save us from ourselves."

A key — if not belated — trend during the fourth wave of online journalism has been increased recognition that what makes good journalism is what makes good online journalism — and that good journalism costs money and has a societal value. Many bloggers have admitted that if frequent news reports from traditional news sources were not available, they wouldn't have as much to talk about in their blog entries. News search engines and aggregators also would have far fewer headlines to market to Web consumers. Other concerns particular to the fourth wave, include an increase in the digital divide, fragmentation of all media markets, and changing definitions of "local" and "community."

The changing role of journalists in this mix is the real question at hand. How do journalists do it all with so much less? This quandary is exacerbated by collapsing corporate newspapers and a disastrous world economy. The following section explores the experiences of a journalist who decided to challenge notions of what journalism is and see how a newspaper might work better for a community in the Web 2.0 world.

Re-thinking reader involvement

In April 2006, the editor and publisher of *The Western News*, a twice-weekly newspaper in Libby, Mont., was diagnosed with lung cancer. Reporter Brent Shrum knew he needed to support his ailing editor and keep the newspaper strong, a transition that was all but seamless for the newspaper's readers. Four months after his diagnosis, Shrum's boss died and Shrum was named editor, with the newspaper's advertising manager promoted to publisher. Shrum recognized that the shift could mean a greater focus on the business side and less understanding

of editorial issues. Still, Shrum had worked with the new publisher for years and thought they'd make a pretty good team. A variety of significant changes and complicated disputes with the publisher and the newspaper's corporate owner followed, and Shrum discovered one day that his job was being advertised on JournalismJobs.com. He left the newspaper the next day — frustrated with corporate ownership and on a mission to reinvent community journalism. To this point, this story reflects the normal ebb and flow of employment in the newspaper business. It's what Shrum did next that makes things a bit more interesting.

After 12 years working as a reporter and editor for *The Western News*, Shrum realized he had developed a strong attachment to Libby and had little interest in leaving the community. He also said he was just plain tired: "Honestly, at that point I just wanted to take a week's vacation and just not do much of anything for a few days and get some rest" (Shrum, 2007). Within 24 hours, however, he approached a friend, Lee Bothman, who had fairly recently left a long stint as ad manager at *The Western News* for ownership of the local print shop. Shrum said the two had discussed starting their own newspaper before:

The first time he and I had talked was not too long after Hagadone bought the paper. At some point where there were issues going on and we had just talked "What if we were to do our own paper? How would we do it? How could we do it?" Just some talk. Never got to the point where we thought it was feasible enough to do it. (Shrum, 2007)

One of the significant obstacles to the pair starting a new venture was the popular editor/publisher of the newspaper, who would be a force to be reckoned with in the community. After his death and Shrum's unpleasant experience as editor for the Hagadone-owned newspaper, Shrum found his loyalty to *The Western News* was strikingly diminished. Shrum approached Bothman and asked him to "start putting some numbers on paper and seriously looking at this thing." The pair met frequently — just about every day — and the newspaper plan began to take shape.

Shrum and Bothman launched the *Kootenai Valley Record* on May 7, 2007. It is important to note that Libby is a small community that already had two weekly newspapers. This required the *Kootenai Valley Record* immediately to differentiate itself from the corporately owned *Western News* and the locally owned *Montanian*. The result is somewhat of a hybrid between the two. *The Western News* takes the traditional journalistic approach of bylining staff-generated stories and running edited blurbs from reader-submitted copy. *The Montanian* runs straight news releases — whatever people send or bring in — even on the front page. Shrum noted,

It's like the stuff we always had on the inside of *The Western News* is on the front page of *The Montanian*. We always knew in the back of our minds people pick it up for that because they get to read that whole story of the quilt guild that we condensed down to two paragraphs and buried inside the paper somewhere. Well it's on the front page of *The Montanian* and we can kind of scoff at it, but there's a market for it. People are picking it up and they're reading it. (Shrum, 2007)

Shrum chose to focus not only on traditional journalistic values and credibility, but also on the Web 2.0 imperative of reader participation. And he opted to do it in print, without a Web site, which marked either great stupidity or pretty revolutionary thinking for the 21st century. Shrum noted that every newspaper he'd worked for had stubbornly clung to the mandates of journalistic writing and the AP Stylebook. When people brought stories in, the contribution was assessed for news value, mined for information and processed for consistency. The result was a pleasingly homogenous mix — a newspaper "voice" that read the same throughout. The unintended consequence was the alienation of readers, who often were told that their club happenings or bowling scores weren't news. Shrum said the burgeoning success of social media and blogs told him that readers might want more.

I think [*The Western News*] was always seen as maybe a little too rigid. Maybe we were taking ourselves a little too seriously sometimes. What

I'm getting at is, for the story about the quilt guild that's sent in by the secretary of the quilt guild. People bring that stuff to *The Western News* and we totally rewrite it — gut it. What if we keep that stuff more or less intact? Let's face it, AP's not going to pick this story up. We can be a little looser in our standards. Sure, I would have written it differently, but I'll keep the structure. It's still going to be edited for punctuation and grammar and basic style, but we can preserve the hominess of it and the small town quality. (Shrum, 2007)

Shrum's idea for the *Kootenai Valley Record* was to reserve section fronts for traditional news coverage and to allow community members to submit stories that would be run with their bylines. His plan was to minimally edit the community contributions and to let the styles and voices of the writers shine through:

What if we had this paper that had this really good front page? Usually this sort of community newspaper you see these homey, folksy little weekly newspapers, but there's no separation between what's on the front page and what's inside and that homey quality runs throughout. That quilting story is on the front page or whatever and it's all sort of slapped together. What if we did a really professional front page and a really nice layout? I've done that for years and I know what my strengths are. But then, we have the inside, as much as possible to be a kind of community bulletin board. We give bylines to people who submit things. (Shrum, 2007)

Just more than two years later, Shrum's experiment has been a decided success. He said that the majority of what is published in the newspaper originates with members of the community in some form, adding "we generally have very little worry about filling the inside of the paper, with all the things people bring to us" (Shrum, 2009). He has found the benefits of this arrangement to be two-fold: 1.) It creates less work for the newspaper's small staff; and, 2.) Involvement with and commitment to both the community and the newspaper is enhanced. As Shrum noted, "If you don't totally revamp their stuff — cut down the story they spent three hours writing to two paragraphs that retains nothing of their voice — they'll bring you another story and their friends will. It fills a hole, it makes them happy." Shrum said contributors seem to "get" that they can have bylines and that their news will be run more or less as they wrote it.

One of my favorites is a "soccer mom" who goes to all the youth club soccer games and writes stories and takes photos for us. One of our county health department nurses also writes columns from time to time on timely issues like the flu season or bee stings. The fact that they take advantage of the forum we give them on such a regular basis seems to confirm to me [that the *KVR*'s dedication to providing community news matters]. I have had several people who bring items to us from time to time thank me very sincerely for providing a service to the community, which is very rewarding.

Items that appear on the newspaper's inside pages with no byline generally are short items that Shrum has put together from notes or fliers — "something that doesn't come to us in the form of a story, but requires 'assembly'" — news releases from agencies like the U.S. Forest Service, or news items that come in with no name attached to them. Shrum said he feels more free with his editing of these, adding "if it comes to me in the form of a story, that someone has obviously put some work into, I try to keep it as intact as I can and give the author a byline" (Shrum, 2009).

The *KVR* has no Web site and Shrum has no plans to launch one in the immediate future. Instead, the newspaper contributes a couple of stories each week to an independent site that runs news that already has appeared in the *KVR*'s print edition and promotes happenings in the community. Shrum noted that this "gives us some web exposure for very little effort on our end" (Shrum, 2009). While it seems noble for Shrum to spurn a Web site, it's largely a practical consideration:

One of the issues with a Web site is simply time; the other is the eternal issue of how does a newspaper run a Web site and not lose money on

it? Give too much away, folks won't buy the paper. Try charging for it, they won't use the Web site. It's really a conundrum for a small paper like ours and I don't have the answer.

Other approaches to reader participation

It's not uncommon for newspapers to solicit news from community members. In fact, it's pretty much standard practice for community newspapers to encourage readers to submit everything from engagement notices to club news to pet photos. Many newspapers offer some sort of "writing a news release" brochure and some editors hold mini-seminars on how clubs can write their news for submission. In general, however, the goal of the news organization is to get something that more closely resembles standardized news writing. Editors want the public to realize that *their* news isn't necessarily *news*, and that there are news values to be met and writing rules to be followed. In fact, reader submissions are often segregated into separate sections of a publication or Web site, as well as being labeled in ways that make it clear that they are not reporter generated. Such labels serve to "place a barrier between the problematic story and other stories" (Tuchman, 1978, p. 98). One method of labeling is to provide one standard byline for reporters and another for community contributions. For example,

By Brant Sherman <i>Times</i> Staff Writer	versus	By Lisa Andrews Special for the <i>Times</i>
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Another method would be to omit credit for non-reporter-generated submissions entirely. Such barriers mark the stories as "other" — something that may not achieve the high standards of traditional journalism. For example, in May of 2009 the Chico, Calif., *Enterprise-Record* began asking readers to submit photos of and short write-ups about community happenings to appear on the "Community Snapshots" page of the newspaper each Monday. As a news article explaining the request noted,

With only three staff photographers, many news-worthy activities in our communities go uncovered. Help us see those events and activities get the coverage they deserve by submitting your photo for inclusion in our new weekly feature. It's like a scrapbook with photos of community-oriented events...Just make sure there are people in the photo. ("*E-R* seeks photographs," 6 May 2009)

The page generally features group shots and grip-and-grins, all presented with long captions. In fact, a lengthy photo caption under a black-and-white picture of 18 young women is almost as large as the photo, which is a magnifying-glass-to-see-their-faces 5 inches wide by 3.25 inches high ("Community Snapshots," 8 June 2009). While it's clear from the accompanying solicitation for submissions that the photos are reader generated, there's something notable missing that — if we draw from Brent Shrum's experience — might engender not just reader participation, but reader loyalty: Bylines and photo credits. Larger photos and a little color couldn't hurt, either.

Most community newspapers already are doing something akin to what Shrum does at the *KVR*. The difference is that the *KVR* has been thoughtfully engineered to be a community-anchored, community-generated, community-generating newspaper. Community news is neither segregated to a particular part of the publication, nor strategically labeled as something other than journalist created. And Shrum is seeing the results:

I really do feel people have a stronger connection to our paper as representative of their community because of this. I've had people thank me for running their story/photo more or less intact where the "other" paper either didn't run it at all or severely edited it. I think our readers in general appreciate this, but moreover, I believe that each and every one of those people who submit something to us at some time, and either get a

byline or see that we value their submission and run it prominently, takes some ownership and will feel some loyalty to us as a result. (Shrum, 2009)

Discussion and conclusion

Journalists once were part of the "defense system" that protected the public from information overload, along with social institutions such as the legal system, healthcare, religion, schools, and the family (Postman, 1992). Each of these institutions has been charged with enforcing particular standards that relate to the meaning and filtration of information. But journalism, along with each of those other social institutions to varying degrees, is broken — but perhaps not beyond repair. In order to retain dedication to history and democracy — two of the core missions of journalism — it may be necessary to loosen the hold on standards and embrace personalization, participation, and partnership. Perhaps journalists need to allow individual voices into the mainstream news mix, invite genuine participation in the presentation of community news, and allow community residents to partner with news leaders in community building. The role of a journalist today must be seen as more of a guide and less of a slave to a "broken" institution. In order to engage readers we need to engender shared ownership of the news process. After all, a significant social role of a newspaper is its communicative ability to shape the present and draw attention to the past. Unlike libraries and museums, which preserve and showcase the past, newspapers bear an active role in the shared creation of a historical record and culture for a particular community, effectively serving as its *locus memoriae* — the keeper of place. Preservation of a community's legacy requires that its history and culture be both accessible and given continued relevance; they must be communicated to its residents. As Lowenthal (1985) noted,

Unless history displays conviction, interest, and involvement, it will not be understood or attended to. This is why subjective interpretation, while limiting knowledge, is also essential to its communication...History is persuasive because it is organized by and filtered through individual minds, not in spite of that fact; subjective interpretation gives it life and meaning. (p. 218)

Lowenthal's claim nicely illustrates the traditional mission of community newspapers, which was to interpret, document, and convey the day to day happenings in the life of a community. But Lowenthal also uses a word anathema to traditional journalism: "Subjective." While many a journalist may curse the rise of blogging, social networking, and tweeting, there are those who recognize that blind adherence to professional journalism has outlived its usefulness. James Carey (1997), for example, pointed to the lack of participation afforded news consumers:

It is a journalism of fact without regard to understanding through which the public is immobilized and demobilized and merely ratifies the judgments of experts delivered from on high. It is, above all, a journalism that justifies itself in the public's name but in which the public plays no role, except as an audience. (p. 247)

And this doesn't fly in the Web 2.0 world. Like a modern day Pandora's Box, the personalization, participation, and partnership afforded by the Web have been unleashed on a public that does not desire their re-containment. For those who live — and love — community journalism, Brent Shrum's experiment offers a glimpse of the hope that remains inside.

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Connecting with readers: How newspapers in Kansas are using Web 2.0

By Les Anderson and Amy DeVault

Community newspapers embracing social networking

Years ago, when the late Sam Shade was publisher of the *Sedan Times-Star* in southeast Kansas, he required members of his staff to take a 15-minute coffee break each morning and afternoon.

He made them leave the office, walk down the street and interact with folks. Staff members always returned with story ideas after visiting with residents and business owners. They also came back with ad copy and orders for job printing.

Rudy Taylor, co-publisher with his wife Kathy of the Taylor Newspapers of Southeast Kansas, was in business with Shade back then. Today, Taylor says his challenge to his staff is similar to what Shade had his staffers do each weekday. Now, however, Taylor and his staff use social networking.

“We use social networking mostly as a way to stay connected with our readers,” Taylor says. “We encourage our staff members to get personal accounts on Twitter, Facebook, Plurk and other forums because we know those interactions will boost their awareness of community issues, events, personalities and flash-points in today’s society.”

Taylor says he feels exactly the same way about telling staffers to get involved with social media as Shade did years ago with the required, twice-daily coffee breaks. He knows the importance of community building and engaging with members of that community. And that doesn’t include just readers of his weekly newspapers.

“The more connected we stay, the more aware we will be of what’s making our community, county, state and nation function,” Taylor says. “In addition, we use Facebook to tease late-breaking news, podcasts and videos that we place on our Web site. That has led to many new readers of our pulp product. A new subscriber told me recently that she didn’t even know the newspaper existed until she saw those teasers on Facebook. That led her to our Web site, and eventually to our printed newspaper.”

Taylor also keeps a company account for Facebook, and has plans to beef it up. So far, he says, it’s mostly gathering dust — and a few friends. But at least there’s a Taylor Newspapers account, he adds.

The Taylor family, which publishes three newspapers, plans to help each community in their readership area develop a community forum, similar to a successful one that’s hosted by a private party in Elk County.

“Many of our news items from Elk County emanate from this forum, and again, we use it as a way to tease back to our own Web site and newspaper,” he says. “Fact is, as we make updates on our own Web site, the forum administrator places a crawler on the screen touting that news item and our taylornews.org Web site.”

Taylor says he knows that many in the newspaper business think he and his wife, both 63, son Andy and daughter Jenny Taylor Diveley are doing something incredibly creative with the Internet and with social networking. Kathy Taylor grew up the daughter of a letterpress editor, so Rudy Taylor says her transition to technology has “come the whole nine yards.” He adds that their son and daughter keep them in the “modern mode of thinking.”

“But truly, we are just being good citizens of social media and the communi-

ties we serve, always looking for reliable information to report and opportunities to sell our newspaper products,” he says. “Newspaper owners and staff members need to be wherever there is activity, information and life.”

Taylor likens his work in southeast Kansas to the early summer happenings in Iran after the contested presidential election, when he says that same thinking proved successful after news reporters were banned from filing stories and cameras were banned from the streets.

“Thanks to social networking and cell phone cameras, there remains a semblance of reliable information, even though a corrupt government is playing havoc with human rights and democracy,” he explains. “While I’m not daring to compare our situation with the one found in Iran, there lingers a thought in my mind that social networking may prove to be a solid link to many Americans who seldom pick up a newspaper, watch legitimate news programs on television or even check news Web sites that are offered by newspapers and broadcast entities.”

Rethinking ways to reach readers

When Dan Thalmann, publisher of the *Washington County News* in north-central Kansas, heard that 12 local high school seniors were going to attend President Barack Obama’s inauguration last January, he sprang into action. He worked with them to set up Twitter accounts to feed into his blog. Thalmann also arranged to have their cell phone photos sent to a Flickr feed on the blog. And he loaned them a couple of Flip mini video camcorders to send video back home.

His idea was to keep his community up to date on the students’ minute-by-minute experiences in D.C. Not only did Thalmann think that this would serve as a form of personal journal/record for the students and their trip, it also would enable folks back home to follow their experiences as they happened. And he used all of the information they gathered as a base for a feature story he wrote about the trip for the newspaper.

“I figured these kids can text message in their sleep anyway,” says the 36-year-old Thalmann. “This just made it a bit more useful.”

Thalmann started his blog, Backroads Newsroom, in January 2008. But he didn’t get serious about it until late that summer. Since then, his blog has been referenced during meetings of the city council, school board and county commission. His blog posts also have been a constant topic of discussion around Washington County, population 6,200, where he publishes his weekly newspaper.

Thalmann promotes his Backroads Newsroom as “online news, commentary and discussion for Washington County and beyond.” Posts in late June ranged the death of Michael Jackson and comparing Fourth of July fireworks displays in nearby small towns to a greased pig contest and the overnight break-in at a café and convenience store that may have been connected to the escape of two prisoners from a nearby county’s jail. He allows readers to post comments anonymously.

“I’ve often said that I feel like I am a babysitter of a lot of unruly children, because four out of five times, people tend to go negative,” Thalmann says. “I think, however, this blog-style discussion will allow newspapers to stay relevant.”

Thalmann says he has had people call and yell at him for comments others make on the blog. He says 95 percent of those posting comments choose to remain anonymous, but he’s deleted fewer than a dozen posts because they were what he

called “pure personal attacks against non-elected individuals.”

“I’ve found, however, that over time, a few consistent commenters have started helping me police the blog,” he says. “These days, when someone takes me to task, it is pretty common for a few commenters to come to my defense, which is cool since that so rarely happens in the newspaper.”

Thalmann wonders whether he as the blog administrator should participate on the blog.

“I participate openly and vehemently at times, but I’m curious to see how others approach this,” he says. “I feel a blog is a totally different monster than a Web site, and I’m being very specific when I say ‘monster’ because it has to be fed constantly. There are times when I’ve regretted the decision to start this thing, but now that I’ve had more than 340,000 hits since I started, I figure it is here to stay.”

Thalmann has experimented with his blog. Last winter, he did a little weather report while driving home in the snow and posted it onto his blog via YouTube.

“I suck as a weatherman, but people enjoyed watching it,” he says. “I truly believe the newspaper is changing as we know it. Soon we’ll all be journalists/press/media, but not necessarily broadcasters or newspaper publishers, etc.”

Thalmann recently started a Facebook page and had 317 fans as of July 1. Mostly, he says, his assistant editor, who operates the page, posts photo galleries so people can access color photos for their own use. He has noticed a lot of young people formerly from the Washington County area becoming fans of the Facebook page.

He also uses Twitter, which he believes is still evolving. He says he got some traction from a tweet about the local nursing home having troubles. Out of nowhere, an employee there who had been following him told him about all sorts of issues. Later, Thalmann received a call from the nursing home manager because he had blogged about it, too, and the manager didn’t like that. He added that he planned to follow up with a story on the nursing home for both his blog and his newspaper.

Among Thalmann’s plans are an e-edition that he plans to start in summer 2009.

“The intention for this product is to better serve the faraway subscribers who don’t get the paper on a timely basis, if they get it at all,” he says. “We’ll use ArcaSearch, I believe, which also allows key-word searching of the digital archive, which should be nice.”

At some point, Thalmann adds, he’ll get a Web site. But he wants something different than the traditional newspaper Web site, so that is why he says he is dragging his feet.

Newspapers, he says, are purveyors of information. He believes journalists will always be around, but need to rethink ways in which they can reach readers.

“I believe we need to question the way in which we distribute our product,” Thalmann says. “I think the lines between print, radio and TV will be blurred with the help of the Internet. I believe a standard format for modern news distribution will be developed in the next decade. Hopefully, we can evolve and stay alive while the changes occur. I, for one, would like to be active in the development of this new format, rather than trying to keep up after the change has already occurred. I think it will be easier to assure my survival that way. We’ll see....”

Reaching people that newspapers don’t

On March 8, 2009, a helicopter crashed in a field outside Moundridge, Kan. Todd Vogts of *The Ledger* was typical of most small-town newspaper editors. He was on scene before the ambulance arrived.

Vogts utilized Twitter to post updates about what was going on, and then he used the photo-sharing site Flickr to post photos that were incorporated into his blog post about the accident. He beat the media personnel who arrived by utilizing these social media tools, including Facebook, because his “status” was updated with a tweet every time he posted to Twitter.

The real value in the social media was shown, however, Vogts says, when people began commenting on the blog post.

The pilot of the helicopter — 66-year-old Roger Hershner, who died in the crash — was from Sequim, Wash., and people from his home state found the post as they were looking for information about their friend and family member. Vogts says 34 people commented on his blog post. They shared stories about the pilot and the amazing life he led. This translated into additional coverage of the crash, and such insight into the pilot’s life made him more human instead of being just another victim of a tragic accident, Vogts says.

A Washington newspaper serving the pilot’s hometown contacted Vogts and used his story and photos in its publication and provided him with stories he used in *The Ledger*. Not only did the blog become a place where people could share stories about the pilot, but it also translated into a partnership with a newspaper halfway across the country, he says.

“Could his have been accomplished without social media tools?” Vogts asks. “Maybe, but it probably wouldn’t have been so successful. People come to the blog and shared their memories because they felt comfortable with the format the information was presented in.”

Vogts says large media companies — *The New York Times*, CNNs and *Washington Posts* of the world — are different than the local, weekly newspapers that reports on wheat crops and Friday night’s pinochle game at the senior center.

“The big media companies can just jump into the social media world and wait for followers and friends to come because their digital presence is already large enough that people are actively seeking new ways to connect with the media outlets,” he says. “For a small-town news organization, that is far from the case.”

Oftentimes, Vogts explains, the weekly newspaper is an area largely unaffected by the Internet. Subscribers are older and want to get their news from a newsprint paper that leaves ink on their hands. In some areas, such as Moundridge, he adds, religious sects such as the Holderman Mennonites don’t use televisions or computers, so having an online news presence is of little help to the news organization, especially when looking at the bottom line from a publisher’s standpoint. However, Vogts says, younger generations and an ever-increasing number of older generations are active on social networking sites.

“They don’t automatically consider where they get their news,” he says. “They just spend time on the social network and glean information from what their digital friends are talking about and sharing via links.”

Vogts says Twitter is valuable because it can give a small paper the ability to instantly update readers about what is taking place, especially in a breaking-news situation, such as the helicopter crash.

“Anyone with a cell phone can use it,” Vogts says. “Each Twitter account can have one cell phone number associated with it, and an update can be posted by simply texting the update to the service. If the reporter in the field has a smart phone, such as a Blackberry or iPhone, he or she can even install applications that allows them to update the Twitter feed without using a text message, which is good if the person only has a limited number of text messages they can send each month.”

As a way to share all such one, single-branded umbrella, though, Vogts says, smaller newspapers can utilize blogging, which provides two important functions — conversation and immediacy.

“No matter how the blog is being used, readers can post comments at the end of the post, and then reporters or columnists can join that conversation in the comments,” Vogts says. “Much like Twitter and Facebook, it allows people to easily communicate with the news organization and get to know the reporters so any wall between the readers and the writers is nearly eliminated.”

He says people are quickly becoming used to reading blogs, even in smaller communities, and they are less fearful about posting comments to voice opinions. Also, he adds, it is fast. It takes only a few minutes to fill in the comment field of a blog post compared to the time it takes to read a print piece, develop an opinion, write a letter to the editor, send it in and see it in print, he says.

“The fast ability for readers to join the conversation also means reporters can post quickly and beat other media trying to swoop into town covering big news events,” Vogts says. “Also, it allows local news events of varying degrees of importance to the outside world to be reported on quickly. If someone wants to know how Friday night’s football game turned out, and they don’t want to wait until next week’s paper, they can look at the paper’s blog, or sports blog if specialization is incorporated, to find out that night, especially if it was an away game that fan couldn’t attend.”

Of course, he says, to buy into any of this, small-town publishers will need to understand that putting information online will not necessarily detract from paying subscribers.

Generally speaking, Vogts says, online users and print subscribers are two different types of people in small communities. Social media tools are a way to reach people in small communities not being reached by the print product, he says.

“One of the most compelling reasons to utilize social media, though, is its price — free,” he adds. “In time when money is tight everywhere, the value of using free services to increase readership and the relationship with the community can’t be ignored.”

What’s working at larger newspapers?

Reporters at *The Wichita Eagle* have been utilizing Twitter since early 2008. From live tweeting news events to finding story ideas and sources, social networking has dramatically changed the way some reporters there are connecting with sources and readers. And their tactics are ones smaller papers can emulate.

Using Twitter to expand court coverage

Judge Jeff Goering is breaking for lunch. Court is scheduled to resume at 1:45 p.m.

13 minutes ago from txt

Jackson: When Lloyd hugged her after saying she was lost, he said, “I’m sorry. I just wanted to spend some time with her.”

14 minutes ago from txt

Still on cross examination: Jackson was a block away from Lloyd’s house when she received the voice mail saying her daughter was missing.

18 minutes ago from txt

Jackson: Chavira was being potty trained at the time she was dropped off at Lloyd’s. But she didn’t tell him that.

20 minutes ago from txt

Jackson: Lloyd first learned about the girl, and that he could be the father, until she was 3 months old. She told him about it at Sonic.

24 minutes ago from txt

On cross-examination, Jackson said she would leave Chavira with both men who were the possible fathers.

26 minutes ago from txt

In the house, Jackson said she saw the child’s pink diaper bag, her clothes and shoes on the floor of the living room.

29 minutes ago from txt

In less than a year, covering trials via Twitter has gone from an experiment to one of *Wichita Eagle* reporter Ron Sylvester’s regular reporting tools. With each new trial, Sylvester says he’s gained about 100 followers — both locally and even from other countries — and that doesn’t count the people who watch it from *The Wichita Eagle*’s news Web site or on his work blog, “What the Judge Ate for Breakfast: News from Inside Wichita’s Courts.”

The reaction has been stunning at times, Sylvester says. Other news sites, notably the *Orange County Register*, also have picked up on this kind of coverage for the courts.

But February 2009 brought a giant step forward when a federal judge in Wichita gave Sylvester the go-ahead to use Twitter there.

“I don’t know if it’s a first, as some of the legal bloggers think,” he says, “but it is a big step in expanding live coverage of the courts.”

Federal courts don’t allow cameras or video or audio recorders. The federal courthouse in Wichita doesn’t allow cell phones, Sylvester says, so he had to get the judge’s permission to bring his Smartphone and Bluetooth keyboard into the courtroom.

The trial in February surrounded federal charges of racketeering aimed at accused members of the Crips street gang. Federal prosecutors around the country have used racketeering laws for years to try and curb the problem of street gangs, he says.

“But to see these trials, you had to go to the courthouse,” Sylvester says. “Twitter will allow people to follow the trial in real time and learn more about federal courts and how they work.”

Lynne Devenny, a state bar certified paralegal at Elliot Pishko Morgan P.A. in Winston-Salem, N.C., wrote in her blog “Practical Paralegalism” that she wanted to be “Ron Sylvester, Courtroom Twitterer.” Actually, Devenny wrote in her blog in late February that “Mr. Sylvester is not a ‘courtroom Twitterer,’ although he is a multimedia reporter for *The Wichita Eagle* and *kansas.com* who covers trials and tweets continuously from the courtroom. Not only is he very good at providing live commentary in Twitter’s 140-character micro-blogging format, but he’s got my dream job.”

Devenny went on to say that Sylvester has ruined her for other courtroom journalists because now she wants all of them to Twitter from public hearings. She says he has changed the face of courtroom print reporting, especially for impatient trial enthusiasts who no longer want to wait for the morning paper or the evening news.

Sylvester started tweeting from the courtroom in early 2008, initially as a media experiment.

“By the end of the trial,” Sylvester says, “we were getting a lot of reaction from readers. People said they were sitting at work, refreshing the page over and over again to keep up with the trial.”

“Not that any of us would admit to doing the same thing,” Devenny blogged, “but think of all the time he saves us from having to watch hours of Court TV.”

She ended her post by asking, “Anyone need a courtroom tweeter in North Carolina? I’ve got some vacation time...”

Sylvester started providing live updates of a capital murder trial in the killing of a small-town Kansas sheriff in the fall of 2008. It was a way of live blogging from the courtroom. He would e-mail updates from his Smartphone and Bluetooth keyboard and send them back to the online team in the newsroom, where time stamps would be added to his posts.

“Readers enjoyed it, but the workflow lagged at times,” Sylvester wrote in his blog ‘technolog-j.’ “The copy desk during the day is sparse, usually one person posting all the updates throughout the day. Metro editors were in meetings all day. I was filing faster than the posts were appearing. That was a snag we were going to have to work out.”

That spring, as another big trial loomed, copy desk staffers told Sylvester and editors they couldn’t handle another round of live blogging because people were going on vacation and they were short-staffed.

The trial was for a man accused of killing a 14-year-old girl who was nine months pregnant during a murder-for-hire. When jury selection began, Sylvester decided to start posting updates on Twitter. He says jury selection is usually the most boring part of any trial.

“Most times, we don’t even cover it,” Sylvester wrote. “But capital murder tri-

als are different. The juries not only decide whether a defendant is guilty, if they return a conviction on capital murder, the jury also decides whether or not the defendant will receive the death penalty. With life and death at stake, I like to know who is sitting on the jury.”

Sylvester says jury selection also seemed to be ideal to conduct experiments.

“Who would notice? So I began tweeting portions of the part of the trial no one seems to care about. Most were tidbits that probably wouldn’t make it in any stories I wrote for the print edition.”

Some of Sylvester’s Twitter highlights:

Prosecutor told the judge one prospective juror “appears to be stoned.”

“I don’t know if this is a legal reason,” said prosecutor Kevin O’Connor, “but the state’s position is he should be dismissed because he’s a punk.”

Prosecutor: “Do you have any concerns about the criminal justice system?” Juror: “Some people in the system are criminals themselves.”

Lawyer: “Do you understand some of the things you’ve heard about the case may not be accurate?” Juror: “Sure, especially from the media.”

Sylvester says he didn’t expect the reaction his tweets received.

“I received an e-mail from a Wichita police officer following the trial on Twitter, saying ‘Keep it up,’” he says. “A woman tweeted her friends, ‘Court TV is gone, but Twitter has @rsylvester.’”

Sylvester says the feedback is important to him because they are local people, looking for local news. “They’re not readers or viewers or audience anymore — in this world of social networking, they’re my friends,” he wrote in his blog. “I like that. I keep getting notices that more people are following me each day.”

At a limit of 140 characters, Sylvester says, Twitter forces him to write tight.

“It’s hard work,” he says. “I leave court feeling exhausted.”

Finding sources & story ideas

Wichita Eagle reporter Suzanne Tobias writes a weekly column about families and parenting. She joined Twitter in April 2008 and says it has turned into an indispensable resource — especially for getting story ideas and sources for stories she’s already working on.

One way she uses the micro-blogging site is to periodically do a search for Wichita to see what people are talking about, which frequently leads to story ideas. With more than 1,100 followers now, Tobias says she feels like she has a huge focus group literally at her fingertips. Finding sources for stories is sometimes as easy as 140 characters.

“I was writing about more people participating in medical research,” she says. “I put out a call on Twitter, and in less than 10 minutes, I was talking to a Wichita man I ended up quoting in the story.”

Sometimes followers simply send Tobias story tips. A Twitter tip in February 2009 turned into a story about a Wichita East High School student who caught a content error on a state writing assessment. That story wound up being linked to from Yahoo and Fark and broke page view records for Kansas.com.

Twitter frequently helps drive traffic on the *Eagle*’s Web site.

“I regularly post a link to my column, as well as to other stories on Kansas.com,” Tobias says.

Today’s column, on unruly kids in restaurants.

Let the angry calls and e-mails begin. <http://bit.ly/EFBeZ>

9:51 AM Jun 18th from TweetDeck

She only started posting links to her weekly columns because people asked her to — especially people who do not live in Wichita or do not regularly visit Kansas.com.

“I follow a lot of mommy bloggers all over the world,” Tobias says. “They’re

more likely to read my column by following a link from Twitter than by going to Kansas.com directly.”

The *Eagle*’s Kansas.com does have an official Twitter account (@kansasdotcom). The 1,445 followers of that account get mostly autofeeds — morning headlines and breaking news. But it’s the paper’s real people on Twitter who make connections, find stories and interest readers.

“I think the most important thing about using Twitter, Facebook or any other type of social media is to be a person first, not a reporter,” Tobias says. “You garner more followers — and eventually tips and sources — by really listening, replying, direct-messaging and participating in conversations, not just being a robot Twitter account posting links. No one likes that.”

At 6,393 tweets and counting, Tobias calls herself a “total Twitter evangelist” in the newsroom, and she encourages other reporters to embrace it, too. The first step, she says, is simple. Just get signed up. Then do a search by geographic location, and start following everyone in your area.

“After that, it almost feeds on itself,” she says. “The only way to tap into that audience is to follow as many people as you can and start participating in the conversation.”

A few more examples of tweets from @suzannetobias:

Looking for Wichita-area teens/parents to comment on this new Nielsen report. <http://bit.ly/b0zE9> (Email stobias@wichtaeagle.com.)

11:11 AM Jun 26th from TweetDeck

Wichita-area tweeps: Have you or someone you know included a pet in a wedding ceremony?

E-mail dmccartney@wichtaeagle.com.

1:00 PM Jun 23rd from TweetDeck

Wichita-area tweeps: Do you have chickens in your backyard? E-mail btanner@wichtaeagle.com (story on urban chicken farming).

2:54 PM May 18th from web

Wichita parents: Are you ditching kid activities (pricey sports leagues, lessons, etc.) in these economic times? stobias@wichtaeagle.com

3:02 PM May 12th from web

So anyway, here’s today’s column. It might, just might, be more enjoyable than a root canal... <http://bit.ly/s0me>

12:13 PM Apr 30th from web — —

Reader called to say my column was “the highlight of my day so far.” And now she’s off to get a root canal. (I wish I were kidding.)

12:11 PM Apr 30th from web

While some reporters worry that they cannot fit any more tasks into their already busy days, *Eagle* entertainment writer and columnist Denise Neil says Twitter has actually made her job easier because it’s so immediate and interactive.

“It’s like being able to eavesdrop on what people are talking about,” she says.

For a person whose job it is to know who serves what on which days and what local bands are performing where, Twitter is the ultimate resource.

“For me, it’s been great for restaurant reporting,” Neil says. “So many local coffee shops and restaurants — 30 to 40, I’d say — are on Twitter. They post what’s going on, what their specials are and other quirky items about their businesses.”

She says she can usually fill up her weekly dining columns just from Twitter tips. While it’s a great resource, she says they always call to confirm any item or tip they get from Twitter.

Neil also says she feels like she’s more connected to many of her readers and sources now. “I have conversations with readers who never would have felt com-

fortable calling me on the phone, or even sending me an e-mail.”

When Tobias and Neil started using Twitter, they were hooked. But they also became concerned that *The Eagle*, like many businesses, might not see the value of having employees using Twitter and Facebook at work. So they started an electronic file of all the tips, story ideas and sources that came straight from Twitter. They’ve never needed that file, though.

“The *Eagle* has actually encouraged us to use Twitter because we find out about stuff that we just wouldn’t otherwise,” Neil says.

Do Twitter tactics work?

Eagle reporters are using Twitter to report, to get story ideas and sources, to post links to stories and to engage readers in conversation. But is it driving Web traffic or gaining newspaper readers?

Nick Jungman, *The Eagle*’s senior editor for interactive, says Twitter is now consistently one of the top referrers to kansas.com.

“It’s not at a Google or Yahoo level, but probably in the very next tier,” he says.

Jungman also thinks it’s important in building newspaper/reader relationships. “We were early to Twitter, and we gained a huge amount of credibility with local early adopters,” he says. “I’ll call them ‘opinion leaders.’ These are young, tech-savvy professionals who have influence with their peers. They think what we do with Twitter is cool, and I think that’s our reputation now.”

He admits it’s still a pretty small community, but he says it’s a very influential community — and one he doesn’t think the newspaper was making much of an impact on before.

“We make it a point to follow the people who follow us, and I’ll watch the stream of our followers’ Tweets,” Jungman says. “It’s really something to see what

people ‘retweet’ and how quickly they do it. It’s instant feedback that is really valuable.”

* * *

When newspapers began publishing to the Web, the stories were static. They rarely changed until the next issue of the paper was on the press. Eventually, newspapers started allowing readers to post comments. Now, readers are not only commenting, but also conversing with reporters and with each other. They are offering news tips and providing photos and video — all through the Web.

With the read-and-write capabilities of Web 2.0, connecting with readers is faster and easier than ever. Readers can join the conversation. Readers can start the conversation.

Publishers and editors of some community newspapers — like Rudy Taylor, 63, and Dan Thalman, 36, and Todd Vogts, 23 — are embracing the community-building opportunities. They are blogging and tweeting. They have Facebook accounts, and they let their readers become citizen journalists. Newspapers not already using or experimenting with social media should borrow ideas from them. They also should look at how larger papers, like *The Wichita Eagle*, are using social media and adapt those ideas for their own newspapers and communities.

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Related sites:

- <http://www.taylornews.org/>
- <http://www.backroadsnewsroom.com/> and <http://twitter.com/BackRoadsNews>
- <http://ledgernewspaper.net/pressroom/> and <http://voiceofthevogts.wordpress.com/>
- <http://www.kansas.com/>
- <http://twitter.com/RSylvester> and <http://blogs.kansas.com/courts/>
- http://twitter.com/denise_neil
- <http://twitter.com/@suzannetobias>

Weekly newspapers in 22-county Eastern Kentucky region reporting steady circulation figures over 10-year period

By Deborah T. Givens

The seismic changes affecting the newspaper industry have made headlines in recent years and especially in 2009. Declining circulation figures coupled with general economic problems have led to the closing of some newspapers while others have reduced publishing days or moved to online-only news outlets.

Most research tracking the decline has focused on large, daily newspapers. Brian Steffens, executive director of the National Newspaper Association, commented on the bias in coverage as part of the introduction to the 2008 National Newspaper Association Survey results.

“Just about all the research and news reports on the ‘struggling’ newspaper industry have been based on what’s happening at the top 100 major metropolitan newspapers, maybe the top 250,” Steffens said. “That doesn’t tell the story of the remaining 1,200 daily newspapers or 8,000 community weekly papers in America.”

The National Newspaper Association serves daily and weekly newspapers with circulations of less than 50,000. The association’s Web site lists the primary characteristics of a community newspaper as “its commitment to serving the information needs of a particular community.”

In *Community Journalism: The Personal Approach* (2000), Jock Lauterer also defines community newspapers as having circulations up to 50,000, “which strive to provide high-quality, local-intensive coverage to their communities.” Both definitions point to information that is needed by the members of a community — and that need is not currently being met by other types of media.

As noted by Robert M. Williams Jr., publisher of *The Blackshear Times* in Georgia, in a 2009 *Chicago Tribune* article, “CNN is not coming to my town to cover the news and there aren’t a whole lot of bloggers here either. Community newspapers are still a great investment because we provide something you can’t get anywhere else.” *The Blackshear Times* has a circulation of 3,500 in a county of 17,000 about 75 miles from Jacksonville, Fla.

The definitions above, and most research on circulation trends for newspapers, even those identified as “community,” include daily newspapers with circulations up to 50,000. As the data on the 22-counties in Eastern Kentucky University’s service region documents, the newspapers, both weekly and daily, are much smaller in size. Just as circulation research has revealed different trends for large dailies as compared to community newspapers, this study looks at circulation trends for even smaller community newspapers — all with less than 10,000 circulation — in a specific geographic area.

The 22-counties that make up the service region of Eastern Kentucky University are served by 24 weekly newspapers and six daily newspapers that are members of the Kentucky Press Association. While that number may seem large, it must be noted that the largest weekly, the *Sentinel-Echo*, a three-day-a-week publication in London, had a circulation in 2008 of 8,312. Most community newspapers in the area have circulations around 4,000 to 5,000 with the smallest newspaper, *The Beattyville Enterprise*, reporting a circulation of 1,101. The six daily newspapers in the area, and their circulations for 2008, are:

Middlesboro Daily News (Bell County) 5,576

The Advocate-Messenger (Danville, Boyle County)
9,790 Daily, 11,185 Sunday

Harlan Daily Enterprise (Harlan County) 5,982

Richmond Register (Madison County) 6,595 Daily, 8,263 Sunday

Commonwealth Journal (Somerset, Pulaski County)

8,984 Daily, 10,477 Sunday

The Times Tribune (Corbin, Whitley County) 6,190

Using the largest day circulation figures, the total circulation for those six counties is 47,673. The *KPA Rate Book and Directory* reports the population totals for those counties as 261,249, which means one daily newspaper is published for every 5.48 residents.

Four of the counties served by dailies also have a weekly newspaper: *Pineville Sun* in Bell County, circulation 2,050; *Tri-City News* in Harlan County, circulation 1,783; *The Berea Citizen* in Madison County, circulation 4,484; and *The News-Journal* in Whitley County, circulation 8,265. In Bell, Harlan and Madison, the weekly newspapers are located in cities other than that of the daily. In Whitley, the weekly newspaper actually has a larger circulation, by just more than 2,000 copies, than the daily newspaper.

The daily newspapers, while including some state, national and international news, mostly provided through news services, focus their reporting on local events and conduct limited reporting in neighboring counties.

Kentucky’s two largest newspapers, *The Courier-Journal* in Louisville and the *Lexington Herald-Leader*, at one time boasted statewide coverage and wide-spread home delivery. In recent years, both have reduced staffing and distribution, basically pulling back into their home counties. *The Herald-Leader*, located nearest to Eastern’s service region, only offers full home delivery in nine of the 22 counties.

While local radio news has become nearly non-existent in recent years, television stations are still providing coverage of the area, but usually in the form of breaking news — accidents, storms and disasters. The basics of community and civic life in the rural communities — city councils, school boards and fiscal courts — are seldom on the “news at 6” unless the mayor has embezzled funds or the sheriff has been caught in a drug investigation. Community newspapers serve cities and counties with as many, although sometimes different, issues as metropolitan areas. The counties in Eastern’s service region are the sites of chemical depots, mountaintop removal mining and a well-documented and large illegal drug industry, among other problems. The residents in these counties need access to information about these issues, and, for now, community newspapers are on the frontline serving that need.

This places the responsibility for covering the news people need to know in a 16-county region on 20 weekly newspapers. Four counties, Estill, Lee, Leslie and McCreary, are served by two weekly newspapers, and the remaining 12 counties each have one community weekly newspaper. The 16 counties served by weekly newspapers cover an area of 5,446 miles and have a total population of 319,927.

To focus on the circulation trends of smaller newspapers, this study looks at the 10-year and five-year changes for weekly newspapers serving counties that do not have a daily newspaper and that were in continuous operation over the time frame. This resulted in the inclusion of 19 newspapers, published in 16 counties. One newspaper, the *McCreary County Voice*, was omitted since circulation information was not available for 1998. This study uses circulation data reported in the annual *KPA Rate Book and Directory*.

Newspaper	1998	2003	2008	5 yr. +/-%	10 yr. +/-%
<i>The Casey County News</i>	6,211	5,953	5,176	- 4.15	-16.66
<i>Manchester Enterprise (Clay)</i>	5,812	5,672	5,792	- 2.41	- .34
<i>Citizen Voice & Times (Estill)</i>	4,463	4,175	4,292	- 6.45	- 3.83
<i>The Estill County Tribune</i>	2,060	2,231	2,244	+ 8.30	+ 8.93
<i>Garrard Central Record</i>	4,596	4,329	4,314	- 5.81	- 6.14
<i>Jackson Sun</i>	4,400	4,650	3,576	+ 5.68	- 18.73
<i>Mountain Advocate (Knox)</i>	6,756	6,495	6,450	- 3.86	- 4.53
<i>Sentinel-Echo (Laurel)</i>	6,246	8,399	8,312	+34.47	+33.08
<i>The Beattyville Enterprise (Lee)</i>	720	724	1,101	+ .55	+52.92
<i>Three Forks Tradition (Lee)</i>	3,219	3,313	3,194	+ 2.92	- .78
<i>Thousandstick News (Leslie)</i>	3,425	3,400	3,350	- .73	- 2.19
<i>Leslie County News</i>	3,820	3,050	3,650	-20.16	- 4.45
<i>The Interior Journal (Lincoln)</i>	4,081	4,368	3,231	+ 7.03	- 20.83
<i>McCreary County Record</i>	4,751	4,717	4,439	- .72	- 6.57
<i>The Booneville Sentinel (Owsley)</i>	1,746	1,911	1,872	+ 9.45	+ 7.22
<i>Hazard Herald</i>	4,456	6,420	4,917	+44.08	+10.35
<i>The Clay City Times (Powell)</i>	4,150	4,125	4,167	- .60	+ .41
<i>Mount Vernon Signal (Rockcastle)</i>	5,450	5,871	5,795	+ 7.72	+ 6.33
<i>The Wayne County Outlook</i>	4,838	5,028	4,845	+ 3.93	+ .14
TOTAL	81,200	84,831	80,817		
Total % Change 1998 to 2003	+4.47	Total % Change 2003 to 2008	- 4.73	Total % Change 1998 to 2008	- .47

The key finding in reviewing the circulation figures is that the weekly newspapers serving the 16 counties are enjoying relatively stable circulation rates in comparison to national trends. Circulation for the 10-year period from 1998 to 2008 showed a decrease of just .47 percent. The newspapers had actually increased in the first five years, growing 4.47 percent, but a drop from 2003 to 2008 of 4.73 percent resulted in the slight 10-year decline.

This compares to figures drawn from the annual *Editor and Publisher International Yearbook* and reported by the National Association of Newspapers on its Web site (naa.org). The yearbook, considered a benchmark publication for the industry, tracks daily newspaper circulation across the United States. According to that data, circulation nationwide dropped 2.62 percent from 1998 to 2003, but then plunged by 16.04 percent from 2003 to 2008. This made the 10-year decrease 18.2 percent.

Percent change in newspaper circulation	1998-2003	2003-2008	1998-2008
16-county Kentucky region	+ 4.47	- 4.73	- .47
<i>Editor and Publisher U.S.</i>	- 2.62	-16.04	- 18.20

The weeklies in the 16-county region had a total circulation of 80,817 in 2008 in an area with a population of 319,927, or one newspaper for every 3.96 residents. This is better coverage than the one newspaper for every 5.48 residents in the six counties served by dailies.

Studying current economic trends in community journalism is important not just for the owners, editors and reporters. As noted by Philip Meyer in *The Vanishing Newspaper: Saving Journalism in the Information Age* (2004), "The decay of newspaper journalism creates problems not just for the business but also

for society. One problem is basic: to make democracy work, citizens need information." The weekly newspapers serving the 16 counties in this study are the primary source of that information.

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New media options for online delivery: **Attracting the under-35 reader by examining preferences**

By Sharon B. Stringer

When Hartman (1999) concluded that the No. 1 problem with the newspapers is the continued hemorrhaging of young-adult readers among newspaper readership, he had no idea what the 21st century would bring. It is no surprise that while all newspaper readership has declined, young people are increasingly lured away from broadsheets with the titillation of online videos, 140-character news bits, and a host of social media Web sites. When popular culture icon Michael Jackson died from an apparent cardiac arrest on June 25, 2009, millions of “hooked in” news watchers tried to digest the tragedy while CNN waited cautiously to confirm reports of his death. Although Wikipedia, Google, Facebook, and YouTube did not crash, users reported that the sites — most often used by young people — slowed to a crawl.

The congestion experienced on the Internet on that fateful day in June reveals information on news consumption patterns. How today’s youth access the news that’s important to them has implications for everyone in the news business trying to capture the under-35 audience.

Community ties, home ownership, and age have been identified as predictors of newspaper readership (Bogart, 1989; Finnegan & Viswanath, 1988). Typically, younger readers spend less time reading the newspaper than older readers. Nonetheless, Nesbitt and Levine (2005) concluded that young adults, under age 30, could be engaged in newspapers if the content meets their needs. The researchers concluded that the news content should be selected and presented to improve the reading experience and have relevance to their lives. In a joint project with the *Star Tribune* in Minnesota, the Readership Institute found that young readers respond favorably to techniques that engage them in a story. The techniques found engaging were as follows:

- subject matter of interest to the target audience,
- elements of stories that play to young people’s experiences,
- active headlines that speak directly to readers and play to their experiences,
- stories written to identify “why this matters to” them,
- stories with clear narrative flow, and
- complicated and/or routine stories relegated to other narrative forms.

Bogart (1989) reported that people read about one-fifth of the newspaper. Readers are typically attracted to specific content with layout design being of secondary importance. This project builds on earlier studies and addresses the readership habits of college-aged students, the content that is of most interest to them, and their preferences on how they access news that is of greatest importance to them.

The theoretical framework for this research includes utility theory as it offers some suggestions on how people respond to different news forms that maximize their interests. The theory purports that when a person is faced with a set of objects, he evaluates and ranks them before making a decision (Miller, 1972; Jeffries, 1978). Jeffries and Atkins (1996) applied this theory to news consumption, suggesting an individual’s reading pattern might be “homogeneous” as he quickly evaluates and ranks media outlets to avoid disliked formats and choose preferred formats that play to his interests.

The good news about students and news consumption

Young people do have an interest in the news and journalism. While newspaper readership among those under the age of 30 represents a small percentage of readers — just 29% — at least that number has remained constant since 1996 (Pew Research Center, 2006). Although not as often as editors and publishers prefer, young people still turn to the newspaper when looking for information. Nonetheless, to consumers who were raised on quick access to information, the Internet is important. Internet news consumers say that they are drawn to the Web for news because of its format, accessibility and ease of navigation. Accessibility also explains why television continues as the primary source for news consumers (Pew Research Center, 2008). While the Internet has drawn news consumers, it is used more as a supplement than as a primary source of news (Pew Research Center, 2006).

Another thing that has remained constant among news consumers is that local and community news continues to be the biggest draw for readers. In Pew’s 2006 survey, 77% of the respondents indicated that they spend some to a lot of their time reading articles about health and medicine, while 63% spend their time with articles on technology, supporting the idea that content is important. In his best practices essay for online sources for journalists, David Meerman Scott writes that the vast majority of Web sites fail to deliver compelling content. He says that the content may look pretty, but often the design and graphics are in the forefront, not the content (David Meerman Scott, 2005).

Anecdotal evidence about preferences

When Michael Jackson died, 18 high school students were enrolled in the Dow Jones Multicultural Journalism Workshop hosted by Penn State University with this researcher assigned as professor-in-charge. The six males and 12 females learned about Jackson’s death during their dinner break between workshop sessions. As none of them had brought televisions to campus for the two-week stay, they had to rely on other media for their news about the pop star’s death. Most found out about the news through their cell phones. However, those who appeared most informed about the details released in the following days were those who said that they were getting their news from the newspapers, made available during the workshop. All students used the Internet to gather news as it unfolded in the days after Jackson’s death. Even after spending six hours per day for previous four days in front of a computer, many took time to find out what the *Philadelphia Inquirer* printed about Jackson and to identify news of interests in the broadsheets supplied during the workshop.

The other good news is that young people still are attracted to print journalism. Of the 18 participants, at least four voiced an interest in a print journalism career, despite the economic turmoil of the industry. Two of the four even indicated an interest in starting their own publications.

This paper discusses a project assigned to students enrolled in the Propaganda and Public Opinion course at Lock Haven University in Clinton County, Pa., The students conducted the face-to-face survey to fulfill their course requirement in an elective course in the Communication Media major. The project was part of a partnership with the local newspaper, *The Express*, a daily publication owned by

Ogden Newspapers, Inc. *The Express* serves a small rural community and has a weekend circulation of approximately 9000.

This study examined the media preferences of college students enrolled at the Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania in spring 2006. The questionnaire used was adapted from one used by the Readership Institute and was developed

- 1) To gain knowledge and understanding of students' media preferences,
- 2) To understand how often students read the newspaper, and
- 3) To understand how often students access their hometown newspapers and the topics that interest them.

Methodology

Although the student participants were not randomly chosen, the 397 sample of students who responded to the survey were 51% male and aptly represented Lock Haven's 5,000 students. As most of the LHU student population is drawn from the Commonwealth, students represented the breadth and depth of the types of newspapers across the state, from very small newspapers such as *The Progress* in Philipsburg and the *Record Herald* in Waynesboro with circulations under 15,000, to the *Altoona Mirror* with a daily circulation of about 31,000. In addition, the respondents also represented approximately 20% of the 93 daily newspapers in Pennsylvania. The sample of participants was made up of students from a variety of majors and included a good mix of age and class ranks. An important goal of the project was to get a broad mix of participants to provide a baseline of information for further studies. Students gathered a convenient sample and interviewed respondents from hometowns with newspapers having circulations of 30,000 or less. Most of Pennsylvania's newspapers have a circulation under 50,000 and serve predominantly rural communities. Only 7 percent of the newspapers in the Commonwealth have a circulation over 50,000 (Stringer, 1999).

Using the National Newspaper Readership Survey as a model, each of the 30 students enrolled in the Propaganda course during spring 2006 participated in the study and was instructed to conduct a face-to-face survey of 13 friends and classmates during a two-week period. Several students administered more than 13 surveys, accounting for seven extra surveys collected. One problem with allowing students to conduct surveys without full supervision is maintaining the integrity of the project. To minimize the problem, the instructor spent several classes talking about research ethics and emphasizing that the results are only as good as the process. After the surveys were returned, the University's computer support staff tabulated the data, providing frequency statistics on students' media preferences, usage, and topics of interest.

Findings

Media Preferences: Half of the respondents to the survey were male (51%) and three-quarters (76%) were under age 30. The respondents reported that more than two-thirds of them (67%) read one newspaper at least two times a week. Only 11 of 397 or 3% reported that they never read a newspaper. Half of the respondents (51%) said that they rely on television the most for information about issues important to them. Only 8% of the students said that they rely most on the Internet for information about issues that are important to them. But a little less than one third (30%) of the 397 respondents said that they rely on newspapers for information important to them. Almost two-thirds of the respondents indicated that they read *The New York Times* or *USA Today*, both of which are available on campus regularly.

When the students were asked about their Internet preferences, more than half reported that they access classified ad or shopping Web sites most often. Students (32%) also showed an interest in health, fitness and sports Web sites where they turn most often when gathering news and information from the web.

Readership Habits: Also gathered in this survey was information about students' interest in hometown newspapers while they were away at college. Most of the respondents (80%) indicated that they access their hometown newspapers at

least two times a week while away at school. Almost half (46%) indicated that they access their hometown newspaper for general news, while 31% were interested in learning about crime in their areas, and 14% were in learning about sports. More than two-thirds of the respondents (68%) reported that they spend 30 minutes or less looking at the newspaper each week.

Newspaper Ratings: Many of the respondents rated their hometown newspaper quite well.

Almost three-quarters, or 73%, rated their hometown newspapers as "good, very good, or excellent." The students were not as supportive of newspapers when asked about newspapers' role in informing the public about national issues. More than half (62%) disagreed with the statement "newspapers in general play a very useful role in informing the public about national issues." Similarly 45% of the college students disagreed with the statement that newspapers in general "play a very useful role in informing the public about local issues," while 40% agreed with the statement. They did, however, agree that newspapers are their main source of information for local sporting activities and that newspapers are a good source of sports information. The respondents agreed or strongly agreed with both statements, 76% and 62%, respectively.

Conclusion and discussion

In response to a decline in newspaper readership, newspapers are looking to find ways to maintain and attract new readers. Young people under the age of 35 are a good target on which to focus. Presumably, if newspapers can maintain and attract students during their college years, those young people will remain readers throughout their lives, as age is a predictor of newspaper readership and home and ownership and family ties contribute to dependency on local news media (Bogart, 1989; Finnegan & Viswanath, 1988; Stamm & Fortini-Campbell, 1983). The findings from this study suggest that content and time have a major role on the type of media college students turn to for information that is important to them. When they are looking for information that is important to them, more than half of the respondents indicated that they turned to television. However, almost a third of the respondents indicated that they turn to newspapers. It's not surprising that today's college students turn to the *USA Today* as their national newspaper of choice with its colorful pictures, short news blurbs, and content that closely mimics many of the qualities of the Internet. It's encouraging that more than three-quarters of the respondents indicated that they do access their hometown newspapers at least two times a week while at college. (It was presumed that students were accessing their hometown newspapers via the Web, as there are only four community newspapers available on campus.) Their responses provide a catalyst for local newspapers to continue to work diligently to attract and maintain readers under the age of 30, by making relevant information easily accessible on Web sites.

While more than half of the college students in this survey indicated that they are interested in classified ads and shopping news when accessing the Web, publishers and editors might want to consider highlighting their classified ads on their Web sites. In addition, almost a third of the respondents cited health, fitness, and sports information as the Web sites they visit most often during an average seven-day period. Hence, newspaper Web designers might consider how health, fitness and sports news might be moved to prominent positions on the site when appropriate.

College readers' preferences provide suggestions for newspaper Web site design that will meet the needs of new media news consumers. This research supports the idea that editors and publishers — even those with limited resources — *should* and can provide new media alternatives. When examining the Web sites of newspapers that respondents identified as from their hometown, several items that would interest under-35 readers were observed. The *Centre Daily Times* in State College, Pa., for example, includes links to several social networking sites, including Facebook, Twitter and BuzzUp. The *Williamsport Sun Gazette* offers a mobile version, which can be accessed on a Blackberry, by its tech-savvy readers. At the time when this paper was written, the *Sun Gazette* also included a YouTube video

which introduced readers to its viewers. The less-than-two-minute video is titled, "Local News Never Stops" and appeared to be produced by the newspaper staff. Many of the small newspapers, such as the *Times-News* in Carbon County and the *Daily Item* in Sunbury, Pa., that are based in the hometown of the student respondents cater to readers' interest in quick news and offer one- to two-minute videos provided by the Associated Press. The *Lewistown Sentinel* offers another perk to all readers, especially those under-35: a listing of job offerings that is posted on the front page. The options are endless but so are the concerns about costs relating to making Web site changes. This researcher suggests that newspaper editors

partner with local universities to enhance staffs and gain access to the technological knowledge of people they are trying to attract as readers.

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