

Proximity Press Opportunities: the USA experience



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Many hats

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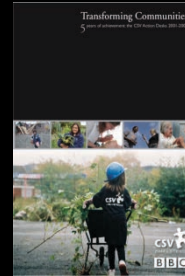
Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA)



Past Lives



1995



2017

- 1995 – 1999: The Local Radio Company
- 1999 – 2003: BBC
- 2003 – 2008: CSV Media
- 2008 – 2012: Ofcom (UK Office of Communications)
- 2012 - 2014: ictQATAR (Ministry of Information and Communication Technology)
- 2012+ Freelance (Kenja Consulting)
- 2015+ University of Oregon

New research

Focus on local newspapers:

- **Survey of 420 local newspaper journalists** (*pub May 2017*)
- **Local journalism in the PNW** (*12 interviews, 10 outlets, pub Sept 17*)
- **Landscape Review, local newspapers in USA** (*52 expert interviews, Nov 17*)

Research Questions

1. How are small market newspapers (> 50,000 circulation) responding to the challenges of digital disruption?
2. What can they do to best prepare for the future?
3. What's going on in my own backyard?



Why this matters

- 1. No new US-wide study since 2011.** Considerable change since then.
- 2. Changes at NYT, BuzzFeed, Vice et al. often dominate.**
- 3. Small + local newspapers often overlooked.**
 - **7,071 newspapers (daily or weekly) in USA** (*Editor & Publisher*).
 - **6,851 have circulations under 50,000.**
 - **Means c.97% of US newspapers are “small market.”**



**Why this is important:
Local journalism matters more than ever**

Frontline of our profession

- **Help rebuild trust in era of “Fake News”.**
- **Often only journalists people ever meet.**
- **Help translate impact of politics and policy into the day-to-day lives of audiences.**
- **Insight often lacking in metropolitan media.**



Proven democratic value

- Holding authority to account.
- Link to voter turnout and civic engagement.



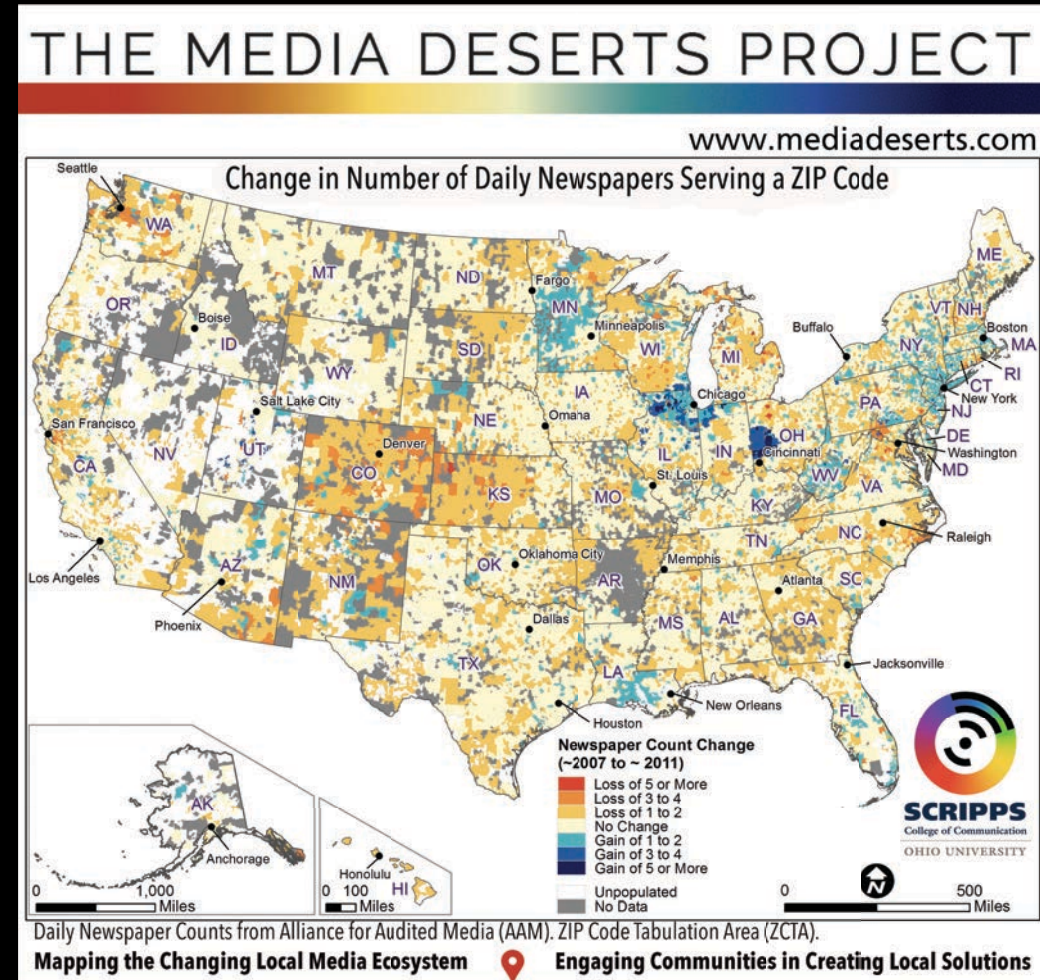
Community value

- Define a sense of place ∴ help create communities.
- Pitbulls + Poodles - audiences value newspaper as “good neighbor”



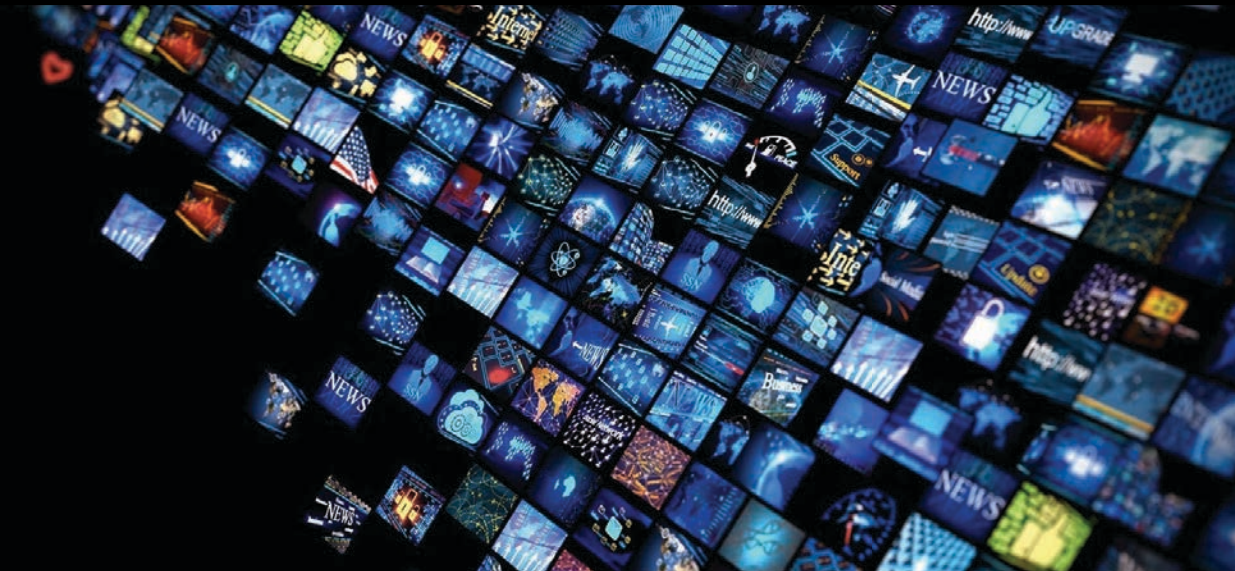
What happens when it's missing?

1. Declining turnout and engagement.
2. Important stories more likely to be missed.
3. Already disadvantaged communities often most impacted.



Contribution to media ecosystem

- Historical progression route for young journos.
- Between 48% - 85% of *all* original reporting produced by newspapers.



Where are we now?

Ch-ch-ch-ch-Changes
(Turn and face the strange)

A tumultuous decade



Notable trends include:

1. Fewer journalists.
2. Fewer papers.
3. Consolidation of titles/groups.
4. Emergence of hyperlocals.
5. New digital-first/only entrants.
6. Homogenization of Main Street.
7. Changing ad/revenue models.
8. Battle for attention.
9. New platforms + tools.
- 10. All happening as revenues decline...**

State of the News Media: Key Statistics

Year	Advertising	Circulation	Newsroom
2007	-7.30%	-2.30%	-0.65%
2008	-14.90%	-0.60%	-3.58%
2009	-26.60%	-0.20%	-14.4%
2010	-6.60%	-2.40%	-8.6%
2011	-7.00%	-0.90%	-2.22%
2012	-5.90%	5.00%	-4.99%
2013	-6.80%	1.80%	-4.8%
2014	-6.40%	1.00%	-5.0%
2015	-7.80%	1.20%	-4.1%

Source:

Pew Research
Center

Data a challenge. But clear trends.

JOBS

- Total workforce for U.S. daily newspapers in 2015 = 32,900.
 - Peak of 56,400 in 2001.
- = 23,500 jobs lost in 14 years.

Source: American Society of News Editors

TITLES SHUTTERED

Sources disagree:

- 100 (Pew)
- 245 (FCC)
- 664 (Penny Abernathy, UNC)



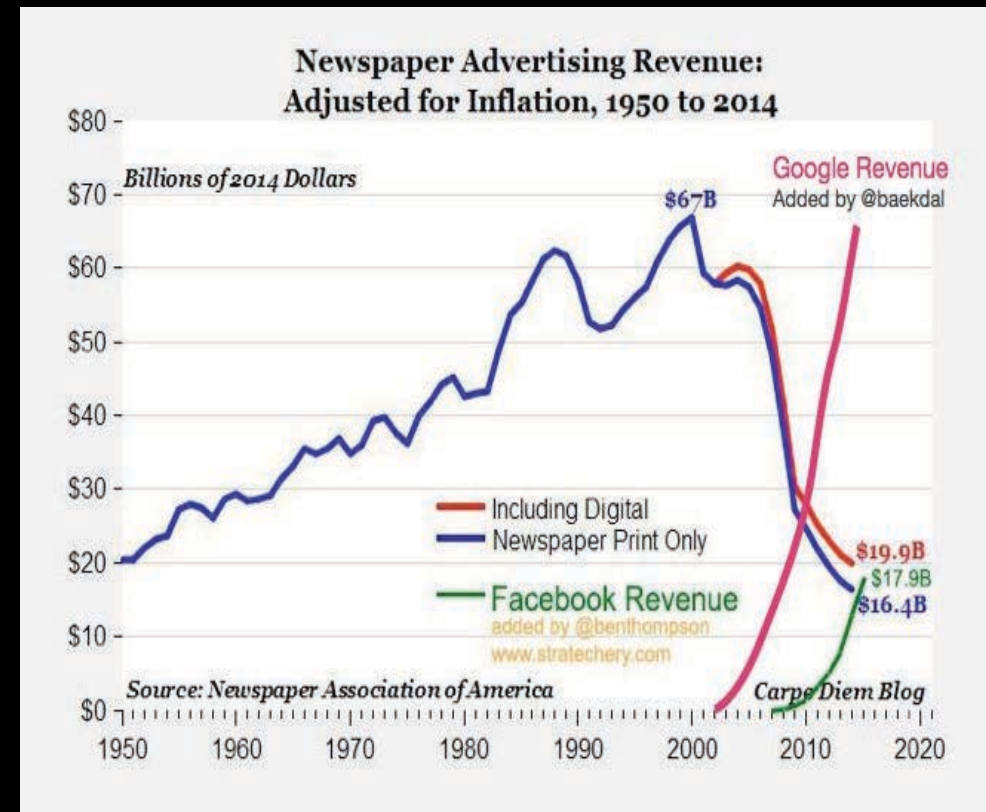
Funding model has changed

- **Demise of main street**

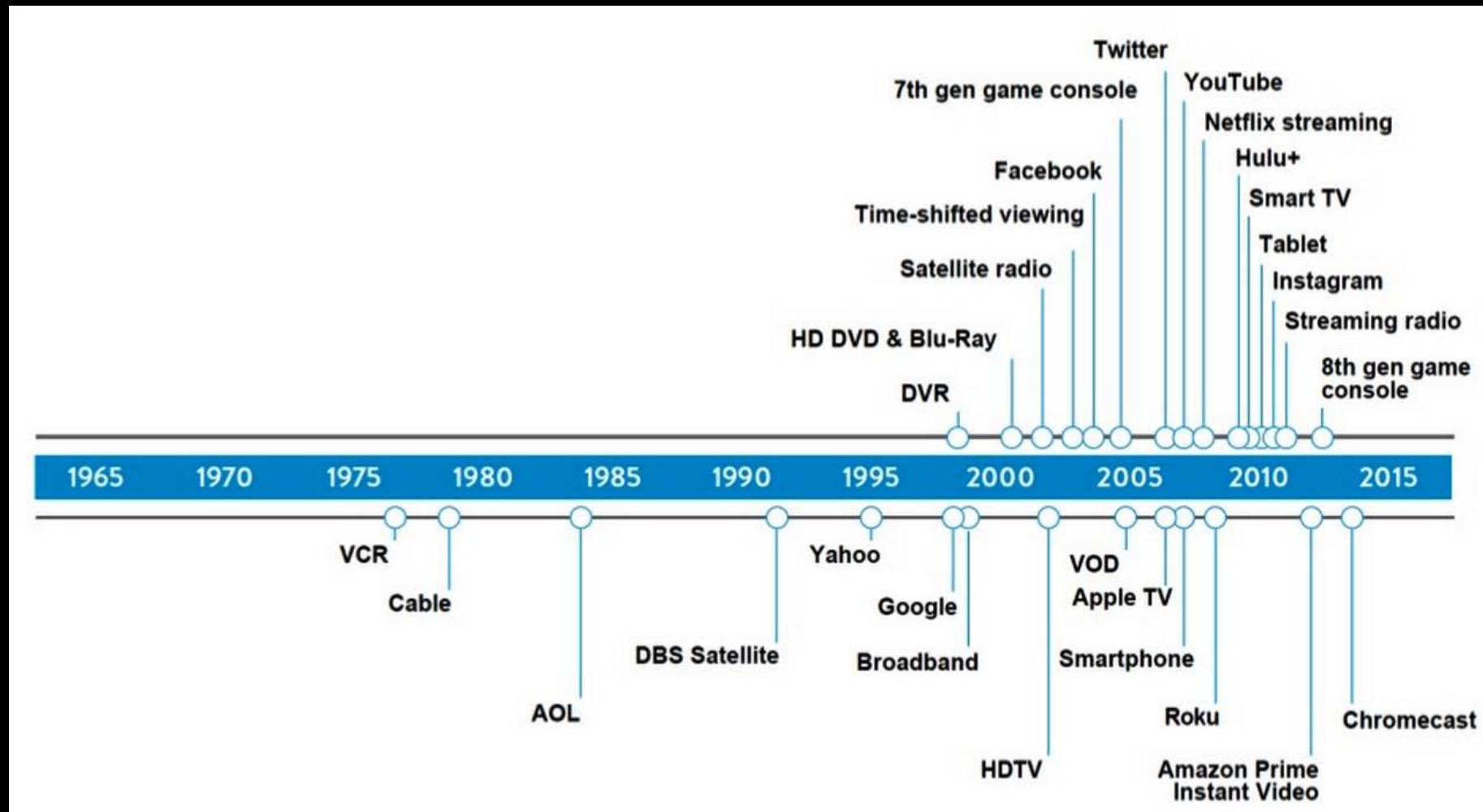
- Decline of local traders
- Walmartization
- Rise of Amazon



- **Creation of new advertising markets**



Fast changing media/tech landscape



Research Findings

Key Messages

1. **Optimism** at a greater level than might be expected.
2. **Experimentation and innovation** across the board.
3. **Need for nuance** – plurality of experiences.

+ Hunger for case studies and peer-to-peer learning

The need for nuance

Circulation	Number of <u>daily</u> newspapers
25,001 - 50,000	139
10,001 - 25,000	366
5,001 - 10,000	396
5,000 or less	301
Total number of small-market dailies	1,202

(Source: Editor & Publisher)

Circulation	Number of <u>weekly</u> newspapers
35,001 - 50,000	99
20,001 - 35,000	368
10,001 - 20,000	758
5,001 - 10,000	1,084
1,001 - 5,000	2,843
1,000 or less	497
Total number of small-market weeklies	5,649

Optimism

1. People still buying local papers.
2. Often source of unique reporting.
3. Closer to audience than metros.
4. Change coming at slower pace.
5. Value of brand and heritage.



As a former metro and small market editor reflected:

“I think there is an opportunity for small newspapers more than the larger ones... Because you might know your neighbor, who was in the paper yesterday. And the smaller newspapers do a better job of getting more people in the paper than the larger ones as well.

I think that forming that type of relationship with the community is still there in smaller papers. And I think it's more difficult in the metro markets.”

Innovation and Experimentation

- Revenue streams.
- Business models.
- Journalistic output.
- Evolving philosophy and approach.



10 x revenue examples



1. Paywalls & Subscriptions

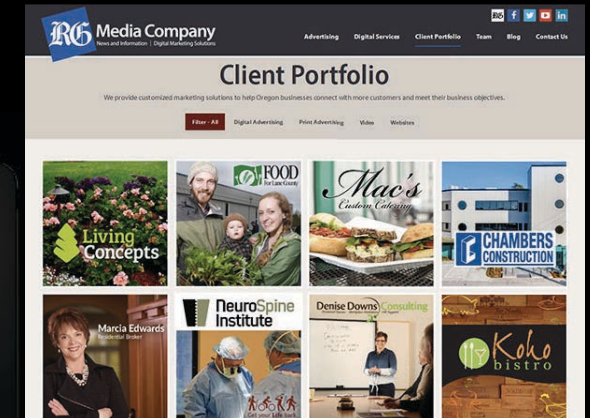
- **Newer than you might think.**
- **IP flexibility.**
- **Special offers.**
- **Weeklies often reliant on single copy sales.**



The image shows a promotional banner for the Statesman Journal. At the top left is the logo for the Statesman Journal, with the text "PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK" below it. The banner features a dark blue background with white text. It says "ENDS JULY 5TH" in a smaller font, followed by "4TH of July Sale" in a large, bold font. Below that, it displays "\$19.⁹⁹ FOR 1 YEAR" in white text. To the right of this price is a red button with the white text "Act Now". At the bottom left of the banner, there is a small, light blue link that says "Not looking to subscribe right now". The banner is set against a background of a wooden fence.

2. Spin-off services

- Website building.
- App creation.
- Digital marketing.
- Printing presses.



3. Events

- Geographic communities.
- Communities of interest.
- Sponsorship.
- Ticket sales.
- + *Story generation*



4. eCommerce

- Photos.
- Historic copies.
- Harness archive.
- Online shop.

COLORADO PHOTOGRAPHS
from DENVER POST
PHOTOJOURNALISTS

SHOP NOW



Image courtesy of R.J. Sangosti

Image courtesy of Kathryn Scott

Image courtesy of Helen H. Richardson

Image courtesy of Kenneth D. Lyons

Fire crews fight blaze in southern Grant County

Blue Mountain Eagle

Published on June 9, 2016 1:35PM



Buy this photo

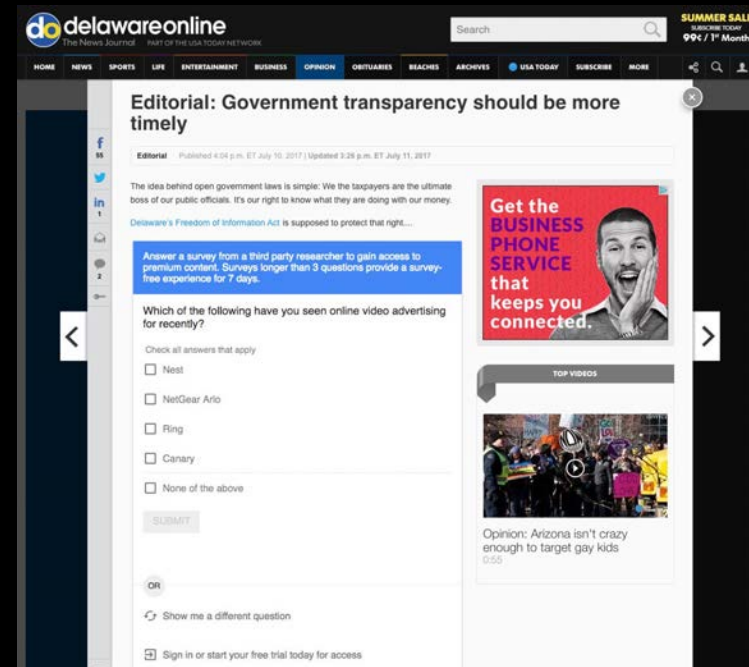


Eagle file photo Clinton Shaver, with the Molalla Rural Fire District, watches as a tree goes up in flames on the Canyon Creek Complex south of John Day last year. Fire crews responded to a blaze 3 miles southeast of the intersection of Forest Roads 15 and 16 Wednesday.

5. Additional ideas

Include:

1. Crowdfunding for specific roles, stories and beats.
2. Newsletter ads/sponsors.
3. Podcast ads/sponsors.
4. Membership schemes.
5. Obituaries.
6. Google consumer surveys.

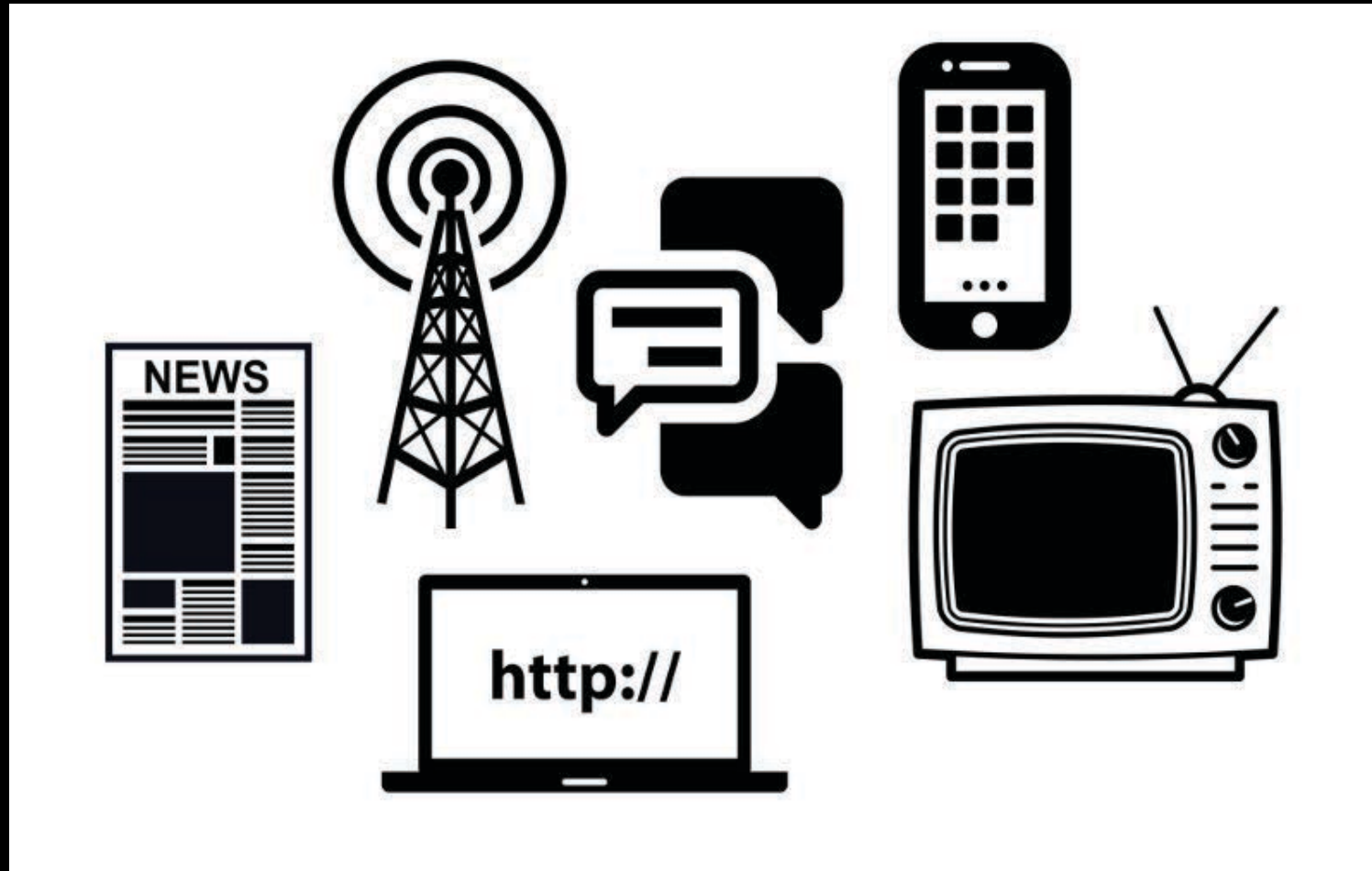


Revenue Takeaways

- **Diversification is key.**
- **Plenty of great ideas out there.**
- **“Respect print and grow digital.”**
- **Print still 75% of revenues (if not time).**



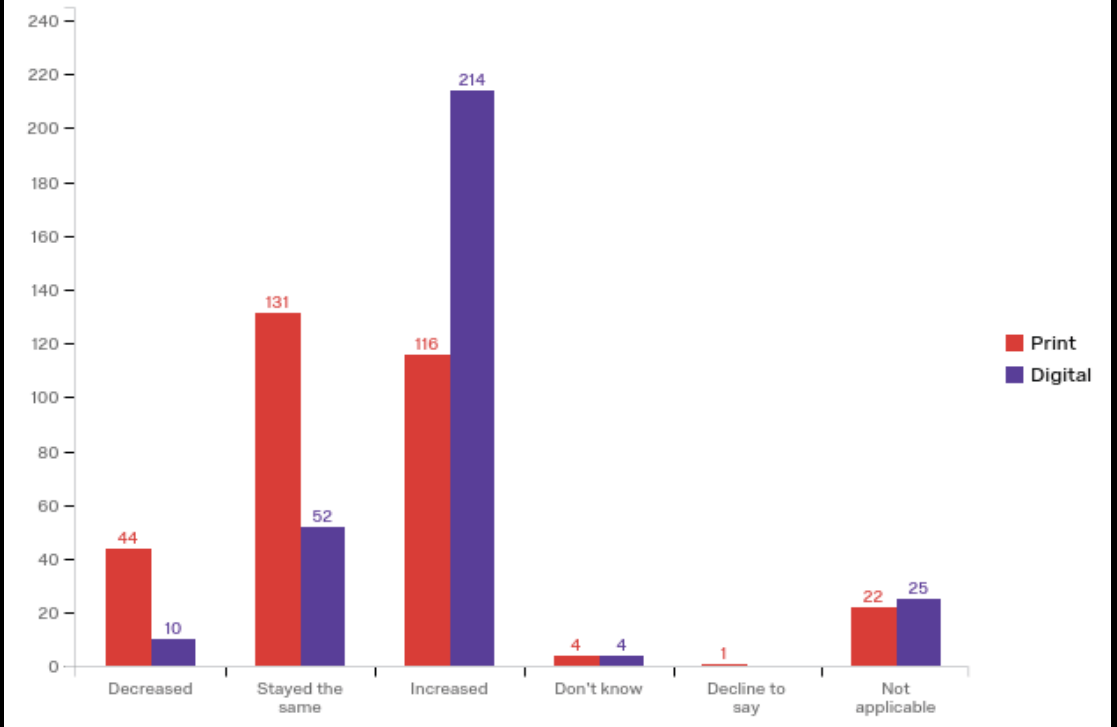
Changing journalistic practice



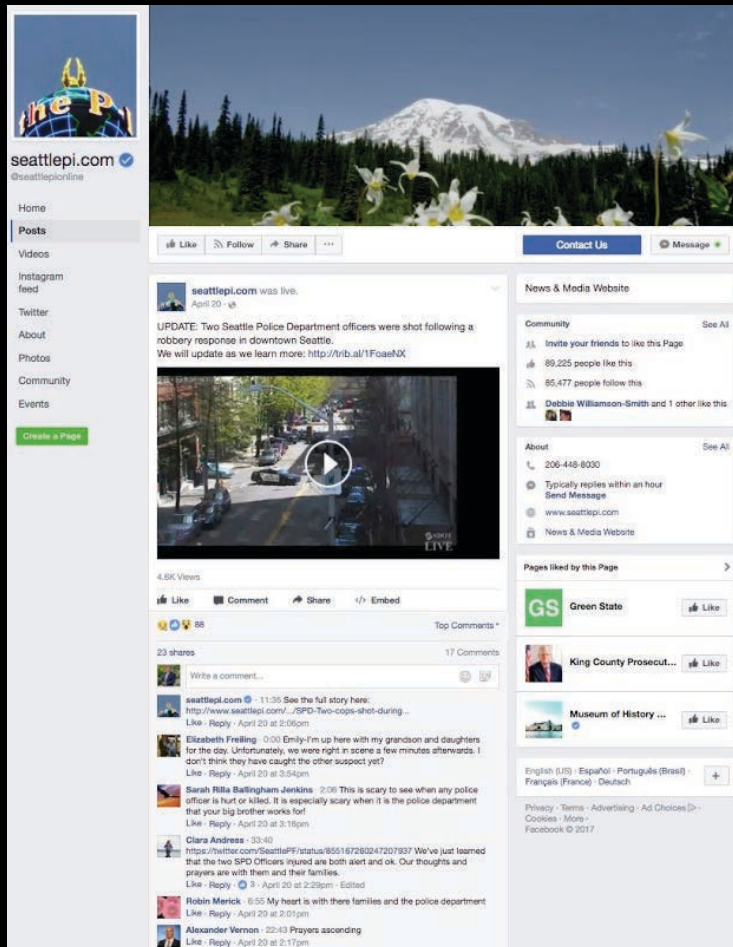
Digital output as standard

- **Increasing focus of role.**
- **Compared to two years ago, 70% said they were now spending more time on the digital side of their role.**
- **46% also said the number of stories they produce increased.**

Thinking about your work at the newspaper over the past two years, has the focus of your output changed? Consider the hours, demands, tasks and expectations for your role. (Print Total: 318; Digital Total: 305)



Including new platforms/formats



The screenshot shows a Facebook post from the page 'seattlepi.com' (@seattlepionline). The post features a video player with a play button and a 'LIVE' indicator. The text of the post reads: 'UPDATE: Two Seattle Police Department officers were shot following a robbery response in downtown Seattle. We will update as we learn more: <http://t/b.al/1Foa6NX>'. Below the video, there are 4.6K views, 17 comments, and 23 shares. The comments section shows several user reactions, including one from Elizabeth Freiling who says 'Emily-I'm up here with my grandson and daughters for the day. Unfortunately, we were right in scene a few minutes afterwards. I don't think they have caught the other suspect yet?' and another from Sarah Taha-Battingham-Jenkins who says 'This is scary to see when any police officer is hurt or killed. It is especially scary when it is the police department that your big brother works for!'. The right sidebar of the page shows 'News & Media Website' information, including a phone number (206-448-6030) and a website link (www.seattlepi.com).



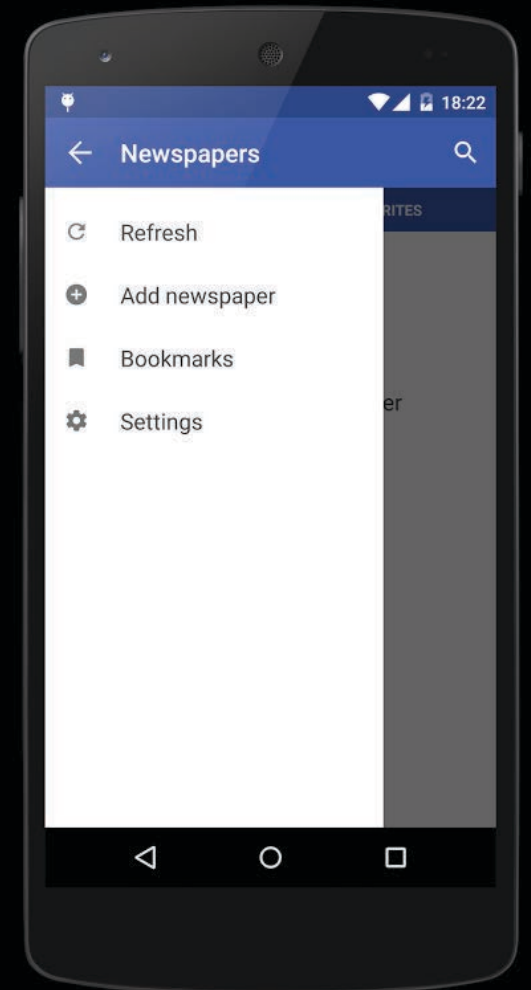
But often an uneasy relationship

Discussing Snapchat...

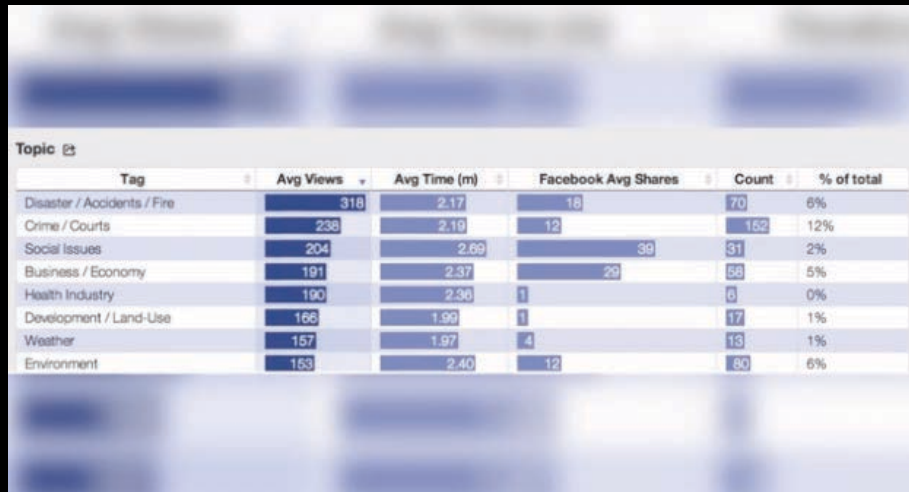
“Are you hoping the money follows, or are you doing it just because that’s where an audience that you're to reach is, and you're hoping they will hear our message and then come back to your site?”

What does success look like on a platform like that?”

Amalie Nash



Growing role of metrics/analytics



Topic

Tag	Avg Views	Avg Time (m)	Facebook Avg Shares	Count	% of total
Disaster / Accidents / Fire	318	2.17	18	70	6%
Crime / Courts	238	2.19	12	152	12%
Social Issues	204	2.69	39	31	2%
Business / Economy	191	2.37	29	58	5%
Health Industry	190	2.30	1	8	0%
Development / Land-Use	166	1.90	1	17	1%
Weather	157	1.97	4	13	1%
Environment	153	2.40	12	89	6%



Old: Uniques, bounce rates, social shares

Newer: Time on site, point of origin (on/off site), pay based on reach/impact

Emerging: A/B headline tests, story formats (e.g. listicles, explainers), genres/verticals

“I think there's a hesitancy in the newspaper industry among reporters to not recognize that what the metrics are telling us is that we need to change the content.

“I think we lose people that could be engaged when we make the news too boring for them to come get it...

They like when we can tell them a whole story, or tell them an important story, but they don't need us to just act as a kind of stenographer of government.”

Levi Pulkkinen

Engagement + Engaged Journalism

- **Off-site (digital and IRL).**
- **Accessibility / Visibility.**
- **Listening.**

“How can we demonstrate to them the value of a local news organization and that it goes beyond the printed product?”

Lauren Gustus

Philosophical shifts

- Objectivity and Distance.
- Advocacy.
- Solutions Journalism.
- Part of the community not just reporting on it.

Good Solutions Journalism:

1. Can be character-driven, but focuses in-depth on a response to a problem and how the response works in meaningful detail
2. Focuses on effectiveness, not good intentions, presenting available evidence of results
3. Discusses the limitations of the approach
4. Seeks to provide insight that others can use

* Draws on sources with ground-level understanding

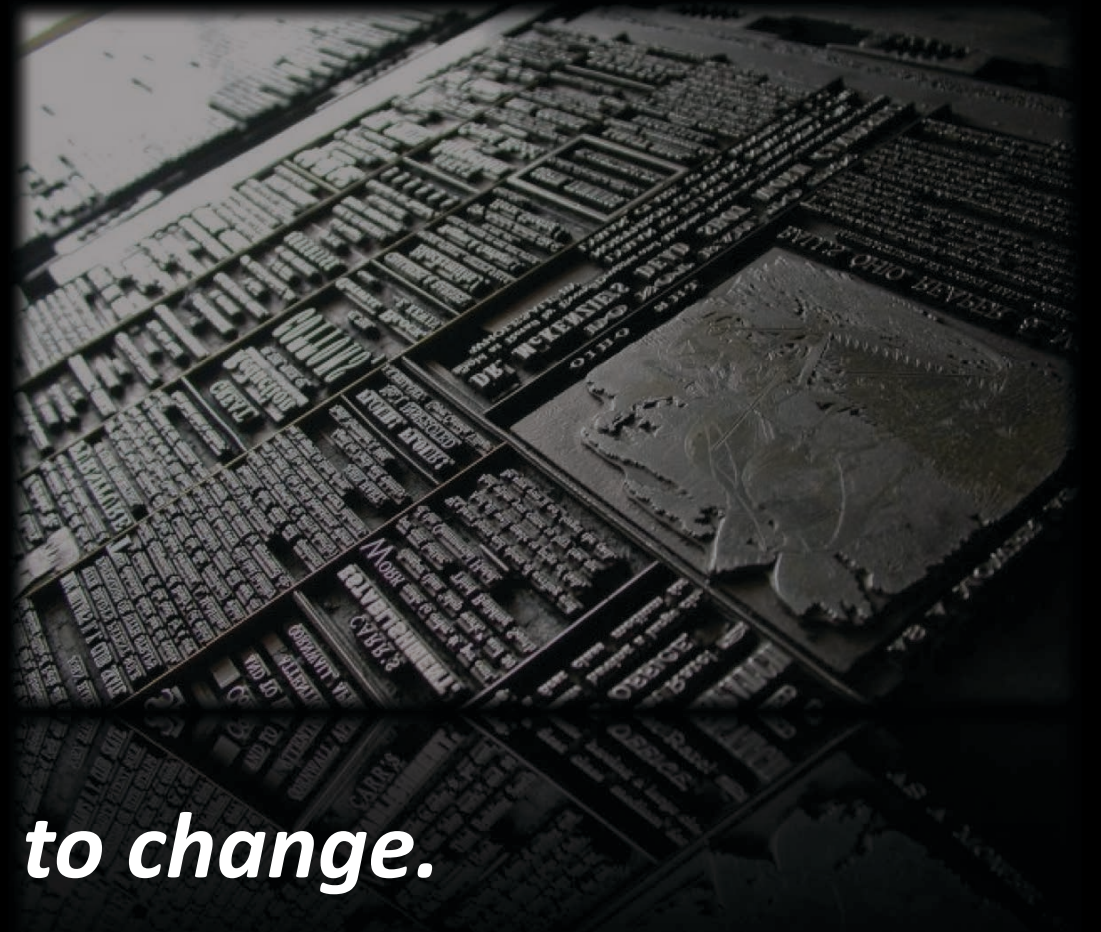
Implications

Seven strategic considerations

1. Won't be the same as the past

- Fewer boots on the ground.
- Smaller profits (if any).
- Battle for attention.
- More routes to eyeballs.

This isn't going to change.



2. Focus on original reporting

“You can do anything, but you can’t do everything.”

- Often only provider in town.
- Double-down to maximize likelihood of paying audiences.



3. Selectivity

- **Define and own the master narrative of your community.**
 - **Analytics can help identify issues and frame coverage.**
 - **Critical friend (champion and critic)**

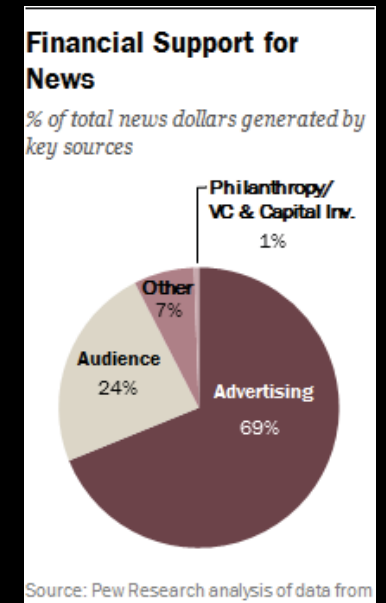
Implications:

- **End of “general store” approach?**
- **Killing, or changing, certain beats.**



4. Income diversification is key

- Move away from ad-dependency.
- Events, Media Services, Crowdfunding et al.
- New funders (e.g. local/state foundations)
- Audiences (some) will pay for content!



"The way the Trib covers politics is even-handed, transparent and trustworthy, and that's really important to me."

— LORENA REYNA,
SUSTAINING MEMBER

5. Create time/space to innovate

- Experiment. Fail fast.
- Revenue + Content philosophy.
- Invest in R&D.



“There are a lot of opportunities to shift the business model, they take a little bit of time and a little bit of runway.”

Mark Zusman, editor and publisher of *Willamette Week* (OR).

6. Partner on everything else

- Beats.
- Innovation.
- Tech.
- Ad inventory.



7. Change the narrative

- Great work going on. Need to share it!
- “Doom and Gloom” risks becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.



“We are allowing the naysayers to kill our industry.

We still offer something unique which residents want, but we allow the screaming voices of gloom and doom to convince people that we are worthless.”

Survey respondent

Thanks for listening.

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