



Overview – Intro

Intro

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

Scan the headlines of 2005 and one question seems inevitable: Will we recall this as the year when journalism in print began to die?

The ominous announcements gathered steam as the year went on. The New York Times would cut nearly 60 people from its newsroom, the Los Angeles Times 85; Knight Ridder's San Jose Mercury News cut 16%, the Philadelphia Inquirer 15% — and that after cutting another 15% only five years earlier. By November, investors frustrated by poor financial performance forced one of the most cost-conscious newspaper chains of all, Knight Ridder, to be put up for sale.

Adding to the worry, industry fundamentals, not the general economy, were the problem — declining circulation, pressure on revenues, stock prices for the year down 20%.

It wasn't only newspapers, either. Magazines like Newsweek, U.S. News and Business Week were suffering, too. The largest company, Time Inc., advertising and circulation falling, cut 205 people and promised to transform itself from "magazine publishing" to a "multiplatform media company."

The former dean at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, Tom Goldstein would conclude, "Unless they urgently respond to the changing environment, newspapers risk early extinction."¹

Is it true? From here on will the delivery of news in ink on paper begin a rapid and accelerating decline? Newspapers are the country's biggest newsgathering organizations in most towns and the Internet's primary suppliers. What would their decline portend?

For two years, we have tracked in this report the major trends in the American news media (See Previous Reports). What is occurring, we have concluded, is not the end of journalism that some have predicted. But we do see a seismic transformation in what and how people learn about the world around them. Power is moving away from journalists as gatekeepers over what the public knows. Citizens are assuming a more active role as assemblers, editors and even creators of their own news. Audiences are moving from old media such as television or newsprint to new media online. Journalists need to redefine their role and identify which of their core values they want to fight to preserve —something they have only begun to consider.

In 2005, change intensified. The shift by audiences to other delivery mediums accelerated print's problems. Things that seemed futuristic two years ago, such as watching network news on a PDA, began to arrive. The role of new aggregators like Google grew. And new scandals in the old media seemed to confirm worries that some news people are more concerned with their careers than the public interest.

We believe some fears are overheated. For now, the evidence does not support the notion that newspapers have begun a sudden death spiral. The circulation declines and job cuts will probably tally at only about 3% for the year. The industry still posted profit margins of 20%. Measuring print and online together, the readership of many newspapers is higher than ever.

On the other hand, the most sanguine reaction to those changes — that they simply reflect an older medium's giving way to a newer one, and that citizens will have more choices than ever — strikes us as glib, even naïve.

Even if newspapers are not dying, they and other old media are constricting, and so, it appears, is the amount of resources dedicated to original newsgathering.

Most local radio stations, our content study this year finds, offer virtually nothing in the way of reporters in the field. On local TV news, fewer and fewer stories feature correspondents, and the range of topics that get full treatment is narrowing even more to crime and accidents, plus weather, traffic and sports. On the Web, the Internet-only sites that have tried to produce original content (among them Slate and Salon) have struggled financially, while those thriving financially rely almost entirely on the work of others. Among blogs, there is little of what journalists would call reporting (our study this year finds reporting in just 5% of postings). Even in bigger newsrooms, journalists report that specialization is eroding as more reporters are recast into generalists.

In some cities, the numbers alone tell the story. There are roughly half as many reporters covering metropolitan Philadelphia, for instance, as in 1980. The number of newspaper reporters there has fallen from 500 to 220. The pattern at the suburban papers around the city has been similar, though not as extreme. The local TV stations, with the exception of Fox, have cut back on traditional news coverage. The five AM radio stations that used to cover news have been reduced to two.

As recently as 1990, the Philadelphia Inquirer had 46 reporters covering the city. Today it has 24.

In the future, we may well rely more on citizens to be sentinels for one another. No doubt that will expand the public forum and enrich the range of voices. Already people are experimenting with new ways to empower fellow citizens to gather and understand the news — whether it is soldiers blogging from Baghdad, a radio program on the war produced by students at Swarthmore College carrying eyewitness interviews with Iraqi citizens, or a similar effort by young radio reporters in Minnesota to cover local towns.

Yet the changes will probably also make it easier for power to move in the dark. And the open technology that allows citizens to speak will also help special interests, posing as something else, to influence or even sometimes overwhelm what the rest of us know.

The worry is not the wondrous addition of citizen media, but the decline of full-time, professional monitoring of powerful institutions.

Those are just some of the questions and conclusions in this, the third of our annual reports on the state of American journalism. The study, which we believe is unique in depth and scope, breaks the news industry into nine sectors (newspapers, magazines, network television, cable television, local television, the Internet, radio, ethnic media, and alternative media) and builds off many of the findings from a year ago.

This year, the study also includes a distinct content report, *A Day in the Life of the News*, in which we examine one day's events as they course through the media culture in print, television, radio, online, and blogs, magazines, both nationally and locally in three American cities.

Major Trends

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In 2006, we see six new trends emerging that deserve highlighting and that add to the underlying trends transforming journalism we have noted in earlier reports. This year:

The new paradox of journalism is more outlets covering fewer stories. As the number of places delivering news proliferates, the audience for each tends to shrink and the number of journalists in each organization is reduced. At the national level, those organizations still have to cover the big events. Thus we tend to see more accounts of the same handful of stories each day. And when big stories break, they are often covered in a similar fashion by general-assignment reporters working with a limited list of sources and a tight time-frame. Such concentration of personnel around a few stories, in turn, has aided the efforts of newsmakers to control what the public knows. One of the first things to happen is that the authorities quickly corral the growing throng of correspondents, crews and paparazzi into press areas away from the news. One of the reasons coverage of Katrina stood out to Americans in 2005 was officials were unable to do that, though some efforts, including one incident of holding journalists at gunpoint, were reported. For the most part, the public — and the government — were learning from journalists who were discovering things for themselves.

The species of newspaper that may be most threatened is the big-city metro paper that came to dominate in the latter part of the 20th century. The top three national newspapers in the U.S. suffered no circulation losses in 2005. The losses at smaller newspapers, in turn, appeared to be modest. It was the big-city metros that suffered the biggest circulation drops and imposed the largest cutbacks in staff. Those big papers are trying to cover far-flung suburbs and national and regional news all at the same time — trying to be one-stop news outlets for large audiences. In part, they are being supplanted by niche publications serving smaller communities and targeted audiences. Yet our content studies suggest the big metros are the news organizations most likely to have the resources and aspirations to act as watchdogs over state, regional and urban institutions, to identify trends, and to define the larger community public square. It is unlikely that small suburban dailies or weeklies will take up that challenge. Moreover, while we see growth in alternative weeklies and the ethnic press, many small suburban dailies have shrunk.

At many old-media companies, though not all, the decades-long battle at the top between idealists and accountants is now over. The idealists have lost. The troubles of 2005, especially in print, dealt a further blow to the fight for journalism in the public interest. "If you argue about public trust today, you will be dismissed as an obstructionist and a romantic," the editor of one of the country's major papers told us privately. An executive at one of the three broadcast networks told senior staff members in a meeting last year that "the ethical anvil has been lifted," meaning the producers could dispense with traditional notions of journalistic propriety. One of the most celebrated editors in the country, John Carroll of the Los

Angeles Times, stepped down in frustration in 2005, but only after taking weeks to persuade his successor not to join him. The most celebrated journalist still at ABC, Ted Koppel, left for cable, but only after announcing that neither cable news nor network news was amenable to the long-form work to which he aspired. The most cogent explanation for why journalism in the public interest has lost leverage was probably offered by Polk Laffoon IV, the corporate spokesman of Knight Ridder. "I wish there were an identifiable and strong correlation between quality journalism ... and newspaper sales," he said. "It isn't ...that simple." From here on, at many companies, the fight on behalf of the public interest will come from the rank and file of the newsroom, with the news executive as mediator with the boardroom. There are some notable exceptions, and journalists who work in those situations today consider themselves lucky. Meanwhile, at many new-media companies, it is not clear if advocates for the public interest are present at all.

That said, traditional media do appear to be moving toward technological innovation — finally . In earlier reports, the real investment and creativity in new technology appeared to be coming mostly from non-news organizations like Google. Traditional news outfits, in practice if not in rhetoric, treated the Internet as a platform to repurpose old material. While the evidence is sketchy and the efforts are frustrated by newsroom cutbacks, in 2005 we saw signs that the pattern was beginning to change. A big reason was that much of the revenue growth in these companies is now coming from online (and from niche products such as youth newspapers). In network television, for instance, viewers of ABC News can now watch an evening newscast from that network online three and a half hours before one is broadcast on television. In print, various papers announced reorganizations of online operations. An internal memo at the Los Angeles Times was fairly typical, calling for "a different kind of online news operation, one that recognizes the changing expectations of readers." In that transition, several big questions remain unanswered. One is whether younger audiences care anything about these traditional news brands. Another is, even if these legacy media do finally try to move online seriously, can they change their culture, or will they succumb to the natural tendency to favor their traditional platforms?

The new challengers to the old media, the aggregators, are also playing with limited time. When it comes to news, what companies like Google and Yahoo are aggregating and selling is the work of others — the very same old media they are taking revenue away from. The more they succeed, the faster they erode the product they are selling, unless the economic model is radically changed. Already there are rumblings. One thing to watch for in 2006 is whether old-media content producers demand that Google News begin to pay them for content. Another option for the aggregators is to begin to produce their own news, and already we are seeing baby steps; in 2005, Yahoo announced it would hire some journalists, but the effort is still minimal. Can the new rivals become more than technology companies? And if they do, will they have more than rhetorical allegiance to the values of public-interest journalism?

The central economic question in journalism continues to be how long it will take online journalism to become a major economic engine, and if it will ever be as big as print or television. If the online revenues at newspapers continue to grow at the current rate — an improbable 33% a year — they won't reach levels equivalent with print until 2017 (assuming print grows just 3% a year). Realistically, even with the lower delivery costs online, it will be years before the Internet rivals old media economics, if it ever does. Fledgling efforts to get consumers to pay for online content edged forward in 2005, but only marginally. All this only adds to the likelihood that the next battleground will be producers of old media challenging Internet providers and Internet aggregators to begin compensating them for content, the model that exists in cable.

Those trends are in addition to others we have identified in earlier years. Among them: that the traditional model of journalism — the press as verifier — is giving way to other models that are faster, looser and cheaper; to adapt, journalism must move in the direction of making its work more transparent and more expert and widening the scope of its searchlight; those who would manipulate the press and the public are gaining leverage over the journalists who cover

them; convergence is more inevitable and less threatening the more one looks at audience data; the notion that people are gravitating to a partisan press model, or red news and blue news, is exaggerated. (See Major Trends 2004 and 2005).

Content Analysis

Content Analysis

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In the first two years of this report, we analyzed the content of American news media by taking 28 randomly chosen days from a wide swath of news outlets and examining what was offered. What topics were covered? What kind of sourcing was there? How were stories framed? How did the various media differ?

This year, we wanted to take a closer look at what Americans get, how specific events are covered, and the style and personality of different media at different times of day. To do so, we examined a Day in the Life of the News, a microscopic look at the coverage of one day, May 11, 2005, nationally and in the local media in three American cities. We examined all kinds of outlets, from national newspapers and television to small suburban dailies, ethnic media, local radio, and blogs. How did stories come and go through the course of the day? How does where we get news influence what we learn? Does the time of day when we get the news matter? What advantage or disadvantage does time offer — waiting till the next morning or the end of the day? Where are the best places to go for certain kinds of information?

Among the findings of this study within a study, A Day in the Life of the News:

Most of the news is transitory and incremental and lacks much long-term consequence. Few of the top stories this day would continue to be covered even two or three days later.

Consumers might actually suffer from relying solely or even primarily on a single news source. Most media excel at certain kinds of information, and few excel at everything. Indeed, someone who watched cable news all day would tend to be less informed than if he or she charted a careful diet of sources that required less time.

When audiences did encounter the same story in different places, they often heard from a surprisingly small number of sources. Some stories on national television essentially relied on a single source, sometimes the same one on every channel. While the news is always on, there is not a constant flow of new events. The level of repetition in the 24-hour news cycle is one of its most striking features.

Audience

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

Pressure is mounting to get better yardsticks to measure audiences. And here, several forces are converging. To begin, different media measure differently. (Online users are counted monthly. Television viewers are measured almost minute by minute. Newspapers are measured by copies sold, not readers.) At the same time, more news organizations are offering their content on multiple platforms, making a solid audience figure even harder to determine.

Adding to the pressure, advertisers want more accurate counts as they decide how to spend their money. In an age when the Internet offers exact and detailed information about not only how many people are accessing a site but also for how long and whether they are exploring a particular story or advertising, the old-fashioned diaries still used to track radio and

TV audiences strike many as antiquated. Minorities have raised the question whether they are undercounted in Nielsen ratings.

New media platforms within media are making old measuring methods seem incomplete. Radio listening now involves podcasting, satellite radio and more. The number of people listening is one thing. How long they are listening is another. Where they are listening is a third question.

Some media themselves are pushing for new measuring methods because the old ones no longer look so good. Newspapers, for instance, are advocating Total Audience, a combination of readers in print and online (a number much bigger than print circulation).

When it comes to the basic numbers, 2005 was a difficult year for most media.

In our first two years of this report, we found that only online, ethnic and alternative media were seeing general audience growth. Even that picture is now cloudier.

The overall audience for news online, for instance, grew little if at all in 2005, according to data from various surveys. And market research from a Dallas-based agency in early March suggests that the audience for the Web may have already plateaued, earlier than many anticipated. But those who did use the Internet for news appeared to be doing so more often. In particular, newspaper Web sites appeared to be growing, but there was more evidence than ever that this growth was coming at the expense of readers' using the print newspaper, which in economic terms was costly.

The ethnic press, where the numbers are less certain, showed some signs of slowing down as well. Even the data gathered by the groups advocating for the industry, and sometimes suspected of being self-serving, showed declines in Spanish-language newspaper circulation. Spanish-language television, meanwhile, appeared to grow more. Univision, the largest broadcaster, saw a 19% increase in prime-time viewership in the third quarter of 2005 compared to the same period of 2004. The network is the nation's fifth largest network. At the same time, two different surveys showed that a large percentage of ethnic minorities, somewhere between 70% (Pew Hispanic Center) and 87% (New America Media) consume some kind of ethnic media.

The alternative weekly press, meanwhile, continued to thrive. Circulation reached 7.64 million in 2005, the highest since 2001.

The rest of the mainstream media continued to have a more difficult time. Cable news saw median prime-time ratings grow 4% and daytime 3% in 2005, according to data from Nielsen Media Research. But using the more volatile measure the cable industry prefers, simple average, ratings were flat.

We prefer median to simple average (mean) because it is less susceptible to wild swings from momentary news events such as Katrina. Yet even by our metrics only one of the three main cable channels is growing: Fox, which now commands more than half the cable news audience at any one time (55% daytime and 59% prime time). But there is a new factor on the horizon. CNN's Headline News now exceeds MSNBC in cumulative audience, the number of different people who watch over the course of a month. By any measure, however, CNN remains the leader in cumulative audience, by roughly 7 million viewers.

Elsewhere, the news was bleaker.

Newspapers, as noted above, saw a worrisome drop in circulation in 2005, approximately 3% both weekdays and Sundays. Between 1990 and 2004, the industry had already lost roughly 12% in circulation daily (or 7.7 million copies) and 8% Sunday (4.9 million copies). Some of the earlier declines were caused by the death of afternoon newspapers. It is even more worrisome that the new declines are being powered by something that is only likely to increase, the migration of readers to online.

The picture for the other major print medium, magazines, was less clearly down, but like newspapers, those titles offering news of general interest were suffering.

The big three news magazines all continued to fall. Time was down 81,000 (1.9%), Newsweek 54,000 (1.7%) and U.S. News 15,000 (.7%), according to the Audit Bureau of Circulations. But those numbers may reflect more a shifting than a general decline. Readership of other titles continued to grow. The New Yorker and the Economist, aimed at more elite audiences, saw small increases. (And a new news magazine that offers something altogether different is growing noticeably. The Week, which has no reporters but aggregates a summary of the week's events from all the other media, grew by nearly 40%. The numbers are still quite small, 65,000, but it is an interesting phenomenon.)

In television, the trend was also not promising.

Network evening news ratings continued to fall in 2005, another 6% November to November. Morning news ratings, flat in 2004, also slipped, by 4%, a worrisome two-year trend.

Local TV news saw shifts, but some hopeful signs of a year earlier seemed to disappear. In 2004, the audience declines of recent years looked as if they might be stabilizing. In 2005, perhaps because there was no boost from a presidential election, early-evening ratings declined again — 13% by our count. And now there were signs that the growth area in local news—early morning—might also have reached its limit. By our measures, ratings for morning news were down 7%. On the other side of the ledger, however, there were signs that late news after prime time might be improving. Our numbers showed a ratings rise in 2005 of 7%. It is worth watching whether that is a one-year event or the beginning of something more lasting.

Radio may be the most complicated of all, in part thanks to the rapidly expanding list of new alternatives. The audience for traditional radio continued to hold, with 94% of Americans saying they listened to the radio every week, according to Arbitron. That number may soon shift, however, as advertisers and marketers demand more precise methods of audience measurement than the listener diary.

At the same time, however, new competitors grew. By the end of 2005, the XM and Sirius satellite radio networks had some 9 million subscribers, up 116% from the year before. That is tiny compared to the 247 million listeners of traditional radio, but it is growing.

Meanwhile, between 2000 and 2005, the number of Americans who had listened to an Internet radio station had grown from 5% to 15%, according to Arbitron. And podcasting, in which people download audio from the computer to listen to on a portable device, appears to be a boon for news. As an example, podcasts from National Public Radio were regularly making the iTunes Top 100 list. On November 21, 2005, according to the Online Journalism Review, NPR held 11 spots on the list — more than any other media outlet.

Economics

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

On balance, 2005 has to be considered a rough year for journalism financially.

Newspaper revenues for the year rose by just 1% to 2%, but almost all of that was thanks to growth in online operations (which grew about 30%) and niche publications, like those aimed at young readers. Without that, revenues would have been flat. More worrisome was the fact that the amount of advertising in papers, lineage, fell.

And the picture only seems more complex looking forward. Competition for the critical category of classified advertising from places like Craigslist, the citizen-based bulletin boards, is likely to grow. And if circulation declines continue, the ability of newspapers to keep raising ad rates, what industry insiders call "pricing power," will only erode. Newspapers are trying to innovate by reaching out to new advertising categories, such as drug companies, but the job is getting harder.

On Wall Street, amid alarm over the fundamentals, stock prices fell, as noted in our introduction, by an average of 20%.

Online is growing fast. The industry over all was expected to take in \$12 billion in ad revenue in 2005 by the time the tally was complete, about 25% more than in 2004. But that is still relatively small compared to the roughly \$49 billion for newspapers. And only some of that online advertising is from journalism. Looking just at newspaper Web sites, the Wall Street analyst Lauren Rich Fine has estimated that for every dollar a newspaper gets in advertising for a print reader, it brings in just 20 to 30 cents for an online reader.

Still, the growth pattern is robust and undeniable. And while most analysts doubt the industry can sustain 25% to 30% growth rates, expansions in technology are expected to keep things humming. As more Americans hook up to the Internet on high-speed connections—the wonder of what insiders call broadband—and those lines get ever faster with technical refinements, the evidence suggests people will spend even more time online, which will make it more appealing to advertisers. In addition, advertisers will find new ways to fix our attention on those ads with more video and dazzle.

The question is how big will online advertising revenue get, and will it ever compensate for what is disappearing from the older media? Or will fragmentation mean everyone has to settle for a smaller piece of the pie?

Certainly network news has had to, and over the last quarter century it has found ways to increase revenues even as audiences declined. In 2004, the last year for which there are complete data, morning news revenue grew by 15%, and in 2005 it was projected to increase another 6%. The network evening newscasts had a harder time. Two of the three programs saw revenues decline in 2004 (ABC grew), though projections indicated a possible 10% increase in 2005.

In radio, the picture was also difficult. Market analysts scaled back almost quarterly on their initial positive predictions. With the exception of Clear Channel's news properties, revenues generated by news-format stations declined across the board for the five largest radio companies. And in 2004, according to an RTNDA/Ball State University survey, fewer than 20% of radio news directors said news was making a profit, down from 22.5% a year earlier.

Satellite radio was more complicated. The XM and Sirius satellite radio networks both reported massive revenue increases. Comparing third-quarter reports, XM's revenue was up 134% from 2004, Sirius 250%. But both were still losing money. At XM, a member of the company's board even resigned in early 2006, warning that unless spending was put under control, he saw a crisis ahead.

In another older medium, magazines, the picture was similarly mixed. Things were tough for the traditional news magazines. Time (down 12%) and Newsweek (down 11%) both saw double-digit declines in ad pages in 2005, along with drops in revenues. U.S. News fared better — flat in ad pages but with an increase of about 9% in dollars.

But the trouble was not across the board. The new and still small entrant in news magazines, The Week, saw ad pages grow 9% and revenues 65%. And entertainment magazines had a big year. Some newer titles such as In Touch and The Star, which recently switched from being a tabloid to a glossy, saw double-digit increases in ad pages and revenues.

The situation in cable news in general was more robust, but here there was a clear winner. Over all, pre-tax profits in 2005 were projected to grow by 21% to \$579 million. CNN, still the financial leader, was expected to account for more than half of the total, \$304 million, up 6%. But Fox, gaining fast, was expected to see profits grow a striking 31% to \$248 million.

The revenue picture was similar. While CNN led with projected revenues of \$878 million, up 5% Fox was expected to enjoy growth of roughly four times that rate, to \$615 million.

At the same time, MSNBC continues to struggle. It failed to meet projections of turning its first profit in 2004, and hoped to finally do so in 2005. But whatever profit it generated was likely to come from cost-cutting.

As for alternative weeklies, revenue figures for 2005 were not yet available at this publishing, though figures on national advertising indicated some markets were beginning to flatten.

Ownership

Ownership

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

For years, journalists have debated the efficacy of different ownership models for the media. First, critics bemoaned the loss of local control, as entrepreneurs like William Randolph Hearst or E.W. Scripps began to amass papers in different cities.

At the end of the 20th century people began to worry about the trend toward public ownership. Not only were such companies not tied to community, they were now beholden to the demands of Wall Street, where the value of the product a company made was purely a matter of money. Making bolts would be measured the same way as creating information that helped forge communities. The market was amoral.

The defenders of where the news business was going said such concerns tended to romanticize the past and oversimplify the present. There were lousy local owners and good chains, they argued first. And there were lousy private chains and good public ones, they argued later. In any case, private companies still had to borrow capital from banks and other financial institutions, and thus were not fully insulated from the financial pressures public companies faced. Those arguments were hard to refute.

The reality was that when media companies made the move to public ownership in the latter part of the 20th century — newspapers headed that way in the 1970s — they were so profitable by and large that they imagined they were immune from many of the pressures other industries felt. By the end of the century, that insulation had begun to wear away.

There were other even more glamorous ways to invest, and the profitability of traditional media was coming from managing costs, not simply counting rising revenues.

A growing number of leaders in journalism, such as Robert Kaiser and Leonard Downie of the Washington Post, warned that only a particular kind of a public ownership was safe — a complex two-tier stock arrangement that allowed public ownership but kept actual control in the hands of a family. The Washington Post operates that way. So does the New York Times.

But by 2005 there were more doubts. The Chandler family that once owned Times Mirror had that kind of elaborate two-tier stock structure, and a family revolt still led the company to be sold. In 2005, The New York Times was facing questions about its family stewardship. The Washington Post Company was now making more than half its revenue outside journalism.

But what really was fueling doubts was that institutional investors had forced the country's second largest newspaper chain (by circulation) to put itself up for sale. And the chain, Knight Ridder, had been one of the most aggressive cost-cutting companies in the industry, to a degree that many journalists in the company felt had damaged its papers without protecting them from Wall Street scrutiny.

In 2006, discussions that had once been limited to university seminars had begun to be held in other quarters, such as major philanthropies and chambers of commerce. Were there yet other economic models, at least for owning the local newspaper? Should journalism be funded by philanthropy? Should civic interests, willing to accept smaller financial returns for the good of their towns, step in? Could some kinds of journalism, such as investigative, be funded by private philanthropy? (The Center for Public Integrity is one such example, but other models involving more prominent investigative reporters are under discussion.) Each of the new options presents its own problems, not the least of which is the agendas of the potential funders. But heading into 2006, there was more worry that the publicly traded corporation may not be positioned to address the problems of journalism to the satisfaction of society.

In the meantime, the debate over bigness and consolidation continued. Viacom broke into two companies, both still large, but organized by properties in similar businesses. Time Warner AOL, prodded by the dissident shareholder Carl Icahn, considered splitting up after the merger that created it proved disastrous.

And the push for more consolidation in broadcasting and newspapers continued to be frozen by uncertainty at the Federal Communications Commission. The commission had badly overreached in its efforts at relaxing ownership restrictions under the chairmanship of Michael Powell, who left the agency in March 2005. The new chairman, Kevin Martin, appeared to be moving more carefully, but heading generally in a similar direction. It was possible, according to FCC watchers, that the rules might relax again by the end of 2006.

News Investment

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

Over the long term, as we have noted in earlier reports, the news media have appeared to reduce the resources devoted to original newsgathering — reporters, producers, editors, correspondents, boots on the ground.

In 2005, as was true a year earlier, that picture became more complex. The cutbacks accelerated in some media sectors, yet others were investing.

The biggest blows in 2005 appeared to come in print. After a loss of 500 jobs in 2004, the industry lost even more in 2005. By the time the tallies were in later in 2006, the industry was expected to lose between 1,500 and 2,000 newsroom professionals — editors and reporters. (Please click [here](#) for an update on final print employment tallies for 2005).

That would mean that the newspaper industry would have lost 3,500 to 3,800 newsroom professionals since 2000, or roughly 7%.

Those suffering most appear to be major metro papers — places like Dallas, Philadelphia, San Francisco, San Jose, New York, and Los Angeles.

The papers that have avoided severe cuts, such as those owned by McClatchy (a public company) and Newhouse (a private one), are those that seem dedicated to long-term investment and to building circulation. Over time, they are also the ones that have shown the best long-term results, though that has come at the expense of lower profit margins.

News magazines were also hard hit. In October 2005, U.S. News let go 10 journalists, including the magazine's chief political writer, Roger Simon. Two months later, Time Inc. shed some 105 employees, 20 of whom were journalists at its magazines. And in January 2006 the company announced another 100 staff cuts, with 10 coming from Time itself.

The situation in radio also appeared dour. According to data from RTNDA/Ball State, the average radio station doing news produced fewer than 40 minutes of it locally each day in 2004. Nearly 20 minutes of that occurred during drive-time hours.

Two-thirds of radio news directors surveyed by RTNDA/Ball State decreased their newsroom size in 2004. Fully 77% were anticipating decreases in 2005.

On top of that, the data show that journalists working in radio lag behind most other media and most other professions. The average news director was paid \$33,000.

In network news, hard hit over the last 20 years, those resources for which there are measures, such as on-air correspondents, did not appear to change much, though there is clearly a generational change occurring. Older, more experienced and pricier staff people are not having contracts renewed in favor of a younger breed.

And in cable, Fox is building, while MSNBC is cutting. Analysts projected Fox News Channel would increase programming costs by 20% in 2005, in line with the growth in revenues. It increased expenses 24% in 2004. CNN was expected to increase 4%, and that was after a cut of 8% the year before. MSNBC, however, was expected to cut costs by 10%, a repeat of what it did in 2004.

The one general sector seeing growth appeared to be online. That represents something of a change. The data are scattered and somewhat anecdotal, but in 2005 we saw evidence companies were not only beginning to invest more money, they were moving toward using the web as a platform for original content rather than an extension for their old operations. Leading the way is CBS, which hired the internet entrepreneur Larry Kramer to head CBS Digital and later thoroughly renovated its site. ABC World News Tonight, in addition to offering a newscast online three hours earlier than it does on television, updates that throughout the evening.

What is less clear, at this point, is how many new newsgatherers are being assigned to produce for the Web. For the old media, that would be their clear competitive advantage, at least at this point. The Internet-only sites offer only marginal

levels of original newsgathering, and some, such as Google, offer none.

Public Attitudes

Public Attitudes

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

The public continues to be troubled about the news media.

It would be an overstatement to suggest, however, that the country has reached some new crisis point, or even that public confidence in the press is on a worsening downward spiral.

In 2005, Americans registered more censure of the press in some areas, including heightened concerns about bias, criticism of the military, and whether the news media really protect democracy.

But by other measures — among them whether the press is professional and moral — Americans are more confident than they were before September 11, 2001, or in aftermath of the impeachment of President Bill Clinton. Overall, the percentage of Americans with a generally favorable view of the news media is rising. And the vast majority of Americans continue to support the idea that the press should be a neutral judge.

Over the longer term, to be sure, the general trend in public attitudes has been downward. We reviewed the data in our original report two years ago, but since the early 1980s Americans have come to view the news media as less professional, less accurate, less caring and less moral. Pollster Andrew Kohut has concluded, summarizing the data, that Americans increasingly believe that news organizations act out of their own economic self-interest, and journalists themselves act to advance their own careers.

In our inaugural report, we suggested that the heart of that declining trust was a “disconnect” over motive. Journalists see themselves as acting on the public’s behalf. The public believes they are either lying or deluding themselves. There was further evidence of that skepticism in 2005. The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press found that 75% of Americans believed that news organizations were more concerned with “attracting the biggest audience,” while only 19% thought they cared more about “informing the public.”¹

The public also increasingly sees the press as slanted. Nearly three quarters of Americans (72%) in the summer of 2005 saw the press as favoring one side, up from 66% two years earlier. And 60% saw the press as politically biased, up from 53% in 2003. Republicans and conservatives are even more prone to feel this way than Democrats.²

This is an area that journalists have tended to dismiss over the years. Yet different surveys of journalists also suggest that while the preponderance of news people see themselves as moderate, the percentage who identify themselves as liberal is growing, while the percentage who see themselves as conservative is shrinking.

The percentage of people who believe that criticism of the military weakens American defenses has been rising as well, and in 2005 reached its highest point (47%) since 1985 (then 31%).³

But the declines in public confidence are hardly across the board. While esteem is still down from the mid 1980s, more Americans see the press as moral than in recent years (43%, up from 39% in 2002). More see the press as willing to admit mistakes (28% vs. 23% in 2002). More see the press as “highly professional” (59% vs. 49% in 2002).⁴

And while there is doubt about scrutiny of the military, there is enduring and even slightly growing support for the press as a watchdog over politicians. More Americans (60%) believe a critical press “keeps leaders from doing things that shouldn’t done” than did in 2001 and 2003 (when the number was 54%).⁵

The public is also more inclined than a few years ago to favor the press’s right to report on stories that it considers of national interest over the government’s need to censor to protect national security. Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, only 39% of Americans thought it was more important for the press to be able to report, while 53% favored government security. By February 2006, the numbers had reversed, with 56% favoring reporting to 34% more concerned with government security.⁶

In an age when it has become popular to believe that Americans are gravitating to partisan media outlets like talk radio, the data suggest, to the contrary, enduring support for an independent press. In 2005, roughly 7 out of 10 Americans (68%) believed the press should be “neutral” rather than “pro-American,” even in covering the war on terrorism. That support for the idea of a neutral the press has remained consistent since the Pew surveys first began asking the questions in the early 1990s.⁷

Indeed, stepping back from concern over the details and looking at another level, there is even a glimmer of some larger optimism in the numbers of late.

Throughout 2005, there were signs that the percentage of Americans who had a favorable general view of the press was rising. In December 2004, some 43% had a favorable view. In February 2006, that number was 59%. Interestingly, that approval rating is also rising across party lines (though Republicans generally are less favorable than Democrats or Independents).⁸

That is a number, and an area of inquiry for researchers, worth watching. On the specifics, there are worries, even on core questions like believability. But despite the criticisms there is a growing sense of an underlying appreciation for what the press does.

No magic formula seems embedded in the numbers. Some of them rise and fall with the news. During 2005, the press helped Americans know about Hurricane Katrina, the Asian Tsunami, secret security prisons abroad, and later, in early 2006, about the Bush Administration’s conducting domestic wire tapping without first getting court warrants. Whether that performance influenced the approval numbers is difficult to know.

What does seem consistent is that the public apparently appreciates the idea that the press is aspiring to work in the public interest, trying to get it right, trying to be aggressive. People have serious doubts about whether journalists live up to those ideals, and they are disposed to think that money, rather than the public good, drives press behavior.

Footnotes

1. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, conducted in association with the Project for Excellence in Journalism, “Public More Critical of Press, but Goodwill Persists,” June 26, 2005.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, “Bush a Drag on Republican Midterm Prospects,” February 9, 2006.

7. Ibid.

8. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, “Bush a Drag on Republican Midterm Prospects” February 9, 2006.

Conclusion

Conclusion

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

In the first two years of this report, we sensed the news media in America trapped by the twin phenomena of changing technology and economic success. The former created the need for the news media to change fundamentally. The latter bred conservatism and aversion to risk. The role of the press was changing, yet the companies that controlled the media, insulated by high profits, seemed neither to fully understand nor ready act boldly. The problems on the horizon seemed to lead to marginal tinkering, not long-term strategizing.

Heading into 2006, we see a change. The problems of the news media have worsened, and with that we get a stronger sense than in earlier years that the news industry is beginning to move into the next era—especially to the Internet. In network television, it was the generational departure of the old anchors that may have helped propel thinking forward. In newspapers, steeper declines in circulation, eroding economics—and the prospect of more to come—opened minds.

The signs of understanding are not across the board. Local TV news does not appear to be building a future online the way network is. Perhaps it doesn't have to, but it is not immune from problems. Some newspapers are moving more seriously than others.

And many questions remain unresolved. One is whether the news industry has waited too long, letting too many opportunities slip by, such as offers years ago to buy start up companies that now are major new-media rivals. Another is whether consumers will care about the values that the old press embodies, or the brands—such as CBS and the New York Times—that represent those values. Third is whether, at the top, too much of the boldest vision has fled. Does the new industry have leaders who can lead journalists?

The answers won't come right away. But we can see differences even from 12 months ago. In a year that on the surface looks dark for the news media, when measured in profits and numbers, our attempts to probe across the industry hint at something positive, too. The answer, we suspect, will be in the journalism, not merely in the business strategies that fund it. And if the past tells us anything, it's that the two sides cannot flourish unless they move together.

Author's Note

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By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

For each of the media sectors, we examine six different areas — content, audience trends, economics, ownership, newsroom investment and public attitudes. We aggregate as much publicly available data as is possible in one place, and for six of the sectors the report includes original content analysis. (For local television news, we rely on five years of content analysis the Project had previously conducted. For radio and alternative media, no special content analysis was conducted.) In addition to numerous new charts of data, most charts from the 2004 report are updated and still available.

People can approach the material in this report in several ways. Users can go directly to the medium about which they are most concerned — say local TV news — and drive vertically through it. Or they can focus on a particular issue — audience trends for example — and move horizontally across different media sectors to see where Americans are going for news. Or they can move across the introductory overviews of each sector. They can flip back and forth between our narrative and the interactive charts and tabular material. Or they can work through the statistics for themselves, making their own charts, answering their own questions, in effect creating their own reports.

Our desire in this study is to answer questions we imagine any reader would find important, to help clarify the strengths and weaknesses of the available data, and to identify what is not yet answerable.

The study is the work of the Project for Excellence in Journalism, an institute affiliated with the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. The study is funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, whose leadership challenged us to take on this assignment. The chapters were written by the Project's staff, with the exception of the chapter on newspapers, which was written with the help of a co-author. All of the chapters also benefit from the input of a team of readers who are experts in each media sector.

Our aim is a research report, not an argument. Where the facts are clear, we hope we have not shied from explaining what they reveal, making clear what is proven and what is only suggested. We hope, however, that we are not seen as simply taking sides. Our intention is to inform, not to persuade.

We have tried to be as transparent as possible about sources and methods, and to make it clear when we are laying out data and when we have moved into analysis of that data. We have attempted, to the best of our ability and the limits of time, to seek out multiple sources of information for comparison where they exist. Each year we hope to gather more sources, improve our understanding and refine our methodology.

This approach — looking at a set of questions across various media — differs from the conventional way in which American journalism is analyzed, one medium at a time. We have tried to identify cross-media trends and to gather in one place data that are usually scattered across different venues. We hope this will allow us and others to make comparisons and develop insights that otherwise would be difficult to see.

Executive Summary PDF

2006 Executive Summary [See end of pdf]

THE STATE OF THE NEWS MEDIA 2006

AN ANNUAL REPORT ON AMERICAN JOURNALISM

A Day in the Life of the Media – Intro

Intro

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

May 11, 2005 was not what most people would call an extraordinary day. A warm spell moved through the Northwest into the South. Rain pelted the Rust Belt, and it was still cold in the East.

In the capital, Congress debated the appointment of John Bolton as ambassador to the U.N. The Bush administration continued to press plans to revise Social Security. Amtrak officials tried to sort out what was causing cracks in the Acela trains between Washington and Boston. The actor Macaulay Culkin testified at Michael Jackson's molestation trial. In a small town called Zion, Ill., the police charged an ex-convict named Jerry Hobbs with murdering his 8-year-old daughter and her friend.

Abroad, a series of terrorist car bomb attacks in Iraq killed 79, the culmination of four weeks of escalating violence. North Korea claimed to have removed fuel rods from nuclear reactors that could be used for nuclear weapons. Hundreds in Afghanistan protested after reports, little noticed yet in the U.S., that interrogators at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, had desecrated the Koran.

In 2005, Americans could turn to the widest array of media outlets in history, a combination of 19th century print outlets, 20th century radio and TV outlets, and 21st century Web sites and blogs — each of them trying to distill and order events into an account of the day.

Prior years of this report examined a representative sample month of news to get a broad picture of the tendencies, strengths and weaknesses of different media. But it was impossible to see how an individual event was covered up close, to get a feel beyond the numbers. To do that, we decided this year to monitor A Day in the Life of the News, to examine in detail what audiences got over 24 hours from a wide range of news media at the national and local level online, on radio, on television and in print.

What would Americans learn from one medium versus another, and what would they not? How do stories come and go over a few hours? As citizens make their daily news choices, where could they go for certain kinds of information versus others? To the extent that a single day offers clues, what would a sensible and varied news diet look like?

Among the findings:

- What people learn depends heavily on where they go for news. The medium may not be the message, but it no doubt influences it. In print, online and on the network evening newscasts

this day, violence in Iraq, a false alarm in Washington, and protests in Afghanistan were the top stories. On cable and morning news, the trial of Michael Jackson and the Illinois murder case were played higher. On local TV and radio, weather, traffic and local crime dominated — and that was an altogether different definition of local than one finds in print. As the media fragments nowadays, consumers must choose strategically to get a complete diet. The notion of relying on a single or primary source for news — one-stop shopping — may no longer make sense.

- When audiences did encounter the same story in different places, often they heard from a surprisingly small number of sources. Every network morning show and cable program covered the story about a security scare involving President Bush by interviewing the same lone person, a security expert from Citibank. ¹ (A grenade, which did not explode, had been found near the site where Bush made a speech in Tbilisi, Georgia.) The murder in Illinois was similarly covered in national broadcast news mainly by interviewing the local prosecutor. More coverage, in other words, does not always mean greater diversity of voices.
- The incremental and even ephemeral nature of what the media define as news is striking. Few of what would emerge as the top stories this day would be remembered months later — or even, a search of data bases reveals, get much coverage within a day or two. And the efforts to add context to some ongoing stories were inhibited by speed, space and journalistic formula, especially on television. Journalism has always leaned toward the transitory and incremental over the systemic — news that breaks rather than news that bends. The older part of the 24-hour-news system — cable news — seems to have exaggerated this with a fixation on immediacy. It is less clear which way the Internet leans. Some online sites, particularly the Web aggregators, seem to be moving toward the ephemeral. Yet others, including some TV sites, may move the other way, toward collecting deeper reports than they offer now. And the arrival of citizens into the mix seems to push further toward more significant or longer-term issues. The blogosphere may have been the platform least focused on the immediate of any that we monitored.
- While the news is always on, there is not a constant flow of new events. The level of repetition in the 24-hour news cycle is one of the most striking features one finds in examining a day of news. Google News, for instance, offers consumers access to some 14,000 stories from its front page, yet on this day they were actually accounts of the same 24 news events. On cable, just half of the stories monitored across the 12 hours were new. The concept of news cycle is not really obsolete, and the notion of news 24-7 is something of an exaggeration.

To study a day in the life in the media, we picked a universe to be representative of a broad swath of what Americans can choose from. It included three national newspapers, the three primary cable news channels, the three major commercial broadcast networks, PBS, seven news Web sites, seven prominent blogs, and a wide cross-section of TV,

radio, newspapers, and ethnic and alternative media in three American cities, Houston, Milwaukee, and Bend, Ore. The result was a study that included 2,125 stories in 57 outlets and 48 hours of programming on radio and television, all offered in a single day, May 11, 2005—plus 112 different blog postings. (Newspapers were coded for the following morning, May 12. For the full list of outlets, please see the methodology.)

To what extent did any of what we saw reflect more than this one day? The results, it turns out — about topics covered, sourcing, and more, in each medium — closely mirror what we have found in these media and others for the last two years, when we took randomly constructed months of news for each, analyzed them by topic and broke down the reporting.

The Media Culture: a Loose Typology

If different media offer distinctly different news agendas, what did we find about each in our study of May 11?

Online : “The Internet,” we found, describes a technology, not a style of media or a set of values or even a journalistic approach. The seven news Web sites we monitored varied widely — from Google’s emphasis on speed and bulk to Yahoo’s focus on navigability to a local TV news station’s site, largely a portal for advertising copy. Many of the most popular sites also remain largely a stepchild of print and wire-service content, especially the so-called Internet-only sites that produce no copy of their own. As a result, while the Internet has added more outlets from which to choose, it has not, our study suggests, added new topics to the agenda.

Ultimately, it still seems unclear what online news will come to represent. Will it be constant updating, focusing on being fast and first? Or more depth, as sites are freed from the confines of space and time? Will online journalism come to mean multi-media convergence, including downloading sound and pictures to PDAs and phones? Or a worrisome intermingling of advertising and editorial? Or will online journalism move toward more citizen voices, more communication with the audience, and more opinion? In the seven sites studied we found all of the above, but none of it all in one place. Two of the most innovative sites we encountered, interestingly, were from old media, a TV network (CBS) and a mid-sized metropolitan newspaper (the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel).

Blogs : If the media culture needs navigators, by day’s end the seven popular blogs we studied would offer that — to an extent. As the hours went by, the bloggers sifted through the content of the mainstream media and noted what they deemed important, curious, absent, interesting or objectionable. But contrary to the charge that the blogosphere is purely parasitic, we also found new topics here, and new angles on old ones. Indeed, the blogs were generally less concerned than many traditional journalists with the latest breaking news, and more focused on long-term issues. Yet there was little here that a journalist would call reporting or even sourcing. Only 1% of the posts this day involved a blogger doing an interview, and only another 5% involved some other kind of original research, such as examining documents. There is no summary of the news to be had here. The blogs ultimately are idiosyncratic. It is not citizen journalism in any traditional sense, but something closer to a stylized citizen media forum, often with an insider’s tone and its own nomenclature.

Cable News : Up close, the striking thing about much of cable news, the first 24-hour medium, is a fixation with whatever is happening at the moment. The result is a good deal of repetition and a good deal that is ephemeral. The reporting, perhaps because of the time to fill rather than despite it, was shallowest by our indicators of any national media studied.

To a degree that we do not find on network TV, the three main cable news channels have also grown distinct from each other. Fox has built its appeal around trying to help its viewers put the news in some order — a conservative order — even if the production values are sometimes ragged. CNN is far more earnest, and tied to the immediate, and seems less sure what the difference is between its different programs. MSNBC, for its part, seems a different channel virtually from program to program — sometimes an extension of NBC News, sometimes something quite alien from its broadcast cousin. If there is a common thread between Don Imus in the morning, Chris Matthews in the evening and Keith Olbermann at night, it might be an effort at being ironic and glib.

Network : The contrast between the network nightly and morning news is so striking that the term network TV news almost seems a misnomer. It makes more sense to talk nightly news versus morning. The three evening newscasts were virtually identical to each other and very different from their network siblings in the morning.

A close look also suggests just how disadvantaged the traditional 30-minute evening newscasts are today. They are still trying to cover traditional hard news, but they are constrained by airing only once a day, by a newshole that is really 18 minutes, and by limited staff, which seems even more apparent when you look closely. People who want a quick, one-shot fill on the major national and international events of the day can still find that here, but within a set viewing times and brevity of a 30 minute program.

In the mornings, the luxury of an hour time slot makes a difference, but the news agenda is lighter and focused on emotion. Morning News and Features would probably be a more fitting title. Much, too, depends on the ability of two or three anchors to be experts in everything, prepared for everything, and charming all at the same time.

Newspapers : If ink on paper has an advantage, the day would suggest it is in the number of boots on the ground. This is the medium that is covering the most topics, has the deepest sourcing, explores the most angles in stories, and for now is supplying most of the content for the Internet. A reader also discovers probably the closest thing to a medium still trying to provide all the news a consumer might want, though perhaps in language and sourcing tilted toward elites. Looming, as readers inevitably shift to acquiring their news online, is the question of what happens to the more complete reporting that additional time affords. And how many boots will be left on the ground if the print editions that pay the bills continue to shrink.

Local TV : Local TV, at least in the three cities studied, focused on what news managers apparently thought people could use, traffic and weather, and what they were worried about, accidents and crime. Take out traffic, weather and sports, indeed, and half of all the newshole — and an even greater percentage of lead stories — was devoted to crime and accidents. But the bulk of what made up local news in print — issues like government, taxes, infrastructure and civic institutions — was relegated here to brief “tell” stories in the middle of the newscast. In style and format, the stations were strikingly similar, even across cities. The stories here were just the facts. There was little opinion, our statistical breakdown shows. But on average local TV news stories had the shallowest sourcing and explored the fewest angles of events covered of any medium studied except local radio.

Radio : Contrary to the notion that radio news is all syndicated national material, we found local radio news today to be very local — but also limited in scope. What listeners get is headlines read from wires, adapted from the newspaper, or provided by national networks. The stories are brief — almost always less than a minute and often less than 30 seconds. What depth of coverage we found came largely from talk show hosts offering opinions on issues or taking calls from listeners. But we found little in the way of reporters in the field, or what most journalists would consider

reporting. Over all, just 14% of stories would involve field reports, and many were from syndicated network feeds. And the eight stations in three cities monitored this day are strikingly alike, in format and style.

Chronology of the Day:

The Early News — Waking up to Headlines

The news day begins awfully early. By 5 a.m., local radio has already entered its magic period, drive time. Those who tune in will get much the same thing in every city — except where the talk shows have already begun — a troika of headlines, traffic and weather. On KTRH in Houston, its news of a state tax bill, a metro rail crash, threats at a local school, a Vioxx trial. And contrary to the idea that radio is now all national syndication, half of all headlines this day are local. But anyone looking for in-depth reporting here won't find much of it, in early drive time or later.

Local TV news is already on, too, and those who tune in are greeted this day with sirens, overnight homicides, weather maps and traffic cams. The few pieces with reporters are mostly about crimes or accidents — that metro rail crash in Houston, a double homicide in Milwaukee. The rest of the news is handled by anchors reading quick “tell” stories, just as on radio. What distinguishes local TV is that the weather and traffic coverage is the most detailed on any media studied.

Once to the front door, people who pick up the morning paper find a far broader scope of the news — this medium is still trying to offer the full menu — from complete sports to the full range of both national and local news. Even the smaller paper in Bend, Ore., features New York Times and Washington Post foreign coverage. Even if one has already listened to local radio, or caught the 15-minute news cycle on local TV, the stories here are more complete versions of the headlines they would have heard elsewhere. The New York Times and L.A. Times are giving big play to the default by United Airlines on its pension plans. In Houston, late night tax bill maneuvering by the state legislature is major news. Milwaukee, it's election fraud and bumbling efforts by Marquette University to change the name of its sports teams.

And those who wander to a computer this early find basically the morning newspapers and wire services. Google's lead story is about a “grenade found near Bush's speech site,” from the English-language service of the Chinese news agency Xinhua. In most American papers the story is just a few paragraphs inside. Yahoo! is leading with the murder case in Zion, Ill., and the grenade near Bush. There is only minimal updating with overnight news — riots in Afghanistan and violence in Iraq — but they're on the New York Times Web site as well.

7 a.m. : The network and cable morning

At 7 a.m., TV viewers get a major change in their news day when broadcast television shifts from local programming to network.

“Was the president's life in danger?” Katie Couric asks as she opens NBC's “Today,” television news's longest-running weekday program. “The Secret Service investigates a grenade scare overseas.” The news agenda is decidedly different from what one was hearing on local news — and softer than what one gets online or in print. There is more emphasis on celebrity, lifestyle and consumer risk, and the crime, since it's not local, tends to bend toward the lurid. The top stories in the first hour are whether the president's life was in danger from that grenade (apparently it wasn't), the grisly murder in Illinois (a story that would vanish in a couple of days), a woman killed in an amusement park accident (not

covered elsewhere), a new ATM scam, a mistaken mastectomy, a new Rolling Stone tour, Nancy Reagan and interviews with the winners of CBS's "Amazing Race."

The tone is more informal than on local TV, too (rather than anchor desk, there are love seats and coffee mugs) and more emotional (words like "horrific" and "stunning" are used to set up stories and to conclude them).

For those who prefer cable news, the Fox and CNN morning shows are chatty and informal, too, but without the focus on emotion or lighter fare and with more politics. (CNN covers the grenade story and the murder, but also violence in Iraq and global warming. Fox airs a piece on a move in Congress for ID tags for immigrants and reports questions about homeland security alerts from that morning's USA Today). To connect with viewers, apparently, the cable hosts this day offer their political opinions — conservative on Fox, liberal on CNN. "The Bush team criticized John Kerry for suggesting the war would cost \$200 billion," the CNN correspondent Andy Serwer says in a dig at the administration. "And, in fact, it's costing \$200 billion to date." Adds the anchor Soledad O'Brien: "You're right, and it will probably cost more."

Those who dip into the blogosphere will find it is also already humming by 7 a.m. — the first posts came in as early as 1:18 a.m. EST (Eschaton), but the agenda here is more professorial and much more targeted than in the dreaded MSM. At Talking Points Memo, Josh Marshall this morning is worried about the current Senate debate on the filibuster rule. Eschaton is worrying about falling U.S. wages and Crooks and Liars is writing about a Baptist preacher ousted for political comments made to his congregation.

9 a.m. to Midday : The Waiting Game

By nine a.m., people are getting to work or settling into a quiet house and can go online or to cable news for the latest headlines. But there aren't all that many new things to report. The North Korea and Iraq stories available at 7 a.m. have now been fleshed out with video and background links, especially on CBS News and CNN. (Those stories, incidentally, will carry through to the next day's papers.)

The cable channels, meanwhile, are eagerly awaiting those top news stories they promised they would follow. The problem is there isn't anything to report yet. Macaulay Culkin is expected to testify at Michael Jackson's trial, but all we see are shots of the courthouse door he will walk through. The prosecutor in the Illinois murder is supposed to hold a press conference but it is delayed, and again and again we see shots of the mike stand where he is expected to speak.

Noon : Fifteen Minutes of Breaking News

Suddenly, at noon, news breaks out. The White House is being evacuated. So, moments later, are the Capitol and Supreme Court. For those getting online news alerts, or watching TV, the moment is scary. On cable, there are pictures of people running. "This is not a drill," a policeman is heard yelling. A plane, we hear, has violated D.C. airspace.

In 15 minutes, it's over. The plane was a single-engine Cessna gone off course that failed to respond to radio warnings. Finally, about a mile from the White House, the plane reacted to visual contact from Air Force jets. The whole business was a false alarm.

Yet CNN viewers would hear of virtually nothing else the rest of the day. For the next six hours, the news channel would veer from the plane scare just three times, once to brief on Culkin's testimony in the Jackson trial, once for a quick

update on Congress for “Inside Politics,” and briefly during the second half of Lou Dobbs’s business and economics show.

People going online after lunch, when Internet news sites get a surge in traffic around 1 p.m., would find the plane story dominating there, too, at least for a while. NYTimes.com would post at 3:20 p.m., with a more complete account. CNN.com would have updated twice. And Google, for some reason, would be featuring the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s account. On CBSNews.com the Jackson trial would already have supplanted the plane scare as the lead.

On local news as the afternoon moves on, what captivated the breathless narrators on CNN and the editors of national Web sites would be only a passing headline.

Listeners to local radio in Houston hear a few seconds on the incident before turning back to talk about divorce on KTRH. In Milwaukee, the subject quickly returns to Marquette’s nickname on WTMJ, and on WHBL in Sheboygan, Wis., to a beef between the mayor and police officers. As the day moves into drive time, traffic and weather become more important again. The same is true on local TV by mid-afternoon. At 5 p.m., the focus is on local news, and more traffic and weather. The stations in Houston are still leading with the aftermath of that traffic fatality the night before, with repeats of much of the video seen last night and early this morning. In Milwaukee, the story is Marquette’s nickname and a police union election.

And for denizens of the blogosphere, the transitory nature of the plane scare made it even less significant a topic. Here, the subjects ranged instead from a blogger convention in Nashville (Instapundit) to a terror alert on a British Airways flight (Little Green Footballs) to a headline in Google News about a Holocaust memorial (Powerline). The criteria of significance on the blogs, it seems, are not so tied to immediacy.

Network News and the Dinner Hour: The Evening Roundups

There was a time, a generation ago, when the news cycle was winding down by 6:30. It ended, except for late local news, after the network nightly newscasts carried their accounts of national and international events. The three news divisions had a monopoly over the video of these stories. Americans then waited until the morning newspapers if they wanted more details. That long ago ceased being the case, and the changeover accelerated in the last five years with the evolution of the Internet.

But 27 million Americans still tune in to see what the news operations of ABC, CBS and NBC say happened for the day, and on this night at least, it is the story that has dominated cable and the Internet. The D.C. plane scare is the lead story on all three programs, making up roughly the first five to six minutes. The networks try to offer something more than their new rivals — minute-by-minute chronologies and discussions about how the air security system works. But the reports, beyond the basic facts of the event, have a hasty and speculative quality. The authorities won’t say how the system works. Some think the evacuation was a gross overreaction. Others say the system works beautifully. It also mattered little this day which program one watched. The first 12 minutes of each covered the same stories — after the plane scare, violence in Iraq, then a follow on the United Airlines pensions. The stories that were major fare on cable and the network morning shows that day — the grenade story, the Zion murder and Michael Jackson — are largely skipped.

On PBS, the NewsHour with Jim Lehrer offers viewers an altogether different news agenda of this day than they can find virtually anywhere else on television. After brief accounts in its news summary of the plane scare and violence in

Iraq, the newscast focuses on the pension story, melting in the Arctic circle, and a background discussion on the fights in the Senate over judicial nominations that have intensified the political polarization in Washington. The segments are long, nine to 12 minutes, and the interviews often involve three experts, not one. The contrast is such that one wonders whether public broadcasting will try to expand into other parts of the day, as NPR has done on radio.

A Night in Cable News: Attitude, Opinion, and Irony

The national news day would once have ended now, but for cable viewers, in many ways, the heat is just turning on. Even more so than during the day, at night the cable news channels are quite varied as they counter-program off each other to maximize audience, one going with talk, another with news, another business, and then an hour later reshuffling the deck.

At 6:00 p.m., Fox's most politics- and policy-focused program, "Special Report with Brit Hume," gives its audience one of the more complete studies of the plane scare seen on TV this day. On MSNBC, the Washington "hardball" insider Chris Matthews (on the network's top-rated show) tells viewers he loved a new book by a fellow GE employee, Tim Russert (it left him "crying") and about a tribute that night to Nancy Reagan. CNN's Lou Dobbs's gives viewers more plane scare, plus a little on North Korean nuclear claims, riots in Afghanistan and Iraq car bombings.

There is no clear time slot for a signature evening newscast on cable, nor are there programs that really resemble them. On Fox, the evening news summary arguably is split between Hume and, an hour later, "The Fox Report with Shepard Smith." On MSNBC, the closest thing viewers get is "Countdown with Keith Olbermann," where the subject is as much Olbermann's take on the news as the news itself. He is telling viewers, among other things, about the plane scare (the coverage was overblown), a football player caught with a device called a Wizzonater (Olbermann raises his generous eyebrows over the name) which could help conceal drug use, and a Michael Jackson "Puppet Theater" he is auctioning off on eBay.

The audience for CNN's evening summary newscast, meanwhile, "NewsNight with Aaron Brown" (since replaced by "Anderson Cooper 360") learns all about the plane scare from five different angles — and there is no irony, thank you.

At some point during the evening viewers can get at least one talk show on each news channel. On Fox the No. 1 rated "O'Reilly Factor" is focused on an editorial in the Westchester County Journal News which, Bill O'Reilly says, is "true and dumb," on the Macaulay Culkin testimony — "why should I care?" — and on the "continuing meltdown of the American criminal justice system." On CNN, top-rated Larry King offers no opinions as he talks with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

By 9 p.m., users will find that online news Web sites have slowed down, even though this is prime time for overall traffic. CBSNews.com is still leading with that Jackson story. The New York Times has an updated account of the plane scare posted at 7 p.m. Click 2 Houston, the Web site of the NBC affiliate in town, where "Local News Comes First," is still on that pickup truck that crashed into a metro rail train the night before. And Google is leading with the Reuters account for the next morning's papers of the plane scare, followed, oddly, by a 7-hour-old account of that grenade incident from the Chinese news agency. The next day's papers have not posted. That will come sometime closer to midnight.

In the blogosphere, some have signed off by 8 p.m. The others are offering opinions on one of their brethren's experiences on the Michael Medved talk radio show (Eschaton), a Senate report on Iraqi oil allocations (Power Line),

and a blogger getting “overly exercised” about Bush’s recent comments about Yalta (Instapundit).

The news cycle won’t end, but people eventually do go to sleep. Their news cycle ends. For some, it will come after the local news.

Jon Stewart, the last word

For others, it may come with a different accounting of the day from Jon Stewart on the Daily Show. Stewart, whose program airs on Comedy Central but is a source of news for many of its viewers, opened his show, like the network newscasts, with the Cessna that flew into restricted D.C. air space. But rather than focusing on whether policy makers did or didn’t do the right thing, or how big a story this was or wasn’t, the Daily Show focused on something viewers might have noticed. “The important thing is in the three-and-half years since 9-11 we have made tremendous progress in dealing with these situations,” Stewart says. “A new strategy has been implemented. It worked to perfection today. It’s called (pause) run for you lives.”

The show also turns its attention to North Korea and its weapons program, another major story in the media culture this day, and his target here is just how fuzzy the official estimates seemed to be about how many weapons North Korea might be able to make. “Ahhh, half-dozenish, 10 million casualties give or take, you know.” There is rant from Comedian Lewis Black, a “This Week in God Segment” and an installment of “Great Moments in Punditry as Read by Children.”

After a day in which many Americans may have been exposed to images, bits of news, earnest commentators, alarmist codewords, pompous newsmakers and maybe pompous news providers, a sense of absurdity can come to mind. The Daily Show articulates that.

Conclusion

In the end, one does draw some conclusions about the different media — what they offer and what they do not. None excel at everything. And there are few, if any, news consumers who rely on only one of these outlets anymore.

The Day in the Life of the News offers two warnings, as well. Consuming the news continuously does not mean being better informed. There is too much repetition, and too much confusion. The most efficient diet means finding the right mix depending on the time of the day, the nature of the news that day, and more. The wrong mix may prove to be a waste of time, the one thing consumers can never get back.

Footnotes

1. This story count includes every channel that aired a segment about the incident. Brief anchor reads of a headline about the incident were excluded.

Close this window

Newspaper

Newspaper

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

How did May 11 look in print?

The challenge and opportunity for newspapers is time. With ink on paper, the news is delivered the following day. The only way newspapers can bring new information is by concentrating on “exclusives” or by taking advantage of the extra time to make more calls, gather more information and weigh more arguments to add new dimensions to their reporting.

So what did consumers get by waiting until the morning of May 12 to learn about May 11 that they could not have found on radio or TV or online earlier — beyond the tactile pleasure some claim from holding the paper in their hands over morning coffee?

Based on a close examination of this day:

- Newspaper readers on balance learn about the widest range of topics and get the deepest sourcing and the most angles on the news among consumers of all media studied except one.
- That exception, the Internet, in turn, still relies for the heart of its content on print journalism, and if papers were to vanish it is hard to see what might replace them.
- Most of the local news we found in newspapers was absent from local television.
- The local metro dailies remain committed to offering a complete menu of news — national and international as well as local. They are not becoming niche products.
- The degree to which citizens could have gotten news sooner from the online version of the paper varied from one paper to the next, but for the most part, the print version remains the papers’ primary outlet.
- One lurking question is whether the breadth and depth offered requires a day’s delay or can be realized in more immediate reporting online.

This close look also revealed some differences among the papers. In a local metro daily rather than a big national paper, government was less important and crime much more important, as were issues not tied to government. And if their newspaper was suburban, government and community issues dominated, but crime, foreign affairs and national defense were not much of a concern. Yet despite the predictable distinctions, big national papers like the New York Times and smaller metropolitan papers like the Bend Bulletin in Oregon shared far more with each other than they did with other media, and perhaps more than many people might expect .

In previous years, our content studies of newspapers, conducted over 28 randomly selected days, gave a general picture of print: Readers of newspapers get a more traditional mix of hard and soft news than in other media as well as coverage more focused on powerful institutions. Newspaper stories generally are more deeply and clearly sourced, though they also rely more on anonymous sources.

By the numbers, May 11 held true to that form.

In addition to more and deeper sourcing on major stories, newspaper stories also scored higher on our index that measured how many contextual elements stories explored to make them more relevant and useful to readers. ¹ And here print actually scored higher than online.

On May 12, newspapers, again, also tended to rely more on anonymous sourcing than other media, except national Web sites.

Depth of News Coverage Across All Media Percentage of all Major Stories

	National Newspapers	Metro Newspapers	National Websites	Cable TV
3+ sources	90%	53%	93%	20%
1+ anonymous source	56%	41%	61%	37%
3+ contextual elements	57%	15%	51%	21%

Yet beyond the numbers, what did the coverage of a day in the news feel like in print? What could one learn? What was missing? If newspapers are shrinking, or if the big metro papers are suffering most, what would their erosion cost us?

We examined three national papers, as well as the local papers in three cities: the New York Times, USA Today and the Los Angeles Times at the national level, and the Houston Chronicle, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and the Bend Bulletin in Oregon. We also examined two suburban dailies, the Baytown Sun outside of Houston and the Waukesha Freeman outside of Milwaukee, and discuss them separately below. We analyzed every story that day in the front section, and the front pages of the local and business sections.

Local News in Print versus on TV

Newspapers, even at the local level, simply define news differently from local television or even national network and cable news. In local metro dailies, citizens were far more likely to learn about things like taxes, education, zoning commissions and the activities of government than they would in most other media. In the metro papers in Houston, Milwaukee and Bend, a third of the space was taken up by matters relating to government or domestic issues such as education. On local TV in those cities on the same day, by comparison, only 23% of the space was filled with those topics, and often they commanded only brief anchor reads read from wire stories — some of them from the local newspaper.

In the Houston Chronicle, for instance, readers of the front and local sections would have learned about:

- a major plan to reform two failing local high schools
- machinations in the Texas Senate over taxes

- a new plan in the legislature to revamp college admissions
- the arrival in Texas of a controversial border vigilante group from Arizona
- problems with university graduation rates
- the killing of a Texas House bill to aid the poor
- a drop in the governor's approval rating

Not one of those stories earned a package on any of the city's three main TV stations' morning, evening or late newscasts. The state tax bill and high school reform plan were mentioned in brief tell stories in some newscasts. The others were completely absent.

Topics of News Coverage in Select Media
Percent of all Words or Time

	National Newspapers	Metro Dailies	Local TV	Local Radio
Election	0%	1%	2%	3%
Government	27	19	9	23
Defense/Military	13	2	2	3
Crime	17	26	42	24
Business	16	17	5	10
Domestic Issues	5	13	14	24
Science	3	6	2	1
Foreign Relations	11	8	4	1
Accidents	*	2	8	3
Celebrity	4	2	4	2
Lifestyle	3	3	10	8
Other	0	1	0	0
Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.				

In the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel a reader could learn about a former Nazi prison guard who lives in the area losing his U.S. citizenship, the state lottery losing nearly a quarter-million dollars on a failed Super Bowl promotion, or a local Presbyterian college that argued that unionization and federal labor laws impinged on its religious freedom. Only one of those showed up on local TV — the Nazi prison guard story — and then only as a brief anchor read.

On local TV, instead, hometown news tended to mean mostly crime, accidents, traffic and weather. Crime and accidents alone made up half of all the newshole. In the local newspapers in the same cities, crime and accidents still

made up a sizable share, but it was roughly half as much (28%). Local radio's treatment of crime and accidents on this day was more on par with the local papers — 27%.

National and International News in print versus TV

The differences were even greater when it came to national news. The local metro dailies studied were notable in how comprehensive they tried to be. It is clear that those publications imagine themselves as institutions of record from which readers can get as full an account of the events of the world as space permits. As of 2005, they had not ceded to other papers or Web sites the task of the news beyond their town.

Federal Highway Bill Coverage, by Media

	National Newspapers
National Print	Inside A
Local Print	Inside A
Local TV	None
Local Radio	None
Network TV	None
Cable TV	None

All three of the smaller papers, for instance, (as well as the New York Times and the L.A. Times) carried a story on the inside pages of their front sections about a bill in Congress to increase funds for federal highways. That story appeared nowhere on local television. Nor did it appear on national television news, either network or cable.

The other big news out of Congress this day, a bill to crack down on gangs, was a story in the Bend Bulletin and the Milwaukee Journal, but the Houston Chronicle passed. Yet TV viewers were far less likely to see it. The only word of it on TV in the three cities was a brief tell story on WITI in Milwaukee at 10 p.m. and another on KTRK's 6 a.m. news in Houston .

The differences were equally striking when we compared what local residents got in the way of international news. On May 12, the local metro papers contained nearly as much coverage of foreign affairs topics as the three major national papers (8% of all space versus 11% in national papers) and twice as much as local TV.

Certain international stories, in particular, were virtually absent from TV yet were major news in the local papers. Often the stories that newspapers carried and television did not seemed somewhat complicated. Every metro paper studied devoted significant space to the news that North Korea had taken nuclear rods from power plants with the intent to use them in making nuclear weapons. In Houston and Bend, that was a Page 1 story. It never appeared on any of the local TV programs studied, and was mentioned on only one network evening newscast.

North Korean Nuclear Rods, Coverage

Houston Chronicle	Pg.1
Milwaukee Journal	Inside A
Bend Bulletin	Pg.1
National Newspapers	Pg.1/Inside
Local TV	None
National TV	1 anchor tell

The quality of the national and foreign coverage also was not as different as some might guess between the local metro dailies and the national papers. The reason was simple. What appeared in the local papers was usually coverage from the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Los Angeles Times. On major stories getting significant treatment, those major papers were more often the source of wire copy than the Associated Press. The AP showed up far more as the source for shorter stories and briefs.

For the North Korea story, all of the local papers monitored relied on the New York Times. On the D.C. plane scare of the previous day, the Bend Bulletin used the Washington Post, the Houston Chronicle relied on the Chicago Tribune syndicate and the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel used the New York Times. 2

Still, if we look at the overall geographic focus of the content in these papers, beyond just the topics, the local metro dailies covered more of the news from a local angle. The stories in these papers were more than twice as likely to focus on the metro or regional area as were the national papers (47% versus 24%). In other words, even if the topics themselves were national or international, these papers were more likely to try to put it in a local context, to bring the story home.

Geographic Focus of Stories, by Media Percent of all Stories

	National Newspapers	Metro Papers	Suburban Papers	Local TV
Metro	17%	31%	63%	69%
Regional	7	16	10	12
National	43	28	18	9
U.S. Int'l	26	18	7	7
Non-US int'l	4	7	1	2
None	4	*	1	1

National Newspapers versus Network and Cable TV

The differences between TV and print were not limited to local outlets. They were almost as significant when comparing network and cable TV news and the three national newspapers studied.

In the national papers, a third of space (32%) was devoted to government and other domestic issues, (a little less, actually, than the 49% we found in 2003 and 2004 studies). On network morning news, that number was 20%, on cable 18%. Only network evening news was close at 29%.

New York Times Iraq Car bombs	L A Times Trade Pact on Slippery Slope	USA Today Fairness of Taxes Study in Question
North Korea Nuclear Rods	CA farmers adding Tourism to Survivor	Support from City Folks Takes Root on the Farm
Bolton Asserts Independence in Intelligence	Marines in Iraq Vulnerable in Dessert Search	Trend: You Smoke? You're Fired!
D.C. Plane Violation	North Korean Nuclear Rods	
How Japan Dumps Trash	Arrest of Mayoral Contributor	
Afghan Protests	Macaulay Culkin Testifies	

And stories that highlighted emotion were much more important to TV than they were to print. On network news and even on cable, for instance, the discovery of an unexploded grenade near where President Bush had spoken on a trip to the former Soviet Republic of Georgia was a major story. It led the network morning news, was the second item on the evening news, and was covered prominently on cable throughout the day. Given that it was not known at the time whether the grenade was operational, a dummy or even a training device, it was a minor item in newspapers, a couple of paragraphs, and those mostly appeared the day before. ³

Newspapers versus Online

If newspapers offer something audiences could not get from television, what about online? How much of what was in the paper the next morning was on Web sites the day before, or even the night before?

The answer varies. The national news Web sites appear to be moving faster than the local. And some local are moving faster than others.

In Milwaukee, for instance the bulk of the stories on the Journal Sentinel's Web site as of 9 p.m. May 11 were the stories from that morning's papers — not what would be in the next day's papers or what had happened during the day.

The paper did have a feature at the top of the page, called DayWatch, in which reporters file brief accounts of stories they are working on for tomorrow's paper. Those filings give a crisp sense of what had happened on some major stories of the day, particularly breaking news. But readers the next morning got a much fuller account of the news.

On May 11, for instance, the top DayWatch item as of 9 p.m., which had been posted at 4:29, reported that Gov. Jim Doyle of Wisconsin and leaders of the Republican-controlled legislature were working on a deal for minimum-wage legislation. In the paper the next morning, readers learned that the deal was done and that workers would see the bump in their paychecks starting June 1, with significant details put together by three reporters, working in both Madison and Milwaukee .

But in Houston, the Chronicle posted online nearly full accounts of stories that would appear in the next day's paper as they became available, with time stamps of when they were posted. Online readers get more — though not all — of

the newspaper the evening before, and many of the evolving elements even earlier.

Local TV station Web sites in Houston, incidentally, do the same, with rough text accounts of breaking news, plus video and audio, and time stamps of not just when stories were posted but when they were updated.

Are All Stories the Same?

What people learned about some stories differed depending on what paper they read, and in some cases on where that paper got its account. Because the national papers' accounts are carried by so many outlets, their stories have added weight. Consider the case of the story about North Korea's announcing it had harvested a nuclear power reactor as a step to making weapons. Readers of the New York Times account were told that this was "a lot of symbolism and taunting" but that U.S. officials "had seen no evidence" to prove the claim and that there were reasons to doubt how serious North Korea was.

But readers of the Los Angeles Times story got a different sense. The development was "a key step toward preparing to harvest plutonium for bombs," it said. South Korea, which had reacted calmly to other recent provocations, this time had "expressed alarm." And the chief outside expert quoted in the story (also quoted by the New York Times but emphasizing far less dire points) said the North Koreans probably weren't blustering. "Everything the North Koreans said they're doing, it turns out they have in fact done."

The Times story, datelined Tokyo but clearly reported in at least two capitals, was emphasizing U.S. efforts not to sound intimidated. The Los Angeles Times story, datelined Seoul, South Korea, was not as heavy on official American diplomatic reaction.

Yet more Americans this day probably got the more skeptical New York Times version. Its story ran in Milwaukee and Houston and on Page 1 in Bend, Ore., as well as in the New York Times.

Other stories also had differences as well, though the differences about how to interpret the news seemed larger than differences about questions of fact. On the violence in Iraq, for instance, the New York Times had "at least 79 dead." The Los Angeles Times and USA Today put the number at "more than 60." The Houston Chronicle, using a story from the Washington Post, reported "72 killed." Yet all four accounts agreed on what was going on in Iraq over the last two weeks that offered background for the violence, and the reasons behind the escalation.

Differences among Major Papers

The national papers also did not have the same news agenda. The Los Angeles Times, for instance, was more local, and less tied to the news of the day. It featured three local stories on its Page 1, plus another specific to California. It also carried two trend stories. That left two non-local news stories on its front, both international in nature.

The New York Times, by contrast, was more about breaking news of the day—violence in Iraq, the plane scare in Washington, the North Korean announcement, and the protests in Afghanistan. It carried just one feature, about trash in Japan.

USA Today, meanwhile, carried no breaking news stories on its front page. It led rather with two trend features—about farming and about smoking on the job. And the lead story was an enterprise piece about how the USA Today

had discovered that an adviser on a federal study of laser guns was a paid consultant to the manufacturer of the product. None of the three national papers agreed on the top story this day. None of the local papers did, either.

The sense from looking at the media generally this day was that the national newspapers in the country are on close examination more different from each other than are rival national network television news programs.

The Top Four Stories of May 11

Finally, it is hard to generalize about how papers handled what emerged in our study as the top four stories of May 11 — the plane scare in Washington, the murder in Zion, Ill., the Michael Jackson trial and violence in Iraq.

The double murder in Illinois, a staple of network morning news, local TV, and cable, for instance, was a minor print story in the national papers, and no story at all in the local ones, except in Houston; the confessed killer had been a prisoner in the Texas system. In a similar vein, the Michael Jackson trial, the third most covered story over all and a staple on cable and network morning TV, was a minor inside story in print save for the Los Angeles Times, where the trial was local.

Treatment of Top Stories on May 11th

	D.C. Plane Scare	Double Murders	Iraq Car Bombs	Jackson Trial
New York Times	A1	A17	A1	A16
LA Times	A5	A6	A4	A1
USA Today	A3	A3	A7	A3
Houston Ch.	A4	A1	A16	A3
Milwaukee Jour.	A3	A (Inside)	A9	A5
Bend Bulletin	A3	None	A5	C7

The other two top stories of the day were more likely to be covered by the newspapers. Those were terrorism in Iraq and the plane scare in Washington, but coverage varied by newspaper. The Iraq story was passed over largely by local TV, cable and morning news. Yet in the larger newspapers studied, it tended to be treated as significant. It led the New York Times, and was an inside story in the other national and metro dailies.

The only story to get a fair amount of coverage across print and broadcast was the day's top story — the plane scare in Washington. It was the lead of the network evening news, and a dominant story on cable. And, as with the coverage of Iraq, it was a front-page story in the New York Times and an inside story in all the others.

Suburban Dailies

As metro papers struggle, smaller suburban papers are suffering far less and in many cases thriving. What do they offer readers?

We monitored two suburban dailies, the Baytown Sun, the largest of the suburban papers around Houston, and the Waukesha Freeman, circulation 15,000, outside Milwaukee.

What we found was a different kind of journalism than readers would expect from either the national papers or the metro dailies.

Here, local news does not compete with national and international on an equal footing. These papers are above all local. And the workings of civic institutions are news even if they are not necessarily controversial.

In the Baytown Sun stories like “Festival to feature plenty of children’s activities” and “Public Hearing on annexation today at Council” are Page 1 news. So is “Select educators to be honored with banquet, cash,” and “ Decker Drive hospital campus to be sold.”

If anything, the smaller Waukesha Freeman front page was more about conflict and wrongdoing, but it was no less hyper-local. The questionable hiring of a fire chief’s son was Page 1 news, for instance: “Family ties prompts hiring policy questions.” So was “ New Berlin man dies after tree limb falls on him.”

It was in these papers that readers would get things such as the local school briefs, a “crime stoppers” column with mug shots of six people for whom the local police had warrants out for burglaries and such, and news that the local school district would be “Testing this summer for (the) gifted student program,” all from this day’s Baytown Sun.

It was in the Waukesha paper that one could read about a class art project, a local town pondering changing its laws on BB guns, or the local “I have a Gripe” column, which on May 11 focused on residents complaining about local road repairs.

Little is too local for these papers. The Baytown Sun would give a staff byline and nine paragraphs to “Garage sale, car wash to benefit church choir.”

Such papers are unlikely to mount an investigation of corruption in the governor’s office, perhaps. Yet the big city daily is equally unlikely to run a staff-written story about a local hospital headlined, “ St. Joseph to host health fair.”

Footnotes

1. The index measured the presence of ten different elements that a story might contain. They were the presence of: background information, future implications, the impact of the story on citizens, a human face to the story, some separation of fact and conjecture, potential action someone could take as a citizen, potential action to take as a consumer, contact information for the journalist or news outlet, the underlying principles at play, where to go for additional information.
2. We also found that some novel coverage in one paper got the heaviest pickup of all. A story from the New York Times by the science writer John Noble Wilford, for instance, about the discovery of a new family of wildlife — an “oddball rodent” in Laos —appeared in every local metro paper studied under Wilford’s byline. Similarly, a well-written story from the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel about new research reported in the New England Journal of Medicine ran on Page 1 in all three local metro papers this day. In an age when every paper is part of a syndicated wire, being local no longer means being in only one city.
3. In the end, it was determined to be a live grenade hurled that failed to explode. Vladimir Arutyunian, a Georgian citizen of Armenian descent, was arrested and convicted of the crime and sentenced to life in prison.

[Click here to view content data tables.](#)

Online

Online

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

By 2005 users were already getting a significant level of choice in style and personality from news on the Web. Virtually all original newsgathering, though, was still being done by the old media, and some of the major new Internet-only challengers appeared to have made less progress in content over the previous year than the sites of the old media.

There was also a range of serious attempts to exploit the multimedia dimensions of the Web some places, immediacy in others, and to turn the Web into a space for advertorial revenue.

In our first two years of studying news online, we found that the extent to which sites were taking advantage of the potential of the Web varied dramatically, and that still appears to be true. We also found that the notion of a new form of journalism forming in this medium was premature. That is still true. Over all in past years at least the top stories people found online were often deeper in sourcing and content than what was on television, but it lagged behind print. Our sample this year suggests that may be changing. The Internet is an environment that may now, on some sites at least, be richer than what is available anywhere else.

In those previous studies, we examined a variety of news sites several times a day for 20 different, randomly selected days. This year, as part of our Day in the Life of the News study, we examined seven sites repeatedly through the course of the one day — May 11, 2005 — comparing them to what was offered elsewhere and to each other. Beyond just a purely statistical or quantitative look, we delved more deeply into the sites, forming qualitative impressions as well.

By the numbers, the Web environment was rich. The five national Internet sites we examined were more deeply sourced than any other media studied, including national newspapers. Fully 85% of top stories on the Internet contained four or more sources, outstripping any other media (in national newspapers it was 78%, and on network evening news, the most deeply sourced TV outlet, it was 31%). The two local-news Internet sites studied also scored high on sourcing.

The Web also rivaled major papers in how much was disclosed about sources. In both national newspapers and Web sites, 9 out of 10 stories contained at least two sources who were so thoroughly identified that audiences not only knew what their expertise was but any potential biases they might have. Consumers could evaluate for themselves what sources were saying.

The major Internet sites were also second only to the major national papers in how much context their stories offered audiences about events. In our index measuring how many contextual elements the big stories of the day contained, 45% of the ones online contained three or more, as opposed to 57% for national newspapers. The highest scoring TV outlet was network morning news at 39%.

The national Internet sites were also relatively free of reporters' opinions, at least in their lead stories. Only 6% contained opinion from journalists, compared with 15% of all national newspaper stories, 48% of network morning news stories, and 46% of cable news stories.

The main national sites also tended to agree on the top story of the day. At 9 a.m., four of the five national sites had the same top story, violence in Iraq. Twelve hours later, four would again agree on their top story, the scare in Washington over a small plane that violated restricted airspace.

Beyond the numbers, however, there was far more difference to these sites than might appear at first glance.

The New York Times



The screenshot shows the New York Times website interface. At the top is the masthead "The New York Times ON THE WEB". Below it, the date is "DATED WEDNESDAY, MAY 11, 2005 9:02 AM ET" and the location is "New York Light F 50°". A search bar is visible with a "Site Search:" label and a "Search" button. The main content area features three top stories:

- At Least 60 Are Killed in New Round of Attacks in Iraq**
By JOHN F. BURNS and TERENCE NEILAN 7:24 AM ET
Suicide bombers struck in Baghdad and in two northern towns as Marines continued their offensive near Syria.
• Panel Is Set Up to Draft Iraq's Constitution
• Complete Coverage: The Reach of War
- Rumsfeld Seeks Leaner Army and Full Term as Defense Secretary**
By THOM SHANKER and ERIC SCHMITT
In an interview, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld gave every indication of serving out the rest of the Bush administration.
• Video: Eric Schmitt on Rumsfeld's Plans
• Excerpts From the Rumsfeld Interview
- United Air Wins Right to Default on Its Employee Pension Plans**

Below the stories is a photo of bodies wrapped in blankets, with a caption: "Bodies wrapped in blankets waited to be identified today after a suicide bombing in Tikrit, Iraq." Below the photo is a "Go to Article" link. At the bottom of the screenshot, there is a "BUSINESS" section with the headline "U.S. Trade Deficit Falls".

Online, the Gray Lady of journalism has had a little more work done than people may realize.

The site is still distinctly that of a newspaper, and the differences between it and online sites managed largely by machines are enormous. But NYTimes.com makes notable use of interactive and multimedia functions. Even more important, it updates stories far more than many other newspaper sites, and a good deal more than it did a year earlier. By 5 p.m. on May 11, and even more so by 9 p.m., this was much different site from when the day started. The sense a visitor gets dipping in and out of NYTimes.com through the day is that of a living newsroom, with new stories coming in as reporters complete them, and adding to those again as new updates come in.

The news was always organized by a strong sense of what was significant, not just what was new, and that distinguished the Times from sites like Yahoo and Google.

In a sense, the approach may be "all the news that's fit to post."

The basics of the page, which as 2006 began had not changed since May 11, 2005, start with four top stories and a large photo. Next to the lead stories at the top, users are shown three other major stories, plus the editorials for the day, the op-eds for the day, and the latest on markets around the world. In the middle of the page, under the top four stories, was a section-by-section breakdown of the print edition that day, which gave users access to 61 additional stories, plus eight of the latest stories from AP and Reuters, all from the Web site's front page.

At 9 a.m., the site is essentially the morning paper on-line but not completely. Already the updating has begun. As early as 7:24 a.m. EDT on May 11, the top story on the page was changed from the lead of the May 11 paper. The paper had already posted a bylined piece about violence in Iraq that occurred overnight. Next users could read about Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's plans for a leaner military, United Airlines winning the right to default on employee pensions and a piece on AIDS in Africa .

NYTimes.com Lead Stories

9 a.m.	1 p.m.	5 p.m.	9 p.m.
Iraq Bombing	Iraq Bombing — updated	Plane Prompts Evacuation	Plane Prompts Evacuation — updated
Rumsfeld Seeks Leaner Army	Trade Deficit Falls Unexpectedly	Iraq Bombing – updated	Iraq Bombing
United Air Pension Plans	North Korea Nuclear Rods	North Korea Nuclear Rods	North Korea Nuclear Rods
AIDS attitudes in Africa	AIDS attitudes in Africa	AIDS attitudes in Africa	AIDS attitudes in Africa

Throughout the day the news that got top billing changed as stories moved around on the site. And, unlike what we saw in cable's use of immediacy, the time an event occurred didn't necessarily determine where a piece appeared. Take the plane-scare story. It started as a secondary item when the news was still coming in. It wasn't until later, after the event was better understood, that it became the page's lead piece, at 5 and 9 p.m.

The Iraq story remained among the lead pieces all day, even after it was technically "old news." It was updated three out of the four times we checked the site — the "at least 60 are killed in New Round of Attacks in Iraq" would become "At Least 79" dead by 4 p.m. that day. The byline would also change, from a co-byline early in the day, John Burns and Terence Neilan (editor-reporter for the Web edition), to a sole author, Burns, by the evening. A piece on a drop in the trade deficit went from a secondary story to a lead, back to a secondary and finally off the page.

By 9 p.m., five of the six top stories on the page would be new or significantly updated from the morning. Across the whole front page, basically more than half of the stories linked would be new — before the next day's paper was posted. Across the whole front page, indeed, 31 of the 67 stories were new or significantly updated after 9 a.m. (28 of them altogether new). If you remove the 16 stories from weekly special sections such as Dining & Wine, Home & Garden or Automobiles, the degree of updating is even greater — 31 updated and 20 unchanged.

When it came to exploiting the interactivity and multi-media nature of the Web, the Times fell behind some of its TV-oriented rivals, but often ahead of the online aggregators. A quarter of its top stories (25%) contained links to video, such as the piece on Rumsfeld's plans and the stories on the D.C. plane scare (compared with 45% on average of all sites examined). Just 5% of top stories offered audio links (the average was 6%). None of the main stories allowed users the chance to customize or manipulate data on this day (the average was 18%). And 30% of the stories offered users the chance to communicate with the Times if they had a question (the average was 39%). Incidentally, these figures are not particularly different from what we found two years earlier in a similar study of the Times Web site. In

early 2006, the Times announced that all bylines on the site would become links through which users could contact reporters by e-mail.

Google



Google News offers users an entirely different experience from the New York Times or the Web sites of other traditional news outlets.

Here the news is edited not by people but by algorithms, and the site produces no original content whatsoever. In other words, computers choose from a mix of content produced elsewhere.

“Search and browse 4,500 news sources updated continuously,” the page promises at the top. The result is less an ordering of the news than a kind of stacking it in different piles — with some 14,000 articles accessible from the front page of the site.

Yet in its computerized effort to be constantly new, the site also reveals the degree to which the continuous nature of the 24-hour, seven-day-a-week news cycle is not really so continuous. Most of the stories added to the site through the day are nearly identical versions of the same event from different news outlets. There is no really new information to report, just newer filings of stories. For instance, the plane story from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, which led the site at 5 p.m. had different — and arguably more interesting — information than the plane piece that was the lead at 9 p.m. from Reuters. The Reuters piece was longer and with more official response, but the CBC piece not only described who the pilot was and what he was wearing — a t-shirt and shorts, which seemed to further emphasize that he was a student pilot who made a mistake — but it included a picture of his arrest. And by 9 p.m. the CBC piece was gone from the front page.

Google News Lead Stories

9 a.m.	1 p.m.	5 p.m.	9 p.m.
Georgia Confirms Grenade Found Near Bush's Speech Site	White House, Capitol Evacuated	2 Men Arrested in Plane Scare at White House, Capitol	White House, Capitol Emptied in Plane Scare
Suicide Attacks Kill at least 61 in Iraq	Russia-Georgia Relations	Budget Provides Billions for Education (Canadian Budget)	White House says Bush Never in Danger in Georgia Incident
Afghans Riot over Koran Report	US Depending on China in N. Korea Policy	Anti-US Riot Turns Deadly in Afghanistan	Four Shot Dead as Afghans Riot at Reported US insult to Koran
\$82 Billion Spending Bill for Wars Heads to Bush	\$82 Billion Spending Bill for Wars Heads to Bush	White House says Bush Never in Danger in Georgia Incident	Authorities: Ill. Father Admits Killings

The site leads with two top stories in its main, middle column and five more headlines right of that, which vary from business to sports news. Below that are a list of subjects "In The News"— on May 11 the keywords included Delta Air Lines, Riverside County, Van Gundy and the Detroit Pistons.

That is followed by three top stories under each of eight different topic headings — World, U.S., Business, Sci/Tech, Sports, Entertainment, Health and More Top Stories.

For each news event, Google News offers apparently every related story it can find. On May 11, for instance, the top story at 9 a.m., about a grenade found near the site where Bush delivered a speech in the former Soviet Republic of Georgia, linked to 1,968 other stories about the event. In all, the 31 "stories" highlighted on Google News's front page at 9 a.m. this day were actually links to 14,228 separate stories. The depth is breathtaking. The utility of it, for an average person, is harder to fathom.

With each subsequent visit, we found new stories in most of the spots. According to the numbers, 80% of the top stories were new on Google. Again, however, usually they were about the same news event, just new versions from a new outlet. At 1 p.m., for instance, the story about anti-American protests in Afghanistan was from CNN, plus links to NPR, the San Diego Union Tribune, Radio Australia and others. At 5 p.m., there were stories from the Associated Press, ABC News, the International Herald Tribune. At 9 p.m., a story from the Scotsman (UK) plus Reuters and the Guardian on top. The actual accounts didn't vary much, sometimes not even the original source. At 5 p.m., for instance, the story on Afghan riots came from the Guardian Unlimited, but on a closer look it was actually an AP story. The story on the riots just underneath it is from ABC News, it says, but it is also the AP story.

On Google, some topics got more prominence than they did elsewhere. Sci/Tech, for instance, comes third in their list, followed by Sports, and Entertainment. Subjects that get more prominence elsewhere, such as politics, are not in the headings here.

In exploiting the potential of the Web for multimedia and interactivity, Google fell behind, at least on this day. Only 5% of the stories on the site had links to video of the event in the news compared with the average of the sites monitored of 45%, though again since that was a result of grabbing stories from a variety of sources, the inclusion of video was ultimately the call of those outlets. None of Google's stories had links to graphics, maps or special text boxes (the average on this day was 17% of stories). Only 5% of stories had some link by which users could manipulate or customize data, whereas the average was 18%. And only 15% of stories on Google had links through which users could follow up with queries or communicate with someone, compared with 39% in our sample over all.

The only multimedia element in which Google was above average was in the use of audio. Some 15% of the top stories had such links, versus the 6%.

How did the news agenda offered by Google's computers compare with those of the editors of NYTimes.com? At 9 a.m., Google led with the story about the unexploded grenade found near where President Bush had spoken, a story that never was near the top of the New York Times news agenda this day. Both sites had Iraqi violence at the top. Google had the Afghan riots next, a story the Times would not post for two more hours. But the Times had exclusives, an interview with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and a story about AIDS in Africa that were nowhere on Google's site. The United Airlines pension story that would dominate elements of the American press this day was not listed among Google's top stories anywhere on its page.

By 9 p.m., the grenade story was again one of the "Top Stories" on Google (after being displaced by a general US-Georgia relations story at 1 p.m. and a piece on the Canadian budget at 5 p.m.) The Times also had the plane scare but continued to think violence in Iraq was important, a story now replaced on Google by the next day's relative calm. Throughout the page, the stories also tended to differ, topic by topic. Apparently, at least on May 11, the choices made by Google's machines differed from the choices made by editors at the New York Times.

Yahoo

Yahoo News takes the spirit of Google News — the user is the editor — a step further. It separates the news in multiple ways and allows users to pick the way they see it — by source, by topic, by genre (photos, opinion), by most popular stories, most viewed and even something called "weird news."

Users also have the capacity, within distinct limits, to add or remove categories and change the layout.

But Yahoo isn't culling from 4,500 news sources as Google is. It is focusing more heavily on the judgment of six sources — AP, Reuters, Agence France-Presse (AFP), the Los Angeles Times, USA Today and the Christian Science Monitor. Users also can select their own sources from a list of 14.

If Google News is about mining the Web for maximum depth, in other words, Yahoo News is more about navigating it within clearer limits for maximum choice.

(The page has been redesigned since May 11, 2005, but the effect is similar. Users sort through the different sources using tabs, so that more classifications are easier to view. There are a few more top stories offered at the beginning of the page, and some new sources are offered, such as NPR. Heading into 2006 users were also now offered some minimal original content from Yahoo journalists, under the heading "YAHOO EXCLUSIVE," though the quantity of original content was more symbolic than substantial.)

On May 11, the top of the page at 9 a.m. was a story about the bombing in Iraq, from AP, that featured a big headline, a photo of a badly damaged car and a one-paragraph lead-in with the dateline. It was the only story on the page played with such prominence. Then came mainly a listing of headlines: There was a "Top Stories" heading, an inventory of the six sources from which the site got its news, and five headlines from each of them. On this day, several of the stories were the same as elsewhere, but not all: The slayings in Illinois were a top story in four of the six outlets at 9 a.m. and the Iraq story was a top item on all the wire services at 1 p.m. The Christian Science Monitor, with its orientation toward news features rather than breaking headlines, also offered a different news agenda ("Pivotal days for Frist and the GOP," "L.A. mayor's race signals new ethnic alliances.")

The page's main listing of headlines was followed by a link to the New York Times homepage (no longer offered in the same place). Then came categories that traditional journalists sometimes find tantalizing, challenging and even a little horrifying: users can click on the stories that are "most popular" followed by "most viewed" and "most recommended." It's not entirely clear what the differences are. But at 9 a.m. on May 11, the "most popular" stories bore little relationship to the top stories as defined by any of the news organizations listed. The most popular story was "New World islands emerge from Dubai 's waters." The second was, "Mark Hamill Reminisces on 'Star Wars.'" The "Most viewed" was closer to the AP news agenda. But the most recommended stories were the most intriguing of all: "Puget Sound in declining health," and "Realtors fight cost-cutters with rule to keep fees high," and "Experts: flares may have helped planets."

By the numbers, Yahoo was fairly typical when it came to updating. Just under half of its top stories (45%) were replaced during the day. Another third were updated in some fashion. As with Google, though, the updating is not a decision made by the staff; in this case it is the latest postings from each of the key news outlets — or on this day from three of them (AP, Reuters and AFP). The difference from Google is in what the two sites draw from and how they offer it to users. Yahoo pulls from a small pool of outlets and lists the stories by the outlet. Google pulls from a nearly limitless number of outlets and lists them by topic.

When it came to exploiting the interactive and multimedia dimensions of the Web, Yahoo again was about average among the sites we found over all. Just over half its stories contained links to video of the events described (55% versus 45% on average) and the video links hit most of the big stories of the day — the Iraq bombings, the Zion slayings, North Korea 's fuel rods. Two thirds (65%) offered photo galleries. A quarter of the stories had links by which users could customize or manipulate data (slightly higher than the 18% average). And three quarters of its stories offered users the chance to communicate or interact with someone to follow up (nearly double the 39% average) in a variety of ways, from e-mailing the piece to visiting message boards so as to post views. Here, Yahoo scored much higher than its online rival Google, and higher than the New York Times, and about on a par with sites that have their origins in television, like CBS and CNN.

Only in the use of audio did Yahoo lag. None of its top stories, at least back in May, had audio links (compared with 18% overall).



If Google and Yahoo represent Web search companies that are moving into journalism, CBSNews.com is at the leading edge of TV networks trying to manage their way into the interactive world. May 11 captured a day before the site was redesigned after the hiring of the online entrepreneur Larry Kramer as head of CBS Digital.

On the date of our Day in the Life study, however, CBS already offered users a clear top story that featured a photo, an interactive feature and video, followed by a second story that, with a click, also offered multiple features. A list of 14 more headlines sat under those. Some of the stories, however, were repeated in more than one place. This section was followed by the CBS Evening News Online Edition, a chance to watch the newscast online.

There were then 47 other headlines on the page, divided by categories — U.S., World, Health Watch, Entertainment, Opinion, Sci-Tech, Politics, Business, Evening News, Early Show

Last May, the level of updating on the page was substantial, but there was also some effort to make the level of change look greater than it may have been. The top story and the second story, for instance, tended to be swapped back and forth, and other stories moved around the page. At 9 a.m. the Iraqi bombing led the page. By 1 p.m., the plane scare in D.C. grabbed the top story position, while the testimony of the actor Macaulay Culkin was second and the Iraq story moved to the right margin under a piece on the Zion slayings. At 5 p.m., the Culkin and plane-scare stories were reversed. There was also a noticeable slowing of the updating as time went on. At 1 p.m., 10 of the roughly 65 stories were either new or updated from 9 a.m. (though that wasn't always signified to the reader). At 5 p.m. another 10 were new. By 9 p.m. just one more story was new, from WebMD.

CBS News Lead Stories

9 a.m.	1 p.m.	5 p.m.	9 p.m.
Iraq Bombings	Air Scare Prompts DC Evacuations	Culkin: Jackson Did Not Molest Me	A Tale of Two Child Stars (Culkin)
Dad Charged in Girls' Murders (Zion slayings)	Culkin: Jackson Did Not Molest Me	"Errant Pilots" Spark DC Scare	No Charges in DC Air Scare
Georgians Play Down Bush Grenade	Series of Bombs Kill 61 in Iraq	Prosecutor: Dad Admitted Stabbings (Zion slayings)	Prosecutors On Dad's Rage Killing (Zion slayings)
United Gets OK to Ditch Pensions	Georgians Play Down Bush Grenade	Series of Bombs Kill 61 in Iraq	Series of Bombs Kill 61 in Iraq

When it came to the numbers, the nature of a television-based site — versus an online aggregator or a newspaper — came into clear relief. Only some of the text on CBS.com came from CBS. None of the main text stories on the site through the day were produced by CBS alone, but 95% of them cited CBS staff and wires together. That is far different from the New York Times, where 90% of the stories were staff-written.

On the other hand, in non-text news, the amount of original content went way up. The site included dozens of video stories that were wholly original to CBS, mostly pieces from different broadcasts.

Indeed, like other TV-based Web sites, even back in May 2005, the site tended to excel at exploiting the multimedia nature of the Web. A remarkable 85% of its top stories had links to video of the events described, while none linked to just audio. Only 5% of the top stories gave users the ability to customize, and none of the top stories offered users specific links by which they could communicate with CBS about the presentation.

All that changed. The CBS page available in 2006 is significantly more of a continuous news source. The site includes a good amount of Internet-only video. It will track news events well after the nightly news is off the air, includes a section on "interactives" where users can find all the interactive features on the page in one place, and includes a special section for "Strange News," an echo of the spirit of "Odd News" on Yahoo.

The site notably also contains a section called "Build Your Own Newscast," where users can select and order from 20 top stories from the day and 18 other packages. This creates the capacity for viewers to see a newscast online that is far different from what is available from either the evening more morning news, and far larger. And there is a substantial section where users can download programming for podcast listening, PDAs and MP3s.

The left rail of the new site also contains an "Only on the Web" feature in which CBS News correspondents generate large amounts of video content that is unique, not "repurposed" from television.

Uniquely among the networks and most other sites, CBSNews.com also contains CBS Public Eye, an effort launched after Kramer's arrival to allow consumers to react to, talk about, criticize and even interact directly with CBS news officials. More than a page, this is a site within a site. It includes essays from outside contributors, comments from viewers, responses by CBS journalists, and blogs by authors from Public Eye.

It is probably the most serious attempt at transparency and dialogue we saw in our sample. It adds a dimension to the CBS approach that makes it, along with one local newspaper we monitored, the most significant attempt to create a sense of a news organization offering a distinct product with a different personality online, rather than just a news source that is involves multimedia and constant updating. Yet Public Eye also feels like a work in progress, and the visitor senses that in a year or two it may be quite different, particularly if blogs begin to fade or evolve as a new dimension of the Web.



The Web site of cable news's oldest channel has become one of the most popular sites on the Web, consistently among the top three (with Yahoo and MSNBC). What people find there is a site whose top stories on May 11 stood out by nearly all our measures — the level of original content, updating, newness of content, and use of the multimedia nature of the Web. Yet beyond those lead items, much like cable news on television, there is less underneath. The rest of the site relies on AP wire copy for most of its news and amounts to less than people can get in various other places.

CNN.com falls squarely in the camp of old media, making choices for people about what news is most important, though it does offer a button for “Most Popular” stories. Still, if the wire copy and original material are added together, CNN.com offers a diet of news very similar to what viewers could find on the cable channel throughout the day.

The page on May 11 (and its setup had not been changed as of early 2006) featured a lead story, which users were drawn to by a major photo. At 9 a.m., it was the news that “Six bombs kill 54 in Iraq,” the same lead as on many of the sites studied. (Incidentally, CBS.com at 9 a.m. had the number at 61, NYTimes.com at “more than 60,” Reuters “at least 70,” and AFP “at least 64”). This top story also had links to two separate video pieces — on the bombing and the general fighting in Iraq — plus a story about Senate funding for the war and a special report, “Iraq: Transition of Power.”

After the morning, though, the top spot would be dominated by the plane scare — at 1 p.m., 5 p.m. and 9 p.m. The story was updated throughout the day and there were fresh pictures and links, but like its cable TV parent, CNN's Web site found the wayward Cessna's journey into restricted airspace the day's big story.

To the left of that lead, CNN's site offered seven more headlines under its “More News” heading. And there was a lot of crime reporting on this day — at 9 a.m. the Illinois slaying, another multiple homicide, in California, the Jackson trial and the sentencing of a “cannibal-inspired killer” all made the list. But there was also substantial use of links and multimedia. Four of the seven stories featured video links, and there was yet another special report, this one on Michael Jackson.

CNN.com Lead Stories

9 a.m.	1 p.m.	5 p.m.	9 p.m.
Six Bombs Kill 54 in Iraq	US Capitol, White House Briefly Evacuated	Two Held After Capitol, White House Evacuated	Two Held After DC Security Scare
Father Charged in Girls' Slayings (Zion slayings)	Macaulay Culkin Testifies for Jackson	Culkin: Jackson "Never" Molested Me	Bush Asked to Explain UK War Memo
Three Children Among Six Found Slain	Father Charged in Girls' Stabbings (Zion slayings)	Prosecutor: Dad Admits Killing Girls (Zion slayings)	Culkin: Jackson "Never" Molested Me
Officials: Grenade Found Near Bush was In active	Six Bombs Kill 54 in Iraq	Six Bombs Kill 54 in Iraq	Prosecutors: Girls Stabbed 31 Times (Zion slayings)

That section was followed by yet more multimedia, the latest updates from CNN Radio and video on Britain's Prince Harry joining the military. Then came a link to the homepage of the news channel's No. 1 show, Larry King, followed by a stock market report and stock quote check.

Below that came the rest of the news menu broken down into topics — U.S., World, Technology, Entertainment, Politics, Law, Health, Science and Space, Travel, Education, Sports, Business — each offering a couple of headline stories, 24 in all. Yet there CNN's effort at original work had stopped. Those 24 stories were all wire copy, mainly AP.

Thus this is really two sites — the eight or so main stories for which CNN has produced packages and text stories through the day, including a couple of background non-breaking news reports, and the larger menu of news from the AP.

During the day, CNN paid fairly close attention to those stories that it produced itself. Nearly half, 45%, of those would turn over by 9 p.m., and another 40% would be updated in some manner. Unlike the aggregators' computerized updates, these were the work of CNN correspondents, and also often linked to the latest TV reports as well as other video or audio components.

Three quarters of stories through the day included video and three quarters photo galleries. Three quarters of them would also allow users to customize or manipulate data. One in every five (20%) included audio links, and half included graphics and maps. By 9 p.m., for instance, the top story on the plane scare in Washington also included seven different links to sidebars, photo galleries, or video — everything from a timeline ("the key 47 minutes") to a package on "How the decision to shoot down a plane is made."

Yet the multimedia emphasis, updating and interactivity was again limited to the top eight stories. In the larger section below that makes up the bulk CNN's homepage, only four of the 24 wire stories would be replaced by newer material through the day. And there was little in the way of multimedia or other links.

As for news agenda, excluding the AP, the Web site has something of a balance that the news channel on TV does not. Online, the plane-scare story was the lead, but it didn't dominate the space on CNN's Web page the way it did the time on TV. Users could sample as much or as little of the plane issue as they wanted.

Still, compared with Yahoo, the New York Times or Google, CNN's popular page is offering users a much more limited menu of news.

JSONline: The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel



As the name implies, JSONline represents the effort to create a news experience for users online distinct from what they find in print but related to it, all with the resources of a paper with a circulation of 240,000 on weekdays and 430,000 on Sundays.

That morning's Milwaukee Journal Sentinel was augmented on the Web with a clear section signaling to users new breaking news in a self-described "Weblog," plus a menu that broke down the news by city, links to online chats, staff blogs, reader photo galleries, and even ways to get RSS (a web feed format), and a link so that people could easily submit news tips.

JSONline.com Lead Stories

9 a.m.	1 p.m.	5 p.m.	9 p.m.
Investigation Finds Election Fraud	GOP Sends DNR Pick Back to Doyle (Daywatch)	Testimony: Oswald Got Delusions from Dad (Daywatch)	Doyle, GOP Work on Minimum Wage Deal (Daywatch)
Museum Layoffs Expected Soon	Existing Home Sales Up 10.4% in Area (Daywatch)	Casino Won't Sap Potawatomi, Study Says (Daywatch)	Testimony: Oswald Got Delusions from Dad (Daywatch)
Board Regroups Amid Gold Outcry (Marquette)	Green Pleads Not Guilty to Charges (Daywatch)	Marquette to Start Over on Nickname (Daywatch)	Casino Won't Sap Potawatomi, Study Says (Daywatch)
Student Who Wore Dress to Prom Suspended, Fined	Investigation Finds Election Fraud	Marquette to Start Over on Nickname	Marquette to Start Over on Nickname

Some of what follows, particularly the generous offering of staff-written blogs, is an update from how the site looked on May 11, 2005, but the general philosophy was already there.

The emphasis on JSONline is not simply to update a given morning's paper — to deliver the newspaper in real time. The Journal Sentinel seems to be approaching the task as if the Internet is a different medium, rapidly developing a

different personality that goes beyond the capacity for real-time immediacy.

The Journal Sentinel, on May 11, was trying to exploit the possibilities of the Web as much as any site we found, and in some ways more than the online-only sites Google and Yahoo. The difference was the ability to offer original content and the fact that the paper clearly was connected closely to a community.

JSOnline at 9 a.m. that day looked a good deal like the morning paper, leading with a local election-fraud story in the right margin, a controversy over changing the name of the Marquette sports teams and a story on a local male student suspended for wearing a dress to his high school prom. As the day wore on, the site added “DayWatch, a Weblog of today’s developing news” — local home-sales figures, a legislative battle over taxes, and testimony in a local trial — in a box sitting atop the site’s top story. “DayWatch” is not strictly a blog in the typical sense. Rather, the paper is posting the first few paragraphs of stories that seem likely to appear in the following day’s paper. Rather than filling the page with new developing headlines, however, the new postings are strung together on one page in chronological order. As the day goes on, “DayWatch” grows. Updates are posted as new material, not changes in existing stories, the same feel as one gets from personal blogs.

Other changes on the site during the day were sparse, though at 5 p.m. the lead story was also new, as the Marquette name controversy had taken a new turn. The “Warriors,” who had seen their name changed to “Golden Eagles,” were again finding their nomenclature being reconsidered. The Marquette story bumped the election-fraud story into the right margin.

Below “DayWatch” users find the main stories from that morning’s paper unchanged. Under those come wire stories from around the nation and world that are updated throughout the day.

Down the left side, the news is offered not first by sections but by cities and towns — Milwaukee, Waukesha, Washington, Ozaukee, Racine. Here the stories are listed not just from this day but earlier days as well. Again, immediacy is not the only value here; localism is important, too. Under sports, the next header, users again can navigate directly where they want — Packers, Bucks, Brewers, Marquette, etc.

By the numbers, JSOnline was not particularly focused on multimedia. Only about 2 of its top 10 stories featured video, less than any site other than Google. No story on May 11 featured a photo gallery or audio. But the site was among the leaders in stories that allowed users to manipulate and customize information.

And every top story invited readers to communicate and ask questions — the only site to reach that level. Each story also included the e-mail address of the reporter — click and you are sending a message.

Since we studied the site, it has expanded its Web offerings. “DayWatch” averages somewhere around 20 posts a day, and the site added “FirstWatch,” a blog entry that offers readers a conversational preview of that day’s news. JSOnline has also begun investing more in multimedia, adding more audio slideshows, video and interactive packages.

The sense one gets, generally, is of a site that by design is trying to explore not certain aspects of what the Web may offer but, within the range of a paper in a medium-sized city, as many of them as they can think of.

Click2Houston.com, the Website of KPRC, Channel 2, the NBC affiliate in Houston, is produced by Internet Broadcasting Systems Inc., a company that designs and manages sites for about 75 different stations and programs, from Telemundo.com to the syndicated program Access Hollywood.

Click2Houston follows a basic template that several of the stations in the orbit use, though they appear customized somewhat for each station. That template represents the most serious intermingling of editorial and advertising we encountered. The sense one gets is that this site is not controlled by the newsroom. News here is a component of an advertising space.

The design for KPRC features nearly 30 tabs across the top of the page, a major emphasis on weather, and a middle column it calls "2 THE BIG STORY," where it features a handful of major stories it is emphasizing that include a good deal of multimedia. On May 11, those stories were national as well as local and were changed or updated throughout the day, but the dominant story was a local one — the collision of a light rail train with a car. That story, with its updates, was the top story at 9 a.m., 5 p.m. and 9 p.m. The plane scare was the top story at 1 p.m.

Click2Houston Lead Stories

9 a.m.	1 p.m.	5 p.m.	9 p.m.
Driver Dies in Collision with METRORail Train	All Clear Announced After Evacuation of White House, Capitol	Authorities Identify Driver In First Fatal METRORail Crash	Father of 4 Becomes METRORail's First Fatality
Police: Man, 19, Fatally Stabs Mother's Boyfriend	Driver Dies in Collision with METRORail Train	Son Charged With Fatally Stabbing Mother's Boyfriend	Pilot, Student in Cessna Force Evacuation of DC Buildings
Report: Grenade Thrown At Bush During Speech in Georgia	Police: Man, 19, Fatally Stabs Mother's Boyfriend	All Clear After Small Plane Forces Evacuation of White House, Capitol	

Below the top three stories came "Latest Headlines" starting with Local and Regional News, then National and World News, and Click2Video. The local and regional news section featured a combination of wire and station-produced content. The national and world news was obviously wire, and the click2video was video listed elsewhere on the page.

But the site stood out more for highlighting features that, though not always labeled explicitly, were clearly paid content, advertorial or just plain advertising, but some of it packaged to look like quasi-editorial content.

Something called "Local 2 Experts," for instance, says "Learn from the Best! To find a variety of products and services from great companies right here in Houston visit the Local 2 Experts section and find the help you need from our local experts! [Click Here for Local 2 Experts!](#)"

Once there, a user found headings such as "siding, concrete restoration, pool, mattress," and many more. Under each, the visitor got a one-line description of a local company and an invitation to "more details," which in turn clicked to a formatted online advertorial with a video clip from someone at the local company. Anyone looking for the criteria for

selecting the businesses wouldn't find any. They were advertisers, not the result of any effort by the station to find the best or most expert.

The tab next to that one, "Click2Win", let users enter contests run by local businesses. The tab next to that, Real Estate, took users to ads for local real estate companies, and so on. There were 20 such tabs linked to advertorial content at the top of the page — from "Dating" (a page "powered by" the online dating company eHarmony) to "Save on Everything," a link to 34 pages of coupons.

Those 20 advertising tabs, moreover, appear above and below half as many tabs for the news sections of the site, "news, weather, traffic, sports, editorials, money, health, entertainment, and tech."

By the numbers, Click2Houston fell in the middle of our sample. The top stories were frequently updated (45% were changed sometime during the day on May 11 and another 40% were updated). More than half (55%) of the top stories included video, and 0% still photos. None linked to audio.

But it was the more aggressive intermingling of advertorial and editorial that stood out. By proportion, perhaps more than half of the site appeared to be paid content.

[Click here to view content data tables.](#)

Blogs

Blogs

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

And what about those Americans who perused their favorite blogs on May 11? Did they find there something different from what was in mainstream media? What did they learn about the big news stories that did not make it to the other outlets?

To find out, we examined seven blogs, selected to offer a range of types, so as to closely examine the subject matter discussed, the places bloggers get their news, the level of reporting that exists, and the relationship with readers and with the mainstream media.

What we found, generally, is that readers of those blogs learned of some of the same stories that were in the traditional media that day, but often from a different angle or different source. They also heard about many items not found in the other media, such as a scholarly debate over the concept of a "living constitution," a recent blogger convention in Nashville, a controversy at Commonweal Magazine over the dismissal of the editor, thoughts from a group of Iranian bloggers who met with one of their presidential candidates, and the blogger Wonkette's "Bushfish" logo. In this regard, the bloggers are adding not just opinion to the media mix, but also new items to the agenda. Those new items can vary widely. Unlike a news organization where a group of minds is behind the selection of stories and the editing process, blogs are truly one-person shows, as is apparent in the topics that sometimes receive focus.

Bloggers are also not simply reacting to what they have read in the mainstream media. The posts themselves have the feel of a small circle of friends talking to each other, often with their own language, and without a good deal of background explanation. Many of the blogs linked back and forth to each other or to other blogs through the course of

the day. Very little of what a journalist would call actual reporting was evident. There was also an implicit expectation that readers were familiar with the places linked to and had been following the conversation among them. Some of this insider feel and internal code is doubtless due to the shorthand nature of the way blogs are written, but it goes beyond that. One also gets the sense the insider feel is part of the appeal of blogging and blog reading in the first place.

For our Day in the Life study, we examined six different traditional text-driven blogs that offer a mix of ideology and formats. We first looked at the most popular blogs by average daily traffic and included the one at the top. ¹ Moving down that list, we then picked the next most popular blogs that offered a mix of political ideology and geography. Then we added a seventh blog of another type called a video blog, or vlog, to see how that approach differs from more traditional, text-based blogs. The blogs are as follows:

- Daily Kos (Markos Moulitsas Zúniga; highest ranking blog overall, liberal, based in Berkeley , Cal.)
- Instapundit (Glenn Reynolds; highest ranking conservative blog, based at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville)
- Eschaton (Duncan Black (aka Atrios); fourth ranked overall, liberal, based in Philadelphia)
- Talking Points Memo (Joshua Micah Marshall; not ranked here but receives over 500,000 monthly visitors, liberal, based in Washington, D.C.)
- Little Green Footballs (Charles and Michael Johnson; usually in the top ten list, conservative, based on the West Coast).
- Power Line (lawyers John Hinderaker, Scott Johnson and Paul Mirengoff; ranked 9th overall, conservative, two of the three bloggers based in Minnesota , the third in D.C.)
- Crooks and Liars (John Amato; liberal, based in Los Angeles and one of the first to experiment with vlogs)

Entries and Timing

Blogs may be the one medium we found in our sample that could be described as genuinely operating 24 hours a day. Among the seven blogs, posting for the day began as early as 12:13 a.m. EDT (Eschaton) and ended at 12:01 a.m. the next day (Power Line). All blogs offered at least an 11-hour time span in the posts for the day.

Number and Timing of Posts, May 11, 2005 (EDT)

	# of Posts	1st Post Time	Last Post Time
Instapundit	25	7:15 a.m.	10:46 p.m.
Daily Kos	12	9:47 a.m.	11:06 p.m.
Talking Points	9	1:18 a.m.	8:08 p.m.
Crooks & Liars	16	3:07 a.m.	11:20 p.m.
Power Line	12	6:54 a.m.	12:01 p.m.
LGF	12	11:20 a.m.	10:07 p.m.
Eschaton	18	12:13 a.m.	10:52 p.m.

Note: all times converted to EDT

Topics Discussed

By the numbers, the topics bloggers covered were not all that different from the mainstream press.

What differed primarily were the subtopics and the information offered about them. The bloggers talked about some of the same stories as the mainstream press that day, but often in ways that were quite different.

Five of the seven blogs wrote about Iraq that day, often mentioning the slew of car bombs the night before. Crooks and Liars and Eschaton both mentioned the outbreak in relation to a New York Times op-ed that day by John Tierney, who called on journalists not to be so fixated on such attacks. Both blogs disagreed with Tierney. Crooks and Liars also linked to a Yahoo story on the bombings as well as to comments from Juan Cole, a professor of history at the University of Michigan who blogs on the Middle East, history and religion. Eschaton followed the initial post with one two hours later that linked to a Louisville Courier-Journal opinion piece by the American journalist Molly Bingham, suggesting that her essay “could have been” a reply to Tierney. He then also linked to a blog by Richard Cranium that “has more on Ms. Bingham” — namely Cranium’s reaction to the op-ed.

The Daily Kos offered the most multi-tiered post. It began with a link to an Associated Press story that he pulled from NYTimes.com. Kos picked up on an interesting element missed in the mainstream press coverage we examined — the practice of having new police force recruits line up together outside before they are searched. “Umm, why do they still do this? . . . Why don’t they search people before they stand in line? That much explosive can’t be easy to hide from the most cursory search,” Kos wondered. He also linked to and reran a portion of comments by the blogger DHinMI on a GAO report about “the mess in Iraq.” DHinMI (whom Kos did not identify, but who is a contributing blogger to thelasthurrah.com), linked directly to the GAO report. That was followed by another rerun except with a full link, introduced only as “this.” It was a Washington Post piece on the bombings. And then, “Update: Armando has more [LINK] on the ‘reputation’ of the insurgents.” Again it was up to the reader to know who Armando was, or to figure it out.

Power Line didn’t blog about the car bombs but had two entries that related to Iraq. The first excerpted text from an Arabic paper that said the jihadist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi had been wounded in fighting. That, the blogger wrote, supported his earlier view that Zarqawi was still alive and well. The second entry linked to a Washington Times story asserting that the war in Iraq is the “last stand for al Qaeda.” The blogger agreed.

The focus of Little Green Footballs, the West Coast conservative blogger, was entirely international on May 11. It did not directly address the bombings either, but concentrated on one of the other major stories in the print media this day, about the riots in Afghanistan that stemmed from reports of desecration of the Koran by U.S. soldiers. The site linked to Roger L. Simon’s blog, which said the Newsweek article that first reported the incident was based on an anonymous

source. Then at 1 p.m., Green Footballs touched on Operation Matador, the American military's weeklong hunt for insurgents along Iraq's Syrian border, by linking to another blog's post on the matter.

What about coverage of the story that ate up so much of the cable TV day, a small plane's violation of D.C. air space? It was largely absent from the blogs. Just two of the seven we monitored addressed it at all. One of those two wasn't so much focused on the event as what it considered the hyperventilated tone of the media coverage. At 12:28 p.m., just minutes after the evacuation ended, Eschaton offered this assessment of the coverage:

"Our quality media . . . just on the Tee Vee! *pant, pant, pant* — 'The White House and Capitol Building are under attack by enemy aircraft!' . . . 'Sorry, just a Cessna that lost its way, all clear given.' STOP HURTING AMERICA!

Update: [Never Mind]" — which linked to a Yahoo story that day.

At 2:46 p.m. EDT Instapundit linked to Andy Cochran's Counter-Terrorism Blog and his brief, blackberry account from the scene, commending the Capitol police, as well as to a timeline at ABCnews.com that was put out by the White House. Then at 7:51 p.m. there was a link to the blogger David Corn's report, again with a lighthearted tone.

The topic that most frequently popped up across the blogs was the ongoing Senate fight over the potential for the use of the filibuster in the judicial-nomination process — a subject that was a minor issue in the media over all this day, and largely restricted elsewhere to the major national papers we studied. Not only was the debate in process in the Senate that day, but a group of students from Princeton were in Washington "filibustering" Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist to preserve the practice. Kos, Talking Points, and Eschaton, the three liberal blogs, supported the right to filibuster, and all linked to the Princeton student blog. In addition, Kos, at 11:46 a.m., noted that no vote was held the previous day, "and we all know darn well that Kitten Killer Frist would've done the vote if he had the votes." Kos also ran comments from DavidNYC, who met with the Princeton students that day. Joshua Marshall, at 11:26 a.m., criticized the Tribune reporter Jill Zuckerman for her use of the term "Nuclear Option" in describing the Republican plan: "Tell Zuckerman no more nuclear-backsliding!" And Eschaton, at 2:42 p.m. reran and linked to comments on the matter from a blogger named Digby.

Posts About the Senate Filibuster Rule Debate

	Filibuster Debate	Princeton Student Protest
Daily Kos	11:46 a.m.	6:53 p.m.
Talking Points	11:26 a.m.	6:50 p.m.
Crooks & Liars	9:47 p.m.	—
Power Line	6:54 a.m.	—
Eschaton	2:42 p.m.	9:46 a.m.
Note: All Times EDT		

The other liberal blog, Crooks and Liars, reran portions of a blogger called the Carpet Bagger Report, which quoted the Christian Coalition founder James Dobson's explanation of why the debate over the filibuster had become so heated.

Power Line was the only conservative blog of the group to weigh in on the matter this day. It led with the topic at 6:54 a.m., but from yet another novel facet — the legal angle. It ran the views of a lawyer named Michael Schwartz (whose comments were dated May 10) on the constitutional legitimacy of the filibuster and asked him a question; his response was added later. Then at 9:14 p.m. the blog came back to the issue, picking up what was apparently a continuing discussion on the blog about Federal Judge Priscilla Owen with comments from an appellate lawyer.

All in the Family

If cable programs itself as if viewers are going to watch relatively passively and take in what the cable teams have to offer, bloggers treat their audience as equal partners in the information exchange. There is a sense that the audience has already been a part of the ongoing dialogue, that they know the background of each topic or issue and that they will click through several layers of links to make a complete picture. That may make it a bit difficult or intimidating to join in. Once in, however, participants are part of an inner circle, a family, or clan. Indeed, one of the most prominent features of the blogs we studied was that they refer continually to one another, and treat their readers as if they were bloggers too.

Of all the blog postings for the day, most — a full third — were spurred by another blogger's post. In other words, those doing the posting saw something on another blog that they then commented on and linked to on their own blogs. Bloggers looked to their comrades more than to actual events (21%) and twice as often as to mainstream press accounts (15%).

Trigger of Blog Posts

Event	21%
Press Account	15
Journalist statement	6
Newsmaker statement	7
Other blogger post	33
Published report	5
No even/statement	5
Don't Know	8
Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding	

Instapundit was particularly prone to such posts. Fully 15 of its 25 that day stemmed from another blog, including links to:

- Prof. Brainbridge on purgatory
- Counter-terrorism blogger Andy Cochran
- TigerHawk's Tax Reform Proposal

- Global Voices on Iranian posts about a meeting with a presidential candidate there
- Video on Crooks and Liars and comments by the blogger Ed Cone on John Stewart's negative comments about way cable covers blogs
- Jeff Jarvis's post on whether Google is the next AOL
- The blogger Austin Bay's comments on Anti-American action in Brazil
- Legal Blogger's piece on the lack of attention among academics to the Multistate Bar Exam
- Several blogs that serve as round-ups of blogs on particular issues such as democracy, Iraq and education

Sometimes the practice comes full circle, in a way reminiscent of the game Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon, where the stream of links always comes back to him. On Crooks and Liars that day, for instance, one post was about comments that the comedian John Stewart made on his show the night before about blogs (something several other blogs posted about as well). The post links to the Stewart video, blogger Ed Cone's post on the matter and a related post on BuzzMachine.com that links back to the video link on Crooks and Liars.

Level of Original Reportage

We found little of what would be considered journalistic reporting done by these bloggers, as in examining public documents, conducting interviews, or acting as a direct witness to events. In more than three quarters of all the posts (79%, 88 posts) the highest level of reporting offered was a commentary from the blogger. Just 5% (5 posts in all) involved some original research.

The highest level of reporting we found on May 11 actually came from a reader's post rather than the main author of the blog. The Daily Kos carried a post from DavidNYC, who that morning went to the Capitol to talk with the Princeton students who were "filibustering" Frist. DavidNYC then blogged about it when he got back. In a little bit of reporting himself, Kos contacted the Columbia Journalism School professor Steve Ross, asking him to remove a question on a survey that suggested that bloggers supporting Howard Dean's presidential candidacy in 2004 were paid to support him. Ross, according to Kos, refused.

Similarly, in a post on the Iraq car bombs, Crooks and Liars said it e-mailed the New York Times columnist John Tierney (whose op-ed had urged journalists not to give so much space to such incidents) "to ask him if it was okay to report on today's suicide bombers." We would have to take his word that he did e-mail the writer, but either way no response was on the blog by the end of the day.

Highest Level of Reporting in Posts	
Personal Experience	5%
Interview	1
Original Research	5
Comments/compilations	79
Round-up of posts	12
Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.	

Follow the Links to Connect the Dots

One result of basing posts on other posts is that it puts a bigger burden on the reader to follow the links through to put the pieces of an event together.

A post on Daily Kos titled “Jonah Goldberg yawns while kids die,” for instance, was about the blogger Jonah Goldberg’s response to an earlier Kos critique of him over his support for the war in Iraq . The post began with a reader’s comment about an e-mail the reader sent to Goldberg on the matter and Goldberg’s response. Then Kos gave his response to Goldberg’s. Next Kos ran another reader’s comment on the matter followed by a link to more comments by The Cunning Realist blog about the exchanges. Whew!

Another subject discussed this day had to do with a blogger’s appearance on the Michael Medved Show. (We’re told nothing about the show itself, but by following a number of links, someone unfamiliar with it could learn that it is a nationally syndicated, conservative radio talk show.) Power Line posted a link to Joshua Marshall’s post on the matter on his Talking Points Memo. When you got to Marshall ’s blog, it linked to the Rock the Vote blog post by the person who went on the show as well as a post by someone referred to as The Count — which was an earlier post by Marshal about someone who is mentioned on the show.

Eschaton’s original post

Bats

Josh Marshall found a humdinger over at Rock the Vote on Michael Medved, twisting in the wind in his attempt to pretend that Republicans have nothing to do with any plans to privatize Social Security. Oh, my.

-Avedon 9:42 PM

The Missing Link

What all this means when it comes to sourcing is quite interesting. In one sense, blogging is all about transparency — embedded link upon embedded link. But if one is looking for sourcing in a journalistic sense — an original source — there is a lot missing. Bloggers link to others but tell readers very little about who those fellow bloggers are, their backgrounds or what if any expertise, relationship or bias they may have on the subject at hand. And if the original blogger who raised an issue is passing something along second hand, by the time it may get to the fourth reference it requires some diligence to realize the absence of a direct source in the first place.

Little Green Footballs, for example, posted about Afghan riots that broke out over the supposed desecration of the Koran by American soldiers there. The post re-ran a portion of a Yahoo story on the event (and links to the entire piece) and then added,

“Roger L. Simon points out that the Newsweek report that triggered these deadly riots was based on an anonymous source.”

There is no explanation of whether Roger is a journalist, a blogger or a soldier or why we should believe his account. And this post, “For news about Operation Matador, the anti-jihadi offensive near the Syrian border, The Adventures of Chester is the place” gives no information on the blog it links to, the author of the blog or what the author’s stance is on the Iraq war, jihadi or anything else.

In another example, Instapundit posts on a comment on democratization made by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice at the Community of Foreign Ministers meeting in Santiago, Chile. The quote is picked up from a post on another blog — John McCaslin’s — but Instapundit offers no context whatsoever about the speech, about where McCaslin got the quote or about the quote itself.

Instapundit’s original post:

CONDI RICE: “‘Democratization,’ Rice told the foreign ministers, is ‘not an event, it is a process.’”

Indeed.

posted at 11:23 AM by Glenn Reynolds

Readers can usually — eventually — figure out what the blogs linked to are about or who the authors are, but it is up to them to do the digging. If they don’t, there is a risk that what is occurring is an electronic version of the children’s game of telephone.

Talking the Language

Along with the inside-the-family ethos of the blogs we examined comes a certain lingo and nomenclature that only those familiar with the blogs may understand. It can be confusing or even intimidating for a newcomer. Daily Kos, for example, ends one of his posts with “Cheers and Jeers sips tea in There’s Moreville. . . [Swoosh!] RIGHT NOW! [Gong!!]”

Senator Bill Frist is referred to as “Kitten Killer Frist,” Rep. Tom Delay as a (R-Sugardaddy). And Little Green Footballs ends most posts with a “(hat tip)” to the blog or person that provided information.

It’s Us vs. Them, Sort of

Some critics have argued that the blogosphere mostly involves bloggers reacting to what they have read in the mainstream press, and that rather than offering an alternative to the so-called “MSM” (mainstream media), they are entirely dependent on it. The Day in the Life suggests that the charge may be overstated, though not entirely wrong;

the relationship may be more complex than that. Most original posts on this day were triggered by a fellow blogger (33%) or from specific events (21%). Just 15% came from the more mainstream press accounts and 6% from statements made by journalists. But if one follows the trail of links deep enough, it can often lead to some original sourcing from a news outlet — but not always. It is a mix that also varied among the particular blogs that day.

Whether bloggers need the MSM or not, they do often seem to harbor a certain animosity toward the old media. In most posts that refer to a journalist or a news outlet — liberal or conservative — the blogger is far from a defender.

Daily Kos bashed the Wall Street Journal story that suggested that bloggers for Howard Dean were paid to promote him. (It also then bashed the Columbia Journalism School's survey question that suggested the same thing.)

The lie that won't die

bykos

Wed May 11th, 2005 at 11:52:45 PDT

Every week, some journalist somewhere writes that “Dean bloggers were paid to promote his candidacy”, and breathlessly reports the “disclosures” that outed said agreement.

Of course, this stemmed from a Wall Street Journal hit piece written by Bill Bulkeley, James Bandler and edited by Alix Freedman. As a result, I refuse to speak to WSJ reporters (as one learned today). But still the story, discredited within 48 hours, still lives on.

The latest is a survey by Columbia Journalism School 's Steve Ross, which is ironically enough, about “journalism ethics”. Go ahead and conduct the survey. Destroy its results. This Ross guy deserves nothing but scorn. Why? When you get to question 15:

“15. What effects do you think the following developments will have on the credibility of the media in the coming year (including on-line, print and broadcast media)? Please use a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 means a very strong effect and 1 means no effect at all.

“Disclosures of non-government/corporate payments to independent ‘bloggers’ to act as spokespeople (For example: Consultants receiving payments from Howard Dean during the presidential campaign)”

Of course, there never were any Dean bloggers paid to act as spokespeople for the campaign. Yet this survey is perpetuating the lie that we were. And on a survey distributed amongst other journalists, no less. Several reporters who got this instantly recognized who the questioner referred to and passed it on to me.

Jerome Armstrong and I asked Ross to correct the question and issue a retraction, and Ross has refused. It's telling that every single reporter we've had to contact to correct the record has done so immediately, and with full apologies. Professor Ross, mister blog ethicists himself, is the first to refuse. That's the first irony. The second is that it was his college — the Columbia Journalism Review's Campaign Desk, that gave me and Jerome the first mainstream defense in response to the WSJ hit piece. They awarded it the first ever "Lipstick on a Pig" award for spectacular hackery.

But really, it's telling that while most working journalists have been more than willing to correct the record, it's the campus ethicists that run most afoul of those ethics they claim to uphold.

Update : Oh, and I forgot to mention. Why did Ross call us out? From an email to me:

I had a bunch of examples that seemed anti-business and anti-Republican so I wanted something different.

So the GOP and WSJ efforts to find moral equivalency on the Left to the Armstrong Williams and other such scandals worked. That's why Jerome and I fought the original WSJ story so hard. Once it's in print, it's impossible to kill. It's like playing whack-a-mole.

Fact is, the examples of unethical behavior are all on the Right, and so he threw us into his little survey for "balance", even if such balance doesn't come close to existing.

Media :: [Permalink](#) :: [Trackback](#) :: [Discuss \(238 comments\)](#)

The conservative blog Instapundit linked to TaxProf's assertion that the New York Times ran a misleading chart on marginal tax rates. And in a link to RawStory's account of the U.N. nominee John Bolton's divorce records, the liberal blog Eschaton wrote: "Maybe this will interest the media? Oh, never mind, no Democrats involved."

At the same time, these bloggers often ended up linking back to an account in the mainstream press. Sometimes it was the second or third link in the stream and many times the use was not acknowledged. But the pattern does suggest that much of the original material does stem from mainstream reporting.

Let's Hear From Me

One consistent element across the blogs was their personal style. Readers learned about those things that the author or authors found significant, or at least interesting. And the vast majority of the time, the personal element included the blogger's own views. Of all the posts that had some commentary from the blogger (as opposed to just a link to other work with nothing more than the slightest contextual language added) the vast majority — 78% — included the blogger's view.

And on each blog, there were at least twice as many posts with opinions as without.

Blogger Opinion in Post Narratives

	Total Posts	Posts with Opinion
Instapundit	14	10
Daily Kos	12	12
Talking Points	6	4
Crooks & Liars	14	9
Power Line	12	12
LGF	11	7
Eschaton	18	16

Footnotes

1. The traffic rankings were taken in April of 2005 from a blog portal, www.truthlaidbear.com, which ranks blogs according to its “Blogosphere Ecosystem.” According to TTLB, its “Blogosphere Ecosystem is an application which scans weblogs and generates a list of weblogs ranked by the number of incoming links they receive from other weblogs on the list.”

[Click here to view content data tables.](#)

Cable TV

Cable TV

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

Cable news thrives on the big, breaking news story. It has gravitated over its quarter-century of audience growth to major crises — wars, disasters, political scandals, big tabloid crime cases. It is the more typical news day, one where events are mostly momentary, alarms prove false, and the news is incremental, that represents cable’s special challenge.

May 11, 2005, was one of those. Much of the news happened overnight and overseas as the nation slept. And the list of new and dramatic breaking news events occurring this day was limited.

There were still things happening — enough to fill the pages of the next day’s newspapers. Yet cable, with its “see it now” approach, would focus this day primarily on just three events.

One was a trial of a celebrity, closed to cameras. Another was a bond hearing in an Illinois double murder, also off camera, where the killer, as planned, would formally confess to killing his child and her friend. The third was a scare, which would last for only 15 minutes, over a small plane’s entering restricted airspace.

A close look at the coverage this day puts some of cable's tendencies in clear relief.

During much of the cable day, immediacy seems to be the criterion of significance above all others. That sometimes leads to an odd hyperbole in which anchors endeavor to create a sense of urgency about small things. In the hour before noon, the three channels on this day would air more than a dozen shots of an empty press room in Illinois and a doorway in front of the courthouse of the Michael Jackson child-molestation trial, where the former child actor Macaulay Culkin was expected to enter.

Another result of cable's weakness for the breaking story is the way cable journalists strain to make things seem compelling. Nine hours after the plane incident was over, CNN's Aaron Brown tried mightily to recreate a sense of panic that people felt when the White House and Capitol were evacuated for a few minutes around lunchtime. "When it was happening, nothing wasn't nothing," Brown intoned somberly. "It was very much something.... We didn't know what it was."  View CNN Video Clip (Get Quicktime® Plug-in)

Some other findings include:

- Cable puts remarkably little emphasis on summing up or offering what would amount to a definitive account of the day's events, even on the programs that air in the evening.
- To get whatever depth or range of views or sources cable offers in its continuous coverage, viewers need to pretty much do just that — get the news here continuously.
- Cable audiences are more likely than those for other media to hear reporters' opinions about the news.
- The close examination of one day highlights the stark differences between the three channels in style and also to some extent in story emphasis. There are greater differences here than on broadcast network TV.

In past years, our content analysis revealed some stark findings about cable news. The medium is largely unscripted — it eschews taped, edited packages in favor of live interviews, and reporters talking off the cuff or from hasty notes. Pictures and words often don't match. The reporting contains fewer sources and viewpoints than elsewhere on TV. And rather than being up to date, much of the reporting is repetitive. Over two years of study we found that roughly 7 in 10 of the stories on cable repeat, but less than 1 in 10 contains any substantive new information. ¹

The more detailed Day in the Life study deepened this impression and found other traits. Reporting on cable is highly focused around either the personality of the program hosts or sending a camera and correspondent to an event and having them pass along what they are seeing at that moment. The effect, more so than in other media, is that the audience's role is passive. There is less effort here to tell how these stories involve the viewers, what to do about them, how they relate to their lives, or how viewers can do or learn more.

Cable's Lack of Summarization

The viewers' role is passive except for one area — the extent to which it is up to the viewers to add up for themselves what the pieces on cable offer throughout the day. The diversity of sources and viewpoints on cable news is usually across two or three different stories rather than within one piece. Facts can vary from account to account. Sources in live interviews offer one view, and it may be a while before contrary or supplemental information is forthcoming. A viewer needs to see all the accounts to get any kind of depth of knowledge.

Take, for example, coverage of the D.C. plane scare. One cable story quoted the Capitol police chief. Another offered reactions of those involved in the evacuation. Still a third interviewed an Air Force colonel responsible for air defense in Washington. A fourth interviewed folks who knew the pilots. But those moments were spread across a multitude of stories over several hours and across the channels. To learn about all those different angles, viewers would need to catch most if not all of that coverage.

Yet they could have gotten virtually all of it by going online, where stories contained most of these elements in one piece, and users could access it whenever they wanted.

Why we found this trait in cable is hard to pin down but worth pondering. With so much time to fill, it is possible cable news managers are simply preoccupied with getting things on the air. Or that for the number of hours to fill, the reporters they have to draw on is too limited. The focus on the immediate may exacerbate the problem, making it virtually impossible to prepare. Whatever the causes, for much of the day, cable anchors function more like traffic cops than investigators.

Reporter Opinion

The study also confirmed another earlier finding, that reporters on cable news are more likely to offer their own opinions about events than other media. Over all, 47% of cable stories on May 11 include reportorial opinion, compared with 14% in the media as a whole. (It was 20% on network evening TV and 48% on network morning). And for the biggest story of the day — the plane scare in Washington — that number jumped to 83%.²

Journalist Opinion in D.C. Plane Scare Coverage

% of all stories

Outlet	Stories w/ Opinion
Cable	83%
National Newspapers	0%
Network Evening News	30%
National Web sites	0%

The opinion on May 11 came in various forms. On the morning programs it came from journalists trying to be informal. After a piece about global warming on CNN's "American Morning," for instance, the anchor Soledad O'Brien offered, "So that videotape there, and really what's happening on the glacier, is definitive proof that there's global warming." The correspondent Miles O'Brien takes her one further. "Yes, but it's just one more little piece. There's a big stack of evidence now . . . The real question is, what are we going to do about it? Are we going to stop using SUVs?"

On Fox News, during the same hour, the co-anchor E.D. Hill was defending the Bush administration from criticisms by the former Homeland Security chief, Tom Ridge, that the administration often raised the terror alert over his objections. “If you don’t raise it and something happens, everyone’s gonna get blamed for not raising it, if you do raise it then people say, nothing happened, why’d you do it?” she said in response to Ridge’s comments, reported in USA Today that morning. “I don’t think there is any way to win on that one.”  View Fox News Video Clip (Get Quicktime® Plug-in)

Her co-anchor, Steve Doocy, made the case partisan. “And the other thing is how many times during the campaign did we hear Democrats say they are doing this for political reasons?” he asked. But Ridge, he said, “did not ever suggest they did anything like that.”

On other cable programs, opinion is a signal part of the program’s appeal. It is part of the core of “Imus in the Morning” on MSNBC. The views of Bill O’Reilly are similarly central to “The O’Reilly Factor” in prime time on Fox, as are the more liberal notions of Keith Olbermann on MSNBC.

The Range of News

Despite all the time it has to fill, the range of topics on cable was also more limited than some might expect. The four hours of this day studied on each channel offered little more than what one would have gotten from a 30-minute network evening newscast, and markedly less than one could learn from any print or online venue.

Among the other events that would be covered online and in the next morning’s newspapers: The Army would decide not to file charges against officers implicated in the Abu Ghraib prison scandal; The Catholic Church would announce that it might cut priests’ pensions in different U.S. cities; There was a scandal brewing about evangelical proselytizing at the Air Force Academy. A new report found that bias crimes against Muslims in the U.S. were up 50% since 9/11.

Most of those stories were about trends, though, not breaking news which is what cable tends to focus most of its energy and time on. On May 11, that would include four main events: the plane scare, the murders in Zion, Ill., the surge in violence in Iraq and the Michael Jackson trial. Those made up a third of the time studied, and even that understates how much the plane scare dominated. The story did not break until mid-day, after two of the programs sampled had aired. Looking just at the afternoon coverage, it commanded even more of the air time. 3

Percent of Newshole Devoted to Top Four Stories
Percent of all Stories

Outlet	D.C. Plane	Zion Murders	Culkin Testimony	Iraq car bombs	Total to Top 4
Cable	13%	10	6	3	32
National Newspapers	4%	2	4	4	14
Network Evening News	18%	0	1	7	26
National Web sites (top stories)	14%	11	9	22	56

Depth of Reporting

In a media environment saturated with news outlets that all offer the basic facts, a growing question among journalists is the degree to which stories explore angles that connect or make events more relevant to the audience.

Cable news, with its hours to fill and variety of programming, does little to fill any such need. For this study, we created an index of 10 different elements a story could contain that might add to a citizen's understanding. Did a story put the event in historical context? Did it suggest where the audience could learn more? Did it suggest what might happen next? 4

More than half (58%) of all major stories on cable news contained none or only one of those elements. The largest number, 36%, did not offer any, and another 21% offered just one. That was a worse rating than any other national news platform except for the 30-minute nightly newscasts, which have much less time and whose stories tend to be much shorter (though even these networks newscasts had a greater percent of stories with three or more index elements. In online stories, for instance, just 4% offered no elements. Three quarters of the stories online (72%) contained two or more.

Story Index Scores 5, by Medium
Percent of all Stories

	0	1	2	3+
Cable	36%	21	21	21
Network Eve. News	41%	23	9	27
Network Morning News	29%	18	14	39
National Newspapers	0%	0	43	57
National Web sites	4%	17	28	51
Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.				

The News of the Day in Cable (and Differences Among the Channels)

The more we study, the more the cable channels begin to look distinct from one another. On May 11, indeed, they differed more in what they covered than the broadcast networks did. On CNN, the plane scare was dominant. Fox focused more on the grisly murder case in Illinois. MSNBC was the most interested of the channels in Macaulay Culkin's testimony at Michael Jackson's molestation trial, a story, interestingly, that its sister broadcast, the NBC Nightly News, didn't even mention.

Morning News on Cable

The feel of morning news on cable is different from the networks. While the tone is similarly informal and chatty, absent are the softer lifestyle subjects such as cooking tips or tools for the garden. Instead, cable focuses on topics geared more toward people interested in politics and getting a jump on current events of the day. And that chatty weatherman mixing with folks in the street is nowhere to be found. Rather than offer emotional reactions to stories, the reporters and anchors are more prone to offer political views.

CNN

Viewers starting their day with CNN's "American Morning" got a quick dose of hard news. The program, from 7 to 8 a.m., led with a taped package on the situation in Iraq, a story that the network morning shows would skip, followed by a story that resembled the network offerings — a taped package on the Zion murders. The story would even feature the same source as the network stories, the local prosecutor Michael Waller.

Next, viewers got a discussion of an unexploded grenade found where President Bush had given a speech in the former Soviet republic of Georgia. The story would be a minor item in newspapers, yet was a staple of morning shows on cable and network. As it turned out, what CNN offered here was identical to what the networks did. Bill Hemmer, a CNN anchor (who later moved to Fox) interviewed a former Secret Service agent, Joseph Petro — the same person interviewed on two of the three broadcast networks that morning.

For its fourth piece, however, CNN offered something more distinctive, a segment on a Swiss study of global warming reported by the correspondent Miles O'Brien in the studio. It was one of the few items on any morning cable program that was not about breaking news.

Finally, CNN's grumpy Everyman, Jack Cafferty, appeared to pose his question of the day: whether United Airlines should be allowed to default on its pensions. That was the one segment that allowed viewers to get involved in the news. And Cafferty was quick to offer his own view. He had no doubt that executives of large corporations normally get a "huge golden parachute" and "you can bet they're not going to suffer, not like the employees will."

Cable Morning Shows: Lead Stories and Type of Coverage

Placement	CNN		Fox		MSNBC	
1st	Iraq	Package	Grenade	Anchor talk	Brief Headlines	Newsrap
2nd	Zion	Package	Zion	Package	Tim Russert	Host talk
3rd	Grenade	Interview	Brief Headlines	Newsrap	Renee Zellweger	Host Talk
4th	Global warming	Staff int.	Terror Alerts	Anchor Talk	Rolling Stones	Host Talk

Fox

Over on Fox News's "Fox and Friends," viewers on May 11 got a program constructed quite differently. In the 7 a.m. hour there was just one on-scene report from a correspondent — a live report from the courthouse in Illinois, which broke to a packaged report, and one report (about the unexploded grenade) with the correspondent live from the Washington studio.

The bulk of the program involved the three anchors chatting or reading a teleprompter. With fewer reporters in the field than CNN, Fox relies more on the chemistry and banter of its hosts. At the same time, that may be one reason why its morning program seems more a distinct program than simply another part of the cable channel's day.

The story lineup was even more government focused than CNN's. There were multiple reports on the grenade near Bush in Georgia. There was a segment on a bill to require identification tags for illegal immigrants. The violence in Iraq was a brief "tell" story.

Another difference on Fox in the morning is that it has abandoned the more disinterested neutral voice of traditional broadcasting. It is a clearly American channel, with the U.S. government frequently referred to in the first person plural — "we" and "us." In Fox's lead story of the morning, the case of the grenade in Georgia, E.D. Hill, speaking not of herself or Fox News but of American officials, said, "Our people haven't been able to look at it. So they (Georgian officials) keep counseling us. We haven't been able to say it's a hand grenade. We don't know what it is exactly."

Viewers also got a sense of point of view in the choice of stories and in the way they were handled. That came through in a subject not found on CNN or MSNBC during the hour — an interview with Gary Aldrich, president of the Patrick Henry Center, a foundation to promote "individual liberty" and known for its conservative views. They discussed Steve Gardner, one of the Swift Boat Veterans who was critical of John Kerry in the 2004 Presidential election campaign. Steve Gardner, Aldrich said, was "the only Swift Boat veteran who served on the boat that John Kerry commanded. So he was in a unique position to observe John Kerry up close and personal." The Fox anchor Steve Doocy then added that Gardner was fired from his job after appearing in commercials. "We had him on our program. Right after he got on TV, and said all that stuff, he got fired." No other source offering a differing view was mentioned.

Fox fleshed out its morning coverage with a sports round-up from one of the hosts and a brief host discussion of the episode of "American Idol" coming up that night. The final segment was an interview between E.D. Hill and the executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, a think tank that studies the effects on immigration on the U.S., over a new administration program to cover some health costs of illegal immigrants. The director, Mark Krikorian, was clearly critical of the administration.

MSNBC

MSNBC's offering at this hour is not television per se at all, it's the radio program "Imus in the Morning," filmed. And it's all about opinions and views — those of the veteran DJ Don Imus.

The top of the hour offered a few news headlines read by Imus's sidekick Charles McCord — brief updates on Iraq, the congressional spending bill, the Zion murders, and another multiple murder, in New Mexico .

Mostly, the program was about the mind of Imus, especially his likes and dislikes. He was disgusted, for instance, over the Rolling Stones announcing another tour — "they've got to stop flopping around on the stage like a chicken on crack...it looks like your crazy grandparents for talent night at the old folks home, doesn't it?" And he loved NBC colleague Tim Russert, host of his sister channel's Sunday talk program "Meet the Press." The largest chunk of the hour was spent in a phone interview with Russert. He and Imus discussed Russert's new book, "Big Russ and Me," and then moved to Laura Bush's popularity and how the NBC family supports each other. Imus was unabashed about selling — books, TV shows, movies, and his own mail-order products. On this day it was Russert's book: "It's a great book. Not really difficult . . . great idea for Father's Day or Mother's Day. I heartily recommend it." He was also selling Russert, and closed with: "I want you to know: I love you and so does Charles."

Mid-Day

The 11-to-noon hour on cable — designated as the “Live” program on each channel — recapped the overnight news and was poised to bring breaking developments on two of the big stories of the day.

The murder suspect Jerry Hobbs was expected to appear for bond in Zion, Ill., after which the prosecutor, Mike Waller, would hold a press conference. At the same time, Macaulay Culkin was expected to arrive at the courthouse in the Michael Jackson trial in California . Culkin’s testimony was not to take place for several more hours, but his arrival at the courthouse was treated as news itself.

On Fox in particular, the key line that hour was “expecting.” Unfortunately for its viewers the expected was long in coming. They were assured repeatedly that Fox “would be there live” and that “any moment now we’re expecting news” on the Hobbs bond hearing and on the arrival of Culkin at the Jackson courthouse.

Throughout the hour, the cameras returned seven times to show the empty courthouse pressroom where Waller would be appearing. The only action during the shots was sound guys adjusting a mike or two. Over and over, “Any moment now . . . could be getting some new details . . . Again, much more to come . . .” Fox filled the waiting time with such things as an interview with a forensic scientist. Unfortunately for those on the edge of their seats, the bond hearing was delayed and the press conference didn’t take place until the next hour.

The Jackson courthouse coverage was much the same. “As soon as it happens, we’re on it.” The “it,” however, was merely the arrival of one of the two celebrities at the courthouse. The image shown three times was the security checkpoint at the courthouse entrance, empty but for the guards milling around. At one point, someone walked through. It “might have been him [Culkin] just passing through,” the anchor speculated. We learned a little later it wasn’t. And still later we learned that Culkin would be led into the courthouse through a back entrance. A pool camera did catch a picture of Culkin’s back shortly after 11:30 a.m. Fox showed the image four times in the final 15 minutes of the hour.

Mid-Day Coverage of the Zion Murders

	CNN	FOX	MSNBC
# of empty podium shots	1	9	4
Sound from Mike Waller	1 tape	0	1 tape, 3 live

MSNBC’s live hour with Randy Meier and Amy Robach also promised to bring viewers the “now” of the two stories, but the channel filled in the waiting time with a wider range of other news. As a consequence, MSNBC during the hour cut to the empty podium shot at the Illinois courthouse just four times and cut to the Jackson courthouse just twice. It “just missed” the pool shot of Culkin’s arrival but did show it — just once — after the commercial break. MSNBC also added some humor to the mix — plugging its evening commentator Keith Olbermann’s “Jackson Puppets,” currently being

auctioned on eBay.  [View MSNBC Jackson Puppets Video Clip \(Get Quicktime® Plug-in\)](#)

The show opened with a fairly comprehensive taped package on the Zion murder case. There was no package on the Jackson trial, but there was live talk with the reporter on the scene and an interview with Susan Filan, MSNBC’s legal analyst. As they tried to fill the time waiting for something to happen, the anchors and guests on MSNBC vamped with

what might be described as fairly obvious speculation: “Is (Culkin) going to fall victim to the prosecution’s sword or will he carry the day? If he carries the day, it’s going to be devastating for the prosecution.”

The main distinction of MSNBC during this hour was that it aired packages on a wider variety of topics than its rivals, some of them using NBC News personnel, though the topics were mostly the same ones we heard about on the morning network and cable channels. There was a taped piece on the grenade in Georgia and another on the United Airlines pension situation. The most distinctive piece was an exclusive report with the NBC correspondent Lisa Meyers on a Middle Eastern bank whose New York City branch was under criminal investigation.

Mid-Day Coverage of Culkin Testimony

	CNN	FOX	MSNBC
# of court house entrance shots	1	10	2

The anchor Daryn Kagan brought viewers the 11-to-noon news on CNN. Its range of coverage that hour was more in line with MSNBC’s. In addition to the three big stories, CNN offered viewers Congressional news about spending and gang-warfare bills, as well as a report on the nomination of Under Secretary of State John Bolton to be ambassador to the U.N. It also covered some entertainment news — the coming premier of the last “Star Wars” movie, the inspiration behind the reality show “CSI” and an interview with the author of a new book on presidential getaways.

CNN led with the Zion story, a package with clips from prosecutor Waller and members of the community. Then, rather than turning to a live report from the courthouse immediately, Kagan announced, “Once that bond hearing for Jerry Hobbs ends, Chris [Lawrence] will have an update for us with a live report.” What viewers got in the meantime was an interview with Dominic Cappello, author of “Ten Talks Parents Must Have with Their Children about Violence.” For the rest of the hour, CNN did not return to the courthouse — so it had just one empty podium shot.

The Jackson trial got even less coverage: one brief live report from the courthouse and one return at the end of the hour for the clip of Culkin’s entrance.

Just after noon, though, CNN’s measured focus on live and breaking news gave way, with the brief evacuation of the White House and the Capitol as a result of the Cessna’s entering restricted Washington airspace. Once the plane incident occurred, CNN viewers got the sense that no other events that day came even close in significance.

From noon through 6 p.m. — from “CNN Live” through “Inside Politics” at 3:30 through “Crossfire” at 4:30 through “Wolf Blitzer Reports” at 5:00 , CNN veered from the plane scare for only a few minutes, once to brief on Culkin’s testimony, and in the second half of “Inside Politics” to report on Congressional proceedings of the day. Then, after a brief departure from the story in the second half of the Lou Dobbs’s business report, Anderson Cooper aired a special edition called “Security Watch: Defending the Skies.” “NewsNight” was also focused almost solely on the story.

The only program on CNN from noon onward not to lead with and devote most or all its time to the plane scare was “Larry King Live.” He had an exclusive interview with Condoleezza Rice, her first extended interview since taking office as secretary of state. But as the night went on, CNN was back to the plane scare.

Evening News

CNN

On CNN, the prime time evening newscast with Aaron Brown featured 10 different pieces on the Washington false alarm involving the Cessna. They included an opening piece by Brown that narrated events as they unfolded, pieces by CNN correspondents reliving those 15 minutes from their eyewitness vantage points on Capitol Hill and the White House, interviews with people from the airport where the flight originated, a close look at that type of plane and even a trip on a simulated patrol of a plane being hijacked — what could have happened if the event had not been the false alarm that it was.

For all the time devoted to the incident, however, and all the hours since it had happened, the reporting suffered from many of the tendencies we have identified elsewhere with cable news. There was a heavy reliance on government sources such as the White House spokesman Scott McClellan as well as on CNN's own correspondents as eyewitness sources. And the primary expert relied on throughout the coverage, the CNN "security analyst" Richard Falkenrath, a former deputy homeland security adviser, clearly identifies himself as a member of the extended homeland security family, whom he refers to as "we." "Now, that's not to say that we didn't make the right decision today to evacuate," he told Aaron Brown.

Though on the surface it might seem as if Brown's program amounted to an hour on the subject, the newscast did not have the feel of long-form or in-depth journalism. It was rather a series of short pieces, each with fairly limited reportage, as if the reporters who were on air all day were simply asked to file one more piece for the late show.

The few segments that tried to go beyond the basic play-by-play failed to go very far. A piece by Jeanne Meserve, for example, was introduced as a look at whether the new warning system for pilots could have prevented the incident. The segment never answered the question. Instead it mostly addressed the mechanics of the alarm. What's more, viewers were told nothing about the sources used, two pilots and someone from the Air Force — their backgrounds, any connections they had or the level of their expertise.

Cable Evening News: Lead Stories and Type of Coverage

Placement	CNN		Fox		MSNBC	
1st	DC Plane	Anchor Pkg	DC Plane	Pkg w/live talk	DC Plane	Anchor read
2nd	DC Plane	Pkg. w/ live talk	Iraq	Pkg	DC Plane	Staff int.
3rd	DC Plane	Pkg.	North Korea	Pkg w/ live talk	DC Plane	Expert int.
4th	DC Plane –	Pkg.	Afghan riots	Anchor read	Grenade	Anchor read

Fox

As with Fox's morning show, "Special Report with Brit Hume" spoke largely to viewers interested in political events, but Hume's range of issues was actually wider. In addition to the plane scare and the Iraq bombings, viewers could also hear about North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons; voter fraud; the resignation of a church pastor over a politically motivated sermon, and a forthcoming vote in Canada. News of the Illinois double murders and the Jackson trial, which had dominated the mid-day, were absent.

The reports themselves were produced in a manner much closer to that of traditional broadcast news. As we found in last year's analysis of a month's worth of Hume programming, viewers heard from a variety of sources and correspondents.

The lead plane-scare story — a taped report from Brian Wilson — contained five different sources (though one was the correspondent Major Garrett, who was evacuated from the White House press room). The tone of the piece was more measured than the bulk of the CNN coverage, assuring viewers that all was well with the government. The first line from Hume let viewers know the scare was over: "The White House and the U.S. Capitol are back to normal tonight after a midday security scare. . ." The other piece on the plane story that hour, an interview with the NORAD spokesman Col. Keith Snyder, paints a calmer picture as well. Hume opens, "Well, as everyone knows, the threat turned out to be a little mosquito of an airplane that had no hostile intent and probably couldn't have done much damage even if it slammed into the Capitol. . ."  [View Hume Video Clip \(Get Quicktime® Plug-in\)](#)

The correspondent reports on Hume's program had a somewhat more balanced feel than other Fox programming — the plane-scare story suggested that the evacuation might have been disorganized, for instance — yet even on this program the reporter roundtable that made up the second half of the program as well as some other feature stories tipped toward a decidedly conservative viewpoint.

An item in Hume's "Political Grapevine," for instance, cited a new report from Milwaukee, WI that found hundreds of ineligible felons had voted in the last election, and then paired that finding with an unrelated study from Washington State showing that felons in that state had voted Democratic by 3-1.

MSNBC

Viewers of MSNBC's "Countdown with Keith Olbermann," the closest the network comes to a main evening newscast, heard about a greater number of news items that day than from any other program studied, much as was the case on MSNBC earlier in the day. Yet aside from the main stories of the day — the plane scare,

Iraq, Zion and Jackson — the items were mostly anchor reads of two or three sentences each by Olbermann, usually filtered through his own "take." In some ways "Countdown" is a hybrid of a news program and a talk show — it is Olbermann on the news.

"Spain has the annual running of the bulls at Pamplona. We now apparently have the annual running of the evacuees around the Capitol," he quipped to MSNBC's chief Washington correspondent, Norah O'Donnell.  [View Olbermann Video Clip \(Get Quicktime® Plug-in\)](#)

Olbermann was a little more sober-minded in the second segment, an interview about the plane scare with Roger Cressey, a former member of the National Security Council but now a "terrorism analyst" for MSNBC and NBC. Cressey, perhaps more than any other source quoted at length on cable this day, admired the administration's response. And that is the only viewpoint offered to the audience. Indeed, no one we encountered identified as a cable news analyst offered anything but praise for his former agency.

Olbermann: Break the day down into its critical components from your perspective, and give each of these components a letter grade, if you'd be so kind.

Cressey: Well, I think Secret Service and the Capitol Police, they'd get high marks because they did the notification quickly, people moved quickly. I think NORAD and the air defense infrastructure worked well. I also give high marks to the Customs police and others around. I give low marks to the pilot, of course.

Olbermann offers three separate pieces on the Culklin testimony that day — a straight news account in a package by the NBC correspondent Karen Brown, a discussion with Jim Moret of "Inside Edition" about the defense's portrayal of Jackson as "a 10-year-old child star trapped in a 46-year-old man's body," and a sarcastic segment in which Olbermann is auctioning off a "Michael Jackson Puppet" on eBay. Some of the material on Olbermann's show has aired before. The segment on the Iraq bombings, for instance, is a replay of the report by Richard Engel from NBC Nightly News.

Cable Talk Shows

The nightly personality talk programs on each of the cable channels are distinctly different from each other. On CNN, Larry King's long-interview format puts most of the focus on his guests rather than his own personality or viewpoints; Fox's O'Reilly show is mostly about O'Reilly; and MSNBC's "Hardball with Chris Matthews" is somewhere in between — the guests are more than furniture, but Matthews often is talking more than listening.

On the night of May 11, the topics varied as much as the styles. Larry King devoted the entire hour to his exclusive interview with Secretary of State Rice. While conversational, the discussion was the most serious of those on the talk programs.

O'Reilly offered his views on a gamut of items and with the hardest of edge of any of the talk-show hosts. On the immigration bill: "Well, that's true and dumb. Nobody thinks all illegals are here to commit crimes, but all illegals have something in common: they are illegal. Unfortunately, many in the press, and politics, and on the bench refuse to confront that." On the Jackson trial: "OK, why should I care?" On the murder case in Zion, he offered his own theory of the crime in an interview with Tom Rybarczyk of the Chicago Tribune, who "has been studying the life of Jerry Hobbs."

O'REILLY: Now my theory — and this is just a theory, but I'm going to throw it out there — it's based on, you know, information that we've been able to come up with — is that it wasn't going well with Hollabaugh. [Laura Hobbs, one of the murdered children, was the daughter of Hobbs and Sheila Hollabaugh.] Hobbs and Hollabaugh, you know, he wanted more than she was able to deliver. And he got angry. And when he gets angry — and this is shown by your reporting — when he gets angry, he turns violent.

Now, what would you do to a mother you wanted to punish? What's the worst thing you could do to her?

RYBARCZYK: It sounds like a sound theory, but I don't know.

O'REILLY: I am not asking to you comment on. I'm just saying this is what — I'm an analyst. I'm able to put this stuff together. This is what we're learning. . . .

And O'Reilly's "most ridiculous item of the day"? The plane scare: "So anyway, there was a little plane, a little plane went into the air space. All the people were evacuated. It was just a little plane. And that was it."

MSNBC's "Hardball with Chris Matthews" gave audiences even more of the self-promotion within NBC established earlier in the day. Just as viewers of Imus began the day with a promotional interview on Tim Russert's book about his father, they could get more of it in the evening on Hardball. Matthews was even more gushing than Imus had been.

“Most of the time when I have to read a book for the show, you know, I do a couple of chapters . . . [but here] I’m crying.” And later, “Perfect book. You can get it now.”

The rest of “Hardball” was devoted to coverage of a dinner that night honoring Nancy Reagan. The discussion, this one with another NBC correspondent, Andrea Mitchell, had the self-conscious feel of talk one might imagine hearing at a celebrity Washington cocktail party. Matthews asserted that Nancy Reagan “is going to be back in circulation after tonight. . . She is going to be around town . . coming to events. The grieving, I guess, is getting close to over. She’ll be up in New York , I’m sure.”

Footnotes

1. In our 2004 study of five days of cable over 12 hours of programming, only 5% of stories were updates that contained new information. In our 2005 study, the number was 10%.
2. In a month of cable news studied in 2004, about 28% included reporter opinion (see 2005 Report), again more than in any other medium studied.
3. The only media that offered a greater percent of its newshole to those four stories was the national online Web sites, but all we studied here were the lead stories on the site (usually the top 4). Among those sites, CNN.com, in particular, tended to reflect the narrow focus of its cable channel. About six stories get substantial treatment. The rest of the news agenda is handled with AP wire copy. For newspapers, the content studied was the entire A section and the section-front stories of the metro and business.
4. The ten elements were presence of: background information, future implications, the impact of the story on citizens, a human face to the story, some separation of fact and conjecture, potential action someone could take as a citizen, potential action to take as a consumer, contact information for the journalist or news outlet, the underlying principles at play, where to go for additional information.
5. The index measured the presence of ten different elements that a story might contain. They were the presence of: background information, future implications, the impact of the story on citizens, a human face to the story, some separation of fact and conjecture, potential action someone could take as a citizen, potential action to take as a consumer, contact information for the journalist or news outlet, the underlying principles at play, where to go for additional information.

[Click here to view content data tables.](#)

Network TV

Network TV

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

The architecture of network TV news is a holdover from another time, an age when news consumption was something that occurred only at home — at breakfast and after work.

The way the news broke on May 11 revealed how network journalists work within that structure.

The most heavily covered story of the day, a private plane in Washington, D.C.'s "No Fly" zone, happened at noon, after the morning news shows were off the air and six and half hours before the evening newscasts.

Violence in Iraq, another of the major stories, had happened overnight. A third, an arrest in an Illinois double murder, was announced before that.

Would the evening news skip some of those stories because they were old? Or delve more deeply into them because there was more time for reporting? In the 21st century, is time an enemy of good journalism or an ally?

A close examination of one Day in the Life of the News found:

- Time slot rather than network seems to define news judgment. There was little overlap in what was covered between the morning newscasts and the evening. And that was less because new events had overtaken the news than because of the starkly different definitions of news between the types of programs.
- Morning news programs build stories around emotion, though that varies somewhat by network. One way of doing so is by interviewing "average" people involved in the news and asking them how they feel rather than merely what happened. Another method is to have anchors and reporters lace their openings and closes with emotional keywords — "stunning... horrifying...horrific" and phrases such as "a serious warning every parent needs to hear" — as if trying to tell viewers how they should feel about these stories. In the first five stories this day, we found more than 30 cases of such terms among the three programs.
- The commercial evening newscasts are so strikingly similar to each other that on this day the first 12 minutes of news time on the three programs covered the same stories. 1 By the shows' end, ABC and CBS had only one "package" that was unique to their newscasts, NBC had two, and all four of the "exclusives" were feature stories. The main distinguishing characteristic of the programs was the personality of the anchor.
- The "NewsHour with Jim Lehrer," on PBS, seems increasingly distinctive now in television news in its definition of news and its treatment. On this day, it did not cover any of what proved the top four stories in the rest of the media landscape, beyond in its brief news summary. It was the only daily outlet not to. Instead, in its six stories, it offered more that was exclusive than any other national television program studied, and in the one story it covered that was widely reported elsewhere, its longer treatment meant it offered a more complete and nuanced account.

In the end, citizens would get in the 30 minutes of the three nightly commercial newscasts roughly as great a range of topics as they would from cable over four hours — and the programs averaged just 10 stories each. Yet the stories

seem so attenuated on these nightly newscasts that it is less clear how much viewers retain, and fewer angles on the stories are explored than in the morning.

In the first two years of this report, we examined network news by looking at a randomly constructed month of programming. That allowed us to look at the broad contours of the network news — how many stories were on different topics, what was the general nature of the reporting, etc.

We found that morning news, the economic powerhouses at NBC and ABC, are interview-based programs, with a “softer” news agenda and stories with a more limited range of sources and viewpoints than many other media. Evening news, which still commands the biggest audience at any given moment, has a more “hard news” agenda. The reporting is generally deeper, and the stories are still told through taped, edited “packages” reported by correspondents, where the facts are double-checked and the pictures and words carefully matched.

This year, we examined one day, May 11, in detail. For network news, that meant closely studying what appeared in the first hour of the three morning shows, and in the evening scrutinizing the three commercial network evening newscasts and PBS’s “NewsHour with Jim Lehrer.” We studied the day two ways — quantitatively, breaking it down by the numbers, and qualitatively, watching the stories and forming more specific impressions based on individual stories. First, the numbers.

Depth of Reporting

The evening network newscasts on May 11 followed the pattern we have seen in earlier years of featuring deeper sourcing than other kinds of national television. First, they featured more sources in their stories. Some 40% of nightly news stories contained four or more sources, compared with 23% on morning news and 12% on cable.

Total Number of Sources in News Stories

#	Comm. Net. Evening	Network Morning	Cable	National Newspapers
0	24%	25%	26%	0%
1	11	29	35	3
2	16	15	20	7
3	11	8	8	12
4+	40	23	12	78

Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Looking more closely at the amount of information provided about these sources so audiences could judge what they were hearing and seeing, the evening newscasts (as well as morning) again outperformed cable. (At night, 37% of stories on the commercial networks contained at least two fully identified sources, as opposed to 31% on network morning shows and 12% on cable.)

But a new index we created this year that probes how much context stories offered — in effect how many questions about a story a segment explored — favored the morning news this day, not the evening. 2 Fully 39% of the major

morning news stories that day touched on three or more potential elements of the events covered. On the nightly news, 27% of the stories answered three or more questions or story elements.

So the live-interview format of morning news may have limited how many sources citizens heard from, but the longer time devoted to the segments allowed room to cover more aspects of the story. In the morning those stories seemed to include looking for ways to connect people to the news in an emotional sense and, occasionally, to focus on what people themselves could do.

Other Numbers

When it came to the other raw numbers, the commercial evening newscasts tended to stack up as less opinionated and more transparent than the morning news and cable.

Anonymous Sourcing

Over all on the broadcast networks, both the morning and evening newscasts on May 11 were more likely than media on average to use anonymous sources. Fully 42% of the commercial evening news stories contained at least one, compared with 31% of the media generally. On the morning news, it was 40%.

Reporter Opinion

Nightly news, however, was measurably more restrained than either morning news or cable when it came to reporters offering their opinions about the news. That might surprise those who complain that traditional nightly news is more filtered or controlled by the journalists than the more live and open format of morning and cable. On May 11, 32% of commercial evening news stories contained reporters' opinions. That was less than on morning news (48%) or cable (45%). Yet all of national television features more opinion than the media generally (13%). Here, incidentally, network news and cable stand in contrast to local TV news (1%).

To see this in practice, it is useful to walk through the day of network news as it happened.

The Day Begins: Morning News

As the day began, all three morning newscasts skipped a series of major stories that had happened overnight and would become major news in the next day's newspapers. In Iraq, for instance, a day of brutal bombings seemed to culminate two weeks of escalating terror and would lead the New York Times the next day. The morning shows referred to them only in passing. In Afghanistan, the worst anti-American protests since the overthrow of the Taliban had occurred in reaction to U.S. press accounts of treatment of prisoners in Guantanamo Bay. That was also a Page 1 story in the papers the next day but absent from the morning shows.

At the same time, the three shows were also fairly similar in approach and even to some degree in what they did cover.

All gave a fair amount of attention, for instance, to the news that a day earlier the authorities in the former Russian republic of Georgia had found an unexploded grenade about 100 feet away from where President Bush had given a speech.

Top Story Treatment on Morning News May 11th

	Grenade Thrown	Zion Murders	Jackson Trial	United Pension Default
ABC	1. reporter package 2. live int. with Citibank security consultant	reporter package	reporter package	No story
CBS	1. headline summary	1. reporter package 2. live interview with prosecutor	1. reporter package 2. live interview with legal consultant	Reporter package
NBC	1. correspondent set up piece 2. live int. with Citibank security consultant	1. set up package 2. live interview with prosecutor	No story	Reporter Package

That story, about which the details were confused, was never more than an inside brief in any newspaper in our sample, at most a few paragraphs. Yet something about it made it more attractive for TV.

The three morning shows even agreed on how to cover the grenade story; they did so identically. Each began with a “live” report from a correspondent outlining the facts. Then each followed with an interview with, as it happened, the same person, a former Secret Service agent who now worked for Citibank. Thus in the end, each of the reports heard from basically one source, the consultant. Everything else was filtered through the correspondent.

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Despite the similarity in style, however, the facts of this story were conflicting and differed from network to network. The crowd the president spoke to seemed to vary in size — it was 50,000 on ABC and then also 150,000. It was 100,000 on CBS. The hand grenade was “not operational” on ABC, but it apparently was operational and was “later rendered safe” on NBC. Was it a Soviet-made grenade, sounding distinctly military? Or was it an engineering grenade for demolition purposes? Or a dummy used for training that was not actually explosive? Had people seen it thrown, as one account put it, or was it found and possibly missed in an earlier security sweep, as another suggested? The answers differed depending on which program one watched. ³

The seriousness of the incident was also a little hard to determine, and the networks seemed unsure themselves how to portray it. Pierre Thomas on ABC said “something very scary may have happened.” Bill Plante on CBS said, “It

could have been fatal if detonated at close range, but the Georgian security chief says the president was in no danger and that it was unlikely that the grenade would have been detonated.” In other words, it wasn’t close enough to the president to be fatal and the grenade couldn’t detonate. And viewers who watched NBC would have learned that the President was surrounded by bulletproof glass in any case — even if the grenade had been operational, and if it had gone off, he would not have been harmed. The only real danger, the segment said, would have arisen if the grenade had been meant to create a diversion for some more serious attack.

One problem appeared to be that the Georgian authorities offered differing details of the event, but the network accounts didn’t make that clear. Instead, the journalists themselves tried to appear more certain, as if they didn’t want to acknowledge that they didn’t know.

Another quality of the stories was that each wanted to focus on the potential danger and sense of alarm. Yet even those two elements, which apparently were what made this story a lead, were somewhat hypothetical. There was no alarm at the time since the administration wasn’t informed of the grenade until hours later, and the danger was unclear because it was unclear at the time if this was a working grenade, or a dud or a dummy. (In the end it was determined to be a live grenade that did not explode.)

The morning shows all gave a good deal of attention to the murder in Zion, Ill., too. And they handled this story similarly. Two of the three did it with a live interview —the same person, Michael Waller, the prosecuting attorney from the Lake County state’s attorney’s office.

The facts this time did not differ. The main distinction among programs was that CBS and NBC — especially NBC — strove to emphasize emotion by repeating key adjectives. The “Today Show” told viewers in rapid succession that the case was “shocking... horrific... horrible...horrific...unbelievably brutal...disturbing...absolutely horrific.”

CBS told us it was “shocking...horrific...brutal...”

The habit of having anchors and reporters tell people how to react was a feature not only of this story but of others, too, on morning news. Certain words applied to several stories, among them “shocked”... “alarmed” ... “stunned” ... “disturbed.” In its first five stories this day, CBS used 11 such terms, and NBC 17. ABC engaged in this technique less than the others.

The terms showed up in three distinct ways. Anchors and reporters would use them in the setup or introduction of the story. Soundbites in taped stories were selected in which sources used the words. Or anchors would react after a story was over by using some of the terms as a kind of coda.

On May 11, such stories as the murder in Zion (all three networks), the story of a woman who had a needless mastectomy because her medical records had been mislabeled (NBC), the story of a woman who had been killed on an amusement ride (ABC), the case of a man whose young daughter was murdered by a sex molester living next door (CBS), and the story of a new ATM scam (ABC) all featured such emotive keywords.

In our first two years of this report we found that the morning shows were more likely to emphasize stories about lifestyle, celebrity, and crime than the networks’ evening newscasts. May 11 followed that pattern. Of the 18 story topics that were covered with more than a brief mention in the first hour of the three morning shows, five dealt with foreign affairs or terrorism, three with domestic or economic issues, six with crimes or terrible accidents, and four with celebrity/entertainment subjects.

Network Morning News Lineups

ABC

Grenade found after Bush Speech (reporter standup)
United Airlines pension (reporter standup)
Grenade story: (interview with security consultant)
Father arrested for murdering daughter and her friend (reporter package)
Woman killed in Amusement Park Accident (reporter package)
A new scam to steal money from ATMs (reporter package)
Interview with Nancy Reagan

CBS

Events in Middle East (reporter standup)
Grenade found after Bush Speech (reporter standup)
Murder in Zion Illinois (reporter package)
Michael Jackson trial (reporter package)
United Airlines defaults on its pensions (reporter package)
Father arrested for murdering daughter and her friend (interview with prosecutor)
Preview, child actor Macaulay Culkin to testify at Michael Jackson's molestation trial (interview with CBS legal consultant)
Father of daughter (9 yrs) murdered by next door sex offender; Megan's law isn't working (Reporter package)
Interview with CBS Amazing Race competitors

NBC

Grenade found after Bush Speech (reporter standup and interview with security consultant)
Father arrested for murdering daughter and her friend (setup piece and interview with prosecutor)
United Airlines pension default (reporter package)
Confusion over homeland security classifications (interview with NBC "terror analyst")
Mistaken mastectomy victim (interview)
Interview with Mick Jagger and Keith Richards

Evening News

By 6:30 p.m. on May 11, not much new had happened that received significant coverage on television news in the intervening hours. Cable had been consumed largely by one event, a single-engine Cessna that had accidentally violated D.C. airspace and led to the brief evacuation of the White House, the Capitol and the Supreme Court, but not other federal buildings. The networks wouldn't ignore the story.

But as it turned out, four of the five of the “news events” that the nightly newscasts covered at 6:30 had occurred the night before in the Middle East or Asia but had been skipped by the morning shows. The evening newscasts all did packages on violence in Iraq and brief tell stories on the protests in Afghanistan, and one did a brief tell story on threatening nuclear moves by North Korea.

Journalistically, timeliness was not something on May 11 that the nightly newscasts considered a prerequisite for something’s being news.

The news agenda was so starkly different between the evening and morning newscasts that just one story that had appeared in the first hour of “Good Morning America” would appear on ABC’s “World News Tonight” — even with the same anchorman on both newscasts that day only two stories were repeated on CBS, and two on NBC. 4

Only one of the nightly newscasts even mentioned the story that across all media in our sample was the fourth most heavily covered of the day that the actor Macaulay Culkin had testified at Michael Jackson’s molestation trial. The network was ABC, which did a 30-second anchor read.

Nor did any of the newscasts do anything with the No. 2 story of May 11 in the media generally, news of an arrest in a murder in Zion, Ill., in which a father was accused of killing his 8-year-old daughter and her friend, supposedly for riding their bikes after he had grounded them. The case would consume several days on morning news. Records over the last year show it earned only a brief single mention on any evening newscast, a 20-second anchor read on May 10 on ABC.

The newshole on the nightly network newscasts on May 11 — the time for news after subtracting for promotions, teases, commercials, and the programs’ introductions and closes — was actually 19 minutes and 40 seconds on average. To fill that time, the commercial newscasts averaged 10 stories per program (10 on CBS, 11 on ABC, nine on NBC). Of those, three on average were anchor reads. Six were longer, taped packages. One segment on each program was a live interview with a correspondent or a newsmaker.

Perhaps to an even greater degree than we found in the mornings, viewers got strikingly similar information regardless of which of the three evening newscasts they chose. The likenesses so outweighed the differences that the biggest variable among the shows on this night was probably the differences in style and personality of the anchors, NBC’s Brian Williams, CBS’s Bob Schieffer and ABC’s Charles Gibson.

In the first two thirds of the newshole on May 11, the newscasts covered the same news, and in much the same way. In the remaining seven minutes, ABC and CBS had only one “package” that was unique to their newscasts. NBC had two, and all four were feature stories.

Network News Lead Stories, May 11, 2005

ABC	CBS	NBC
DC Plane Scare pkg.	DC Plane Scare pkg.	DC Plane Scare pkg.
DC Plane Scare staff int.	DC Plane Scare staff int.	DC Plane Scare staff int.
Grenade Incident	Iraq Bombings	Grenade Incident
Iraq Bombers	Afghan Riots	Iraq Bombings
Afghan Riots	UA Pensions	UA Pensions

The Top Story: The D.C. Plane

Even though the scare was long over and cable news, particularly CNN, had given over most of the afternoon to it, all three commercial newscasts still chose to lead with the Cessna that wandered into restricted Washington airspace.

Indeed, all offered more than twice as much time to it than they did to any other story.

Each also began the same way, with a play-by-play retelling of the event. ABC and NBC even told the story nearly identically, with a minute by minute accounting: “11:59, the threat level at the White House and the Capitol is raised to yellow, the plane is just 15 miles away; 12:00 noon, two F-16s are scrambled from Andrews Air Force Base,” as NBC put it.

Each network also followed that with an anchor interview with one of its correspondents. Each interview tried to take a more focused look at one aspect of the incident.

That practice, of covering the lead story of the day with two or more substantial correspondent pieces, is something network evening newscasts have done since the technique was introduced by ABC News in the late 1980s. It is a way to go deeper into a story without running packages that run more than two or three minutes.

In tone, the stories on the network nightly news were also less congratulatory to the administration than the ones viewers might have seen on cable, a reflection of the fact that they contained more sources offering different perspectives.

Still, CBS was the lone network to explore whether the evacuation and response were appropriate given the potential threat, and the fact that the Air Force seemed to sense fairly quickly that the plane’s intrusion was an accident.

“Some aviation officials question the need for alarm, saying a plane as small as a Cessna could not cause significant damage or injuries,” the correspondent Bob Orr reported. “But one security official said, ‘The government had no choice but to treat this as an imminent threat.’ Still another mocked the hair-trigger response, saying officials ‘are predisposed to overreaction. Evacuate first,’ he said, ‘and try to figure it out later.’

“Beyond that, as it turns out, not everybody here in Washington was in the loop,” Orr continued. “For example, officials in charge of security at the Labor Department, right next to the Capitol, and other buildings say they knew nothing about the threat until the whole thing was nearly over.”



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[View ABC Evening News Video Clip \(Get Quicktime® Plug-in\)](#)



[View CBS Evening News Video Clip \(Get Quicktime® Plug-in\)](#)

The nightly news reports included more background and context than we found on cable, though less than online or print accounts. In our index measuring how much context a story contained, 4 of the 10 reports offered at least 2 of 10 possible elements on the plane story. On cable, despite its larger newshole, it was 10 out of 29 that offered that many.

Second Story

After leading with the plane scare, all three commercial evening newscasts followed with a slate of foreign stories, most of which the morning shows had skipped.

NBC and ABC each first offered a brief anchor read about the grenade incident (CBS passed) and then moved to more substantial coverage of the recent bombings in Iraq — the overnight news event the morning newscasts had ignored.

One criticism of the press is that it keeps focusing on such events, which may mask other, more positive news in Iraq. Another concern is that the incremental coverage of individual bombings may become numbing after awhile. Putting the larger picture together becomes daunting.

On this day, more than 12 hours after the incidents occurred, each of the three commercial networks tried to move beyond the news of the bombing itself. NBC addressed it briefly but mainly used it as a news peg to explore the reasons why violence in Iraq seemed to have escalated, “a particularly bloody illustration of just how serious the situation there is.” ABC used the day of violence as a hook to do a piece on why young men feel moved to become suicide bombers. CBS did a review of the day’s events, followed by a taped phone interview with the U.S. Army colonel in charge of the American offensive on Iraq’s Syrian border.

ABC and NBC also aired another, related piece later in the newscast. ABC’s was the fourth segment in a series on dealing with pain — a joint project with USA Today — this one on the right way to treat pain from war wounds in Iraq. NBC did a feature on the death in Iraq of a Marine captain who had been part of the color guard that escorted the casket of Ronald Reagan.

Yet none of the pieces, even at lengths of two minutes, really answered the questions they were wrestling with. After two years of war, for example, the answer to why the violence continued and the recruiting of bombers thrived was ultimately probably too complicated for a two-minute story.

Terrorist activity in Iraq was a heavy news item for the evening news in 2005. Data from Andrew Tyndal’s ADT Research, which analyzes every night of the evening newscasts for the year, found that over all, the networks devoted approximately 164 minutes of their time to reporting terrorist attacks in Iraq. That number, however, represented 8% of all the evening news coverage about Iraq. The lion’s share of Iraq coverage, 44%, was about U.S.-led combat operations. Incidentally, the amount of coverage of the situation in Iraq over all fell by more than a third in 2005 from a year earlier.

Pension Plans

The third correspondent package on each evening newscast was not among the four that dominated the news agenda in the media generally, though it might arguably have been one of the more far-reaching of the day. It was fallout from a bankruptcy judge’s decision to allow United Airlines to default on its pension plans.

The pension story was the only one to get substantial treatment in both morning and evening newscasts (an average of three minutes in the evening). Each report was an exploratory package on what was happening to pensions in America in the wake of the United Airlines ruling, and the capacity of the government’s Pension Guaranty Corp. to cover all the pensions corporate America had defaulted on.

Interestingly, that was probably the only story to get more substantial treatment on TV than in print.

The Rest of the Newscasts

From there, the newscasts moved in slightly different directions — CBS to a story about lawsuits against the Catholic Church over sex abuse, NBC to a story on the economic and environmental costs of illegal immigration in U.S. border towns.

ABC and NBC both carried stories about new computer software being used to more accurately imagine what King Tut actually looked like. It was a story ideally suited to TV, since the computer animation can be seen gradually drawing in the face. As its close, CBS ran a feature on parents teaching toddlers sign language before they learn to talk.

In the end, however, the sense one gets from May 11 is that the evening news is not an update of what viewers might have learned in the morning. It is a different newscast, aimed apparently at a different America, concerned with different issues.

The ‘NewsHour’

On PBS, the “NewsHour” stood out as distinct, not only in evening news but against any other daily program on television we studied — cable, broadcast, national or local.

It began by handling most of the breaking news stories of the day in a news summary, with further coverage of just two — the bombings in Iraq and the plane scare. Both pieces had correspondents, tape and sound, but they were something not seen elsewhere on national TV — shorter packages, something less than a minute. Yet because they were more straight-news pieces, not thematic, magazine-style reports that tried to touch on other issues, they were fairly complete, straightforward news accounts. The retelling of the Iraq bombing story, for instance, gave more on the basic facts of the day’s violence than the longer pieces on network news.

The “NewsHour” skipped altogether the grenade story that led morning news and came second on the evening newscasts as a brief tell story. It also passed on the Jackson trial, which was a major focus of morning and cable news (MSNBC’s top story). It did nothing on the Zion murder trial, a big feature of the morning and on cable (it was Fox’s top story).

The “NewsHour’s” primary “focus” piece following its news summary was a deeper discussion of the fallout from the judge’s decision the day before that United Airlines could default on its pensions. With its substantial treatment on network evening news, this was the most heavily covered topic across network news, though not on cable.

The discussion was billed as a look at “ the likely impact of the bankruptcy judge’s decision on United, its workers, and other Americans enjoying or expecting retirement pensions.” While the piece covered much the same ground as other nightly newscasts, the taped package, followed by a 12-minute discussion between Margaret Warner and three pension experts, was more than four times longer than what appeared on the commercial newscasts and went much deeper into the story’s various elements.

That report was followed by one from the Arctic Circle on the melting of the ice pack, and how it is changing life there. The next piece was a lengthy discussion on the fights over judicial nominations. Anchor Gwen Ifill interviewed two federal judges who had “gone through the wringer” of the nomination process, Judge Charles Pickering, who eventually won a recess appointment from President Bush, and James Wynn, who never got to a vote.

The program closed with a feature on King Tut, a story carried by two of the three commercial networks.

Of the “NewsHour’s” four longer segments, in other words, half were long-term developments that were not breaking news — global warming and judicial nominations — and were not seen elsewhere on network news this day. One was a followup to breaking news, and a piece seen widely on network news. The fourth was a feature, also widely seen elsewhere. As a percentage of the newshole, more was unique on the “NewsHour” than we saw on cable or on morning or evening commercial television.

Conclusion

If morning and evening news on the commercial networks are not simply updates at different times of day, but in many ways different products aimed at different audiences, it presents an interesting question for network news going forward. What do these programs do if the news is something that moves online, something that is downloaded so it can be watched on demand?

Do they continue to remain distinctly different shows, which may be updated as news changes? Would the evening newscast, for instance, offer some kind of update in the morning hours for those who prefer its style? Would there be something akin to an afternoon update of the stories highlighted half a day earlier on “Good Morning America”?

Or do the networks instead offer their Web sites as their own product separate from the different programs — with elements of the shows included but with the Web as something new, the online product of the news division? That is probably closer to the direction they operate in now. But as the audience increasingly moves online, does that solution threaten to weaken the existing newscasts rather than broaden them? (The answer is somewhat more complicated, perhaps, for NBC, whose Web site is a joint operation with Microsoft.) Whatever path the networks choose, the move toward continuous newsgathering online will put new demands on the resources of the news divisions.

The path seems simpler for the “NewsHour.” It stands distinctly apart from any other evening newscast on television today. And with the change in format and decline in ratings of “Nightline” after the departure of Ted Koppel, that may be even truer in the future.

Footnotes

1. The only exception was that CBS did include a 20-second anchor read about North Korea that was not on other shows.
2. The index measured the presence of ten different elements that a story might contain. They were the presence of: background information, future implications, the impact of the story on citizens, a human face to the story, some separation of fact and conjecture, potential action someone could take as a citizen, potential action to take as a consumer, contact information for the journalist or news outlet, the underlying principles at play, where to go for additional information.
3. In the end, it was determined to be a live grenade hurled that failed to explode. Vladimir Arutyunian, a Georgian citizen of Armenian descent, was arrested and convicted of the crime and sentenced to life in prison.
4. On the two ABC programs, the only story that repeated was a brief tell story that evening about the Michael Jackson trial. On CBS and NBC, both the morning and evening newscasts did stories about United Airlines pensions, and the evening newscasts both had brief tell stories about the grenade incident.

Local TV

Local TV

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

Local TV news remains American journalism's beloved but disrespected middle child.

The medium is at the same time among the most trusted sources of news for Americans and the most caricatured. ¹

The first view holds that local TV news is down to earth, deals with topics that are community-based and is aimed at what regular people care about.

The other view is that local TV news is the same everywhere and that it is all mayhem and emotion — that all one gets is crime news punctuated by traffic and weather.

Is one of these views more accurate than the other?

On May 11, looking at 24 newscasts across 8 stations in 3 cities (Houston, Milwaukee and Bend, Ore.) ², we found that neither stereotype completely hits or misses the mark. There is just enough truth in both that the two sides keep on arguing.

Instead four traits stand out:

Viewers got a lot of local weather, traffic and crime. As for other news of the day — local or national — usually just three or four items received anything more than a brief anchor report with taped sound. That was true across markets.

On the other hand, local TV news is more likely than other media we studied to try to portray regular people from the community and how they feel about things, rather than just officials.

The reporting was straightforward and mostly strictly factual, with little of the journalist's opinion thrown in.

As local newsrooms are stretched thinner by producing more hours, anchor people increasingly are these newscasts. Most stories were anchor "voice-overs" supplemented with taped sound and visuals, but without correspondents. There was surprisingly little in the way of live or packaged reports from correspondents — far less than on the networks.

Morning news is the newest form and the one still evolving, but as a rule, traffic and weather dominate it.

In other words, viewers got straight news from their local TV stations and it was certainly about the community, but the topics covered were somewhat limited. Whatever tendency already exists in local TV toward stories that are emotional and visual — such as crime — has probably been accentuated with the growing reliance on anchors. The few reporters are saved for those stories that are believed to be audience grabbers. It is left to the anchors to briefly handle the bulk of stories about such matters as budgets, government, infrastructure and civic institutions. The brevity of the coverage, in turn, creates a cycle in which viewers are less and less likely to look to local news as an authority on those subjects.

News of the Day: It's Crimes and Accidents

Topics in Local TV, Percent of all time

	Morning	Evening	Late	All
Gov't/Elections	8%	12%	13%	11%
Crime	38	46	44	42
Accidents	9	6	6	8
Business	8	5	*	5
Domes. Issues	6	13	23	14
Science	1	2	4	2
Foreign Rel.	5	2	3	4
Defense/Military	2	5	1	2
Celebrity/Entertainment	7	2	2	4
Lifestyle	16	8	3	10
Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.				

For viewers looking for news that day about crime and accidents in the community, local TV was the way to go. More than 40% of the news time was spent on crime — most of it local incidents (although the double murder in Zion, Ill. — a national crime story that day — was covered as well). If we add in accidents (there was a metro rail crash in Houston the night before), the figure rises to 50%. That was close to double the percentage on local radio (24% crime, 3% accidents) or metro newspapers (26% crime and 2% accidents).

Crime and accidents also dominated all three time slots this day: 47% of morning news time, 52% of evening and 50% of late night.

KTRK, Houston 6 p.m. News Packages

Police officer rapist
Metro rail crash and death
Girlfriend assault
Nicaragua visit
Girl Boxer w/ Olympic dreams

In Houston, for instance, three of the five packages on KTRK's May 11 evening newscast were crime-related. First came a KTRK "exclusive" about new DNA evidence that linked a local police officer to several rape incidents. Another package included the full-screen graphic lead-in "DEADLY ACCIDENT" and focused on a driver who ran a red light and was killed by a metro rail car the previous night. That was followed by a package about a girl who was held hostage and physically assaulted by her boyfriend, which was introduced with the full-screen graphic "GIRL TORTURED." The

two non-crime packages were a commentary on helping Nicaragua to help kids get back on their feet and a piece about a girl boxer with Olympic aspirations.

Milwaukee's local news was largely about crime and accidents as well, with a heavy focus this day on the local retrial of the convicted killer Ted Oswald as well as the murders in Zion, Ill. (close enough for Milwaukee stations to cover live with local reporters).  [View WDJT TV Evening News Video Clip \(Get Quicktime® Plug-in\)](#)

In Bend, Ore., though, with a population of 70,000, crime coverage was not as dominant. The station had stories on a "missing student" and a "methamphetamine bust," but local shootings and car accidents were largely absent.

Beyond crime, what other kinds of local news would viewers hear about on May 11? Local issues such as a firefighters' pay raise and plans for a new casino or a new police station made the air in the cities we examined, but were generally found in the middle of the newscast. They accounted for 14% of the news time, usually as anchor reads. Just 9% of all the news time was devoted to government, either local or national.

And just 4% of time was given to foreign affairs on May 11, such as a deadly day in Iraq, the worst anti-American protests in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban, or the move by North Korea to extract fuel from its nuclear plants that could be used to make weapons.

Weather and Traffic

Up-to-the-minute reports on weather and traffic were a unifying component to the local television we saw on May 11. It was a rather typical day for weather patterns and traffic delays in each of the cities, and nearly a quarter of all the news time studied (22%) was spent there. That was more than double any other broadcast medium, including the other main draw for traffic and weather news, local news radio (where it accounted for only 9% of the news time).

The morning local-TV news hour, as people are choosing their dress for the day and their allotted minutes for commutes, devoted a full 30% of the time to weather and traffic. The two topics usually led the hour at 6:00 a.m. and were revisited four or five times in the hour. They were less prominent in the early evening and late news, but still consumed more than any other subject (17% evening and 13% late).

While local TV has always been a trusted place for such information, the degree to which it even outpaced the quantity on local news radio was notable. One reason may be that stations can now visualize both weather and traffic. Weather has maps, Doppler radar, and sophisticated graphics and traffic cams now provide current, live (if unstimulating) images of the streets we drive on. On radio, the weather reports are much briefer.

The Missing Reporter

For three years now the Project has reported on the declining role of the local TV reporter, often as a result of expanding workload but diminishing resources. Over five years of study, from 1998 to 2002, the percentage of stories presented by reporters dropped by almost a third, from 62% to 43%, while anchor coverage and feed stories (those coming from the parent network) increased.

The Day in the Life study reinforces those findings and shows how they play out. If the newscasts we saw on May 11 were any indicator, the reporter may have come even closer to vanishing. Only about a third (36%) of the stories came from reporters while 60% were anchor-tell stories (with no video at all) or anchor reads with some video or sound on

tape. And that is not including sports, traffic or weather which also usually comes from an anchor or desk correspondent. In most 30-minute segments, there were just two or three packaged pieces and perhaps one live, on scene report.

Story Types in Local TV

Percent of all news

	Morning	Evening	Late	All
Packages	26%	49%	45%	35%
Staff Live	2	0	0	1
Interviews	2	0	0	1
Other News Outlet	1	0	2	1
Anchor Voice Overs	54	37	42	47
Anchor Reads	15	14	11	15

Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.
*Does not include sports wraps, traffic or weather which is usually anchor work as well.

What viewers learned about beyond headlines ran the gamut on May 11 — anything from the murders in Illinois, which got heavy play, to a Milwaukee boy who wore a male prom dress to his big high school dance. Consider the 10 p.m. news on Milwaukee's WISN. There were three reporter packages: a story on a pregnant woman ordered by a judge to be hospitalized for her drug addiction, a piece on the confession of Jerry Hobbs in the murders of his daughter and her friend in Zion, Ill., and a story about a newly discovered germ that eats the flesh of its victims. None of those stories, incidentally, were section-front news in the local newspaper the next day. The rest of WISN's 10 p.m. broadcast was all anchor voiceovers, and all but one were under a minute.

It's Not About Me

With much of the news coming from quick anchor reads, the news broadcasts on May 11 tended to be fact-oriented, with little evidence of journalist opinion. That stood out notably from cable news, and to a lesser extent from morning network news. On the local stations studied, just 1% of the stories (3 in all) contained opinion from the reporter.

That highlights what seems to be a fundamental difference in the three television platforms, and it has to do with their inherent appeal to viewers. Cable mostly centers on host or anchor personalities and views. Network news creates more connection to the news itself and the decision-makers. In local TV, the stories are written to emphasize an emotional attachment to everyday folks.

That sense is created in two ways. First, through the sound bites, which are often from local residents rather than decision-makers. And second, through the subject matter covered, which again often looks at everyday folks — the woman with 12 cats, neighbors' reactions to a new homeless shelter in the neighborhood, the local track star who is also a singer. Another likely factor is the lack of reportage mentioned above. As stories are more and more frequently anchor reads, there is simply less time for analysis and opinion. In a sense, as resources become thinner, and stations

program more hours of news, some of which are designed to be watched for just a few minutes (as in the morning), local TV is evolving toward more of a town crier approach, with little need or room for opinion but also with little depth.

Time Slot Differences

The three time slots for local news — morning, evening and late night — differ in what they offer viewers. The morning news segments stand out in particular as quite different from the other two. Here is a look at the day in local TV news, starting with morning shows.

Morning News: It's Not the 'Today Show' ³

In the morning news hour on May 11, viewers in Houston and Milwaukee heard about a lot of different goings-on. In all, there were 275 different news items — an average of 39 for each hour segment — and that excludes traffic, weather, teases, promos, banter among the anchors and commercial time. For the vast majority of those items, what was heard was a quick anchor read with some video and perhaps sound on tape (which unlike packaged reports do not require anyone to actually leave the station but pulled from news services.)

Most of the “news” was crime or accidents from the night before. The hour devoted a little less of the total time to crime and accidents than the half-hour programs later in the day, but here they were perhaps even more prominent. Crime or accident news was the lead story following traffic and weather in every single newscast in the two cities.

On the 6:00 a.m. news on Houston's KHOU, for example, the entire first news segment, sandwiched between two traffic and weather reports, was eight crime or accident reports. The list:

Headline tease

Banter

Weather

Banter

Traffic

Metrorail accident

Train accident follow-up

Man and baby in stolen car

Charges against Texas criminal

Apartment shooting

Man killed in stolen car

Teenager found dead

Pastor's car bursts into flames

Weather

Traffic

All that came in the first 13 minutes of the program.

The lead live breaking-news item across all three Houston stations that morning (and even into the evening) was about the car that ran a red light the night before and crashed into a metro rail train. The scene had been completely cleared by morning, with no impact on the morning commute. All three stations, however, led with a reporter live at the site

where the crash had occurred. Viewers mostly saw the same images of the crash that aired the night before —flashing lights, injured people on stretchers — and heard from the same transit official.

 [View KPRC TV Video Clip \(Get Quicktime® Plug-in\)](#)

 [View KHOU TV Video Clip \(Get Quicktime® Plug-in\)](#)

 [View KTRK TV Video Clip \(Get Quicktime® Plug-in\)](#)

Interestingly, information concerning the topic with the widest public impact — the overall safety of the metro rail system — differed on each station. According to KTRK, metro rail had been “plagued” with so many wrecks that it “claims the worst first-year safety record of any rail service in the country.” But KPRC distinguished between accidents and fatal accidents: “This is the 80th accident involving the light rail . . . but this is the first accident in which someone was killed.” KHOU’s live reporter offered perhaps the most nuanced picture: “Metro rail has been involved in 70 or so accidents since it opened. And we’re told that actually recently that number of incidents had dropped when it comes to trains and cars. In fact, it has been cut in half compared to this time last year.”

Milwaukee stations did not have the same kind of dramatic overnight news to offer, but found several overnight crime stories to lead their coverage. A double homicide, a daughter stabbed, the ongoing search for a missing man, a teen killed, and the murders in Zion, Ill. all topped the news this morning.

News of local government of civic issues, were mentioned only later in the program if at all. Viewers of Milwaukee ’s WDJT that hour would have heard briefly about a handful of items that related at all to local civic issues: election fraud discovered in Wisconsin , renter’s insurance, local jobs for youth and new housing for local inmates, new approval figures for the governor, and the renaming of the Marquette ’s sports teams. But all of these were anchor tell stories, sandwiched in the middle of the newscast and with less than three minutes of total airtime. WTMJ did stand out on this day, though, for a two-minute piece on the new bankruptcy law, complete with an interview (though even this appeared 27 minutes into the hour).

In Houston, the tax bill passed overnight by the Texas legislature, on the other hand, which would lead the Houston Chronicle the next morning and change residents’ property, education and other tax rates, was relegated to a 13-second anchor voice-over 30 minutes into the hour on KHOU and got similar treatment on KTRK. On KPRC, the tax overhaul still ran in the form of an anchor voice-over, but appeared earlier — eight and a half minutes in. Most of Houston ’s morning radio news programs, by comparison, reported the tax story at the top of the hour, and some made it their talk and call-in segments that day.

The few “packages” that did appear in the morning were normally softer, lifestyle pieces and were different from station to station. In Houston , besides the lead report on the metro rail crash, none of the packages were the same. KPRC ran two — work involved in the upkeep of a local Marriot hotel, sex offenders living in group homes — and two separate live reports on a teenager who stabbed his mother’s best friend. KHOU devoted packages to the strained relations between President Bush and Congress over Iraq, the winners of Survivor’s “Amazing Race,” and consumer advice on protecting against identity theft. KTRK ran just one package, on insects invading a city in Arizona.

Houston

Metro rail crash & death
Bush & Congress relations
“Survivor” race winners
Identity Theft
An invasion of bugs
A local weather segment award
Sex offender group homes

Milwaukee

Search for a missing man
2 local homicides
Wendy’s Frosty’s CHECK
United Airlines Pension Plans
Zion Murders
17 year-old shot
Neighborhood mourns recent death
Green Bay Packer arrest
3 people stabbed
Travel advice
Bush and Grenade
New flesh eating germ

Evening and Late Night News

The evening and late night newscasts in each city were thoroughly different from the morning. ⁴ But they were nevertheless alike. Both half-hours tended to have more packaged reports and were even more locally focused than the morning.

Two patterns emerged. The first is that most of these newscasts demonstrated what we have come to call the “hook and hold” approach to local TV news. The phrase refers to the habit of opening the newscast with visuals that are meant to be alarming and eye-grabbing— flashing lights and yellow police tape — to get to the broadcast’s lead story, then repeatedly teasing viewers with the promise of another report, held till the end to try and keep people from changing channels. In the middle, stations carry the brief anchor-read stories that they apparently feel need to be covered but that aren’t “good TV” — legislative activities, budget news, etc. The item at the end, teased throughout the broadcast, is usually a funny or unusual piece of video, such as a married couple who say it was Elvis that brought them together. (For a more detailed discussion of this approach please see the 2005 Annual Report.) On May 11, “hook and hold” was evident in both the evening and late newscasts, except that the middle of the newscast didn’t cover much in the way of government and other local issues. It was more crime and some national wire stories.

KPRC’s 6 p.m. newscast in Houston, for instance, hooked viewers in with the live, breaking news that the Houston Crime Lab had been re-accredited, followed by a live report from the scene of the metro rail crash that occurred 20 hours earlier (with the same eye-grabbing visuals as in the morning newscasts), and a then bike accident. The middle of the newscast included voice-overs about child murder, teacher alcoholics, the evacuation in D.C., the Iraq car bombs and local crimes. Teased throughout was the final package—a girl boxer with dreams of going to the Olympics.

Not every station followed the pattern exactly, however. KTVZ’s 6 p.m. newscast in Houston used the “hook and hold” but offered more serious news in between. It drew viewers in with a graphically displayed “Missing Student” story in the

middle aired correspondent packages about two local pieces of legislation — an education bill and a gun bill — with some of the most in-depth reporting we saw that day.

In Milwaukee, WITI's 10:00 p.m. newscast represented still another variation on the theme—the traditional “hold” but a much more serious lead story than the normal “hook.” It was a new state law that would restrict the purchase of some over-the-counter cold medicines. Even here, though, the anchor still tried to give viewers some sense of alarm in the lead in: “If the governor signs this bill you’ll need an ID to buy some over-the-counter drugs,” the anchor began. “Meaning, it will be easier to vote than to cure your cold.”

As for the “hold” teased throughout this newscast? There were actually two: An outer-space elevator and a new game — Robodog soccer.

A second finding for May 11 was that most the stations packaged different stories in the evening than they did on the late news following prime time. While cable news stands out for repeating its news items and even its packages across the day, local TV seems more concerned with giving viewers something different each newscast. Commonly, something that was an anchor read on one of the newscasts was a package on the other, and vice versa. Consider the 6 p.m. and 10 p.m. broadcasts on WISN in Milwaukee. At 6 p.m. the Zion murder case, the local Oswald trial, the Marquette nickname, and a boy's prom dress were packaged reports. At 10 p.m., all of those except for the Zion murders were anchor reads with sound, while a pregnant drug addict and a flesh-eating germ became packages.

WISN Milwaukee: Story Rundown May 11, 2005

6 P.M.		10 P.M.	
Zion Murders	Pkg	Pregnant woman's Drug addition	Pkg
DC Plane Scare	A. Tell	DC Plane Scare	A. Tell
Oswald Trial	Pkg	Former Nazi Guard citizenship	A. Tell
G.B.Packer Arrest	A. Tell	Overnight Shooting	A. Tell
Marquette Nickname	Pkg	Killer Ted Oswald Trial	A. Tell
Boy's prom Dress	Pkg	Packer Arrest	A. Tell
Jerry Taft Retirement	Pkg	Marquette Nickname	A. Tell
		Flesh-Eating Germ	Pkg
		Boy's Prom Dress	A. Tell
		Culkin Testimony in Jackson Trial	A. Tell
		Sports	

Finally, the late-night newscasts, with an extra five minutes in their newshole compared with the evening programs, didn't devote that time to hard news coverage. They were more apt to close the newscast with a soft feature piece. In the final segments of the eight newscasts, viewers got reports on fortune cookies, a feature on an ice cream customer, a couple who believes their marriage centered around Elvis, local White House aides, King Tut, Robodog soccer and sports scores.

Market by Market

And what about the stereotype that local news is the same in every city — that in a consultant-driven medium there is no longer any sense of place?

The Day in the Life study suggests there is something to that complaint, but we found some small differences. Across the three cities, the look and feel of all the newscasts were strikingly similar. From the images themselves — the news desks and anchors as well as the video clips — it would be hard to discern which of the three cities you were watching. All the newscasts had a two-person anchor team, almost always a man and a woman, one black, the other white, and almost always seated side by side. Only one station, WITI in Milwaukee, veered from having the anchors perched at the news table throughout. On that station they moved around, sometimes standing, sometimes sitting.

The video clips of sirens, frenzied gunshot scenes and even many of the softer feature pieces had little to identify them with a particular city. Nor did the graphic tags like “The Big Story,” “Deadly Accident,” “Breaking News,” and “Local First.”

What about traffic and weather? The names of the cities finally give the location away, but the other images, from the live traffic cams to the five-day forecast graphic, were universal in their look.

The biggest stylistic difference in the three cities was in the availability and use of live reporters. Houston, the biggest market in the mix, clearly had more correspondents available to report live. The newscasts there tended to have two or three stories with reporters live on the scene, with a cut to a package each had prepared earlier.

In Milwaukee, two of the newscasts had a reporter live in Zion, Ill., reporting on the double murders, but the other “live” comments were all in-studio. In Bend, the lone evening news program had one reporter live on scene for a story, while the other evening packages were from the anchors themselves, suggesting the effects of an even slimmer staff on a smaller market. And at 11 p.m., three of the four packages came from the station’s NBC parent.

Among the stories themselves, however, the choice was not so strictly homogenized from station to station. In Houston, for instance, viewers at 6 p.m. were met with the same lead story on each station — breaking news on the Houston Crime Lab’s re-accreditation, which had been announced “moments” before — but after that the three stations diverged.

Houston, TX Evening Newscasts: Packaged Reports May 11, by station

KHOU	KPRC	KTRK
HPC Crime Lab—w/ live stand-up	HPD crime—w/ live stand-up	HPR crime lab-w/ live stand-up
Army Recruiting abuses	Metro—w/ live stand-up	News DNA evidence of police officer rapist in area —Exclusive
Author/musician Kinky for Gov.	West Nile local incident	Metro accident-response
Weight lifter Mom	Bill Boards on teen abstinence	Girlfriend torture
	Artist/musician Kinky for Gov.	Nicaragua help
	Girl Boxer Olympic Dream	Girl Boxer OL. Dreams

In Milwaukee, the channels were more similar in their top news picks at 6 p.m. All four stations aired packages on Zion, the renaming of the Marquette sports team and the Oswald trial. The one station that led with something different was WITI, which ran a package on an announcement by the state commerce department that it would step up inspections of gas stations for possible fraud in the octane levels they claimed. The correspondent treated the development as a rather critical consumer matter, but in the end, viewers were left wondering why it was all that important. After interviewing the state commerce secretary and explaining policies in other states, the reporter closed by noting that the Wisconsin official “says so far they haven’t found any incidents of gasoline fraud.”

Milwaukee 6 P.M. Packages, May 11, by Station

WTMJ	WDJT	WISN	WITI
Zion Murders	Marquette nickname	Zion murders	Gasoline Fraud (Madison)
Marquette Nickname	Zion murders	Oswald Trial	Zion murders
Military unit call-up	Oswald Court	Marquette nickname	Identity Theft
		Boy Prom Dress	
		Jerry Taft Retirement	

In Bend, there is just one local news station, KTVZ, an NBC affiliate. The morning news show did not air that day because of local power outages, but the evening and late night shows give us a sense of the small cities’ resources and news offerings on the 11th. There were four packages in the 6 p.m. newscast — two on local legislative issues (education and gun control), a package on internet pornography and one about a singing track star.

In a sign of the small size of the station’s staff, two of the four packages at 6 were reported by the anchors. And as noted, three of the four 11 p.m. packages were feeds from NBC. The other package was a rerun of the one at 6 p.m. on a local gun bill.

KTVZ, Bend, OR 6 P.M. Packages, May 11, 2005

Child Education Bill
Local Gun Bill
Internet Pornography
Singing Track Star

Footnotes

1. Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, "Public More critical of Press but Goodwill Persists: Online Newspaper Readership Countering Print Losses," June 26, 2005. The survey found that 79% of Americans said they had a favorable view of local TV news, higher than for nearly any other medium surveyed.
2. For the local sample we selected three markets, one large, one medium and one small. To select the markets, the list of 210 markets was first divided into thirds based on population. (Each group representing roughly one-third of the population according to Nielsen Media Research). While ensuring geographical diversity, one market was then randomly selected from each group. The markets selected were Houston, TX (large), Milwaukee, WI (medium) and Bend, OR (small). For radio news, we selected, if they existed, 1 all-news station, 1 news talk station (looking for a diversity of affiliation and ownership), 1 local NPR station if it airs local news programming beyond top-of-the hour wrap-ups. If there was no all-news station, we selected a second news-talk station, that is either Clear Channel or unaffiliated. In some instances, it is hard to determine the exact nature of a station from Arbitron or BIA listings as the category types do not always clearly reflect programming. We tried to be as thorough as possible in examining the multitude of radio stations within each market. For a full list of stations and hours captured, please see the Methodology.
3. In bend Ore. , KTVZ's 6 a.m. news program did not air that day because of a power outage. In Houston and Milwaukee , the morning news programs studied were the 6 to 7 a.m. broadcasts.
4. For every station except WDJT, Milwaukee, the evening newscast studied was 6:00 to 6:30 p.m. On WDJT, the 5:00 to 5:30 program was captured. The late night newscast in all cases except KTVZ in Bend was the 10:00 to 10:35 newscast. In Bend, the only late local newscast aired from 11:00 to 11:30.

[Click here to view content data tables.](#)

Magazines

Magazines

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

News magazines have long been an anomaly in the media world. In a changing news environment, their contours have remained largely stable. The content of the major magazines evolved, but the titles remained the same, and so did the basic format. A question kept being asked: Would someone come up with a new idea that would challenge the format and formula of Time and Newsweek, which have long dominated the field? In 2005, there suddenly appeared a possible contender in the form of The Week.

The Week was founded in 2001, but its sudden rise in ad dollars (see Economics) and circulation (see Audience) in 2005 has become news in the past year. Business Week did a piece on the rise of The Week, and media writers have noted how the magazine, once thought of as an experiment, is beginning to be taken seriously. ¹

The Week brings a different approach to news magazine content. Rather than having reporters go out to gather news, its editors cull the week's coverage from foreign and domestic publications and condense it into a summary. The magazine is not trying to set an agenda. It doesn't make any original decisions about what to cover, and it doesn't replay anyone else's coverage at much length. Instead, its attitude may be summed up best in its slogan: "All you need to know about everything that matters."

In some ways the magazine is loosely following the path laid out by blogs, with less slant in any political direction. In a world inundated with reporting and information, and with a population that has less spare time to keep up with the news, The Week's approach of providing a kind of weekly briefing paper has obvious appeal.

We noted in past years that the news magazines — at least the mass titles — were on a clear migration away from serious longer reporting about hard-news topics. But now it seems an alternative path may have emerged. The Week does not focus on celebrity gossip or trend news. It is serious in tone and choice of topics, but it does not provide heavy in-depth reportage. It melds significant topics with short space and a fairly balanced presentation that offers a sample of opinions from the left and right. Data indicate that this approach may be catching fire.

Other trends of note in 2005:

- The slow drift toward lighter fare at Time and Newsweek showed no signs of abating.
- U.S. News and World Report maintained its practice of providing more hard, Washington-based coverage than Time or Newsweek.
- Following the presidential election, the New Yorker appeared to lean away from hard-news coverage in 2005 and return to more “culture” reporting.
- In the magazine industry over all, entertainment titles grew after having seemed to plateau.

Will the success of The Week and its second-hand summary approach — or the continued success of other nontraditional books like the Economist and the New Yorker — stir the interest of other publishers? Or lead Time and Newsweek, the two dominant weeklies, to reconsider their formats?

The Week's success also raises a concern. If its content model continues to succeed, and even inspire imitators, the net effect is likely to be fewer reporters gathering information as it peels readers away from those doing the original reporting. Quality outside reportage, then, will grow increasingly important, and the sway over the news that a few publications and companies enjoy could grow.

A Week in the Life of the News Weeklies

Every media outlet has its own way of reporting news and makes its own choices about what to cover. But news magazines have a particularly varied array of options. Because they have a longer time than most other outlets (particularly the other outlets we examine) there are more possibilities for them to consider. Inevitably, a week's worth of news from the entire world, even news that was covered by other outlets, will not fit between two covers. Traditional magazine editors decide what is and isn't worth their pages, and because magazines are less time-sensitive the editors are granted a wider latitude in that regard than editors and producers in other media.

In the past, we looked at the topics covered annually to provide a measure of the world the news titles offered. Looking at those topics over 25 years, we found a decline in reporting on national and foreign news and a rise in entertainment and celebrity stories, especially in Time and Newsweek. This year we wanted to look at how that shift away from traditional hard news plays out, by doing a closer examination of one week's worth of coverage in each magazine. We

picked a week that corresponded with the “Day in the life of the media” that we examine in the other chapters of this report.

What do we see? A complicated landscape. If you paused at a newsstand or magazine rack the week of May 16, the first conclusion you would probably have drawn about the week was that nothing epic had happened. The first thing you might notice is that many of the titles are actually dated May 23 – a week after the day they actually appear on the newsstands – in order to appear “fresh” for a longer period of time. The covers of the major news magazines were devoted to a hodgepodge of issues, topics and even products. Time was heralding a look at the new Microsoft Xbox video game console. Newsweek had a president on its cover, but it was one from two centuries ago — George Washington, publicizing an excerpt from the historian David McCullough’s new book on the great man. U.S. News featured a picture of a slot machine and wrote of “Secrets of the Casinos.” The Week, with a sketch of Charles Darwin, turned its attention to the debate on “intelligent design” and evolution. The Economist fronted a discussion about the “axis of evil.” And the New Yorker offered a sketch of Sigmund Freud driving a cab with a fare/patient lying down on the back seat.

Such is the nature of the news magazine world in a week when there is no dominant news event. Magazines have the freedom to promote on their covers a “good read” or an “evergreen” or a piece that for one reason or another was contracted to receive cover play.

Look inside and the differences run deeper still. If you picked up a magazine to get an idea of what happened the week of May 8-14, the reality you found depended greatly on the title you picked. 2



Time: The world presented in Time’s May 23 issue includes news from the week past, but it isn’t what many might think of as the news of the week. The 82-page magazine functions more as a supplement to a broader news diet, with a mix of topics and a mix of seriousness.

There is some national affairs coverage, a smattering of international news and an increasingly large area for pop culture in “the back of the book.” Today, that term may refer only to where something appears in the magazine; it may

say little or nothing about what magazine editors consider the material's significance. In the May 23 issue, the cover story (Microsoft's new game console) and the other piece teased on the cover (an interview with the comedian Dave Chappelle) reside in the "back of the book." There is actually, by page count, more soft news than hard news.

The issue has three big interview subjects: Bill Gates, Chappelle and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel . Of those, it is Sharon who doesn't make the cover, even though the interview with him is an exclusive.

What we found to be the main stories in our study of a Day in the Life of the News got little space in Time. King Tut got a two-page spread of photos and captions. The United Airlines story got about a quarter of a page and got the most space out of any of our big stories in the magazine by far. The plane that violated airspace got about 10 lines. And the Michael Jackson trial was handled in a quote from Macaulay Culkin.

Cover — The main cover topic is Microsoft's new Xbox game console, and the dominant picture is Gates staring at the reader, Terminator-esque, the glowing "on" button of the new game box serving as his right eye. "Inside Bill's new X-Box," the text reads.

The cover-story package is 14 pages long, though the amount of text is considerably less than that. Graphics and large pictures (the hallmarks of the news weeklies nowadays) make for considerably less actual type. There are, for instance, only 16 lines of type on the first two pages of the piece, which carry a large picture of Gates playing with a controller. The piece itself is a trip inside "Xbox Headquarters," where the machine was built, and a look at the thinking behind it.

Along with the main piece, Time includes a three-page spread full of pictures of video game "innovators" — or "visionaries," as they are also called.

The package tries mightily to invest what many might consider an essentially light topic with extra heft. It isn't just about the new video game system, the cover story says, but rather "about a sea change in American culture, which has embraced video games, formerly a despised hobby, as a vital force in pop culture." Whether that is true is one question. Whether that is news because of the latest Xbox is another. The story offers some discussion of changing American culture, but is largely a commercial for the newest endeavor of Bill Gates, one of the people Time would eventually name a Man of the Year for his philanthropic activities.

The other piece teased on the cover, about Dave Chappelle, is the second largest package in Time, a six-page piece including a Q&A interview. Chappelle, who went AWOL early in 2005, has a new program on Comedy Central called "Chappelle's Show."

The piece doesn't wade too far into any "larger significance" of the comedian or his hiatus, perhaps because it's not clear what that would be. Pictures make up two of the six pages of the package.

Other stories — The third biggest story in the issue is the interview with Sharon . The lack of any reference to the piece on the cover suggests that the magazine now clearly sees itself less as a news magazine than a general-interest magazine with news included; Time's current editors apparently are willing to forgo such items on the cover. That is also reflected in the division of space between the covers. The "front of the book," the part of the magazine devoted to covering hard news, ends on page 42 with the end of the Sharon interview. The lighter "back of the book" takes up 38 more pages. Subtract the 15 pages for the table of contents, letters from readers and other items, and the back of the book accounts for more than half of the issue. Based on the topic page counts from Hall's Magazine Reports in recent years, that appears to be fairly typical.

The names and images on the cover — Chappelle and Xbox — also probably have more relevance to younger readers than Ariel Sharon.

Elsewhere in the issue, Time devotes eight pages to national affairs. The pieces include one on President Bush's ban on funds for stem cell research, the religious leaders behind a filibuster fight that was going on in the Senate, and the ousted anti-gay mayor of Spokane, Wash. In World, the Sharon package also included a short piece about the relatively unknown ad man who helped soften the prime minister's image and win him the election in Israel.

The magazine also features a three-page "Your Time" section in the back (a combination of news you can use, random facts and short interviews), a page of shorts on "People" and a closing essay.

The news of the week, the stories that pass through the public consciousness day-to-day, appear in the Notebook section in the front of the issue, a series of quick short items. It was here that the United Airlines story, the one about the plane that violated D.C. air space, and the Macaulay Culkin quote appeared, along with shorts on Arianna Huffington's blog, military base closings, the successor in Pope Benedict's old job, a book called "French Women Don't Get Fat," a contraption that vaporizes alcohol for quicker consumption, and plans to change the president's daily intelligence brief.

Time is a magazine that seems caught in between genres. It feels compelled to pay attention to the news of the week, but only in passing, and to try and cover serious issues like the Middle East, but it isn't clear if its audience really wants to pay attention. And Time looks as if it isn't sure how much its audience wants to read.



Newsweek: Like Time, Newsweek is not really a summary of the past seven days but instead a complement designed to keep its readers apprised of news topics and trends that the magazine's editors see as important. The world presented in the May 23 issue in many ways resembles the one offered by Time.

The current-events section, or the "front of the book," is particularly short. There are just five hard-news stories, which go up to page 36, and a later two-column piece on the Illinois slayings. The rest of the magazine's 84 pages are

devoted to lighter trend stories. Removing the letters, cartoons and table of contents, the hard-news hole in the issue is 13-plus pages — including ads.

Three of the stories we saw in our Day in the Life study turn up in Newsweek. The plane violating D.C. airspace gets about two-thirds of a page in the Periscope section. North Korea's nuclear ambitions are covered in a one-page column. And the slaying of two girls in Illinois is covered in a short two-column piece near the back of the issue's hard-news section.

Cover — Newsweek's May 23 cover isn't news, it's about a book excerpt. The cover face is more than 200 years old — a picture of George Washington looking defiant astride a white horse. The cover, "The Real George Washington" is based on an excerpt of David McCullough's book "1776." Also teased on the cover are a special section on "Design 2005: What's Hot" and "The Filibuster Fight" in the Senate.

Inside, the four-page piece leading into the excerpt calls "1776" "powerful" and "vivid" and calls McCullough "America's best-loved historian." That kind of prose isn't unusual for book excerpts. If Newsweek didn't like the book or believe others would, presumably it wouldn't have put it on the cover. The lead-in piece is mostly an essay on the author, his book and the nation. "For the country, the path ahead is never entirely smooth, but, as Washington's story shows, faith and patience can see us through the longest nights," it says near its end. The piece is followed by a five-page passage from "1776."

The cover-teased "Design 2005" package looks at a variety of new product designs, from homes to video games to prescription bottles, in ways that range from multi-page stories to short items no longer than 15 lines. Design — in everything from Target products to iPods — has recently gained increased attention from the news media.

Rather than a searching exploration of design, however, the section, particularly near its close, turns largely into an advertising layout. A "Design Dozen" resembles a shopping guide — readers learn about the Mario Batali Basting Brush, Krups Espresso Maker and the hot colors for the year in paint. The subhead on this section: "Our pick of the names to know, stuff to covet, ideas to ponder. Wearables, listenables — even affordables."

Also getting a cover mention is the filibuster showdown that threatened to erupt in the Senate. A large illustration of Senators Harry Reid and Bill Frist with dynamite around the Capitol dominates the opening spread, taking up five of the six available columns. The actual room for text is about four columns out of a 12-column spread.

The article delves less into the filibuster threat and more into the waning influence of moderate voices on Capitol Hill, in the Senate particularly. Much of the piece focuses on the moderate Republican Sen. Arlen Specter, whom it calls "a relic of a bygone era." It notes that Specter and a fellow GOP moderate, Sen. Susan Collins, stopped their weekly meetings among moderate Republican senators because they were the only two people there. Almost lost in the shuffle are the judges who prompted the GOP to consider the "nuclear option" in the first place. They are restricted to a graphic.

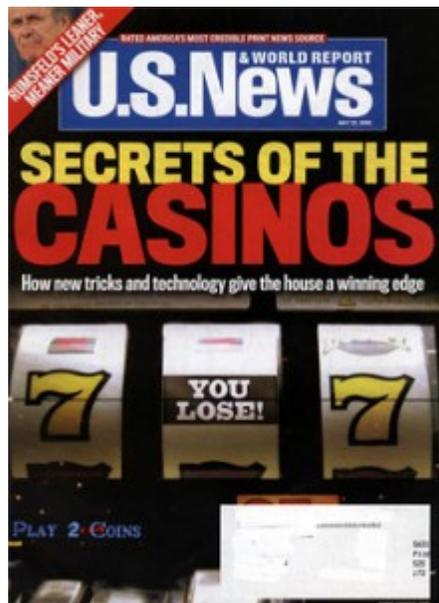
Other pieces — Next comes a three-page story about Newsweek's disputed account of the reported desecrating of the Koran at the prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba (an article that ran on May 9) — what the magazine got right and wrong and the violence that broke out in the Arab world after the story ran. The piece acknowledges possible inaccuracies in the earlier story, but adds that its source still recalls reports about Koran mishandling, including a toilet incident, but

cannot recall where. There is also a one-page piece about the Defense Department's base closure plans and a one-page column from International Editor Fareed Zakaria about the administration's policy regarding North Korea .

Then comes a two-page report on Burger King's plan to reach Americans by selling extremely caloric and fatty foods, including a new Enormous Omelet Sandwich. A one-page story explores how the runners-up on the TV show *The Apprentice* often did better than the winners. Another page and a third carries a piece on the rising star of the Miami Heat point guard Dwayne Wade, next to a two-column story about the slaying of the two young girls in Illinois.

The front and back of the issue are filled with briefs. The magazine's four-page Periscope section contains its usual mix of short supposed insider pieces (an item about President Bush visiting battleground states after the election), short news-of-the-week pieces that don't merit big play (the aircraft that entered D.C. airspace) and other news nuggets (the mayor of Las Vegas pursuing a reality TV deal). In the back, the magazine offers its "news you can use" section called *The Tip Sheet*, which covers everything from television season finales to safe cars of the future. Then there is the *Newsmaker* section, a place for gossip and entertainment shorts — an item on Dave Chappelle and one on Renee Zellweger's engagement to the country singer Kenny Chesney.

By and large, *Newsweek* in this edition follows the same pattern as *Time*, though generally with a lighter and (it seems to hope) a hipper touch. Some of the editorial content hints of advertorials.



U.S. News and World Report: The world presented in U.S. News's May 23 issue is heavier than the one in *Time* and *Newsweek*. Dave Chappelle doesn't appear. Neither do the runners-up from *The Apprentice*. There are more stories, and more weightier topics, than in the other traditional news weeklies. The magazine is also written in a more direct, "hard news" style; anecdotal leads appear, but not as often. Still, even here there is no attempt to recap the week, but simply to focus on issues editors believe important. U.S. News's editors seem more interested in a hard-news agenda — from stories on shipping terrorists overseas for interrogation to an article on the dangers of life in the commercial fishing business.

Of the three traditional news weeklies in this week, U.S. News covers the greatest number of the “big stories” from May 11 in its 96 pages. Most get short treatment. A large piece about the spike in violence in Iraq includes information about the security forces being attacked. The United Airlines strike winds up a brief, as do North Korea’s nuclear aspirations, fused with information about Iran’s nuclear gambit. King Tut gets a very brief four-line photo caption under what was basically a mug shot of the boy king. It is a no-nonsense issue of a no-nonsense magazine.

Cover — The image is a large picture of a slot machine and the words “You Lose” in between two sevens. The story? “Secrets of the Casinos, How new tricks and technology give the house a winning edge.” In the top left corner of the cover a stern secretary of defense looks down to tease a story about “Rumsfeld’s Lean, Meaner Military.”

The eight-page cover package is markedly different from recent examinations, in other news weeklies, of Vegas as racy cultural phenomenon. The stories here look at the unsexy side of gambling. In fact, one could make the argument that the report fits in with the magazine’s “news you can use” focus. It is decidedly negative and something of a warning about the dangers of gambling. The opening photo is not of showgirls or fountains, but a four-column close-up of a pair of hands pushing the buttons on a slot machine — the gambler’s “courtesy card” tethering her to the machine. The stories reveal that while gambling has become a hot pastime, with poker becoming particularly popular, the odds against winning are getting longer. The package explains how casinos use reward cards to gather data on gamblers in microscopic detail, and includes a piece on gambling addiction. Pictures play a role in the presentation, but they are not of the same emotive quality as the shots in Time and Newsweek.

The article teased on the cover is a five-page story about Donald Rumsfeld’s restructuring of the military and impending base closures. It is a straightforward roundup look at Rumsfeld’s efforts to make the military “nimble” and how base realignment fits with those plans. The conclusion? “It is easy to talk about making the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines work together more closely. It is more difficult to make it happen.”

Other pieces — U.S. News groups its national and international sections together as “Nation & World.” As a result, readers bounce around a bit. Following Rumsfeld is a one-page piece on the spike in suicide attacks in Iraq, followed by a two-page piece on the U.S. practice of shipping terrorist suspects overseas for interrogation, followed by a “Letter from New York” on efforts to rebuild Ground Zero. Finally, Gloria Borger has a one-page “On Politics” column that looks at the perils of one party’s controlling the executive and legislative branches at the same time — there’s a lot of blame that can be heaped on the party.

The issue wanders into areas untethered to news of the week, but they are not necessarily light. A 24-page “Executive Edition” insert includes content tailored to the socio-economics of the magazine’s readers. There is medical news (about a hospital company that specializes in heart disease), along with some business news (a story about online stock trading companies) and some lifestyle news (a piece about buying wine) among others. And the issue offers a special four-page report on the dangers of commercial fishing: fishermen have the most dangerous jobs in America after loggers.

Many short items appear in the front and the back of the magazine. The opening pages feature Washington Whispers, a two-page section with lighter briefs on politics, on John McCain’s book “Faith of My Fathers” being made into a movie, and an item about Egg McMuffins being passed out a White House meeting to celebrate Chief of Staff Andy Card’s birthday. Next comes the White House Week page, which walks readers through some of the week’s more standard Washington fare: The state of the highway bill, the potential for departures of justices from the Supreme Court and how the new director of national intelligence, John Negroponte, is planning to reform the nation’s intelligence

apparatus. After that the magazine still has a three-page section of briefs from the week featuring, among other things, a piece on the Newsweek Koran flap, John Bolton's nomination to be U.N. ambassador, North Korean nuclear tensions, and the filibuster showdown in the Senate.

In the back of the magazine, following the gambling cover story, comes a series of short money and health items along with pieces on a range of topics — two pages on St. Augustine's legacy, two pages on inner-city youngsters at elite colleges, two pages on animal hibernation — and columns from Lou Dobbs, John Leo and David Gergen.

In all there are 22 stories of a page or more in the May 23 issue, which means even with a shorter page count, it has, by far, the most long pieces (Time had 13 and Newsweek about 17).

In short, U.S. News seems the most serious, sober-minded of three main news weeklies. But it also seems bound by tradition. There is more news here, and less attitude, but also not much innovation of the kind found in some of the more serious alternatives that follow.



The Economist: The world represented in the pages of the Economist is big and sprawling. Different regions — the United States, Asia, Europe and others — are given their own sections and treated with roughly equal weight, suggesting to readers that the magazine looks at the news differently. There are no “national” or “foreign” sections in the Economist's pages, there is just the world. Topics in Bhutan are given the same weight as those in Seattle . This absence of the “us and them” perspective leads to a decidedly different and perhaps more holistic view of the news.

The magazine is not just a recap of the week. Stories are joined together to try to make connections and create a larger context, even if they fall in different regional sections in the magazine. So a story in the “United States” section on terrorism might refer readers to pieces in the “Middle East” or “Europe” sections. There is also agenda-setting — stories on matters readers might know little about such as Hugo Chavez's Venezuela , and biofuels. Lighter trend pieces, meanwhile, barely get space.

Beyond the personality differences, the magazine explicitly has a point of view; its editorials by themselves separate the Economist from its U.S. rivals. In American news weeklies it is what the writer thinks, not the magazine institutionally, that matters. The writers in American news weeklies, moreover, tend to have what journalists call a “take” on issues, but not clear positions. The Economist, by contrast, often urges actions and specific policies and makes endorsements. None of the pieces in the Economist even carry bylines. On its Web site, the Economist Group says the magazine “has no bylines, believing that what is written is more important than who writes it.”

From its text-driven nature to its U.K. headquarters, the Economist differs substantially from the other news weeklies, which may partly explain why it has made substantial inroads in audience here in recent years, while the U.S. magazines have struggled. Even the matter of how issues are dated is different in the Economist. It hits the newsstands three days before the Big Three.

Three of the “big stories” from May 11 make it into the May 20 Economist, though none is a stand-alone story. Instead, they are bits of information in larger stories about larger issues. For instance, there is a piece on Iraqi security forces that mentions the spike in violence in the country, and a short 10-line item in “The World This Week” in the front of the magazine touches the same topic. The news about North Korea bolstering its nuclear arsenal is part of the cover piece on the “Axis of Evil” as well as a nine-line item in “World this Week.” And the story about the obstacles to CAFTA is a 3-line brief and part of the larger article that opens “The Americas” section of the issue.

Cover — The Economist in this issue uses a week without a central headline to basically build one itself, based on two different events — North Korea’s announcement that it is preparing a nuclear test and Iran’s announcement that it is about to resume enriching nuclear materials. The cover line, “Return of the Axis of Evil,” and picture, a Muslim figure holding a mushroom cloud in his hands, are unlike the approach taken by the other titles. It is a contextualizing of different, not obviously related, events to create one story. And the four stories teased on the cover represent a diverse range of topics — “From Goldwater to Bush,” “Venezuela’s oil-rich troublemaker,” “A future for biofuels” and “Detroit and the Unions.” All appear in different sections of the magazine.

The cover package is made up of two stories. A one-page editorial on the “Return of the Axis of Evil” outlines the stakes and urges action by the U.S. government. The Economist’s format also means that, technically, another part of the cover package is the lead story in the Middle East and Africa section later on that lays out specifically “Iran’s nuclear ambitions” — which frees up room for editorial commentary up front.

Other pieces — Listing all the articles in this issue would take up a lot of space. There are 71 — more than four times the U.S. average for this week — and the range of topics is vast, everything from the Los Angeles mayoral race to mining in China to French corporate governance.

In the May 20 issue the stories are, as always, short; three pages is a treatise here. The leads are taut and to the point, with lots of facts and figures. There are not a lot of scene-setting anecdotes or florid prose.

At the start of the book, the briefs are really brief, many less than 10 lines, and all are hard-news driven. The May 20 issue has no celebrity briefs, and international matters lead. Topics range from President Bush’s Russian trip to a summit of Arab and South American countries and the Senate’s passage of a resolution asking Nigeria to extradite the former Liberian leader Charles Taylor.

The Leaders section, where the magazine's opening opinion essays appear, begins with the one-page "Axis of Evil" piece, then goes on to essays about India's reformist prime minister, Venezuela's Hugo Chavez, General Motors' need to reduce labor costs, German shareholder activism and the Tories' role in British politics. Following that is a three-page special section on Chavez, looking at the social gains his nation has made and the heavy hits democracy and economic development have taken. The nation has one foot in democracy and the other in autocracy, the article declares, adding that "Venezuelans must decide which foot they prefer to amputate."

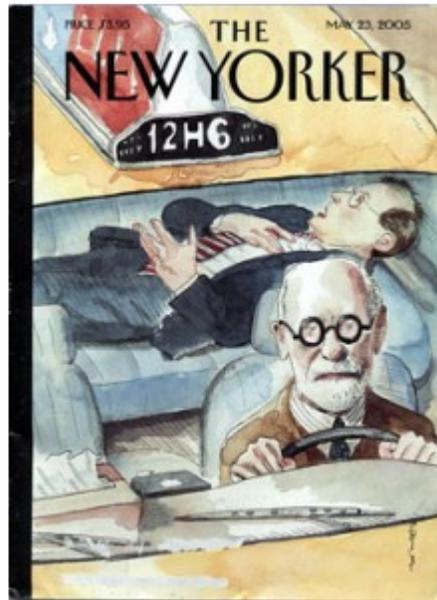
Even the United States section offers a different definition of news than U.S. weeklies. The first article is a one-page look at Antonio Villaraigosa, the new mayor of Los Angeles. It's followed by a short piece on Jim West, the publicly anti-gay legislator in Washington State who was found to have engaged in homosexual activity, and a one-page piece on Paul Volcker's investigation of the U.N. oil-for-food scandal. There also is a one-page report on the decline of American unions, a short piece on how poor Americans have never saved money, a two-column story on faulty DNA testing in Virginia and a story on Chinese businessmen who are making inroads in the Midwest. The one-page Lexington column, which comes at the end of the United State section, talks about Republicans abandoning a small-government approach to management. The Jim West story was the only one the U.S. weeklies also covered.

It is not until page 62, that the magazine digs into business news – and that content diverges dramatically from what would have been found in American news weeklies. Among business's eight pages is a one-and-half-page article on Intel and its new head, a two-column story on how American businesses are starting to take global warming seriously, a one-column item on the battle over the mobile e-mail business and a short item on how Kodak is struggling in the digital picture age.

There follows a three-page special report on the rise of biofuels that suggests it is time to take them more seriously as oil prices increase, a five-page Finance and Economics section and a three-page Science and Technology section. One needs to get all the way to page 85 (already longer than the entire issues of Time and Newsweek from May 23) before arriving at a three-page "Books and the Arts" section. Even here there are no celebrity interviews or film reviews. There are four one-and-a-half-column book reviews, a two-column article on new Asian cinema and a short item about a gallery exhibit of previously unseen Marilyn Monroe photos.

The issue still has room for a one-page obituary of Bob Hunter, the man who founded Greenpeace, and the Economist's usual three pages of numbers, charts and tables that look at financial and economic indicators — something one would never find in any of the traditional American news weeklies. Again, some of that has to do with the magazine's mission. It is a hybrid business/news title. But even taking that into account, the Economist simply treats news and the world it covers differently.

The Economist's slogan is "First published in 1843 to take part in 'a severe contest between intelligence, which presses forward, and an unworthy, timid ignorance obstructing our progress.'" That insistent attitude, aided by arch prose, sums up what the magazine aspires to.



The New Yorker: The outlier in this group of titles is the New Yorker, which isn't really a news magazine but, as we've pointed out previously, has wandered further into the events of the week in recent years. The world as represented in the May 23 issue is both broader and deeper than the one examined in the traditional news weeklies. The articles may not be immediately topical (in a week where there was no dominant story) but the issues they deal with — AIDS, a young sports star, espionage during a war, and art and an artist are familiar in a larger sense. The magazine clearly isn't aimed at filling in the reader on what's happened in the last seven days, and the length of its pieces means that inevitably, fewer stories are covered. Still, the depth of the reportage and the broad topics serve to illuminate larger issues. None of the 11 Big Stories we saw on May 11 turned up in this issue of the May 23 New Yorker.

Cover — The cover, a break as always from photo journalism, was a drawing of a New York City cab with Sigmund Freud sitting stoically at the wheel while a passenger lay on the back seat, presumably baring his soul. (The magazine in recent years has used flaps to highlight pieces inside.)

Stories in the issue — Talk of the Town opens with a lengthy Comment article on the victory of Tony Blair and the Labor Party in Britain's recent Parliamentary elections and on Blair's close relationship with President Bush. The piece features the magazine's usual left-of-center take on the elections and the drag Bush may have caused Blair. Beyond that, Talk of the Town is a usual mix of short pieces on scenes from New York and the world of the arts — a look at the United Nations Building renovation, at writer's "habitats," a count of trees in New York City, and Robert Goulet.

Following "Talk," the magazine heads into matters at greater length. The news stories are less about the news of the week than issues and people of familiar gravity, but with an apparent emphasis on telling readers something they don't know. First there is a seven-page piece on the rising H.I.V. rates in the United States and what's behind the trend, foremost a return of casual sex among gay men. A seven-page piece on the 15-year-old Major League Soccer player Freddie Adu reports his struggles adjusting to the life of a professional athlete. Following that is an 11-page story on

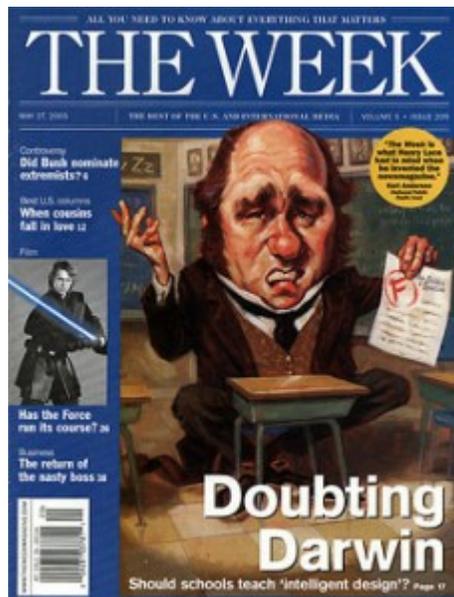
Pham Xuan An, a Time magazine employee in Vietnam during the war there who was also a double agent, and a 10-page profile of the artist Robert Rauschenberg.

The pieces all offer depth not seen elsewhere. The HIV piece opens with a long scene lead that lays the ground for a discussion of the relationship between crystal methamphetamine and unprotected sex, but still has plenty of room to step back and offer a broad picture of the AIDS epidemic in the U.S. It explains how crystal meth works on the brain — what neurotransmitters are affected — and still comes back to talk about sex clubs. The New Yorker gives writers enough space to delve into topics at several levels and draw connections between different points.

The piece on Adu wanders through topics like soccer's place in America and Adu's "mental conditioning coach" while discussing the difficulties the boy has had developing as a player. The long article on Pham Xuan An isn't just a profile of the man, but a history of the war and of how he played both sides. The piece paints a complicated picture. In 1997, it says, An was denied permission to attend a conference in New York. An says it's because his government wanted to keep him silenced, but the reporter adds, "This is one possible explanation, but as always with An, there could be another figure in the carpet. All we know is that, for at least 27 years after the end of the war, An was still an active member of Vietnam's military intelligence service."

Photos do appear. Almost all are black and white and artistic in style. The three-photo montage that ran in the HIV story is pure art — of no one in particular, with images stacked atop one another to suggest the effect of a motion picture. And, of course, there is a certain amount of space devoted to the cartoons that appear every few pages. Over all, though, text dominates the New Yorker in the front of the magazine and the back.

The New Yorker's editors might chafe at its being considered a news magazine, but today categorizing the magazine is difficult. Describing its approach, whatever the topic, as deeply reported and writer-driven is not.



The Week: The world presented in the May 27 issue of The Week is a broad but condensed picture of the world as seen through the eyes of others (the title is dated ahead the same way Time and Newsweek are, but is on a slightly different news schedule). The magazine doesn't dispatch reporters to cover events or

use them to work the phones; it culls through pages and pages of newsprint, magazines and Web sites to produce a summary of what others have offered as the week's news.

The magazine, founded by Jolyon Connell, a onetime White House reporter, is modeled after the briefing created daily for the Oval Office. And The Week throws its net wide to get its content. The New York Times is heavily represented in its pages, but the May 27 issue carries excerpts and ideas from the Glasgow Herald, Turin's La Stampa, Mexico City's La Jornada, even Cigar Aficionado. The excerpts are generally short, sometimes a few paragraphs and sometimes only a few sentences. But they offer a quick summary of what the main piece was about, and the brevity of the pieces allows for a broad look at the news of the previous seven days. Of all the titles we examined, the Week comes closest to offering a recap of the week's news, and that is what it strives to do.

The Week features more of the Big Stories from May 11 than any magazine studied, more even than U.S. News. The May 23 issue has articles about, or at least mentions, five of the stories — Iraq, United Airlines, King Tut, the Blockbuster board and CAFTA. It also deals with the North Korea story in the previous week's issue, since the magazine comes out on a different schedule from the traditional weeklies.

Cover — The main image is a sketch of a befuddled Charles Darwin sitting in a classroom holding up a paper entitled "The Origin of Species" graded with a large: F. The cover line: "Doubting Darwin, Should schools teach 'intelligent design'?" The sketch shows the usual approach the magazine takes to its cover art, a cheeky take on what it considers the week's biggest story. Down the left side of the cover are four teases: "Did Bush nominate extremists?" "When cousins fall in love," "Has the Force run its course?" and "The return of the nasty boss." The teases are notable for their variety — everything from court appointments to the movie "Star Wars Episode III" — and for their sheer number. Like the Economist, The Week likes to get as many subjects as it can on its cover.

The "cover story" is not much different or much longer than any of the other stories in the issue. It is a half-page discussion of the intelligent design debate consisting of three long quotations from other publications — a column by the Boston Globe's Ellen Goodman, a post from Brian McNicoll of Townhall.com and a post from Slate's William Saletan. The piece itself takes no position. Goodman is against intelligent design, McNicoll is for it and Saletan says the theory is an admission of defeat from biblical literalists because they have at least had to accept the basic premise behind evolution, change over time.

The article on Bush's judicial nominees has the same format and is the same size — a half-page of quotations, this time from six different writers in publications spanning the political continuum from the Los Angeles Times and the Washington Post to the Wall Street Journal and National Review Online. Those critical of the federal appeals court nominees in question (Janice Rogers Brown, William Pryor and Priscilla Owen, all now confirmed to federal courts) find them too radical; quotes from the supporting publications emphasize their qualifications for the bench.

The pieces on "cousins in love" and "the nasty boss" are straight excerpts from other publications — in the former case a column by the Chicago Tribune's Steve Chapman about cousins who want to marry but can't in Pennsylvania, the latter a business story from USA Today.

The piece about "Star Wars" rounds up reviews by A.O. Scott of the New York Times, Roger Ebert of the Chicago Sun-Times, Anthony Lane of the New Yorker, Kenneth Turan of the Los Angeles Times and the Chicago Tribune's Michael Wilmington.

Other pieces — Everything else is brief, but the list of topics is long. A quick glance shows the breadth — military base closings, the fight over John Bolton, fighting in Iraq, Los Angeles's new mayor, Lance Armstrong saving sperm to have children later, the formerly credentialed White House "reporter" Jeff Gannon and a one-page "Briefing" on the right to die inspired by the Terri Schiavo case.

That's all in the front of the magazine's news section, along with three pages called "The world at a glance..." which feature maps of the continents marked with dots and lines that connect to one-paragraph reports. The items consist of everything from a severed fingertip supposedly found in a bowl of Wendy's chili to the launching of a television network backed by President Hugo Chavez in Venezuela to the push in Rome to make Pope John Paul II a saint and the killing of hundreds of civilians in Uzbekistan by government troops.

After all that there are three pages devoted to the "Best columns" in the United States, Europe and elsewhere. Along with columns from the New York Times and Chicago Tribune, there are selections from Italy, the Netherlands, Iraq and Russia. There is also a short item called "It must be true... I read it in the tabloids."

Then there are two more pages of "Talking points" where the big topics of the week, some heavy and some lighter, are boiled down to what people have written for and against them. This is where the Darwin piece appears, along with items about Yalta, Pope Benedict and the Rolling Stones. Then come two pages of editorial cartoons from the past week. At this point, not even half-way through the issue, the biggest stories of the last seven days have largely been addressed.

That still leaves the rest of the issue for a vast assortment of topics. The Week has sections for health and science, reviews of books, film, music and the stage, plus food and drink (recipes for lobster rolls and blueberry cobbler as well as an excerpt of a review on a new Chicago restaurant). A one-page travel section runs excerpts from stories on areas ranging from Uruguay to Bethesda, Md. and Madison, Wis.

The Week is Reader's Digest meets the blogosphere — an inclusive shorthand summary of the week's events as seen through the eyes of others.

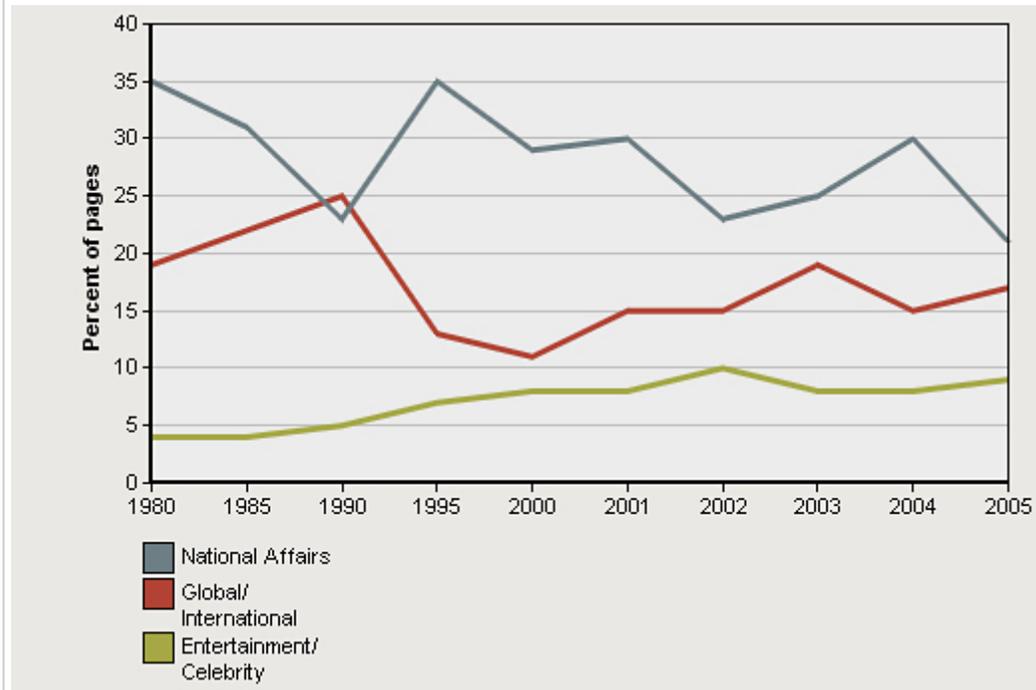
Topic Coverage Over All in the Traditional News Weeklies

The in-depth look at one issue allows us to make close comparisons of the nature and editorial choices of the various magazines. A broader look at the breakdown of topics year-to-year provides a sense of the shifts in coverage over time.

Through the first eight months of 2005 the data from Hall's Magazine Reports show a big change from a year earlier in the topics covered. Looking at the three traditional news magazines combined, national affairs, while still the largest topic in the weeklies, fell off dramatically — down to 21% of all pages — and if the trend continued that would be a 9% drop from 2004.³ While it's true that 2004 was a presidential election year, there were some notable national news headlines in 2005, from Tom DeLay's court troubles to the retirement of Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor to the investigation of the White House adviser Karl Rove. (It should be noted, however, that the page tally took place before Hurricane Katrina, which was bound to increase the national affairs coverage.)

News Magazine Pages by Topic, 1980-2005

Select years



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Halls Media Research unpublished data

* 2005 data from January – August

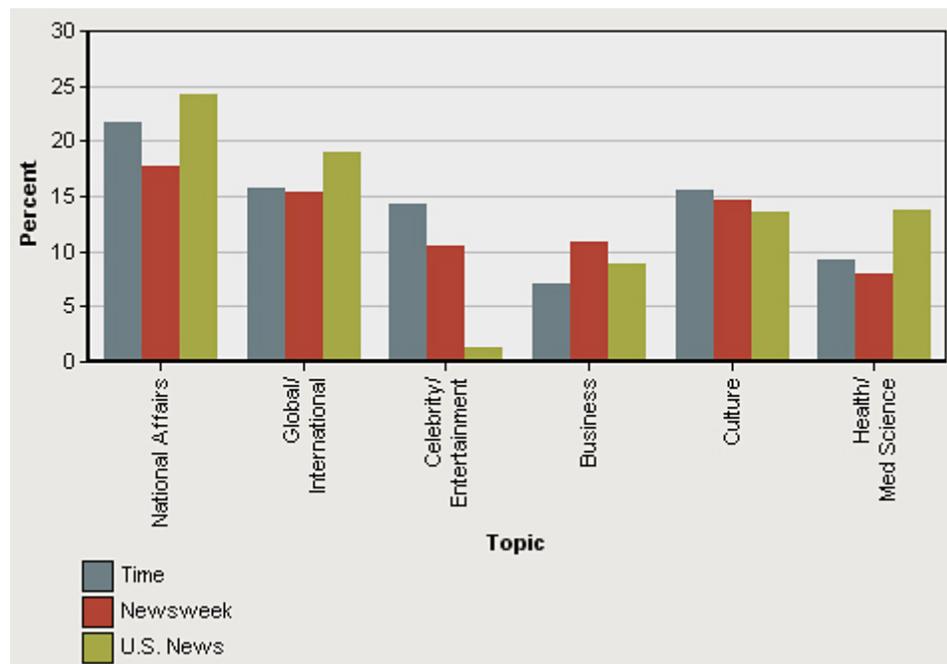
What filled the pages left open by the drop in coverage of national affairs? For the most part, it seemed to be cultural news, which increased 4%, from 11% to 15%. But it was not alone in seeing gains. Health and medical science, and global and international affairs, were both up 2%, to 10% and 17% of all pages, respectively. And business pages and entertainment and celebrity pages both grew slightly to 9% each. 4

Title by Title

Amid those broad shifts, there were also some differences among the Big Three magazines, particularly in the light-news areas. Reflecting some of the same differences found in the May 23 issues we examined closely, Time and Newsweek devoted far more of their pages to entertainment/celebrity topics than did U.S. News (14% for Time, 10% for Newsweek and 1% for U.S. News). U.S. News's "news you can use" predilections also showed up in page counts. The magazine was by far the leader in health and medical science stories, which made up 14% of the pages in the first eight months of 2005. The topic accounted for 8% of Newsweek's pages and 9% of Time's. 5

News Weekly Topics, 2005

By percentage of pages



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Hall's Media Research unpublished data

* January – August

U.S. News also led the pack in national affairs coverage (24%, versus 18% for Newsweek and 22% for Time) and global/international coverage (19%, versus 15% for Newsweek and 16% for Time).⁶

Those patterns bear watching, however. The page counts were done before the big announcements at U.S. News of layoffs and its plan to shift to more Web-based publication. What that will mean for the news content is uncertain. It's possible that U.S. News could become even more hard-news based, focusing in on its core product in a leaner publication.

In 2004

The traditional news weeklies were a little different in 2004. National affairs, where the presidential election coverage normally appears, saw an increase of 5% in total magazine pages from 2003 to 30%, according to figures from Hall's Magazine Reports. That is a large increase for one year, but still below the high figure of 35% in 1995, when there was no national election under way.⁷

Just as interesting is where the increase in national pages came from. Mostly they were taken from global/international coverage, which fell 4% in 2004, to 15% of all pages. That happened even though 2004 was a big year for international news, particularly the war in Iraq, where insurgent attacks increased and casualties grew. Also taking small hits in

percentage of pages allotted was business coverage, which dropped from 9% of pages in 2003 to 8% in 2004, and personal finance coverage, from 3% to 2%.⁸

The New Yorker

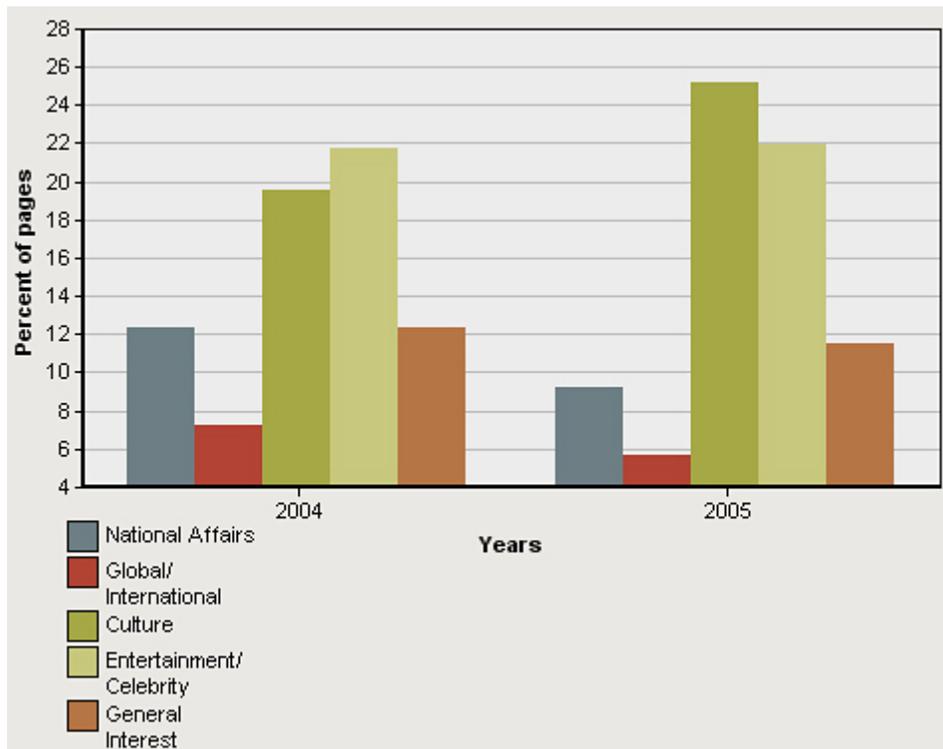
While the New Yorker has become more “newsie” and political in the past 20 years, the general mix more recently has remained largely unchanged, according to Hall’s Magazine Reports.

Cultural affairs and entertainment issues remain the linchpin of the New Yorker, accounting for close to half of all pages. But as we saw above (LINK BACK), the magazine’s approach to culture and entertainment is deeper, with an emphasis on issue-based pieces or profiles. And the prominence given to “general interest” coverage demonstrates the latitude the magazine takes in covering more off-beat issues. Where the traditional news weeklies purport to cover the week’s news across many areas — politics, culture, business — the New Yorker does not.

The small shifts that did occur in 2004 and 2005 were likely tied to the 2004 election. Political coverage (as a part of national affairs) rose 12% during the election year, but fell back down again in the beginning of ‘05 to less than 10% of coverage overall.⁹

New Yorker Topics

2004 vs. 2005



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Halls Media Research unpublished data

The election-year shifts suggest that even though the magazine isn't a "news magazine" per se, its editors feel its content is at least tied to the news in some way, particularly where politics is concerned.

Summary

After a long stable period, the traditional titles may be facing serious challenges from two different models.

The Economist and the New Yorker, thick magazines that belie the suggestion that consumers want news more quickly, have been seen as models for smaller niche audiences. The question is whether the approach of The Week, a magazine with no first-hand reportage built as a kind of print-blog, can resonate with a bigger mass audience.

The Week counters many of the prevailing trends in the news media today. It has no bylines and is developing no "personalities" for TV or radio consumption. It has no reporters trying to get "exclusives" to trumpet on its cover. It does not rely heavily on opinion or its own point of view to win readers. But its style and approach seem tailor-made for an audience looking for easily digestible, even pre-digested, news.

Footnotes

1. Lowry, Tom, "Mighty Week," Business Week, March 21, 2005
2. Though the dates on the covers of these issues vary because of editorial decisions designed to make the issues look fresh on the newsstand, the news inside them is from as parallel a time as possible.
3. Hall's Reports research. Unpublished data. www.hallsreports.com
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid
8. Ibid
9. Ibid. It should be remembered, however, that the magazine's overall figures include fiction and reviews, which always make up a large share of the pages.

Radio

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

In the various debates over the state of journalism, the area about which the least is known is probably local news radio.

Critics argue that the field has been decimated, decrying that since the deregulation of the 1980s and the consolidation of the 1990s station after station has abandoned producing local news, and arguing that cities around the country have suffered as a result.

Defenders say there are more choices and more news, talk and information than ever.

The discussion on both sides, however, is usually anecdotal. The medium tends not to receive the level of academic attention or critical study focused on network TV, print or the Internet.

As part of the Day in the Life of the News, we wanted to find out what local radio was actually offering citizens. ¹ To do so, we studied what was on local news radio on May 11, 2005, in three cities in three different regions: — Houston, a major metropolitan area, Milwaukee, a middle-sized city, and Bend, Ore., a smaller city.

What we found, by and large, is that radio news today is more local than the critics might think, but also quite thin. It rarely involves sending reporters out to explore the community and tell stories about local voices and personalities — the hallmarks of traditional local news coverage. Over all, the stories we found on local radio this day had the shallowest sourcing and explored the fewest angles of any media studied.

Instead, what listeners got was headlines read from wires or provided by national networks. The stories were brief — almost always less than a minute and often less than 30 seconds.

Radio News: Story Types

	Percent of all Time
Anchor Reads	24%
Packages	12
Interview	31
Other News Outlet	7
Traffic/Weather	9
Sports	5
Promos/banter/Fill	12
Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.	

What is probably the most prevalent local component on radio today is traffic and weather, broadcast on every station studied.

Whatever depth of coverage we found came largely from talk-show hosts offering their opinions on issues or taking calls from listeners.

In Bend, the one local radio station listed as offering local news and talk was KBND, where the only story segment longer than a minute in the hours studied was Paul Harvey’s syndicated “Rest of the Story” about the 1931 Indy 500. 2

During morning drive time on News/Talk WTMJ in Milwaukee, the news block was made up of 14 headlines at the top of the hour, but the headlines were brief, without a single source for any information cited.

Of all the hours monitored on local radio this day, only 14% involved correspondents reporting the story and many of those came from the local NPR affiliate or feeds from network owners.

How much radio news did we find? 3 In the biggest city, Houston, with a population of roughly 2 million 4, there were two stations identifying themselves as news/talk, two all-talk stations and one public radio station. The fourth largest city in the country had no station listing itself as “all news” dedicated to coverage of the community.

Listeners actually had more radio news options in the Milwaukee market, population 600,000, with eight stations listed: Three news/talk, two talk, and three public radio. 5

In Bend, a city of 52,000, radio listeners had little choice if they wanted news. One local news station, KBND, a “combined communication station” and CBS affiliate, offered CBS headlines and then mostly local news headlines. Listeners could also tune into an all-talk station broadcast from Redmond, Wash.

What We Studied

To get a closer sense of what was offered in each city we monitored one all-news station, one news/talk station, and a public radio station if it had local news programming hours. If no all-news station existed, we monitored a second news-talk station.

For each, we captured local programming at three different times of the day — an early-morning hour, a mid-day hour and an evening hour — if local news was offered. 6

Topics

Local news radio listeners are not hearing the same stories they would get from other media. And, in spite of the high level of consolidation that has taken place in radio, they are not hearing just nationally syndicated material with little local connection.

More than half the airtime (57%) on May 11 took a local perspective and another 16% were regional in focus. Eighteen percent delved into areas that did not fit clearly into any geographic boundary, such as divorce, health matters or the daily news quiz. The other quarter took a national or international angle.

Geographic Focus of Local Radio News

	Local	Regional	National	Int’l	None	Total
% of all time	57%	16	4	5	18	100

The stories that dominated the national media were a minor factor here. The four national stories that got the most coverage across the media generally this day were covered, but usually just briefly in the headlines at the top of the hour. A mere 5% of the stations' newshole spoke to these stories — only suburban daily papers covered them less (4%). Listeners could easily miss them if they weren't listening closely.

What topics were covered? By and large, listeners learned about three main subject areas: local government issues such as tax bills and the school budget; crime (murders, local voter fraud, and missing persons as well as the murder story in Zion, Ill., a national news item this day); and domestic issues such as education and marriage, whether tied to local events or to broader, non-geographical concerns. Each of those areas accounted for close to a quarter of the total air time. All other topics were fit into the other quarter of air time. That was a different mix from local television that day which was close to twice as dedicated to crime but much less so to government news. And it was a narrower focus than we found in local print media.

Topics on Local Radio

Topic	% of all Time
Crime	24%
Gov't/Elec.	25
Domestic	24
Other	27
Total	100

Of the top 14 stories in WTMJ's morning news hour, for instance, 10 were local. Eight of those were about local crimes.

WTMJ, Milwaukee Morning News: 14 Stories

- Marquette sports name (local)
- Zion murders (nat'l)
- Trial of killer Ted Oswald (local)
- Three shooting overnight (local)
- Local stabbing and shooting (local)
- Search for missing man (local)
- Charges against 13 year-old dropped (local)
- Milwaukee voter fraud (local)
- National Voter ID Bill (nat'l)
- Legislation to restrict cold medicine sales (local)
- Pharmacist on trial for refusing to sell medicine (local)
- Bombings in Iraq (Internat'l)
- Possible Grenade thrown at Bush (nat'l)
- Local mayor charged with sex crimes (local)

The Lost Art of Local Radio Story-Telling

But it was local radio's approach to reporting on those topics that stood out most of all. Rarely could the news content offered be described as thorough, complete or even well rounded. Little of it involved reporters going out to the scene and interviewing people or serving as the public's eyes and ears. Indeed, the local radio news we found on May 11 was not about reporting in a traditional sense at all.

Sourcing of information, for instance, was often absent. A full third of the coverage of the major news items across the stations studied did not contain any sourcing. Another 37% contained only one source other than the host.

Sourcing in Local Media

# of sources	Radio	TV	Metro Dailies
0	33%	40%	15%
1	37	21	16
2	16	18	16
3	9	9	12
4+	5	13	41

Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding

That compared poorly to the other sources of local news we monitored on May 11, from local TV, to weekly papers, to local or suburban daily papers. All of those rivals were significantly higher in the amount of sourcing available to audiences. Suburban dailies included four or more sources in 18% of their stories, and local TV included four or more in 13%. Local radio listeners must put a good deal of trust in the local on-air voices.

When it came to how much context stories provided, local radio scored the lowest of any English-language media studied. On our index of 10 elements that major stories might contain that would explain how a story mattered, 88% contained one or none — and that includes the long, far-ranging talk-radio discussions.⁷ Again, that was the lowest score of any media studied.

Format Is King

Instead, what we found in local radio news was a medium heavily “formatted,” where everything was fit into a predictable and highly promotable pattern that was easy for listeners to remember. Yet that format tended to shallow-out the reporting on radio, and emphasize what cost less for stations to produce.

Across all the stations we studied in all three cities, the format on local radio was dominated by four elements: headlines, traffic, weather, and talk.

Only one station studied, KBND in Oregon, had a program we monitored that did not feature talk. Both its 6 a.m. and 5 p.m. hours cycled through national headlines from the CBS news desk, local headlines, sports, weather and traffic and business news — and then repeated.

The amount of talk versus news varied with the time of day. On Houston 's KTRH, the 6 a.m. drive time “Lana Hughes and J.P. Pritchard Show” was almost all headlines, traffic and weather. The one longer news segment was a one-minute, 38-second read on a Texas tax bill, with one sound “actualities” from a senator but no reporter at a news scene. The hosts were reading wires. No other story item during the hour ran even a minute long.

In the afternoon on KTRH, however, the “Deborah Duncan Show” was all about talk. After a brief headline summary, Duncan spent most of her time taking listener call-ins. The topic was divorce — everything from being surprised by emotions to what no-fault divorce means in court to protecting children from negative effects.

Headlines

It was in the headline summaries at the top of the hour that the local radio we monitored offered the bulk of what people might traditionally consider the news. All the stations offered headline summaries, and all the summaries were brief. Segments were usually under a minute and often less than 30 seconds, too brief to include much in the way of context or connection to listeners.

When it came to the level of reporting and sourcing, especially for national news, there was some variation. The national stories provided by network feeds (including public radio feeds) offered listeners slightly longer reports. They also tended to have either correspondents reporting or soundbites from at least one source, but they did not often feature both.

KBND's 5 p.m. hour, for example, kicked off with national news from CBS, covering nine stories in four minutes. Three of the nine were reports from network correspondents, but only one included any soundbites or sound actualities from newsmakers themselves. Two of the stories read by the network anchor also included at least one soundbite from a newsmaker.

There does appear to be a trade-off. Stations that handled news summaries locally rather than getting them from a national network news operation tended to be more local in focus. But they also tended to be even more cursory.

In Houston, for instance, KSEV's morning show covered both the national and local headlines in its minute-and-a-half news roundup, but none of the reports featured a correspondent or any soundbites at all. The news summary amounted to a local anchor reading wires.

KSEV Morning News: Top Headlines

Time	Story
00:00 – 00:12	Iraq bombings
00:13 – 00:26	Zion murders
00:27 – 00:41	Ads
00:42 – 01:00	Metro crash
01:01 – 01:21	Heat protection
01:22 – 01:36	Ads

The station that stood out for offering listeners the richest local news reporting at the top of the hour was the public radio station in Kenosha, Wis., WGTD. Following NPR headlines at the top of the 8:00 a.m. hour, the station covered six local stories, each over a minute long and with multiple sources. And three of them were reported by a correspondent on the scene. A report on the discovery of uncounted ballots, for instance, featured a local correspondent and quoted reaction from both a Republican and a Democratic state representative. The entire piece was under a minute and half. Among the stories monitored on May 11, that one was unusual.

Another effect of the reliance on headline summaries was that most stories made almost no attempt to offer listeners much context, explore different elements or try to make any sense of how stories might affect them. Looking at stories that were less than 45 seconds (a subset that includes most headline coverage but removes the longer talk segments), more than 80% offered none of the contextual elements for which we measured.

Weather and Traffic

The next key ingredients in the radio format were weather and traffic. They were usually 20-to-30-second segments that were repeated, with updating as needed, throughout the hour, sometimes from a designated traffic and weather personality and other times from the program host.

On KTRH's morning show in Houston, for instance, the rundown following roughly 10 minutes of news headlines with promotions and ad time was an 11-minute, 29-second period that featured traffic, then weather, a station promo, and three minutes of ads. After the break, another promo, then sports headlines, then more ads, then back to traffic and weather. The totals: 86 seconds of traffic, 3 minutes and 37 seconds of weather, 69 seconds of promotions, and nearly five minutes of advertising. The rundown, following the news headlines from minutes 1-11 went as follows:

KTRH 6 A.M. Hour

Programming Min: Sec

Traffic 11:27-12:10

Weather 12:11-12:50

Promo 12:51-13:02

—Ad Break—

Promo 16:04-16:28

Sports 16:29-19:45

Promo 19:46-20:18

—Ad break—

Traffic 21:32-22:13

Weather 22:14-22:55

All of the morning and evening news programs monitored offered between five and eight traffic and weather segments each hour — about every eight minutes on average. The lone exception in our sample was the NPR affiliate, WGTD, in Kenosha, which offered two. (The mid-day hours were less focused on traffic and weather, with just two or three segments each.) It is worth noting, though, that even this dominance was much less than what was found on local TV news that day. All in all, traffic and weather accounted for more than double the news time on local TV than on local radio (22% versus 9%).

Talk

By and large, what depth we did find in local radio this day came through “talk.” Those segments were generally much longer but ranged from 25 seconds of commentary following each news headline to nearly 30 minutes of call-ins or guest interviews on a single topic.

The hosts normally included some facts of the story they wanted to discuss, but usually the “reporting” was secondary to the focus on opinion. Sourcing, to the extent it existed at all, was almost always second-hand, and in some cases the reporting came from the listeners who were invited to call in. On occasion the talk format had the quality of blogging, where citizens offered information and the host was a moderator rather than the center of the show. Yet it was impossible to discern whether the information was reliable.

On KSEV in Houston, for instance, the morning show host Chris Begala took three listener calls about a tax bill at the end of the hour that seemed to be offering information, or at least speculation.

The first caller said he had not yet received his appraisal and wondered if it was intentional, on the chance it might change because of the new tax bill.

Begala responded with speculation of his own: “Now that is entirely possible. Of course it is just conjecture on our part. We have no really hard evidence to argue. I can’t tell you why you haven’t gotten yours, but . . . I think that has about a zero percent chance of passing.”

The next caller said she had inside knowledge that a former mayor had wanted to hold off on the assessments so residents did not get upset and vote against him. It wasn’t clear how she had that inside information, but it was good enough for Begala: “Interesting. Thanks Cathy. That is good solid information.”

The third caller added yet another nugget: “I called in to the office and they hadn’t sent it out but the phone person said I have 30 days from when I get it.”

Begala: “. . . Just keep good track of exactly when you do get it. . . . If you were told by that office that you have 30 days, then I’m sure you do . . . but keep the stamped letter as proof. . . We’ve got the most informed, knowledgeable listeners out there.”

On some of the talk programs it was occasionally possible to figure out where a host had gotten his or her information, but listeners needed to be following closely. In the talk on WTMJ about a possible change to Marquette University’s team name, one of the hosts recapped the situation and did mention his immediate source, in passing:

Jagler: The MU board of trustees has scheduled an emergency meeting today, that much we know. The agenda, according to Rana Altenburg, Marquette's vice president for public affairs, is to sit down and discuss all of the communication that they've received since the vote one week ago. In other words, they're going to discuss the outcry and anger they've received . . . she doesn't know, she's telling the Journal Sentinel, if they're going to actually vote to reconsider."

WHBL in Sheboygan, Wis., actually provided some of the best sourcing we found in any news/talk segment monitored, though it was still clearly used to make a point. The sourcing came from the replay of soundbites, or "news actualities." In questioning a statement by the mayor that appeared in the Sheboygan Press that morning, the afternoon host replayed a clip from a town meeting earlier that week. The subject was the building of a new police station. The host first read the mayor's comment in the paper: "He said, 'The complaints the police have shared with us have never been about location.' I thought that was the only thing the police were talking about as [sic] their concern."

The host then went back and played audio from a law-enforcement meeting the previous evening at which an officer, speaking on behalf of the department, had said, "The most significant issue for us is the central location." The host played the soundbite again and again and again and again to make his point. But listeners were hearing the words of the officer himself. The program, highly local, also had the feel of a public forum to a greater extent than other

programs we monitored. Even a local alderman called in to comment.  Listen to WHBL Afternoon Host Audio Clip (Get Quicktime® Plug-in)

The Tone of the Talk

Occasionally the tone of the talk-radio programs we heard had an edge that also brought to mind blogging. The words were uncompromising, blunt, often suspicious. This wasn't just opinion. This was a kind of grievance.

KSEV's morning show in Houston was again illustrative. Chris Begala was sitting in for the regular host, Edd Hendee, and his main topic was a state tax bill, supported by Lt. Gov. David Duhurst, that would change the school tax. The State Senate had approved the bill in the wee hours of the morning. Begala was crystal clear in his views of the lieutenant governor and the idea of raising taxes:

"Duhurst wants to take away our school exemption. Duhurst would raise \$482 million in new or higher taxes and property tax relief in 2007. Don't believe it. It's bull crap. A bunch of bull."

Begala then suggested that the coverage in the Houston Chronicle that morning, which suggested that the bill was "revenue neutral" was also nonsense.

"That's wrong. Of course it is not (revenue neutral)... David Duhurst has gone mad, and any Republican who supports it has gone mad too. . . ."

In Milwaukee, the tone on WTMJ's morning news was not so harsh. The subject was the possible renaming of Marquette University's sports teams. But the message was similar. Something was wrong. The university had made a "mess" of things. But rather than angry, the tone was more ironic, making fun rather than fuming.

Ken Herrera: I don't think anyone on the board expected the feedback to be so overwhelming [sic] negative.

John Jagler: I think you're absolutely right about that. And what are they going to do? I don't know. You mentioned going back to the Golden Eagles. I just don't think they're going to do that.



Listen to WTMJ Morning Hosts Audio Clip (Get Quicktime® Plug-in)

In the end, Jagler would conclude: And the one thing for folks . . . for alum holding out hope, nothing's been finalized. I mean they're not the Gold yet. They haven't taken to the field or the court or anything ... They still have time to fix the mess they created a week ago. I just don't think they will, but you never know.

Beyond the general characteristics of the different program types, there were also differences in the characteristics of what a listener could get in a city generally.

Houston

In Houston, the stations and hours studied all offered a mix in format and topics. KTRH (news/talk), the ABC and Clear Channel station, was all news in the morning hour, call-ins in the afternoon and all national programming in the evening. Even though it was an ABC affiliate, it did not turn to the parent network for national news headlines, but stayed with the local host. The only subject discussed at length in the two hours of local programming was divorce.

KSEV, a news/talk station since converted to just talk, offered local news, talk and call-ins in both the morning and evening hours but aired national talk shows at mid-day. The morning program offered a bit of contextual talk on the Zion murders but spent the bulk of discussion time and all call-in time on the state tax bill. Afternoon listeners heard more talk about a different national news item, the filibuster rule being debated in the U.S. Senate, but again all call-in time was on the state tax bill.

Milwaukee

In Milwaukee, the three stations came out of three different suburbs, with a mix of formats, and perhaps as a result focused on more varied topics. The only story carried across two different stations, indeed, was the debate about the new nickname of the Marquette sports team.

The ABC affiliate WHBL out of Sheboygan (news/talk) was all headline news in the morning, heavily listener call-ins in the afternoon and all national programming in the evening. On the morning program, "Morning News with Kelly Meyer & Mike Kinzel," the longest segment (3:48) and the only one to veer from headline traffic and weather, was a listener news quiz and giveaway. The next longest segment (3:39) addressed the Marquette team nickname. The afternoon program, "Middays with Nick Red," spent roughly 17 minutes on talk and listener call-ins about the site for a new police station. Both hours turned, at the top of the hour, to the ABC news desk for national news headlines, occasionally with ABC correspondents or outside sources.

WTMJ (News/Talk) a CBS station out of Milwaukee , offered a mix of headlines and talk in both the morning and evening hours but had no listener call-in time. The afternoon hours were all national programs. The early morning hour was co-hosted and gave the most talk time (4 minutes) to two boys who went to a local prom together. (The second longest segment was the Marquette nickname debate.) The station stuck with the prom story during the evening drive time with another 3 minutes and 32 seconds on the topic.

The Kenosha station, WGTD, a public station and NPR affiliate, offered the biggest difference. Beyond the top-of-the-hour headlines (mostly from NPR) the entire show was spent with the chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Parkside discussing everything from its connection to students to its community involvement, cooperation with other universities and the tenure process. The mid-day local programming, in contrast, was about news. NPR headlines led the hour, and then the host spent the rest of it on a wide variety of subjects, some national, some local and just one sports segment at the end. Many stories were reported from correspondents and some were even fully reported with multiple sources. The longest of those (4 minutes) was about getting more women interested in hunting. The evening news hours were filled with national NPR programming.

Bend

News radio listeners in Bend, Ore., had just one choice: KBND, a CBS affiliate. During the week, 5 to 9 a.m. is devoted to more to news than talk. In the 6 a.m. hour studied, there is a local “host” but nearly all the content except traffic and weather comes from other personalities. National headlines come from the CBS radio news desk, local news from a local news anchor — some of it correspondent-reported but all of it brief. CNN radio brings business news headlines, and a syndicated health personality offers health news. Then national, syndicated programming kicks in until 5 p.m. From 9 to noon it’s Rush Limbaugh, from noon to 1 Paul Harvey, followed by Lars Larson and Bill O’Reilly. Local news, in the same format as the morning hour, airs from 5 to 6. The day then ends with more national programming, Clark Howard’s consumer news and finally Dr. Laura Schlessinger.

Footnotes

1. As currently licensed, satellite radio networks are restricted by the FCC from providing local content to specific targeted communities.
 2. The story lasted 3 minutes and 23 seconds.
 3. For the purposes of this overview, the Project used unpublished data pulled from BIAfn’s Media Access Pro 4.1 database. Station listings, which included primary format information, were generated for three markets—Houston-Galveston, Milwaukee-Racine, and Bend, Ore. Using the BIAfn data, station format histories were verified and then crosschecked and updated by using information listed on individual station Web sites and with Arbitron’s station information listings. Still, when compared to other radio formats, news is perhaps the most difficult to cleanly define. No precise formula and no real guidelines exist for determining whether a station is a news station, a news/talk station or a talk station.
- It is also difficult to precisely determine issues like reception that may affect the radio station people might listen to as their ‘home town’ station. It is wholly possible that an individual in Houston or Milwaukee is able to receive the signal of a station from outside either city’s designated market-area. 4. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Estimates of the Population for Incorporated Places Over 100,000, Ranked by July 1, 2004. Population: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2004 , <http://www.census.gov/popest/cities/tables/SUB-EST2004-01.xls>
5. Coverage determined by using National Public Radio’s station coverage map.
 6. The result was 11 1/2 hours of local news programming spread across 6 different stations. The specific stations were as follows: In Houston, KSEV (6-7 a.m. and 5-6 p.m.) and KTRH (6-7 a.m. and 1-2 p.m.); In Milwaukee, WTMJ (5-6

a.m. and 5-6 p.m.), WGTD (8-9 a.m. and 12-12:30 p.m.) and WHBL (6-7 a.m. and 11a.m.-12 p.m.); In Bend, KBND (6-7 a.m. and 5-6 p.m.)

7. The index measured the presence of ten different elements that a story might contain. They were the presence of: background information, future implications, the impact of the story on citizens, a human face to the story, some separation of fact and conjecture, potential action someone could take as a citizen, potential action to take as a consumer, contact information for the journalist or news outlet, the underlying principles at play, where to go for additional information.

[Click here to view content data tables.](#)

Ethnic

Ethnic

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

What did the world that was put forward by the ethnic media look like on May 11, 2005? It varied significantly, depending on where you looked.

The violation of No-Fly Washington, D.C. airspace by a small plane, a big story in mainstream and some ethnic news outlets, didn't even crack the paper the next day in Rumbo de Houston, that city's Spanish-language daily newspaper. Instead, news of a mosquito infected with West Nile virus was the big news. On local Spanish-language TV in Houston, a Hispanic man killed when his car was hit by the city's light rail system was a major story.

One national Spanish-language newscast led with the airspace violation, but the other led with the court appearance of an Illinois man accused of killing his 8-year-old daughter and her friend. Iraq, meanwhile, made nary an appearance in any of the outlets, while the topic of immigration was a part of the news mix of each in one way or another.

Our Day in the Life of the News sample of ethnic outlets from May 11 was a mix of different kinds of media.

National ethnic media are hard to find, but we recorded two newscasts, Univision's and Telemundo's. Beyond that, we captured the local ethnic media —newspaper, TV and radio — in Houston, Milwaukee and Bend, Ore. We recorded two local Spanish-language newscasts, both in Houston. Among the cities we chose there was only one foreign-language daily newspaper, Rumbo de Houston. None of the Spanish-language radio we recorded in our cities had meaningful news content. We also looked at one African-American publication, a weekly community newspaper in the Milwaukee area, the Milwaukee Community Journal.

The sample, while admittedly small, revealed noticeable differences in what audiences got from those outlets.

Spanish-Language Outlets

The Hispanic media aren't simply copies of others in a different language. They tend to be broader in the scope of their topics and in the geographic regions they cover, and that is true for local outlets as well as national ones. Stories affecting members of the local ethnic community are given heavy treatment.

Take, for example, the newscast for KXLN, the Univision affiliate in Houston. On May 11, it opened with an interview with a family whose son lost his legs jumping from a moving train five days earlier. That piece was followed by comments from visitors to the station's Web page about railroad safety. Then came a second-day piece about a man who was killed when he was struck by a city light rail train.

The newscast did a serious, lengthy piece on religion. The story focused on a Hispanic woman who was a member of the Episcopal clergy and raised the question why women can't be priests in the Catholic Church. The report wasn't just a profile. It waded into meatier religious topics, at one point quoting a local monsignor about why women are not allowed to be priests. It then challenged his reading of Scripture by noting that supporters of woman priests also quote the Bible. And the piece was just Part 1 of a multi-part series.

The plane scare that dominated cable and network evening news that day, when it did appear on KXLN, got only one paragraph, more than half-way through the newscast.

That was followed by a longish story about the discovery of a mosquito carrying the West Nile Virus in Houston and the fumigation scheduled for the affected area. Immigration made an appearance in two pieces — one about emergency health care for illegal immigrants and a short item on the Mexican government's reaction to the U.S. government's plan to make driver's licenses harder to get.

And the local newscasts reached out further, geographically and otherwise, for some of their topics. For instance, Telemundo's local newscast on KTMD did a lengthy feature on the city of Alvarado in Mexico's Veracruz State, hundreds of miles down the Gulf coast from the Texas border. The city is known as "the place where the most dirty-mouthed people live," and the story was filled with bleeped expletives. At one point the reporter interviewed a resident of the region who told him, "It's very common here for someone to say, '**** your mother,' and I will answer, '**** yours.' We talk like that."

A numeric accounting of the topics that appeared on Houston's local Spanish-language TV is revealing. Consider, for example, that traditional staple of local TV news, crime. It was in short supply on those newscasts, only 16% of their newshole. That is far lower than the 42% that mainstream local TV spends on the topic. ¹

Government news barely cracked the local newscasts we saw on May 11 — only 6% of all coverage. That was less than the government coverage on mainstream local news that night, which weighed in at 9%. But foreign relations was a much bigger part of the Spanish-language newscasts, with just under 15% of the stories. English-language local TV did only about 4% of its stories on the topic. ²

National Spanish-Language TV

The national Spanish-language newscasts looked different from each other and from their English-language counterparts. Telemundo opened its May 11 newscast with three different crime stories from across the country — murders in California, Illinois and Texas — before turning to a relatively short piece on the plane scare in Washington.

Univision, meanwhile, opened with a lengthy package on the plane scare. It quoted a range of people — the Florida Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a Hispanic Congressional employee, and President Oscar Berger of Guatemala, who had been in the Capitol for trade talks.

The pieces on the two networks were different in tone as well. The Univision story at several points drew comparisons to September 11, 2001, and relayed complaints from evacuees that it was difficult to clear the Capitol. The Telemundo piece emphasized that the Capitol was empty in “seconds.” The report quoted the president of El Salvador, who was visiting the Capitol, as saying the evacuation “was very effective, and that only a few cell phones were lost. And someone ripped their pants.”

Immigration matters and the accounts of struggling immigrants also played a big role in the national Spanish-language newscasts. On May 11, Univision’s “Noticiero” did an update of a story on thousands of New York residents who were going to lose their drivers’ licenses because they did not have valid Social Security cards. “Today, on the other hand, thanks to a judicial decision, there is hope,” anchorman Jorge Ramos told his audience. “Although, as Blana Rosa Vilchez of New York says, we should not get overconfident.”

The use of the word “we” is interesting because of the way it links the identity of the station with its audience. “On your side” isn’t just a marketing phrase for these newscasts. There is a definite feeling that the news is aimed at a particular community, and that the station is working with its viewers.

On May 11, Telemundo’s “Noticiero” did a piece focusing on Springdale, N.Y., where the rape and murder of a housewife, apparently by a Guatemalan worker, had created distrust toward immigrant workers. The story featured some of the same “we’re in this together” viewpoint. “The workers simply state that they are paying for the actions of one person,” said the reporter. “This is taking away their daily bread as workers: because of one, everyone has to pay.”

And both networks were interested in news south of the border. Both had a story about Mexican soap opera actors hit by a car in Mexico City. Telemundo had several other pieces from Mexico, including a story about how the U.S. embassy denied a humanitarian visa to a woman whose husband had been beaten in New Jersey, violence in the Mexican city of Nuevo Laredo, and the death of an actress in Mexico City who had a heart attack when she thought she was being robbed.

Looking at the geographic focus of the stories covered — what the stories were about rather than where they were reported from — Spanish-language TV really stood out. On May 11 Univision’s national newscast included stories about the arrest of 400 youths by the government of Cuba, the man who ran over Mexican actors on a street in Mexico City, and the increase in fake versions of drugs like Viagra coming over the Mexican border into the U.S. Even the story of the Washington plane scare took a different approach with its interviews with Hispanic witnesses.

The numbers make the differences between the Spanish-language outlets and their English-language counterparts clear. Roughly 36% of the stories on all the Spanish-language TV newscasts we examined were about international topics.³ That is far above local TV’s 9% and cable’s 29%, though less than the national evening TV news with 48%.⁴

Perhaps because of Telemundo’s heavy focus on murders, crime coverage in the national Spanish-language newscasts was high, 28%, well above the 19% on the network newscasts.⁵

As for the specific topic of foreign relations, Spanish-language newscasts stuck out for the large amount they had at national level, just as they did at the local level. The national newscasts devoted about 19% of their stories to such news, almost twice the 10% the mainstream network evening newscasts carried. The national Spanish-language newscasts looked a bit more like their English-language counterparts in the amount of their government coverage — 16% for Spanish-language, 17% for English-language.⁶

Spanish-Language in Print

The lone Spanish newspaper in the cities in we examined in our Day in the Life study, the tabloid *Rumbo de Houston*, had a different approach from the English-language newspapers.

Crime, for instance, barely made an appearance in the May 12 *Rumbo de Houston*. Indeed the paper was less focused on crime (12% of space) than any other newspaper type we examined.⁷ The only traditional crime-focused story was about an attack on a journalist in Nuevo Laredo, the town near the U.S.-Mexican border where the lawlessness had become national news in the U.S.

Local news, however, was not lost in the issue. On the front page, the paper featured a large story on the mosquitoes infected with the West Nile virus, followed by a piece about the death on the city's light rail system, which the paper called "one of the most dangerous transportation systems in the whole country." There was a story about the regulation of Houston taco stands and one on the "pressures" involved in the mayor's prodding of firefighters on a contract.

National news did not figure prominently in the May 12 *Rumbo*. There wasn't a story with a national focus until page 6, and that was a preview of a local meeting about military base closings. On page 8 there was a piece on a potential new law that would make drivers' licenses more uniform. The war in Iraq didn't make an appearance until page 9 (out of 12 pages total), which had a short item about the number of deaths since the installation of a new Iraqi government. And the small plane that violated D.C. airspace wasn't even mentioned.

We again saw the foreign focus we found on Spanish-language TV. Just after the opening local stories, page three carried a piece about how residents of El Salvador would have to use an extra digit to make calls in the country. Other stories reported on money being shipped from immigrants in the U.S. to friends and family in Mexico, on the Mexican government's opposition to the building of a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border, and various short items about Central and South America (the subjects of eight stories in all).

Rumbo was more like its English-language counterparts in some ways. Roughly 25% of the newshole in the 12-page tabloid was devoted to government, compared with 27% for national newspapers, 24% for suburban papers and 20% for metro newspapers. About 10% of the hole in *Rumbo* was devoted to foreign relations, compared to 11% in the national papers and 8% in the metro papers (it's probably not a surprise that suburban papers did little foreign coverage, 2%). Domestic issues got roughly the same amount of coverage in *Rumbo* as in other metro papers, with both devoting roughly 14% to the topics.⁸

On the whole 47% of the Spanish-language stories we examined had an international focus. That far outstripped all the other types of papers: metro (24%), suburban (8%) and even national (30%).⁹

Spanish-language papers were close to the metro-paper average when it came to journalist opinion — neither had much, only 3% of stories and 2%, respectively.¹⁰

African-American Media

The African-American paper we captured, the weekly *Milwaukee Community Journal*, provided content that was truly community-based in almost every sense of the term. The content was either about African Americans, about Milwaukee, or both. Its content fit with what we've found in previous years in this report. The African-American press,

published in English and generally published weekly, is not designed to serve as a substitute for the mainstream media but as a complement.

The front page of the paper presented a look at the mix inside. One story reported that the Police Athletic League facility in one of the city's poorest neighborhoods was being put up for sale because of the PAL's bankruptcy. Another noted that the national unemployment rate for African-Americans was twice the national average. Another described a lawsuit being filed against the city by individuals claiming their constitutional rights were violated by the Milwaukee police.

The pieces had a definite point of view and were as intent on stirring action as they were on reporting facts. The PAL story gave readers contact information for anyone interested in the bidding process. The lawsuit story didn't include a comment from the police department, but it not only outlined the lawsuit in detail, it also quoted a letter from a Milwaukee alderman requesting an investigation by the U.S. Justice Department.

But the unemployment story may offer the most telling sign of the paper's point of view. The piece presented opinion as fact. It called the unemployment numbers "another in a series of blows that the American middle class has suffered under the Bush administration" and added that the Bush budget "fails to promote security or to honor our veterans." It then said, "Democrats will keep fighting for the values that will strengthen the American middle class."

The paper carried an article about a local church's "Day of Restoration" designed to bring the community together to discuss its problems. A lengthy piece reported recent parties and events in the community attended by a columnist from the paper — everything from a high school recognizing attendance and its honor roll to a lecture by the singer Patti LaBelle. There was also a lengthy piece on marijuana and mental health.

Footnotes

1. PEJ research.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.



Newspapers – Intro

Intro

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism and Rick Edmonds of The Poynter Institute

May 8, 2006 Update

The American Society of Newspaper Editor's annual newsroom census* found that full-time professional employment at daily newspapers fell by 600 during 2005. This roughly equals the number of announced job cuts during the year and is considerably less than the 1,200 to 1,500 reduction we had projected when State of the Media 2006 was published in mid-March.

Why were the losses not as bad? Three factors mentioned in the report probably provide the explanation:

- The job losses were almost completely concentrated at large metros. Smaller papers did much better.
- In any given year, many newspapers hold staffing steady and a few make modest increases, unannounced.
- Some of the cuts announced in 2005 were still being carried out in early 2006 – and thus will impact next year's census rather than this one.

For the newspaper industry, 2005 turned out to be the year of unpleasant surprises. Every indicator, including the number of news staff members that the nation's best metro papers field every day, was on a steep downward path.

Yet the picture heading into 2006 is ambiguous. Newspapers, by our reading of the evidence, are not headed for extinction by the end of the decade as some commentary has implied. But it is far from clear how to characterize what is going on. Is this the beginning of an orderly transition to a new set of business models in which the papers wholeheartedly follow many of their readers online? Or will newspapers inevitably shrink — in their news effort and even physically — leaving a dangerous void?

As 2005 began we said 2004 had disappointed early hopes that it might be a year of robust cyclical recovery. Then 2005 was a lot worse.

*Circulation losses accelerated, down 2.6% daily and 3.1% Sunday year-to-year for the six-month period ending September 30. ¹ A positive interpretation is that the figure reflects the shedding of weak or questionable circulation.

But no one is bothering to dispute that there is also a flight of readers to online sources of news, at the papers' own sites and others. The best case is that circulation losses could stabilize to around 1% annually within a year or two. But the next report, for the six-month period ending March 31, 2006, was expected to be as bad as the last. ²

*Print advertising revenues grew a paltry 1% to 2%. ³ And that was not to be explained away by a recession, as the sharp decline of 2001 had been. Strong growth revenues from online and niche publications pushed total revenues to a more respectable 2% to 4%, ⁴ but the possibility lingered that revenues could go negative sometime in the near future. That would be devastating confirmation that the industry was in decline.

*Investors and analysts didn't like what they saw. After a strong performance in the first part of the decade, newspaper stocks began declining in the spring of 2004. In 2005 shares fell an average of 20%. Tribune Company lost 30%, the New York Times Company 35%. ⁵

*Investment in the newsroom, meanwhile, followed business fundamentals downward. After relative stability in 2004, newspapers announced layoffs and buyouts of between 600 and 700 news people in 2005, principally at large metropolitan papers. Our estimate is that when the final tally is in, come April 2006, the industry will be down 1,250 to 1,500 full-time professionals That echoes almost exactly the losses in circulation. ⁶

One bright spot in news performance was coverage of Hurricane Katrina. Advance's New Orleans Times-Picayune did not miss a beat, even during a week when its reporters had to flee town and all its coverage moved online. Knight Ridder's Sun Herald of Biloxi, Miss., was exemplary as well. The corporations opened the purse strings for coverage, absorbed enormous advertising shortfalls and even rushed top executives and money to the scene to support staff people who had lost their homes.

*The glow of those accomplishments didn't even get the industry through the fall. On November 1, Private Capital Management, which owns 19% of Knight Ridder stock, demanded that the company be put up for sale. Two other large institutional investors supported exploring the possibility. Knight Ridder capitulated and in early 2006 was meeting with half a dozen interested groups of newspaper companies and private equity firms. ⁷

Takeovers have been extremely rare in the industry. To see the nation's second-largest chain by circulation, with 32 newspapers, on the block was a shock for an industry already nervous about profits and stock prices.

Two different unhappy endings were looming. The Morgan Stanley analyst Douglas Arthur suggested that the first was a new owner who would cut much deeper than Knight Ridder had to date and boost profit margins. ⁸ Indeed, Knight Ridder executives were sketching out how that might be done as they met with potential buyers early in 2006. ⁹

Or second, should all the buyer interest not culminate in a premium offer and sale, that would be a blow as well, signaling that newspaper stocks were out of favor with almost everyone.

McClatchy, a company with a strong commitment to editorial quality, was among the potential bidders. As this report was going to press, the deadline for bids passed. McClatchy and one private equity firm were the only verified bidders.

If it were successful (possibly dealing off some of the slower-growing Knight Ridder properties to Media News and/or Gannett), most journalists think that would be a distinctly brighter scenario.

There may be an even more critical issue bubbling below the surface, however. Can newspapers build online news content, audience, advertising and profits enough, and quickly enough, to cover declines in print?

Newspapers' online revenues in 2005 grew by about 30% — more at big companies and big papers, less at the many mid-sized and small ones. ¹⁰

There is vast terrain for newspapers to traverse, though, if they are to get to a workable online-dominated future. Even after years of growth, online now amounts to only 3% to 5% of total ad revenue on average, more at the big, well-established national sites.

How long will it take for online to equal print in ad volume? By our count, it will take another dozen years for the lines to cross. ¹¹ And that is with Google, Yahoo and a host of other potential competitors lingering in the shadows.

Here is another way to look at the challenge. To date the metrics for measuring print and online audiences are wildly out of sync. For print it is daily circulation, or daily readership (which the industry is pushing because it yields a number higher than circulation by a factor of about 2.5). For online the standard measure is unique visitors, but that is counted by the month. ¹²

At least two analysts, Paul Ginocchio of Deutsche Bank Securities and Lauren Rich Fine of Merrill Lynch, have estimated that when print advertising moves to online, newspapers typically take in only 20 to 30 cents for each print dollar lost. on the dollar. ¹³

Donald Graham, the plain-spoken CEO of the Washington Post, addressed the issue in a December 2005 presentation to investors and analysts. WashingtonPost.com, already a big and successful site, will almost certainly continue to increase audience and revenues, he said. "How much can it grow in profits? That might be one of the central questions we face." ¹⁴

Note on updated employment figures dated May 8, 2006: The census, conducted primarily to measure industry progress on diversity goals, has been conducted for more than 25 years. This year 928 of 1,417 American dailies responded, and the response rate is the highest among the biggest circulation papers. The industry total is reached by projecting employment at non-responding papers according to their circulation.

This year the census added an estimate for 11 free dailies, most in large cities. With a smaller universe and several key non-respondents, ASNE is estimating employment of 1,300 in this group. It is also unclear whether the census captures newspaper online editorial employees, particularly at newspapers where online is treated as a separate unit organizationally.

Including the latest numbers, the industry has lost about 2,800 fulltime professional newsroom jobs so far this decade. But an important part of the jobs story is redeployment to online, free, youth-targeted, ethnic and non-newspaper publications, all important growth areas as traditional newspaper growth has stalled.

Footnotes

1. Newspaper Association of America , "NAA Releases ABC FAS-FAX Analysis," November 7, 2005 .
2. Each six-month report is a comparison with the same period a year earlier. So the poor results of the most recent six months are virtually certain to roll into the totals for the first six-month report in 2006.

3. Paul Ginocchio, "Newspaper Publishers: Private Company Outlook," Deutsche Bank Securities, December 1, 2005.
4. Lauren Rich Fine, Publishing Q 4 Preview – USA ,” Merrill Lynch, January 17, 2006.
5. Rick Edmonds, "A Bad Year for Newspaper Stocks – A Worse Year for the Gray Lady," Poynter Online, January 12, 2006. Available online at: http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=94997
6. Our count and estimate are explained in the News Investment section of this chapter.
7. Charles Layton, " Sherman 's March," American Journalism Review, February/March 2006.

On March 13, 2006, McClatchy announced it had acquired Knight Ridder for \$6.5 billion to become the country's second largest newspaper publisher. The McClatchy Company press release, "McClatchy to Acquire Knight Ridder– Becomes Country's Second Largest Newspaper Publisher," March 13, 2006.

8. Douglas Arthur, "Knight Ridder: A Scenario Analysis," Morgan Stanley, November 29, 2005 . Available online at: <http://www.poynterextra.org/KR/Research.pdf>
9. Pete Carey, "Knight Ridder said to urge cuts" Contra Costa Times, January 25, 2006.
10. Paul Ginocchio, "Newspaper Publishers: Private Company Outlook," Deutsche Bank Securities, December 1, 2005.
11. Rick Edmonds, "An Online Rescue for Newspapers?" Poynter Online, January 27, 2005 . Available online at: http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=77603
12. Newspaper Association of America, "Daily and Sunday Newspapers 2005 Readers Per Copy," prepared by NAA Business Analysis and Research Dept., MRI Spring 2005; SRDS Circulation 2005.
13. Ginocchio and Merrill Lynch research to co-author Edmonds
14. Donald Graham presentation to CSFB Media Week Investors Conference, December 6, 2005 . Available online at: http://library.corporate-ir.net/library/62/624/62487/items/176243/CSFB_12.6.05.pdf.

Content Analysis

Content Analysis

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism and Rick Edmonds of The Poynter Institute

How did May 11 look in print?

The challenge and opportunity for newspapers is time. With ink on paper, the news is delivered the following day. The only way newspapers can bring new information is by concentrating on "exclusives" or by taking advantage of the extra time to make more calls, gather more information and weigh more arguments to add new dimensions to their reporting.

So what did consumers get by waiting until the morning of May 12 to learn about May 11 that they could not have found on radio or TV or online earlier — beyond the tactile pleasure some claim from holding the paper in their hands

over morning coffee?

Based on a close examination of this day:

- Newspaper readers on balance learn about the widest range of topics and get the deepest sourcing and the most angles on the news among consumers of all media studied except one.
- That exception, the Internet, in turn, still relies for the heart of its content on print journalism, and if papers were to vanish it is hard to see what might replace them.
- Most of the local news we found in newspapers was absent from local television.
- The local metro dailies remain committed to offering a complete menu of news — national and international as well as local. They are not becoming niche products.
- The degree to which citizens could have gotten news sooner from the online version of the paper varied from one paper to the next, but for the most part, the print version remains the papers' primary outlet.
- One lurking question is whether the breadth and depth offered requires a day's delay or can be realized in more immediate reporting online.

This close look also revealed some differences among the papers. In a local metro daily rather than a big national paper, government was less important and crime much more important, as were issues not tied to government. And if their newspaper was suburban, government and community issues dominated, but crime, foreign affairs and national defense were not much of a concern. Yet despite the predictable distinctions, big national papers like the New York Times and smaller metropolitan papers like the Bend Bulletin in Oregon shared far more with each other than they did with other media, and perhaps more than many people might expect .

In previous years, our content studies of newspapers, conducted over 28 randomly selected days, gave a general picture of print: Readers of newspapers get a more traditional mix of hard and soft news than in other media as well as coverage more focused on powerful institutions. Newspaper stories generally are more deeply and clearly sourced, though they also rely more on anonymous sources.

By the numbers, May 11 held true to that form.

In addition to more and deeper sourcing on major stories, newspaper stories also scored higher on our index that measured how many contextual elements stories explored to make them more relevant and useful to readers. And here print actually scored higher than online.

On May 12, newspapers, again, also tended to rely more on anonymous sourcing than other media, except national Web sites.

Depth of News Coverage Across All Media

Percentage of all Major Stories

	National Newspapers	Metro Newspapers	National Websites	Cable TV
3+ sources	90%	53%	93%	20%
1+ anonymous source	56%	41%	61%	37%
3+ contextual elements	57%	15%	51%	21%

Yet beyond the numbers, what did the coverage of a day in the news feel like in print? What could one learn? What was missing? If newspapers are shrinking, or if the big metro papers are suffering most, what would their erosion cost us?

We examined three national papers, as well as the local papers in three cities: the New York Times, USA Today and the Los Angeles Times at the national level, and the Houston Chronicle, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and the Bend Bulletin in Oregon . We also examined two suburban dailies, the Baytown Sun outside of Houston and the Waukesha Freeman outside of Milwaukee, and discuss them separately below. We analyzed every story that day in the front section, and the front pages of the local and business sections.

Local News in Print versus on TV

Newspapers, even at the local level, simply define news differently from local television or even national network and cable news. In local metro dailies, citizens were far more likely to learn about things like taxes, education, zoning commissions and the activities of government than they would in most other media. In the metro papers in Houston , Milwaukee and Bend , a third of the space was taken up by matters relating to government or domestic issues such as education. On local TV in those cities on the same day, by comparison, only 23% of the space was filled with those topics, and often they commanded only brief anchor reads read from wire stories — some of them from the local newspaper.

In the Houston Chronicle, for instance, readers of the front and local sections would have learned about:

- a major plan to reform two failing local high schools
- machinations in the Texas Senate over taxes
- a new plan in the legislature to revamp college admissions
- the arrival in Texas of a controversial border vigilante group from Arizona
- problems with university graduation rates
- the killing of a Texas House bill to aid the poor
- a drop in the governor's approval rating

Not one of those stories earned a package on any of the city's three main TV stations' morning, evening or late newscasts. The state tax bill and high school reform plan were mentioned in brief tell stories in some newscasts. The others were completely absent.

Topics of News Coverage in Select Media
Percent of all Words or Time

	National Newspapers	Metro Dailies	Local TV	Local Radio
Election	0%	1%	2%	3%
Government	27	19	9	23
Defense/Military	13	2	2	3
Crime	17	26	42	24
Business	16	17	5	10
Domestic Issues	5	13	14	24
Science	3	6	2	1
Foreign Relations	11	8	4	1
Accidents	*	2	8	3
Celebrity	4	2	4	2
Lifestyle	3	3	10	8
Other	0	1	0	0
Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.				

In the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel a reader could learn about a former Nazi prison guard who lives in the area losing his U.S. citizenship, the state lottery losing nearly a quarter-million dollars on a failed Super Bowl promotion, or a local Presbyterian college that argued that unionization and federal labor laws impinged on its religious freedom. Only one of those showed up on local TV — the Nazi prison guard story — and then only as a brief anchor read.

On local TV, instead, hometown news tended to mean mostly crime, accidents, traffic and weather. Crime and accidents alone made up half of all the newshole. In the local newspapers in the same cities, crime and accidents still made up a sizable share, but it was roughly half as much (28%). Local radio's treatment of crime and accidents on this day was more on par with the local papers — 27%.

National and International News in print versus TV

The differences were even greater when it came to national news. The local metro dailies studied were notable in how comprehensive they tried to be. It is clear that those publications imagine themselves as institutions of record from which readers can get as full an account of the events of the world as space permits. As of 2005, they had not ceded to other papers or Web sites the task of the news beyond their town.

Federal Highway Bill Coverage, by Media

	National Newspapers
National Print	Inside A
Local Print	Inside A
Local TV	None
Local Radio	None
Network TV	None
Cable TV	None

All three of the smaller papers, for instance, (as well as the New York Times and the L.A. Times) carried a story on the inside pages of their front sections about a bill in Congress to increase funds for federal highways. That story appeared nowhere on local television. Nor did it appear on national television news, either network or cable.

The other big news out of Congress this day, a bill to crack down on gangs, was a story in the Bend Bulletin and the Milwaukee Journal, but the Houston Chronicle passed. Yet TV viewers were far less likely to see it. The only word of it on TV in the three cities was a brief tell story on WITI in Milwaukee at 10 p.m. and another on KTRK's 6 a.m. news in Houston .

The differences were equally striking when we compared what local residents got in the way of international news. On May 12, the local metro papers contained nearly as much coverage of foreign affairs topics as the three major national papers (8% of all space versus 11% in national papers) and twice as much as local TV.

Certain international stories, in particular, were virtually absent from TV yet were major news in the local papers. Often the stories that newspapers carried and television did not seemed somewhat complicated. Every metro paper studied devoted significant space to the news that North Korea had taken nuclear rods from power plants with the intent to use them in making nuclear weapons. In Houston and Bend , that was a Page 1 story. It never appeared on any of the local TV programs studied , and was mentioned on only one network evening newscast.

North Korean Nuclear Rods, Coverage

Houston Chronicle	Pg.1
Milwaukee Journal	Inside A
Bend Bulletin	Pg.1
National Newspapers	Pg.1/Inside
Local TV	None
National TV	1 anchor tell

The quality of the national and foreign coverage also was not as different as some might guess between the local metro dailies and the national papers. The reason was simple. What appeared in the local papers was usually coverage from the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Los Angeles Times. On major stories getting significant

treatment, those major papers were more often the source of wire copy than the Associated Press. The AP showed up far more as the source for shorter stories and briefs.

For the North Korea story, all of the local papers monitored relied on the New York Times. On the D.C. plane scare of the previous day, the Bend Bulletin used the Washington Post, the Houston Chronicle relied on the Chicago Tribune syndicate and the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel used the New York Times.

Still, if we look at the overall geographic focus of the content in these papers, beyond just the topics, the local metro dailies covered more of the news from a local angle. The stories in these papers were more than twice as likely to focus on the metro or regional area as were the national papers (47% versus 24%). In other words, even if the topics themselves were national or international, these papers were more likely to try to put it in a local context, to bring the story home.

Geographic Focus of Stories, by Media
Percent of all Stories

	National Newspapers	Metro Papers	Suburban Papers	Local TV
Metro	17%	31%	63%	69%
Regional	7	16	10	12
National	43	28	18	9
U.S. Int'l	26	18	7	7
Non-US int'l	4	7	1	2
None	4	*	1	1

National Newspapers versus Network and Cable TV

The differences between TV and print were not limited to local outlets. They were almost as significant when comparing network and cable TV news and the three national newspapers studied.

In the national papers, a third of space (32%) was devoted to government and other domestic issues, (a little less, actually, than the 49% we found in 2003 and 2004 studies). On network morning news, that number was 20%, on cable 18%. Only network evening news was close at 29%.

National Newspapers: Front Page Coverage May 12, 2005		
New York Times	L A Times	USA Today
Iraq Car bombs	Trade Pact on Slippery Slope	Fairness of Taxes Study in Question
North Korea Nuclear Rods	CA farmers adding Tourism to Survivor	Support from City Folks Takes Root on the Farm
Bolton Asserts Independence in Intelligence	Marines in Iraq Vulnerable in Dessert Search	Trend: You Smoke? You're Fired!
D C Plane Violation	North Korean Nuclear Rods	
How Japan Dumps Trash	Arrest of Mayoral Contributor	
Afghan Protests	Macaulay Culkin Testifies	

And stories that highlighted emotion were much more important to TV than they were to print. On network news and even on cable, for instance, the discovery of an unexploded grenade near where President Bush had spoken on a trip to the former Soviet Republic of Georgia was a major story. It led the network morning news, was the second item on the evening news, and was covered prominently on cable throughout the day. Given that it was not known at the time whether the grenade was operational, a dummy or even a training device, it was a minor item in newspapers, a couple of paragraphs, and those mostly appeared the day before.

Newspapers versus Online

If newspapers offer something audiences could not get from television, what about online? How much of what was in the paper the next morning was on Web sites the day before, or even the night before?

The answer varies. The national news Web sites appear to be moving faster than the local. And some local are moving faster than others.

In Milwaukee, for instance the bulk of the stories on the Journal Sentinel's Web site as of 9 p.m. May 11 were the stories from that morning's papers — not what would be in the next day's papers or what had happened during the day.

The paper did have a feature at the top of the page, called DayWatch, in which reporters file brief accounts of stories they are working on for tomorrow's paper. Those filings give a crisp sense of what had happened on some major stories of the day, particularly breaking news. But readers the next morning got a much fuller account of the news.

On May 11, for instance, the top DayWatch item as of 9 p.m. , which had been posted at 4:29 , reported that Gov. Jim Doyle of Wisconsin and leaders of the Republican-controlled legislature were working on a deal for minimum-wage legislation. In the paper the next morning, readers learned that the deal was done and that workers would see the bump in their paychecks starting June 1, with significant details put together by three reporters, working in both Madison and Milwaukee .

But in Houston , the Chronicle posted online nearly full accounts of stories that would appear in the next day's paper as they became available, with time stamps of when they were posted. Online readers get more — though not all — of the newspaper the evening before, and many of the evolving elements even earlier.

Local TV station Web sites in Houston, incidentally, do the same, with rough text accounts of breaking news, plus video and audio, and time stamps of not just when stories were posted but when they were updated.

Are All Stories the Same?

What people learned about some stories differed depending on what paper they read, and in some cases on where that paper got its account. Because the national papers' accounts are carried by so many outlets, their stories have added weight. Consider the case of the story about North Korea 's announcing it had harvested a nuclear power reactor as a

step to making weapons. Readers of the New York Times account were told that this was “a lot of symbolism and taunting” but that U.S. officials “had seen no evidence” to prove the claim and that there were reasons to doubt how serious North Korea was.

But readers of the Los Angeles Times story got a different sense. The development was “a key step toward preparing to harvest plutonium for bombs,” it said. South Korea, which had reacted calmly to other recent provocations, this time had “expressed alarm.” And the chief outside expert quoted in the story (also quoted by the New York Times but emphasizing far less dire points) said the North Koreans probably weren’t blustering. “Everything the North Koreans said they’re doing, it turns out they have in fact done.”

The Times story, datelined Tokyo but clearly reported in at least two capitals, was emphasizing U.S. efforts not to sound intimidated. The Los Angeles Times story, datelined Seoul, South Korea, was not as heavy on official American diplomatic reaction.

Yet more Americans this day probably got the more skeptical New York Times version. Its story ran in Milwaukee and Houston and on Page 1 in Bend, Ore., as well as in the New York Times.

Other stories also had differences as well, though the differences about how to interpret the news seemed larger than differences about questions of fact. On the violence in Iraq, for instance, the New York Times had “at least 79 dead.” The Los Angeles Times and USA Today put the number at “more than 60.” The Houston Chronicle, using a story from the Washington Post, reported “72 killed.” Yet all four accounts agreed on what was going on in Iraq over the last two weeks that offered background for the violence, and the reasons behind the escalation.

Differences among Major Papers

The national papers also did not have the same news agenda. The Los Angeles Times, for instance, was more local, and less tied to the news of the day. It featured three local stories on its Page 1, plus another specific to California. It also carried two trend stories. That left two non-local news stories on its front, both international in nature.

The New York Times, by contrast, was more about breaking news of the day—violence in Iraq, the plane scare in Washington, the North Korean announcement, and the protests in Afghanistan. It carried just one feature, about trash in Japan.

USA Today, meanwhile, carried no breaking news stories on its front page. It led rather with two trend features—about farming and about smoking on the job. And the lead story was an enterprise piece about how the USA Today had discovered that an adviser on a federal study of laser guns was a paid consultant to the manufacturer of the product. None of the three national papers agreed on the top story this day. None of the local papers did, either.

The sense from looking at the media generally this day was that the national newspapers in the country are on close examination more different from each other than are rival national network television news programs.

The Top Four Stories of May 11

Finally, it is hard to generalize about how papers handled what emerged in our study as the top four stories of May 11—the plane scare in Washington, the murder in Zion, Ill., the Michael Jackson trial and violence in Iraq.

The double murder in Illinois, a staple of network morning news, local TV, and cable, for instance, was a minor print story in the national papers, and no story at all in the local ones, except in Houston; the confessed killer had been a prisoner in the Texas system. In a similar vein, the Michael Jackson trial, the third most covered story over all and a staple on cable and network morning TV, was a minor inside story in print save for the Los Angeles Times, where the trial was local.

Treatment of Top Stories on May 11th

	D.C. Plane Scare	Double Murders	Iraq Car Bombs	Jackson Trial
New York Times	A1	A17	A1	A16
LA Times	A5	A6	A4	A1
USA Today	A3	A3	A7	A3
Houston Ch.	A4	A1	A16	A3
Milwaukee Jour.	A3	A (Inside)	A9	A5
Bend Bulletin	A3	None	A5	C7

The other two top stories of the day were more likely to be covered by the newspapers. Those were terrorism in Iraq and the plane scare in Washington , but coverage varied by newspaper. The Iraq story was passed over largely by local TV, cable and morning news. Yet in the larger newspapers studied, it tended to be treated as significant. It led the New York Times, and was an inside story in the other national and metro dailies.

The only story to get a fair amount of coverage across print and broadcast was the day's top story — the plane scare in Washington . It was the lead of the network evening news, and a dominant story on cable. And, as with the coverage of Iraq , it was a front-page story in the New York Times and an inside story in all the others.

Suburban Dailies

As metro papers struggle, smaller suburban papers are suffering far less and in many cases thriving. What do they offer readers?

We monitored two suburban dailies, the Baytown Sun, the largest of the suburban papers around Houston, and the Waukesha Freeman, circulation 15,000, outside Milwaukee .

What we found was a different kind of journalism than readers would expect from either the national papers or the metro dailies.

Here, local news does not compete with national and international on an equal footing. These papers are above all local. And the workings of civic institutions are news even if they are not necessarily controversial.

In the Baytown Sun stories like "Festival to feature plenty of children's activities" and "Public Hearing on annexation today at Council" are Page 1 news. So is "Select educators to be honored with banquet, cash," and " Decker Drive hospital campus to be sold."

If anything, the smaller Waukesha Freeman front page was more about conflict and wrongdoing, but it was no less hyper-local. The questionable hiring of a fire chief's son was Page 1 news, for instance: "Family ties prompts hiring policy questions." So was "New Berlin man dies after tree limb falls on him."

It was in these papers that readers would get things such as the local school briefs, a "crime stoppers" column with mug shots of six people for whom the local police had warrants out for burglaries and such, and news that the local school district would be "Testing this summer for (the) gifted student program," all from this day's Baytown Sun.

It was in the Waukesha paper that one could read about a class art project, a local town pondering changing its laws on BB guns, or the local "I have a Gripe" column, which on May 11 focused on residents complaining about local road repairs.

Little is too local for these papers. The Baytown Sun would give a staff byline and nine paragraphs to "Garage sale, car wash to benefit church choir."

Such papers are unlikely to mount an investigation of corruption in the governor's office, perhaps. Yet the big city daily is equally unlikely to run a staff-written story about a local hospital headlined, "St. Joseph to host health fair."

[Click here to view content data tables.](#)

Audience

Audience

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism and Rick Edmonds of The Poynter Institute

In 2004, the newspaper circulation losses that had been building slowly over 15 years began to accelerate.

In 2005 things got roughly three times worse.

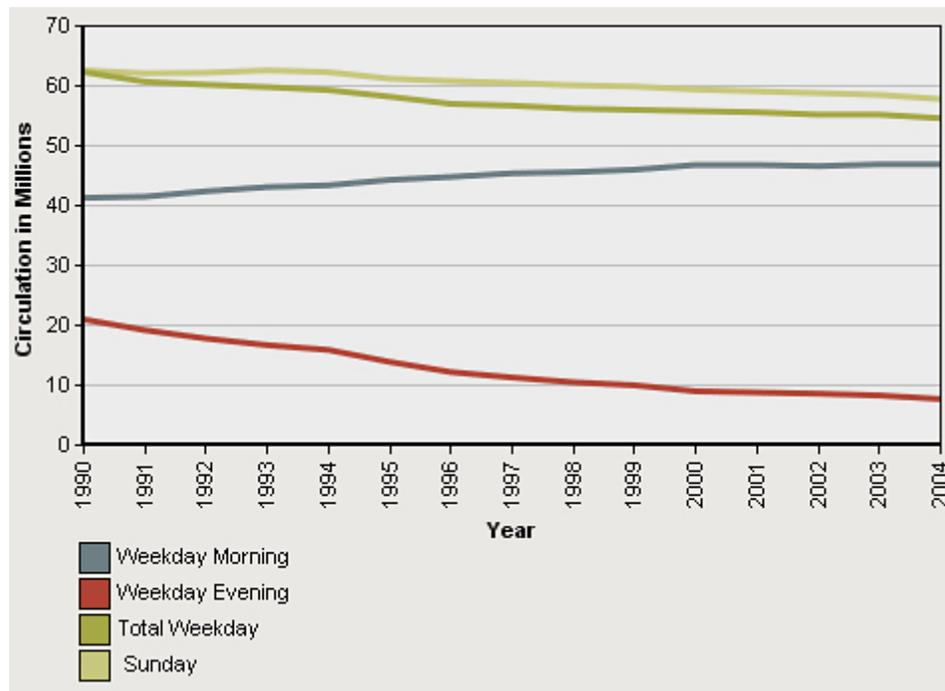
And in 2006, newspaper executives at best hoped only to slow the bleeding. Few were arguing that the numbers would head back up or even stabilize.

Those results for the six months ending September 2005 — industry circulation down 2.6% daily and 3.1% Sunday from the same period in 2004 — were ugly. During that earlier period, in turn, the industry had recorded losses of 0.9% daily and 1.5% Sunday. ¹

Thus in just two years, daily circulation fell about 3.5%, Sunday 4.6%.

U.S. Daily Newspaper Circulation

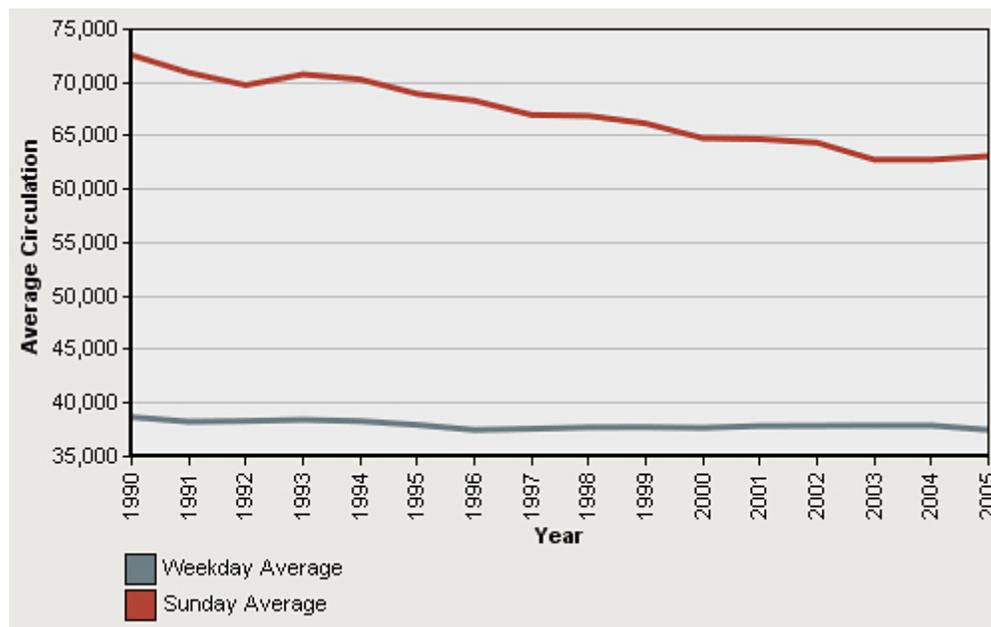
Circulation in millions, weekday and Sunday editions, 1990-2004



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Editor and Publisher Yearbook data

Average Circulation of U.S. Daily Newspapers Weekday and Sunday editions, 1990-2004



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Editor and Publisher Yearbook data

While daily circulation had been on the decline since 1988, and Sunday's since 1993, we've now seen a fairly significant change. Until 2004, daily losses were less than 1% a year, and those were driven in significant measure by the closing of evening newspapers, a problem that seemed to be reaching its limit. Sunday circulation was shrinking by less than 0.5% a year.

Between 2001 and 2003, moreover, the losses in daily circulation slowed, and it looked as if circulation could be stabilizing. ²

But in 2004 the declines resumed, and in 2005 they gained a new momentum. Perhaps even more worrisome, the key factor driving the circulation losses now was the movement of readers, especially young ones, to online alternatives — a pressure that is likely only to increase.

Who Is Losing and Who Isn't

The losses of the last two years have been most severe at big-city metros, in places like Washington, Los Angeles, Boston, San Francisco and Philadelphia. The top 50 papers in circulation lost 4.1% daily from September to September, according Deutsche Bank Securities, a percentage point worse than the industry average. ³

A few of those posting big declines in 2005, notably the Atlanta Journal Constitution and the Boston Globe, had actually recorded gains a year earlier. More often, however, losses were substantial in both years. Over the two years,

the Los Angeles Times saw declines of 9.3% daily and 9.8% Sunday. The Washington Post was down 7% daily and 5.8% Sunday. 4

There are three notable exceptions to the trend. The three truly national papers have all held close to even in circulation over the last two years, with slightly different factors at work for each. The Wall Street Journal is able to count 300,000 of its 700,000-plus online subscribers as paid subscribers to the newspaper. (The others already are paid subscribers to the print paper). This ruling let WSJ go from 1.8 to 2.1 circ just like that.

The New York Times put the brakes on price increases (a new round had been announced for February 2006) but was still expanding daily delivery availability into new national markets. That covered continuing losses in the New York metro area; circulation in the five boroughs of New York City fell about 19%, from 321,000 to 261,000, since 2001. 5 USA Today, with its intricate distribution system in hotels and airports, was able to stay even in 2005. That was accomplished despite a single-copy price increase from 50 to 75 cents, which would typically lead to losses.

The second bright spot is in growth markets like Phoenix or Sarasota and in smaller markets where competition is more muted. The National Newspaper Association, representing 7,000 smaller dailies and weeklies, reported that the number of papers moving from weekly to twice-a-week publication had grown sixfold since 2001, and that a large majority of the publications either had a Web site or planned to start one in 2006. 6

A final category of papers with better than average circulation performance included the McClatchy papers, led by the Star Tribune of Minneapolis and the News and Observer of Raleigh, and several Advance papers including the Oregonian, of Portland, and Star-Ledger, of Newark. All are known for commitment to editorial quality and steady investment in their newsrooms. Their success is something, in turn, to watch. If it continues, it may hint that the more frugal and short-term approach of others was, as some critics charged, a self-fulfilling prophecy toward newspaper decline .

Scandal Redux

To add to the sense of alarm in some quarters, the losses of 2005 came on the heels of circulation scandals at several major publications in 2004. In particular, disclosures of padding of the numbers at Newsday, the Dallas Morning News, the Chicago Sun Times and Hoy's New York edition resulted in corrective measures. In Dallas, for instance, the Morning News took distribution inside the company to tighten controls. Part of what caused the scandal had been a system of aggressive quotas for independent distributors, and something of a don't-ask-don't-tell attitude toward how they met those goals. 7

It is worth noting that the 250,000 or so phantom readers who were purged from the totals at the four papers still do not show up in the Audit Bureau of Circulations reports and NAA estimates of industry circulation losses. That is because the papers remain on probation, and audited figures for year-to-year comparisons are not available. If those losses were added to the circulation losses of the last two years, they would add another half-percent. 8

All of which raises the question, sometimes overstated in death-of-the-industry rhetoric, whether continued and quick decline in paid circulation is now inevitable.

Industry Response

Industry associations and newspaper company executives in 2005 offered a host of rejoinders. A main strategy was to shift the discussion to newspaper readership and total audience reach.

Readership (which takes into account the pass-along effect of newspapers and is discussed at length below) is of course a much bigger number than circulation, roughly 126 million on the average weekday, according to the Newspaper Association of America, compared with 51 million daily circulation. Readership is declining, too, but more slowly than paid circulation.⁹

Another response among some executives is that the situation is not as bad as it looks. Some of the biggest losers in the September 2005 reporting period, like the San Francisco Chronicle (17%) and Orlando Sentinel (11%) said they had deliberately made big cuts in lower-quality promotional circulation sponsored by hotels and other businesses.¹⁰

Executives also argue that even after the losses of the last two years, newspapers remain the most effective way to reach a broad audience and deliver results for advertisers. That will be put to the test as newspapers try to raise advertising rates in 2006 even in the face of the negative circulation trends.

Are these industry responses just PR, or is there substance to the calmer response that the circulation losses do not, in the end, amount to the beginning of a rapid descent?

Most of those we have consulted who follow the situation closely believe that for now, the industry is not on the precipice of a sudden and dramatic loss of audience. Gary Meo, an executive at Scarborough Research, provided a candid summary for Editor & Publisher. "The perception that newspapers are losing readers in droves isn't true," he said. "They're losing them in a trickle."¹¹

To assess whether "trickle" is too sanguine a word, after nearly two decades of circulation losses, a closer look at what is causing the losses would help.

The Accelerating Losses

Part, but only part, of the story is a shift to online news reading, often at a newspaper's own site. How much that is a factor probably varies, but it may be significant. The NAA estimated that online newspaper readership was up 15.8% in September 2005 compared with September 2004, reaching 47.3 million unique visitors (a total probably helped by interest in Hurricanes Katrina and Rita).¹² Surveys about online consumption also suggest that those who visit newspaper Web sites spend less time with the print product. And privately, executives report that some major newspapers' Web sites now attract as many users in a day as they sell papers. To the extent that newspapers are losing readers to their own Web sites, the issue becomes one of whether they can begin to change the economic model of the Web.

But there is a wealth of other online news options, especially for readers mainly interested in national and international news. They can turn to the sites of national newspapers, to those of CNN, MSNBC, BBC, listen to NPR or even watch Comedy Central's Jon Stewart. That may explain why bigger papers that try to offer a comprehensive national report rather than just local news are now suffering more. More broadly, newspapers compete for time with a range of Internet activity — shopping, searching, blogging, iPod, games and e-mail.

On stories like Katrina, cable TV kicks into high gear as a competitor. Niche competition like youth weeklies, or the free commuter dailies that are aggressively hawked at transit stations, whittle further on circulation.

Another factor, well understood in the industry but not much discussed, is a steady switch from seven-day subscribers to occasional buyers. The most frequent pattern is that readers, except sports fans on Mondays, skip the first busy days of the working week, then pick back up for the weekend cycle. ¹³ The stronger online sites become, the more appealing that consumption pattern is; for the semi-regular reader, a check to see that he or she is not missing big local news on a given day is free and only a click away. (At the instigation of its advertiser members, the ABC is phasing in required reporting by each day of the week — allowing advertisers to see just how many fewer papers go out on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.)

Finally, there are some technical reasons for the recent declines. The ABC tightened its rule on how many holidays and bad-weather days a year could be exempted from accounting. The rules on “other” circulation have also tightened, and a number of companies are voluntarily trimming such circulation.

The federal do-not-call rule that was phased in during 2004 and 2005 has also had an impact on phone solicitation, which had been the No. 1 source of new subscription sales. Consequently, it has become more expensive to recruit new subscribers. Many newspapers have opted to take the hit rather than invest in different approaches to attract readers.

Financial Implications

Typically, circulation losses translate into declines in circulation revenue. The Deutsche Bank analyst Paul Ginocchio estimated that public companies lost close to 3.2% on average in circulation revenue in 2005 and forecast another flat or declining year in 2006. ¹⁴

But circulation revenues are only about 20% of total income for newspapers. The bigger question is whether two years of losses in circulation will translate into a loss of pricing power and revenues in advertising. The worst case, Ginocchio said, was that ad revenues could actually fall in 2006. ¹⁵ Newspaper executives insisted not. A number of companies announced aggressive rate increases — between 3% and 6% — for 2006 at the December 2005 Media Week conferences with investors and analysts. (See Economics).

Readership

There has been debate in the industry for years about which is the better measure of audience reach, paid circulation or readership. The NAA, and some companies like Tribune, have long touted readership as the superior measure of how many eyeballs look at ads in each day’s paper.

The let’s-talk-about-readership argument reached a crescendo in 2005. Jay Smith, president of Cox newspapers and chairman of the NAA, distributed an op-ed, timed to coincide with the release of the September 2005 circulation results. He wrote that circulation is a “flawed measure of the true vibrant audience newspapers attract,” comparable to counting the number of TV sets rather than TV viewers. ¹⁶

Including households where several adults read the paper, “pass along,” and copies read in public places by several people, a typical newspaper increases its circulation total by a factor of 2.3 daily and 2.6 Sunday, according to the NAA. ¹⁷ By that measure 77% of adults read a paper at least once a week (a positive spin on declining seven-day-a-week readership). ¹⁸

But as Editor & Publisher reported, there is a question whether advertisers find the argument persuasive. They have been paying very high rates for years in part because of the commitment implied by a reader's decision to pay for the newspaper but also with knowledge that the real reach is greater . So advertisers may see the emphasis on readership numbers mostly as a sign of eroding commitment. 19

Total Audience

A variant on the readership story is that some executives want to include online audience, and sometimes unduplicated additional audience reached by youth papers and other niche products, to a new measure called Total Audience Reach. It is clear that by this standard, the typical newspaper company's audience isn't shrinking — it's growing.

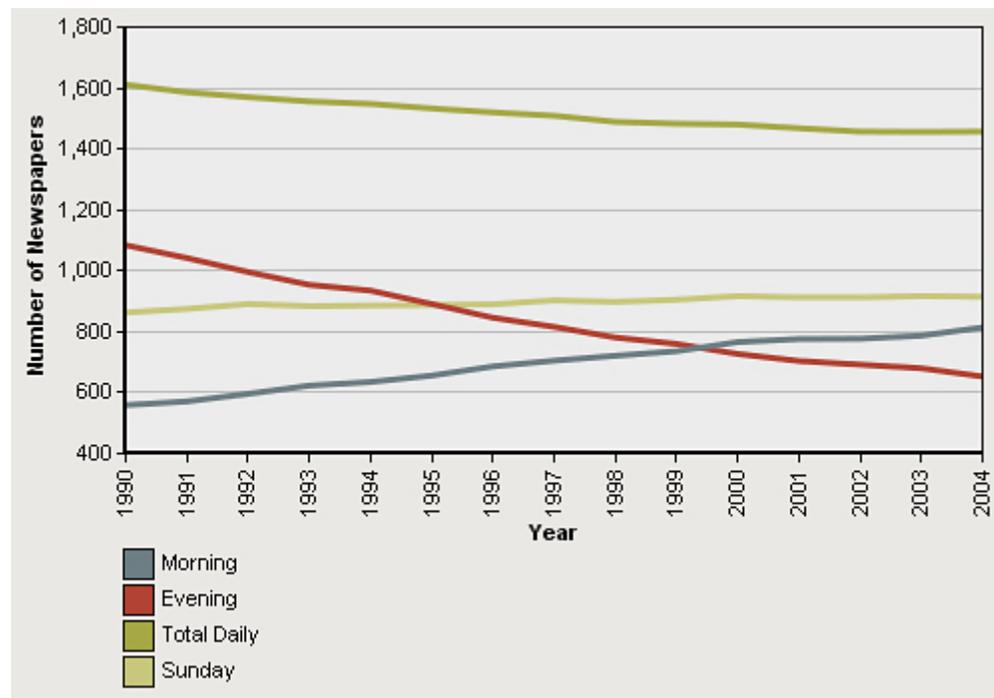
There is a new push for a measurement of this dimension. For example, at the Arizona Republic , which is considered a model of strong online presence and strong niche publications, internal research suggests that its website had added its reach beyond its print circulation by 7% online and specialty publication by 13%

It is not yet clear, however, whether such sets of facts will prove persuasive to advertisers. The standard online audience measure is unique visitors per month. Many of those visits are quite brief, not comparable to the half-hour a reader may give to that day's newspaper. That is partly why online display advertising, while growing quickly, commands much lower rates.

Number of Papers

Beyond the basic circulation numbers, there are other indicators to watch. Although it appears circulation has been declining since the early 1990s, the total number of daily newspapers has remained generally stable over the last several years and even increased by one in 2004. The total number of daily papers in the U.S. now stands at 1,457, according to Editor & Publisher. 20

Number of U.S. Daily Newspapers
 Weekday and Sunday editions, yearly increments, 1990-2004



Design Your Own Chart
 Source: Editor and Publisher Yearbook data

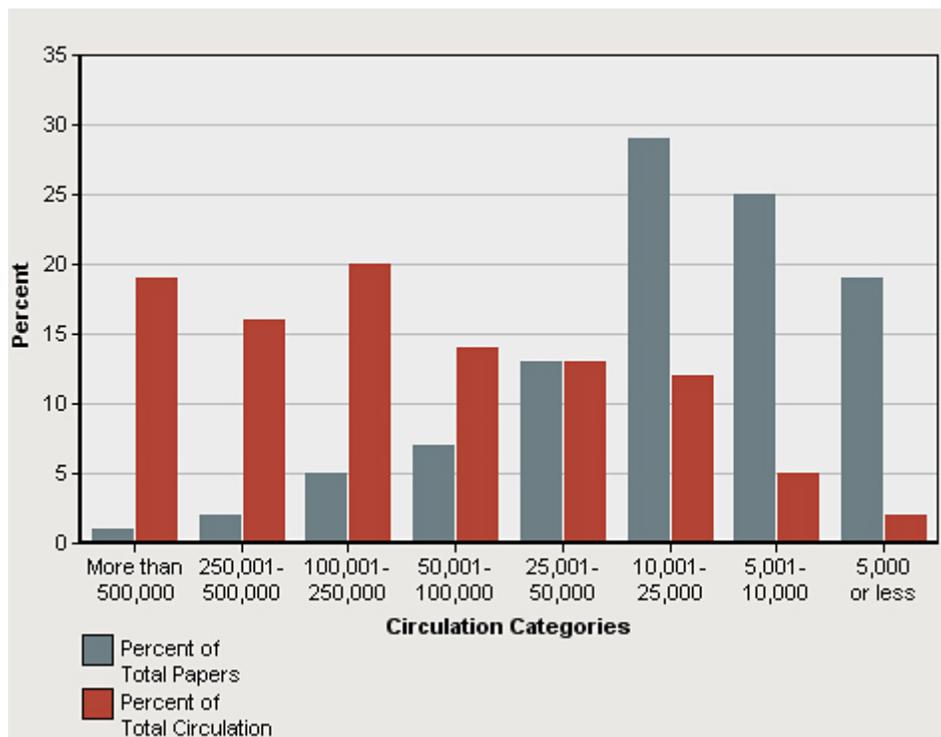
The trend toward fewer evening editions apparently continued to accelerate. According to the last year for which data are available, 2004, the number of morning papers increased by 27, to 814, while the number of evening papers fell by the same number, dropping the p.m. total to 653. The number of evening papers has dropped for nearly three decades as evening network news, market consolidation, and now presumably the Internet, have siphoned off their audience. And circulation remains heavily oriented toward the morning, with over six times more papers sold then than in the evening, also up from last year. 21

Finally, the total number of Sunday papers fell by two, to 915.

Distribution

Circulation remains highly skewed toward the country's largest papers. While just 11 papers (less than 1%) have a daily circulation of more than 500,000, they account for 19% of total circulation. And while just 7% of all papers have a daily circulation of 100,000 or more, those papers make up 69% of all circulation. 22

Daily Newspapers by Circulation Category, 2004



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Editor and Publisher Yearbook 2005

* Due to rounding, percents do not add up to 100.

Who is Reading: A Question of Demographics

To get a deeper understanding of overall readership patterns, it may be helpful to look at the similarities and differences among various demographic groups.

These three observations stood out in 2005:

First, readership continued to decline among almost every demographic group.

- Second, newspaper readership among Hispanics remains well behind that of other racial and ethnic groups; and

Third, readership among Americans with graduate degrees continued to decline in 2005 after significant increases earlier in the decade.

Age Groups and Readership

We have reported in earlier editions of the annual report that while older Americans are more likely than younger ones to be newspaper readers, people of every age group are reading them less often each year. That trend apparently continued in 2005.

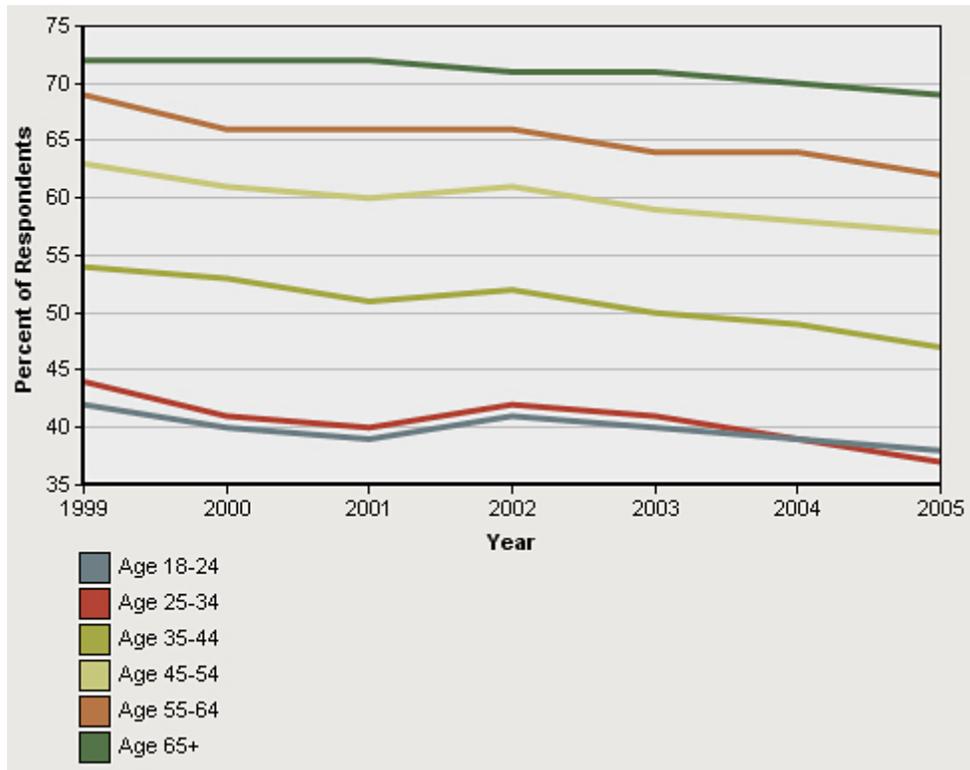
In 2005, daily and Sunday readership generally fell a percentage point or two for each age bracket. Indeed, there has been a consistent and slow decline on that order since the late 1990s. ²³

According to Scarborough Research, a consumer marketing company, 38% of people aged 18 to 24 read a newspaper during the week and 46% did so on Sundays. Fewer people in the next age bracket, 25 to 34, were weekday readers (37%) and they were only slightly more likely to be Sunday readers (47%). ²⁴

We also looked at older readers. Americans 34 and older generally came of age at a time before the emergence of the Web as a mass information tool. Moreover, they are usually more likely to have higher incomes to spend on a newspaper subscription. But they too seemed to have abandoned the newspaper — at least in its print form — and at the same rate as younger Americans, in 2005. ²⁵

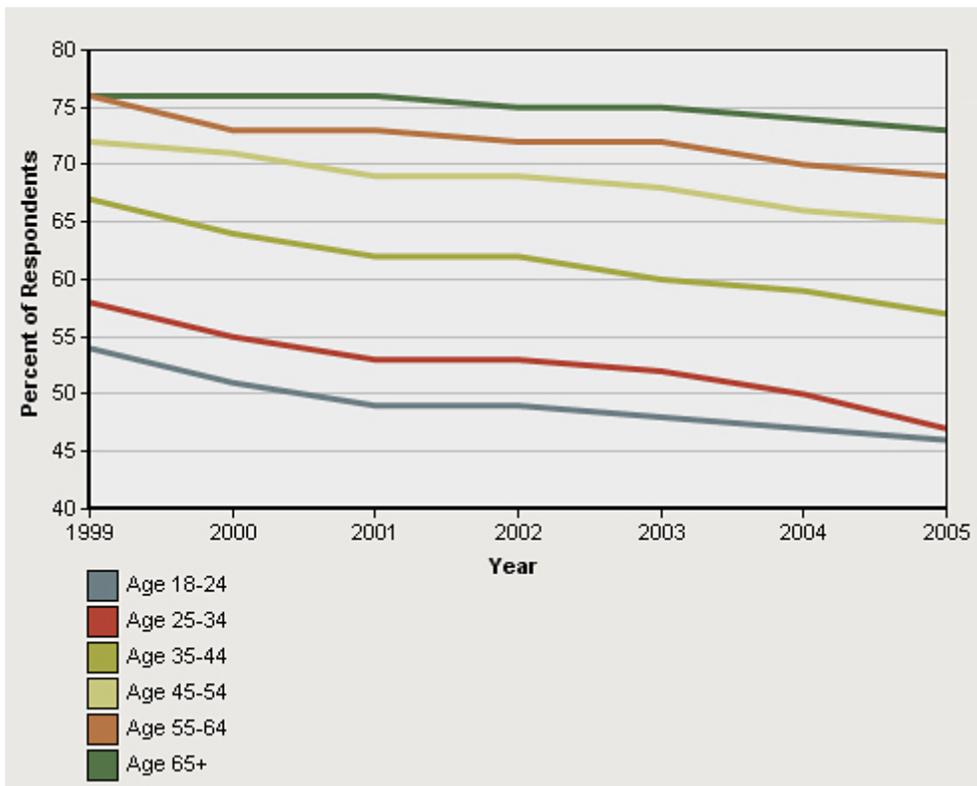
None of this is to minimize the generational dilemma newspapers face. As some of their loyal older readers are literally dying off, the youngest adults look first to the Internet for news. In a study for the Carnegie and Knight foundations, Merrill Brown found that baby boomers read newspapers a third less than their parents and Gen Xers another third less than the boomers. ²⁶

Daily Newspaper Readership by Age Group
Percentage reading newspapers in an average week, 1999-2005



Design Your Own Chart
Source: Scarborough Research survey data

Sunday Newspaper Readership by Age Group
 Percentage reading newspapers on an average Sunday, 1999-2005



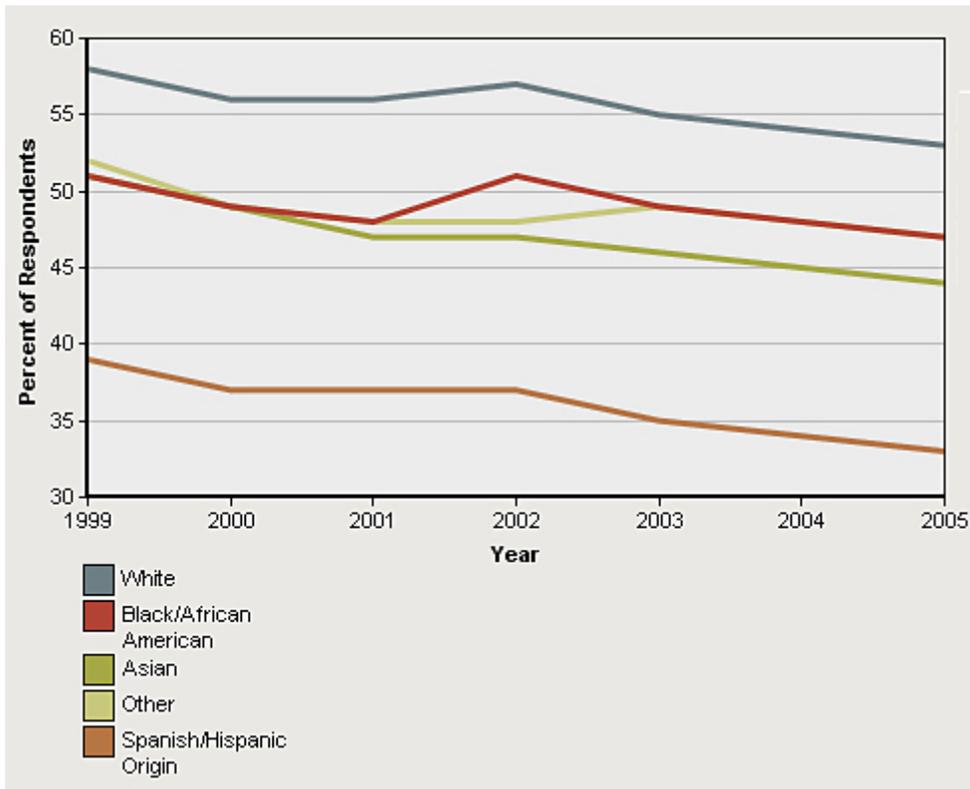
Design Your Own Chart
 Source: Scarborough Research survey data

Race, Ethnicity and Readership

A recent study shows that around a quarter of the adult U.S. population now consumes some form of ethnic media. Hispanic newspaper readership, however, remains lower than that of non-Hispanic whites, though it should be noted that newspaper readership in 2005 declined among all racial and ethnic groups.

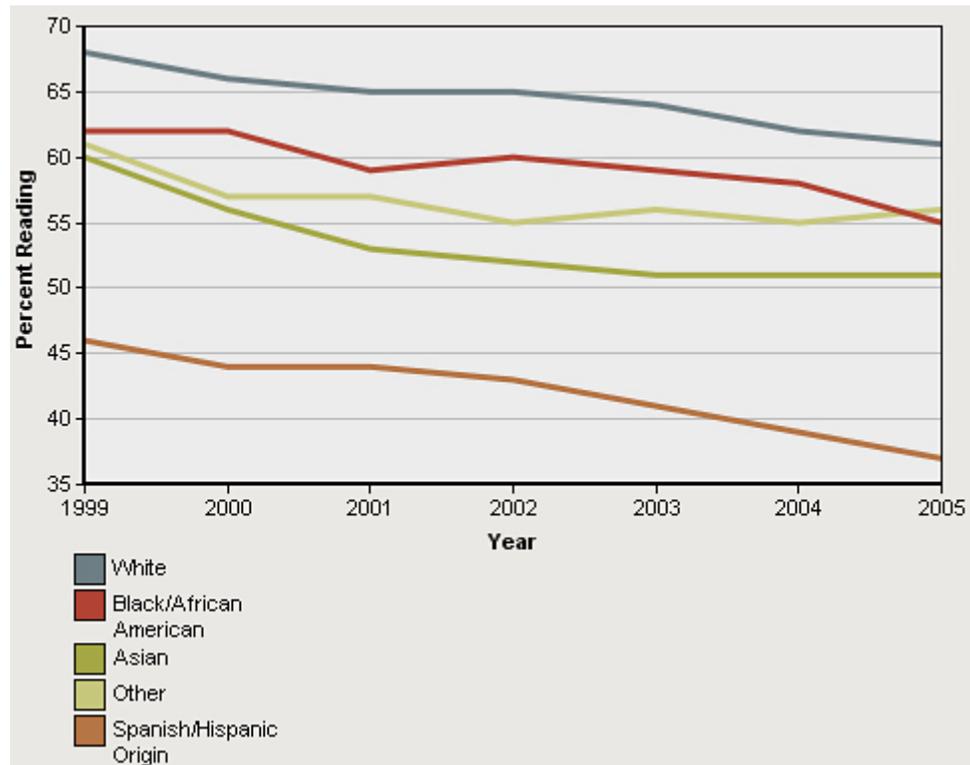
Newspaper readership both during the week and on Sundays was slightly higher among whites than other racial and ethnic groups. According to Scarborough Research, readership was particularly low for Hispanics. Around a third of Hispanic adults said they read newspapers.

Daily Newspaper Readership by Race/Ethnicity
Percentage reading newspapers in an average week, 1999-2005



Design Your Own Chart
Source: Scarborough Research survey data

Sunday Newspaper Readership by Race/Ethnicity Percentage reading newspapers on an average Sunday, 1999-2005



Design Your Own Chart

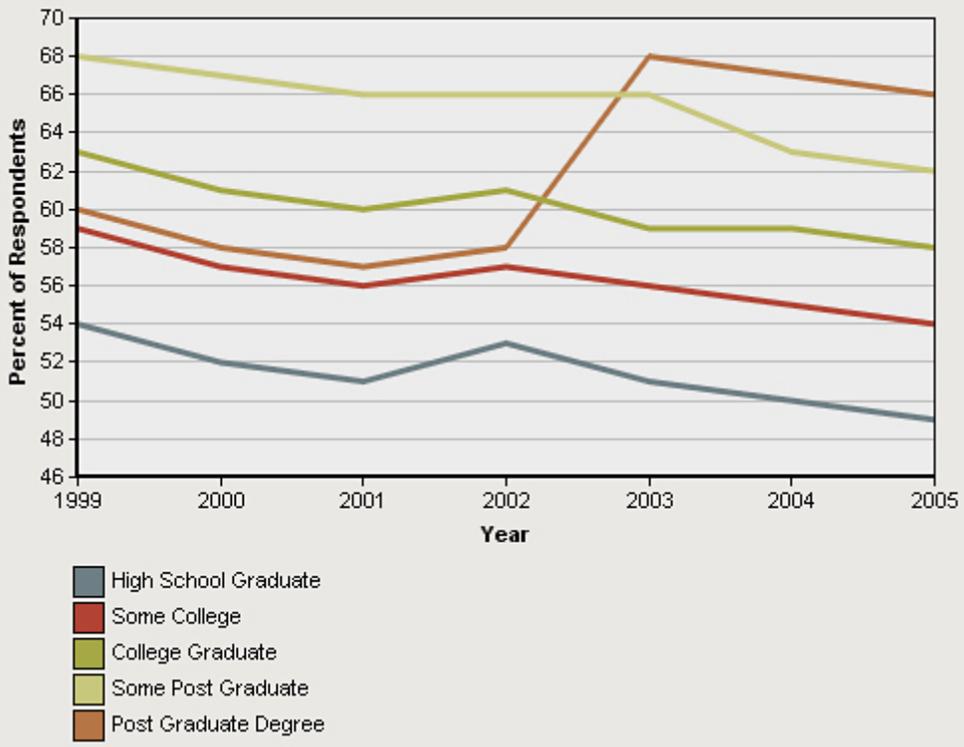
Source: Scarborough Research survey data

Education and Readership

Historically, newspaper readership increases with education. While that remained true in 2005, every education level experienced declines, even the most educated.

For several years, Americans with postgraduate degrees had reversed the overall trend of declining readership. Indeed, readership in that group rose nearly 10 points between 2002 and 2003. But it started falling in 2004.

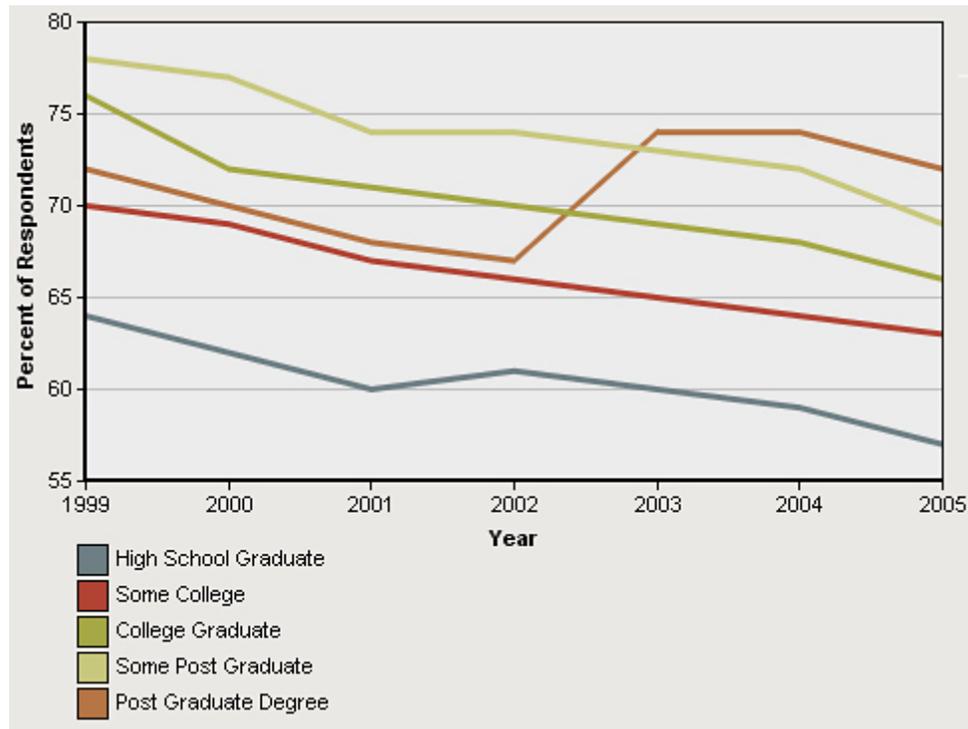
Daily Newspaper Readership by Education
Percentage reading newspapers in an average week, 1999-2005



Design Your Own Chart
Source: Scarborough Research survey data

Sunday Newspaper Readership by Education

Percentage reading newspapers on an average Sunday, 1999-2005



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Scarborough Research survey data

Conclusion

In the end, the circulation erosion of print newspapers appears likely to continue. An optimistic read is that it may slow to the more typical annual level of 1% or less as papers finish working through their adjustment to the Do Not Call rule, tightened ABC guidelines and volunteer shedding of that excess third-party circulation advertisers did not really want. Conversely, there is every reason to think that the losses to online sources of news or other Web shopping and leisure activities may accelerate.

What is clear is that 2005 solidified the reality of a multi-platform strategy; it is no longer rhetoric. Newspapers' operations are not just about the print edition with "other" an afterthought. Increasingly companies are putting cash and focus into developing online and niche audience as the traditional one wanes.

Footnotes

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Economics

Economics

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism and Rick Edmonds of The Poynter Institute

A year ago we reported that newspapers were still highly profitable, managing reasonable ad-revenue and earnings growth but beginning to feel pressure on fundamentals of their business model.

That was then. In 2005:

*As circulation numbers declined sharply, print ad revenue grew only minimally — in many places just 1% to 2%. Newspaper companies turned to growth in their smaller online ventures and niche publications to achieve a total ad-revenue gain of less than 3%.¹

*Stock prices were hammered, typically falling 20%. As the year ended, some careful analysts said the industry might still be over-valued given what they saw as sour business fundamentals. If so, stock price could be expected to decline further in 2006. Profit margins were off only a little .

*Companies were scrambling to beef up their multi-platform presence. That included a number of acquisitions of non-news businesses, some with odd-sounding names like About.com, Shopzilla, Topix.net and Point Roll. Online newspaper sites, which were of little business consequence and lightly staffed at the start of the decade, are now the focus of editorial and business expansion.

Certainly one of the most noted events of the year occurred in November, when several dissatisfied institutional investors in Knight Ridder demanded that the company be sold. Knight Ridder capitulated, agreeing “to explore strategic options.” By the year’s end, it had a number of preliminary bids.

Heading into 2006, the possible sale of Knight Ridder appeared to be shaping up as a lose-lose proposition for the industry. Analysts expected that a buyer (a private equity firm or other media company) would most likely make even deeper cuts than those Knight Ridder imposed in 2005. Knight Ridder reportedly explained how that might be done in talks with potential buyers. Conversely, if no buyer or group of buyers is willing to pay a premium for the stock, that outcome will be read as a ringing no-confidence vote in the industry. ²

Profits and Revenues

Profit margins in the newspaper industry were one of the better economic figures of the year, at least on the surface. They were off just a bit from 2004. The 13 publicly traded companies fell an average of 1.5 percentage points to just below 20%. The average pre-tax operating margin for these companies was still higher than the high-flying pharmaceutical or oil industries. That figure, though, clearly did not impress investors, who now put little weight on profitability alone. Big profit margins on flat revenues, for example, suggest a stale industry to Wall Street. ³

The investment community is now more focused on revenue growth (what they call the “top line”) and on the broader question of whether newspaper companies are nimble enough to invent new business models and find a way to grow in the Internet era.

When it came to revenues, Wall Street was far from excited. Total revenues from newspaper operations at those companies rose only an average of 2.2%. ⁴

Newspapers generate their revenue from two different sources, circulation and advertising. In 2005 the ratio was roughly 20% circulation to 80% advertising. Two decades ago the ratio was closer to 30%-70%, but as circulation has declined the percentage it contributes to total newspaper revenue has also gone down.

Circulation revenue was down at most companies, 3.5% on average for public companies. At Tribune, the country’s second largest newspaper chain in revenues, for instance, it was off 7%. ⁵

As for advertising, the newspaper business has historically followed the country’s general economic cycles, falling slightly in advance of a recession and rallying in the early stages of an upturn. During the last serious downturn in 2001 investors stayed calm as both revenues and earnings fell. In 2004 and 2005, however, there was nothing especially ailing in the economy, yet advertising growth went soft anyway. The Newspaper Advertising Association estimated overall ad revenue growth in the first three quarters of 2005 to be 3%. ⁶ The fourth quarter was even worse.

An obvious culprit is the movement of ad business to online. It is not so much that advertisers are quitting newspapers in droves; they are not. Surveys consistently show, though, that companies are leaving their print and broadcast ad budgets flat and increasing online display and straight-to-the-consumer online marketing. Examples abound, from the auto companies’ design-your-own-car sites to Expedia and other book-it-yourself travel services (like Hertz, which went six months without advertising in the New York Times).

Newspapers are far from outright losers in the online game. Ads on their sites continued for a fourth straight year to grow at rates of 30% to 60%, faster than online advertising as a whole. But the online rates are much lower than print rates. What’s more, Google and Yahoo grew even faster, with the great majority of their revenues from advertising, and they have become the stock market’s darlings.

Advertiser Influence

Another factor in the decline of ad revenue was downturns in some industries that purchase newspaper ads. Automobile sales and auto advertising had an off year in 2005 (they did well only with the summer “employee-price” promotion). According to the January 17, 2006,

report from Deutsche Bank, auto classified was down 5% over all and down as much as the “low teens” for some publicly traded companies. 7

A rally in auto advertising had been one of the hopes of the newspaper industry for a better 2006. But that hope dimmed, and newspapers posted especially bad results in December 2005, the month Ford announced its plans to restructure and lay off 30,000 workers.

Completion of the Federated-May department store merger also hurt retail advertising in a number of large cities — two significant advertisers collapsed into one, and they shifted strategy to emphasize Internet. At Philadelphia Newspapers, for instance, publisher Joe Natoli said the merger would eliminate the Strawbridge’s nameplate, one of the papers’ largest advertisers. 8

The movie business was down for a second consecutive year, especially affecting the New York Times and Los Angeles Times. And the Wal-Mart phenomenon keeps on rolling. The retail juggernaut rarely runs newspaper advertising, and other big-box retailers like Home Depot and Circuit City have shifted from display advertising to inserts.

Telecommunications advertising also contracts as a result of mergers like that of Sprint and Nextel. Telecommunications newspaper advertising declined 14% in the third quarter. 9

Real estate advertising was the one category that appeared especially strong in 2005. And even if the boom in housing prices had crested, as many believed, that might or might not be a negative in 2006. Longer time for sales could translate to extended advertising schedules in some markets. Still, as the Newspaper Association of America has noted, Web alternatives are gradually making newspaper listings less central to selling existing homes.

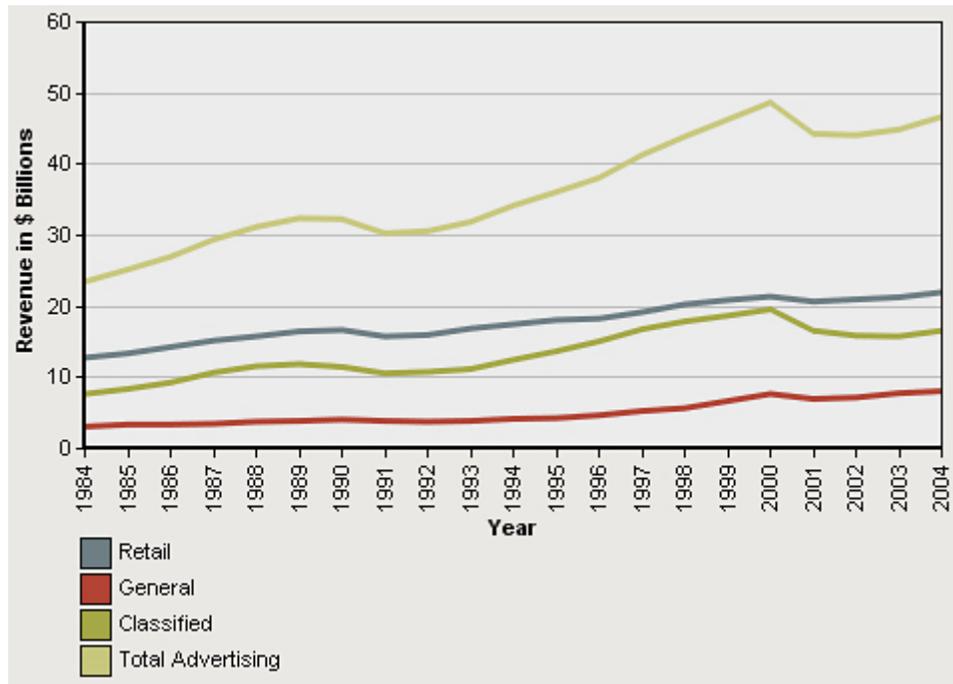
Over all, both the volume of classified advertising and what newspapers can charge for it came under pressure in 2005. Craigslist, whose online classified listings are free except for job-recruitment ads in some big cities, represents killer competition in categories like general merchandise. In San Francisco, home base of Craigslist, the service is estimated to have cost the San Francisco Chronicle \$50 million in lost classified revenue in 2004. 10 A number of newspapers now offer free listings to private parties trying to sell small-ticket items, but broadly the industry is stuck trying to make the case that while their classified are more costly, they deliver greater value.

If the Craigslist headache isn’t enough, Google in November 2005 launched a new product in beta (trial) version, called Google Base. It allows users to post all kinds of content, including free classified advertising. It is too early to estimate its competitive impact, but that could prove enormous.

Employment advertising is another microcosm of the competitive dilemma in what traditionally has been the single highest-margin segment of the high-margin classifieds. Recruitment advertising was up for the year, but some of the huge losses of 2001 have never been recouped.

Online sites like Monster.com, which was set up for both job suppliers and job seekers, have taken a big bite out of newspapers’ share. The newspaper’ own electronic service, CareerBuilder, a joint venture of Gannett, Tribune and Knight-Ridder, has grown quickly in five years and is now the industry leader in volume (whether it is truly profitable is still murky). The fact remains, though, that Monster, which did not exist a decade ago, was recording 200 million job searches a month and approaching \$1 billion in annual revenues worldwide in 2005. 11 Yahoo/Hot Jobs, third in the field, is a formidable competitor, too.

Daily Newspaper Advertising Revenue 1984-2004



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Newspaper Association of America Business Analysis and Research Department

Industry Response

Trying to get a fix on the size of the classified problem, the NAA commissioned a study by the McKinsey consulting firm in spring of 2005. The trade association got more than it bargained for. The study estimated that competitive pressure alone had cost the industry \$2 billion in revenue between 1996 and 2004. Knight Ridder's CEO, Tony Ridder, chairman of the image-conscious NAA at the time, dismissed McKinsey's work as "a very shallow and superficial effort." 12

The episode seemed to capture the general sense of jitters. The industry wanted to know what the trouble was, but the leadership seemed put off when the findings were too negative .

It is probably fairest to say that the industry has hardly been complacent, but that the advertising problems really are enormous. The litany of trouble spots is so long that newspapers have been fairly adaptive just to keep advertising revenue headed up at all. Partly that has meant finding new categories over the last decade like pharmaceuticals or, more recently, branded online services, to replace fading lines of business.

Newspaper companies have also been aggressive with rate increases. Yet it is problematic how long that can be kept up if circulation losses continue and the alternative "readership" and "total audience" stories fail to impress the advertising community.

Heading into 2006, the problems on the revenue side of newspapers, in other words, are real and are not going away.

Costs

There was also bad news on the cost side of the ledger in 2005. Newsprint prices, so soft in 2003 and early 2004 that they may have masked deteriorating fundamentals, were up another 5% to 10% in 2005. More of the same is expected in 2006. ¹³ Watch for a continuing wave of reductions in paper weight, newshole and page width to cushion the cost impact. The Wall Street Journal, for instance, plans to shrink the size of its broadsheet from 60 inches to 48 in 2007. ¹⁴

Like most American businesses, newspapers also feel continuing cost pressure on health and pension benefits. In addition, public-company results will look a little worse in 2006 because of new accounting regulations requiring that stock options be expensed. Finally, staff cuts and buyouts save money over time, but will turn up as special expenses in 2005 and the first part of 2006.

Pricing Power

One of the most critical business questions at this juncture is whether newspapers are losing their power to raise ad rates as circulation losses accelerate. In many ways the biggest strength of the industry in the expansionary 1970s and 1980s was its ability to raise advertising rates 5% or 10% a year, even without growing circulation, and with little market resistance. Competition first began to emerge in the 1990s from diverse quarters like alternative weeklies and publications like the Auto Traders, a group of free specialty publications that consisted of nothing but listings of cars for sale. Ad rates still rose, but by a little less.

Then Internet competitors — some of them very well capitalized like Google and Yahoo — came along and changed the landscape unmistakably by matching ad placements to topical searches.

Even amid the new competition, though, newspapers have had an advantage over other media. Their advertising rates have never been tightly tied to circulation numbers (unlike magazines, where publishers guarantee a rate base and refund advertisers money if they fail to meet it). Historically, many advertisers simply have wanted to be in the newspaper, diminished reach or not. It has continued to deliver the single largest audience (in most places all local television stations combined draw more people, but no single one does.) That is the short explanation of why big circulation losses have not translated directly into lower sales, profit margins, and earnings.

The circulation losses of 2005, though, may finally be great enough to curtail the papers' bargaining power. If they lose their leverage in negotiating packages with advertisers, that might cause advertising revenues to begin to fall rather than merely flatten. ¹⁵ As soon as that happened for a year or two, it would signal the erosion of newspapers' hold on local-market advertising and cement the industry's going-nowhere image on Wall Street .

The issue is central enough that several companies broke with the tradition of confidentiality surrounding advertising rates and got specific about price increases in December 2005 Media Week presentations to investors. The New York Times said it planned a 5% increase at the mother paper and an average of 3% at its New England and regional groups. USA Today planned a 6% increase, Tribune between 3% and 6%. ¹⁶

Those companies offering revenue forecasts were guarded. Gannett, for instance, reported 3.4% total newspaper revenue growth in 2005. It forecast "low to mid-single-digit growth" in 2006. With the online contribution at Gannett up nearly 50% for 2005, traditional print advertising is weak.

In short, 2006 shapes up as a testing year.

New Business Models: Online, Youth and Niche

With traditional revenue streams slumping, newspapers are clearly in need of new business models. Executives know it, and a consensus strategy has emerged for what's next. The industry wants to develop online, to build niche publications and some direct shopping, and several bigger companies intend to invest cash flow in fast-growing non-news businesses.

So the industry is not standing still, expecting some big rebound in its daily print editions to carry them. But questions linger. Will online revenue continue to grow enough to make up for declines on the print side as the sites mature? Is big strategic innovation really in the DNA of companies built around traditional departments like production or advertising to sustain the print franchise? Will companies swing too far in the new focus and neglect the news core of the venture?

Online Sites

Online has become a favorite child. As discussed in more detail in the News Investment section of this chapter, 2005 marked a sharp break with a general pattern of doing little more than posting print content online. There were investments both in upgrading the timeliness of reports and in bells and whistles like video, audio, citizen journalism and blogs. Some local sites are more advanced than others, but the practice of simply rehashing the morning paper, so-called "shovelware," is increasingly out of favor.

The Web sites of national newspapers merit some special mention. At the New York Times and USA Today, print and online news staffs began to be consolidated, a process expected to extend through 2006 and beyond. The Washington Post's staffs remained separate, but a 24-hour news desk was added, linking the two. The Wall Street Journal's site, which requires a paid subscription, has 764,000 users, and the New York Times took a step in that direction by putting columnists and some other content behind a wall called "Times Select." By the year's end, "Times Select" had 336,000 subscribers, about 45% paid, at \$50 a year; the rest were subscribers to the print edition who had registered to get the service free. ¹⁷

Those developments have not gone unnoticed. Over all, online advertising revenues at the public companies grew 30% to 60% again in 2005. ¹⁸

The emphasis on the Web, at long last, makes obvious sense. As the data on audience make clear, the future of news in written form is increasingly online. And advertisers have proved willing to move there. The problem is whether and how quickly that can be made profitable — through advertising or subscriptions — at a level comparable to print.

Assuming that ad rates for online and print ads stay roughly where they are, by our calculations, if online operations sustain 33% growth a year it will still be 2017 or 2018 before they have bulked up to the size of the slower-growing newspaper divisions. (That assumes newspaper ad revenues grow at an annual rate of 3% during the period. If newspaper ad revenues begin to decline, the tipping point will come sooner, but the whole operation will be smaller). ¹⁹

Online Revenue vs. Newspaper Revenue

Revenue in millions

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Online	3	4	5.3	7.1	9.5	12.7	16.9	22.5	30	40	53.3	71	94.6	126.1	168.1
Print	97	100.9	104.9	109.1	113.5	118	122.7	127.6	132.7	138	143.5	149.2	155.2	161.4	167.9

Source: Rick Edmonds, "An Online Rescue for Newspapers?", January 27, 2005, Poynter Institute

Projected revenue growth through 2018 is based on 2004 growth numbers of 4% for newspapers and 33.3% for online.

Sustaining growth, though, is not a slam dunk. The biggest and best-developed sites, like WashingtonPost.com and USA Today.com, grow more in dollars, but at a lower rate than the industry overall. With maturity come new issues like “inventory” — the available space for displaying ads.

There is also the challenge of reaping revenues online that come anywhere near those in print. Currently, online advertising revenue typically amounts to roughly 5% of total advertising revenue. Though the units do not allow for a strict apples-to-apples comparison, analysts estimate that when an advertiser switches part of a schedule from print to online, the Web ad generates only 20 to 33 cents or so for each dollar lost in print revenue.

Paul Ginocchio of Deutsche Bank Securities paints an even bleaker assessment: A newspaper print reader is worth an average of \$360 a year (circulation revenue included); an online reader is worth closer to \$20 to \$25 because of lower rates and shorter visits.²⁰

The upside is that Web distribution involves vast savings. As readers move from print to online reading, there are small savings now and bigger ones later from not having to print and deliver as many paper copies. If the companies have modeled the cost and profit side, that half of the game plan is not openly discussed. Yet even if distribution accounts for half of the cost of print, the lost revenue of a reader switching to online overwhelms, for now, what might be saved in distribution.

This was how the Washington Post’s Donald Graham summed up the online questions in that presentation to analysts and investors in December: “Will WashingtonPost.com grow in traffic? You bet. Will it grow in revenue? Chances are. How much can it grow in profits? That might be one of the central questions we face.”²¹

Niche Publications

A second leg of the consensus strategy is heavy attention to youth, niche and ethnic publications. The strategy is hardly new, but after three or four years the publications continue to flourish. They have economic appeal because they are comparatively inexpensive to produce, and a good share of the ads are sold by the newspapers’ existing ad staffs.

Ethnic publications remain a hot category, but newspapers have met a strong push back from established grass-roots competitors. Tribune’s Hoy, for instance, once considered the leading edge among Spanish-language dailies, turned out to be a house of cards built on padded circulation in New York. Tribune quietly shifted from paid to free distribution of Hoy’s Chicago edition. In Los Angeles, where Tribune was up against the longstanding family-owned La Opinion, it made a similar switch.

The Spanish-language publications seem to succeed where the largest concentrations of Hispanics live — San Antonio, Dallas or Miami — but in other cities are harder to sustain. The San Jose Mercury News, for example, closed its Spanish newspapers and sold its Vietnamese paper because they were not making enough profit.²²

Youth publications — dailies in the biggest cities, weeklies elsewhere — also continue to proliferate, as do other kinds of niche publications. Gannett, for instance, now has more than 800 niche and other weekly publications, and says most have become quickly profitable.²³

Many niche publications, with their focus on home design, health, travel and fashion, lopsidedly cater to the interests of the well-to-do. Some might view that as a distraction from the newspaper’s role of covering the whole community; others argue that it helps pay the bills, same as run-of-the-paper advertising has done traditionally.

There is no dispute that online and niche together have been a financial godsend. Print edition revenue growth, alone, was typically just 1% in 2005. But a multi-platform growth total was at least a bit brighter at a little more than 2%. Even the St. Petersburg Times, often held up

as a model of modest profit margins and investments in the news core, expected 45% of its ad revenue growth in 2005 to come from online and a new youth-targeted weekly. 24

Acquisitions

The bigger companies added a third leg to their growth strategies in 2005 with a wave of acquisitions. A couple — “Marketwatch” for Dow Jones and Slate for the Washington Post — mostly bulked up online news and commentary. More typically, the new family of ventures are Internet-based and information-driven but not news, with names few journalists would recognize — About.Com, Shopzilla and Topix.net . (See sidebar for discussion of each.)

Broadly they move the newspaper companies into a new type of business. The services typically offer shoppers product information, comparative prices and a capability to order directly. Clark Gilbert, a Harvard Business School professor and longtime student of innovation and lack of innovation by newspapers, explained the strategy in a Wall Street Journal column in November: First, it moves the companies into a new and explosively growing market space, reaching shoppers who may or may not care for news. Second, it adds some in-house expertise in online innovation. 25

Two of the first newspaper companies to pair a growth business with profitable but slow-growth newspaper and local TV holdings have had considerable success. The Washington Post’s Kaplan education division now generates more revenue than the newspaper, though not as much profit. E.W. Scripps has had huge success with the Food Network and Home and Garden Television. It has three other channels under development, and some on Wall Street now view Scripps as a cable content company that also owns some newspapers and television stations.

It is still early, though, to fully judge the synergies and innovative spark the acquisitions are supposed to provide.

If all breaks well, the businesses will be fast-growing moneymakers. In the December 2005 meetings, companies were already wrapping revenue into their online divisions, the better to bolster a growth story.

Profits, Stock Performance, and Deploying Cash

Newspaper executives may be excited by the new business acquisitions, but Wall Street in 2005 remained unconvinced that they were enough. Or at least the industry had not yet made a persuasive case.

Hence its yearlong tumble, with most stocks down at least 15% and some 30% or more. And that was in a year when the S & P index was up 5%.

Those companies with a track record of re-deploying cash into big growth plays — like Scripps and the Washington Post — are relative favorites. (See chart for company-by-company performance). Nor have investors responded enthusiastically to cost-control initiatives like those at Tribune, the New York Times Company, and Knight Ridder. The market appeared to be looking for more in 2005 than frugality. Apparently it wanted vision, and some persuasive reason to believe the companies knew the strategy would work.

Newspaper Company Stock Values 2004 vs. 2005

Company	12/31/04	12/31/05	Percent Change	Two-Year Peak	Decline form Peak
Gannett	\$82/share	\$61/share	-25%	90(4/04)	-33%
Tribune	42	30	-30%	53 (2/04)	-43%
Knight Ridder	67	63	-6%	80 (5/04)	-21%
New York Times	40	26	-35%	49 (2/04)	-47%
Dow Jones	43	35	-17%	52 (2/04)	-25%
E.W. Scripps	48	48	even	54 (5/04)	-11%
McClatchy	72	59	-18%	75 (4/05)	-21%
Washington Post	983	765	-22%	983 (1/05)	-22%
Lee	46	37	-20%	50 (6/04)	-26%
Journal	18	14	-22%	20 (3/04)	-30%
Journal Register	19	15	-20%	22 (3/04)	-32%
Media General	65	51	-22%	72 (2/04)	-30%
Belo	26	21	-19%	30 (4/04)	-30%

Sources: Yahoo finance, Merrill Lynch research. Stock values are rounded to whole dollars and percentage change calculated on that basis.

The publicly traded companies began 2005 with market capitalization (shares times stock price) of roughly \$85 billion. They ended the year at roughly \$15 billion less. What can help? Stabilizing circulation or an uptick in ad revenues would. Transformation — full integration of the multiple platforms and new businesses — would be even better. Realistically, though, that will play out over a period of years, not just in 2006.

The companies do have financial moves available to appease shareholders in the meantime. A number have been buying back large quantities of their own stock, a device that improves earnings per share by reducing the number of shares traded.

Douglas Arthur of Morgan Stanley and other analysts have suggested that the companies could pay much higher dividends, returning a bigger chunk of cash flow to investors in that way. Dividends went out of fashion in the go-go 90s, but have been coming back lately. That could make newspapers attractive to income-oriented investors like the coming wave of baby-boomer retirees. While several newspaper companies have increased their small dividends modestly, none have yet plunged in that direction. 26

Conclusion

Some companies come close to executing the difficult trick of striking a consistent balance among shareholder-friendly financial response to changing times, core competency and growth strategy. Others are perceived as flailing — cost-cutting Tribune and Knight Ridder are the obvious examples. That is how, after four years in which newspaper stocks outperformed the market, we came to a pass in 2005 where one of those companies lost more than a third of its value in 18 months and the other was being floated as an acquisition target.

Newspapers will continue a transition to new business models and try to stabilize basics of readership and advertising in 2006. Battered, the industry still has the advantages of generating lots of cash and holding leading local-market franchises both in print and online. The situation amounts, as one senior executive put it, to a race against time. Can newspapers keep pace with changing media consumption patterns and some formidable competitors? Or will disinvestment and cost-cutting undermine their credibility with Wall Street and the public even as they move now to innovate?

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Ownership

Ownership

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism and Rick Edmonds of The Poynter Institute

For 10 months, 2005 was shaping up as another slow year for change in the landscape of who owned America's newspapers. All that was reversed in the first week of November when Private Capital Management, owner of 19% of Knight Ridder shares, demanded that the company be put up for sale. Two other large institutional shareholders supported exploring the possibility of a sale, and thus the company was thrust into play as an acquisition target.

Knight Ridder capitulated, at least to an extent. It hired Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley as advisers and agreed to accept bids. In January 2006, the company met with prospective bidders including McClatchy, MediaNews and a half-dozen private capital groups. Ultimately only McClatchy and one private equity group were confirmed bidders in mid-March as this report went to press.

What price Knight Ridder can fetch will be read as a barometer of investor opinion of the entire industry. At the end of the year its shares were up 20% and trading in the mid-\$60s on the basis of the takeover possibility. A likely final price in the mid \$80s would be a modest premium compared to transactions of the last 15 years. Knight Ridder also indicated that if the bids came in too low, it might choose not to sell. ¹

Even without a final chapter, putting Knight Ridder in play was a huge event for the industry. It amounted to an exclamation point on a dismal 18 months, in which newspaper stocks fell so sharply that the properties were in the bargain/clearance bin. It raised the possibility that purely financial players would take over a once-proud company, cut

and slash much more deeply than current management and have little regard for journalism and public service. Or something else might happen.

Even people who disliked Knight Ridder management were unsure how to feel. “Overnight, Tony Ridder seemed to go from Darth Vader to Anthony Skywalker,” an editor at the San Jose Mercury News told the Project in a private conversation.

Knight Ridder was especially vulnerable to a takeover because it lacks the structure of dual classes of voting stock, which ensures family control over public companies like the New York Times, Washington Post and others. Gannett has no family control, but is protected by its size and tradition of strong financial results. Tribune, while broadly traded, doesn’t have institutional owners with the clout of Private Capital Management. Its three largest institutional holders control barely 10% of the shares. About 25% of the total is owned by the McCormick Tribune Foundation and the Chandler family. The foundation’s board is essentially top company management, and the Chandler family would have influence on any sale or restructuring plan. ²

By contrast, at Knight Ridder, Private Capital Management, and the longtime institutional shareholders Harris Associates and Southeastern Asset Management, control about 37% of the shares. Knight Ridder management was thus in no position to shrug off the pressure to explore a sale. ³

The bill of particulars PCM held against Knight Ridder management was somewhat murky. In a letter that doubled as a Securities and Exchange Commission filing, Bruce Sherman, CEO of Private Capital, wrote that the company had “unexceptional operating margins.” He also said it had not adequately addressed the migration of traditional newspaper advertising to other media and lacked a national newspaper that could capture online national advertising.

Sherman said he was particularly disappointed that after Knight Ridder’s board met with him in July and took action, including raising the dividend, buying back 5 million shares of stock, making staff reductions and disposing of the Detroit Free Press and the Tallahassee Democrat, the share price fell rather than increased. ⁴

Whether or not that is the heart of the matter, this much is clear: After more than a decade at the head of the company, Tony Ridder and his team appear to have lost favor in Wall Street circles. It is significant that Harris and Southeastern, patient investors through that entire period, now also see a sale as a potential exit strategy.

Their bet is that some set of financial and/or industry players will see potential in paying a premium for the stock, then restructuring the company or running it differently. All it takes is one buyer.

On the other hand, Knight Ridder stock, even at its Nov. 1 low, did no worse in 2005 than Gannett, Tribune or the New York Times. If stock price is the measure of corporate competence, the argument that Knight Ridder is poorly managed is not so airtight.

Beyond the Knight Ridder Sale

Earlier in the year, the biggest transaction of note was a three-way swap involving Knight Ridder, Gannett and Media News. Knight Ridder sold the Detroit Free Press to Gannett. Gannett transferred its Detroit News to MediaNews, owned by Dean Singleton, and restructured a joint operating agreement (JOA) between the two papers so that the Free Press gets 95% of the profits. Knight Ridder also sold the Tallahassee Democrat to Gannett, receiving three papers in the Pacific Northwest and cash in return. ⁵

It was a sad end to the downward trajectory of Knight Ridder's Detroit efforts. When the company entered into the JOA with Gannett in 1989, it looked like a license to print money on both sides. But the papers were hit with a protracted strike, and neither circulation nor advertising fully bounced back. The Free Press emerged as the circulation leader and was holding its own editorially. Along with other Knight Ridder papers, however, it went into a shrinking mode in both circulation and news investment.

In other 2005 transactions, Lee Enterprises completed its \$1.5-billion acquisition of Pulitzer in January 2005 and vaulted to being the fourth largest public company in total circulation. Later in the year the Lawrence Eagle-Tribune, a well-regarded family-owned paper near Boston, was sold to Community Newspaper Holdings Inc. (CNHI) of Alabama.⁶

Market conditions did change during the year, but in offsetting ways. The 2005 climate was better for mergers and acquisitions generally than the first years of the decade. The reasons included abundant capital, still-moderate interest rates and the reduced share prices for newspaper stocks. There was buzz that financial groups with lots of money looking for deals might emerge, and they did turn up in the first round of Knight Ridder bidding.

But with all newspaper stocks down substantially, it was a disadvantageous time for companies like Gannett or Tribune to go on a shopping spree with cash, their own stock or added debt. Tribune, especially, had ample problems of its own. It also suffers from the perception that it paid too much and has delivered too little in its big 1999 acquisition of Times Mirror. Those papers — including the flagship Los Angeles Times — have not been strong financial performers.

Furthermore, the newspaper companies were using available cash and borrowing to acquire assorted Internet businesses, not other daily newspapers.⁷ (The Internet acquisitions are discussed separately in the Economics section of this chapter)

Could others get caught up in a Knight Ridder scenario? That seems unlikely. Though it is not always apparent, most independent newspapers, private chains, and even public companies are under family control (see accompanying chart). They are for sale only if the family chooses to put them in play, and there is no evident momentum for that. But speculation continues. Copley (private, its flagship the San Diego Times-Union) and Media General (public with family control) are seen as prospects because of generation shifts in top leadership.

Dow Jones has underperformed the rest of newspaper stocks because of sustained weakness of technology and financial advertising in the Wall Street Journal. Sale rumors resurfaced in August, and some critics increasingly argued that the company was poorly managed.⁸ The controlling Bancroft family offered a different solution than selling in January 2006 when the Dow Jones board replaced CEO Peter Kann with his No. 2, Rich Zannino. Karen Elliott House, the Wall Street Journal's publisher and an aspirant for the top job, resigned.⁹ Investors responded positively to the changes. Dow Jones stock rose nearly 10% in the next several days.¹⁰

Finally, Freedom Newspapers (private, biggest holding the Orange County Register) teamed with an investment consortium in late 2003 to buy out dissident Hoiles family members. The disgruntled losers in that auction (Gannett and Media News) speculated that the company could be back on the block as soon as 2006 or 2007.

It remains theoretically possible that one or several of the public companies could put together a leveraged buyout and go private. But in practice that would mean trading a set of demanding owners for a set of demanding banking partners.

It is also possible, especially as stock prices get hammered down, that wealthy individuals may want to buy a paper as a trophy property like a sports franchise. The entertainment magnate David Geffen said in September that he wanted to acquire the Los Angeles Times. ¹¹ He got a meeting with top management at Tribune and a polite reply that the newspaper was not for sale. The billionaire Philip Anschutz extended his free-distribution Examiner papers to Washington and Baltimore. There is no indication yet how they are doing, though he has the deep pockets to carry years of start-up losses. The company is private, and releases little financial information.

Update on FCC Ownership Rules

There was considerable anticipation in 2005 that the Federal Communications Commission would relax the so-called “cross-ownership” rule that bars companies from owning newspapers and television stations in the same market, but it did not. A ruling from the five-member agency was expected sometime in early 2006, after President Bush appointed the lawyer Robert McDowell to fill the seat left vacant by Kathleen Abernathy, whose term had expired.

Lauren Rich Fine, a media analyst for Merrill Lynch, told the Chicago Sun-Times in January 2006 that the unpredictability surrounding the future of cross-ownership rules “has cast a shadow over merger and acquisition activity.” In March 2005, for example, the Tribune Company was ordered to sell WTXN in Connecticut because it was in the same market as the company’s Hartford Courant. After an appeal, however, the FCC gave Tribune a two-year waiver. ¹² (For a more detailed discussion of potential FCC actions in 2006, see the ownership chapter in the Local Television report.)

Private newspaper companies rarely figure in a big way in discussions of industry economics because they are not required to report financial results and do so only sporadically. A number of big companies occupy the private side, though. Among them:

*Advance Publications, 26 newspapers including the Oregonian, the Star Ledger, in Newark, and the Plain Dealer, in Cleveland. It ranks fourth in circulation among all companies.

*MediaNews, controlled by Dean Singleton. It has 46 papers, with the Denver Post the flagship, and ranks eighth in daily circulation.

*Hearst, 12 newspapers including the San Francisco Chronicle, the Houston Chronicle and the San Antonio Express News. It ranks seventh in daily circulation, a bit ahead of McClatchy.

*Cox, 17 newspapers including the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, the Austin American-Statesman and the Palm Beach Post. It ranks 11th in circulation, just behind E.W. Scripps. ¹³

Those companies use their independence in different ways. Advance, especially, and Cox to an extent, invest in news quality. MediaNews is mostly about financial performance and acquisition. Historically, it has bid on properties no one else wants, and CEO Singleton has compared himself to a surgeon who saves some patients and loses others. ¹⁴ Hearst has a mixed bag of holdings, including one hot market, San Antonio; one of the very few big-city papers, the San Francisco Chronicle, that are actually losing money, as well as the smaller paper (the Post-Intelligencer) in Seattle’s contentious Joint Operating Agreement whose other paper is the Times.

Advance faced one of the thorniest operating problems in 2006 — how to manage the New Orleans Times-Picayune as the city recovered slowly from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. The company was unequivocal in saying it intended

to keep operating the paper, but didn't say what downsizing or other adjustments may be necessary.

Ownership Trends

As was the case in the first two editions of the annual report, around 20 newspaper companies continue to dominate both in the number of papers they own and in their share of total daily and Sunday circulation.

There were two changes worth reporting for 2005, however. First, the share of Sunday circulation belonging to the top companies declined two percentage points, from 75% to 73%.¹⁵

Second, daily circulation became even more concentrated among the 10 companies with the highest total circulation. According to the most recent data, those chains now accounted for 54% of total daily circulation, an increase of three percentage points over the previous year. Meanwhile, they accounted for an even greater share (58%) of Sunday circulation, although that number increased only one percentage point over the previous year.¹⁶

Footnotes

1. The Knight Ridder auction was widely covered. A good summary was Charles Layton's "Sherman's March," *American Journalism Review*, February/March 2006. Douglas Arthur, Morgan Stanley's newspaper analyst, explained the case for acquisition in a November 29, 2005, report, "Knight Ridder: A Scenario Analysis," <http://www.poynterextra.org/KR/Research.pdf>

On March 13, 2006, McClatchy announced it had acquired Knight Ridder for \$6.5 billion to become the country's second largest newspaper publisher. The McClatchy Company press release, "McClatchy to Acquire Knight Ridder—Becomes Country's Second Largest Newspaper Publisher," March 13, 2006.

2. Lauren Rich Fine, "Tribune Co. — Is There a Way to Surface Value: A Scenario Analysis," analyst's report for Merrill Lynch, November 8, 2005.

3. Yahoo! Finance breakdown of major holders. Available online at: <http://finance.yahoo.com/q/mh?s=KRI>.

4. Letter from Bruce S. Sherman, CEO of Private Capital Management, L.P. Letter dated November 1, 2005. Available online at: <http://sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/205520/000089722605000213/kri2.txt>

5. Joe Strupp, "Knight Ridder, Gannett, MediaNews Strike Blockbuster Deal," Editor & Publisher, August 3, 2005.

6. "2005 Newspaper M & A Values Up 72%, Says Report," News Inc. January 9, 2006.

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19. " Cincinnati newspaper agreement will not be renewed after 2007," Cincinnati Post, January 16, 2004.
20. "12 Cities Still Have JOA's," Seattle Post-Intelligencer, April 29, 2003.
21. Bill Richards, "JOA fight may have different twist in next stage," Seattle Times, August 21, 2005.

News Investment

News Investment

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism and Rick Edmonds of The Poynter Institute

May 8, 2006 Update

The American Society of Newspaper Editor's annual newsroom census* found that full-time professional employment at daily newspapers fell by 600 during 2005. This roughly equals the number of announced job cuts during the year and is considerably less than the 1,200 to 1,500 reduction we had projected when State of the Media 2006 was published in mid-March.

Why were the losses not as bad? Three factors mentioned in the report probably provide the explanation:

- The job losses were almost completely concentrated at large metros. Smaller papers did much better.
- In any given year, many newspapers hold staffing steady and a few make modest increases, unannounced.
- Some of the cuts announced in 2005 were still being carried out in early 2006 – and thus will impact next year's census rather than this one.

With circulation declining and advertising flat, 2005 brought cuts in newsroom staffing nearly as alarming as those during the newspaper recession of 2001.

Large cuts, especially at highly regarded big regional newspapers, took place all through the year. Many made headlines — 100 jobs at the Philadelphia Inquirer and Daily News, 50 at the San Jose Mercury News and 45 at the New York Times.

How severe were the cuts, and what do they portend? Were they cyclical responses to a flat advertising year and a temporary response to newspapers cleaning house of some shaky circulation? Or do they signal a turning point in which newsrooms are likely to shrink from here on as the industry begins an accelerated decline?

Those are the questions that people inside and outside the industry seemed to be asking as 2006 began.

The Numbers

A firm total for 2005 was expected by April 2006. But with between 600 and 700 newsroom job cuts announced, mostly at large papers, our estimate is that the industry's total loss will be roughly twice that, somewhere between 1,250 and 1,500. As noted, that is roughly the same percentages as the year-to-year circulation losses through September 2005 — 2.5% to 3.1%.

While the job losses are large, it is probably overly dramatic to suggest the industry is somehow now crippled. Newspapers remain far and away the largest news organizations in their communities.

The week in September when 300 of those cuts were announced, one highly respected retired publisher commented, "Well, I don't think the sky is falling in." The industry would still field more than 52,000 full-time professionals gathering, writing and editing the news in 2006.

Hard-hit papers like the Dallas Morning News and Philadelphia Inquirer retained news staffs of 400-plus. Yet readers of those papers may well feel they can clearly see the difference in the product. As the editor of one Knight Ridder paper put it in a private conversation, "I think we have reached the bone." Said another, about a different paper in the chain, "I think we hit it several years ago."

Whatever one thinks of the cuts, the news-investment trend in 2005 and looking out to 2006, like so many trends in the industry, was downward. Some reduction programs spilled over into the new year, and fresh cuts were likely.

What's more, they come after job losses in earlier years. After a "rally" of 300 new hires in 2002, the industry lost 500 jobs in 2003 and another 100 in 2004, according to data from ASNE. If our estimates are right, newspapers were heading into 2006 down 3,500 to 3,800 newsroom professionals from 2000, when the industry hit its near-historic peak in employment of 56,400. ¹

Prominent Losses

Among the most noteworthy staff cuts of 2005:

*The Philadelphia Inquirer eliminated 75 jobs and its smaller sister paper, the Daily News, 25, largely through buyouts of veteran reporters and editors. At the same time, its parent, Knight Ridder, ordered a reduction of 52 newsroom positions at the San Jose Mercury News. The Inquirer's editor, Amanda Bennett, was widely quoted as saying the

directive had made her literally sick to her stomach. But it was an occasion, she said, to reinvent the paper, jettisoning boring, dutiful meeting stories, trying to keep the best of investigative work and producing a “vibrant” daily report. 2

*Nearly all Tribune papers trimmed their newsroom staffs. The Los Angeles Times cut 85 from a staff of roughly 1,000 (along the way precipitating the resignation of its esteemed editor, John Carroll). Newsday, still recovering from a nearly 20% overstatement of circulation, decimated its New York City staff, eliminating 45 news positions. Those were not the first cuts at either paper. 3

The Baltimore Sun, Hartford Courant, Chicago Tribune, Orlando Sentinel, Allentown Morning Call and Newport News Press all announced smaller cuts near the end of the year. 4

*The New York Times announced it was eliminating 45 newsroom jobs, after shedding 12 earlier in the year, a relatively modest hit on a staff of roughly 1,200 that had grown in 2004. The company’s Boston Globe took a proportionately bigger cut, losing 35 editorial positions out of 400. 5

*The Dallas Morning News, like Newsday caught in a major circulation-padding scandal, trimmed more than 65 newsroom positions, just over 10%, at the end of 2004 and early in 2005. 6

*The San Francisco Chronicle has shrunk its news staff from 575 to 440 since 2000. More cuts may well be on the way because the paper is one of a handful of dailies actually losing money. 7

*The St. Louis Post Dispatch, under new management by Lee, eliminated 41 jobs through buyouts. Editor Ellen Soeteber resigned in protest. 8

And that by no means exhausts the list. 9

If in scope the cuts are worrisome but less than apocalyptic, what do they imply about the future? If there are patterns to the reductions, they are a pretty tight fit to companies and markets under the gun financially. Tribune and Knight Ridder papers are heavily represented (and the New York Times Co., less conspicuously, has been turning in disappointing revenue and earnings results, too).

Another message seems to be that times are especially tough in the biggest metro markets. Some, like Philadelphia, Chicago and Washington have heightened competition from an assortment of free dailies. The L.A. Times’s persistent circulation and advertising woes are a little more mysterious — perhaps a product of the area’s sprawl and unusual ethnic diversity. 10 The Times also hurt itself, insiders tell us, with deep cuts to circulation promotion and by actually pulling out of distant suburbs.

The American Society of Newspaper Editors releases staffing data at its annual April convention, compiled as of the end of the year. That will be the test of whether the wave of cutting spread to mid-sized and smaller papers where reductions are measured in single digits and typically not announced. Business results have been better at mid-sized and small papers; Media General and Lee, whose properties are typically in that category, had the best results among public companies in 2005, suggesting that cuts in the sector would be more modest.

The 30 papers with circulation of 250,000 and above, where announced cuts in 2005 were focused, account for about a quarter of the full-time news professionals in the industry. 11 Our guess is that unannounced cuts from smaller papers will roughly equal the 600 to 700 that were announced.

But we do know the cutting is not done, since 2006 will mark the completion of some of the staff reduction programs announced in 2005.

The pattern the industry has followed in recent years is that newsroom cutbacks during hard times are not followed by reinvesting during better times .

2006 and Beyond

The best hope for keeping staffs and news capacity whole turn on stabilizing circulation and ad-revenue trends. As recently as the end of 2004, an equal number of 250,000-plus papers had added news staff or held steady as had cut staff over a three-year period. ¹² So, best case, 2005 will be an aberration from relative stability in commitment of news resources.

The worst case is that a tipping point has been reached, that audience and ad revenue declines will prompt existing owners or new ones to make deeper cuts. The capacity of newspaper news staffs to offer thorough and aggressive coverage of their communities will erode subtly but steadily. Who will take up the slack? There is no obvious alternative .

Which is the more likely scenario is frankly hard to predict, and we doubt those who sound certain can really know. As the discussion of circulation and economics in this report has made clear, the industry has serious problems with its fundamentals, which is why stock prices are low. Yet the industry also appears to be more aggressive about innovation in new platforms and business models. Perhaps most important, if newspapers do not make the transition to online newsgathering, it is difficult to imagine who will.

Wall Street's Reaction

Wall Street analysts, typically cheerleaders for budget tightening, were skeptical about this round of newsroom cuts. Peter Appert of Goldman Sachs told Editor & Publisher that the Philadelphia and San Jose downsizings were “dramatic to the point where readers will notice” and circulation and ad losses might follow. ¹³ Visitors to San Jose who compared the paper today to the paper of a few years ago might be hard pressed not to notice. Consider that the business section of the paper — one of the core franchises of the Mercury News — five years earlier had a staff of more than 45, editors told the Project. After the latest round of cuts, the number was closer to 25.

The immediate signals suggested that investors thought management might have overreacted, or reacted the wrong way. Knight Ridder and New York Times shares fell the week their cuts were announced; by the year's end Tribune had not moved the stock-price needle upward with all its talk and action on cost containment. ¹⁴

Newspaper managers believe that using buyouts rather than layoffs has the advantage of making departures self-selective and sending many long-time staff people out the door with generous settlements. But buyouts also raise the suspicion that newsroom managers have an agenda of replacing the best paid with lower-salaried beginners and perhaps tilting staff to more computer-savvy young people in the process. Whether intended or not, it seems difficult to dispute that experience, institutional memory and deep knowledge of the local community are all casualties of this method of staff reduction.

As always, there were encouraging exceptions to the negative news-staffing trends. McClatchy newspapers, which has consistently trumpeted the business value of news investment, basically kept news staffs whole, even as it failed to

increase circulation company-wide for the first time in 20 years. ¹⁵ Most of the privately owned Advance Newspapers, controlled by the Newhouse family, are generously staffed. Two of Advance's largest properties, the Oregonian in Portland and the Star Ledger in Newark, were among the very few papers to keep circulation even in 2004 and 2005.

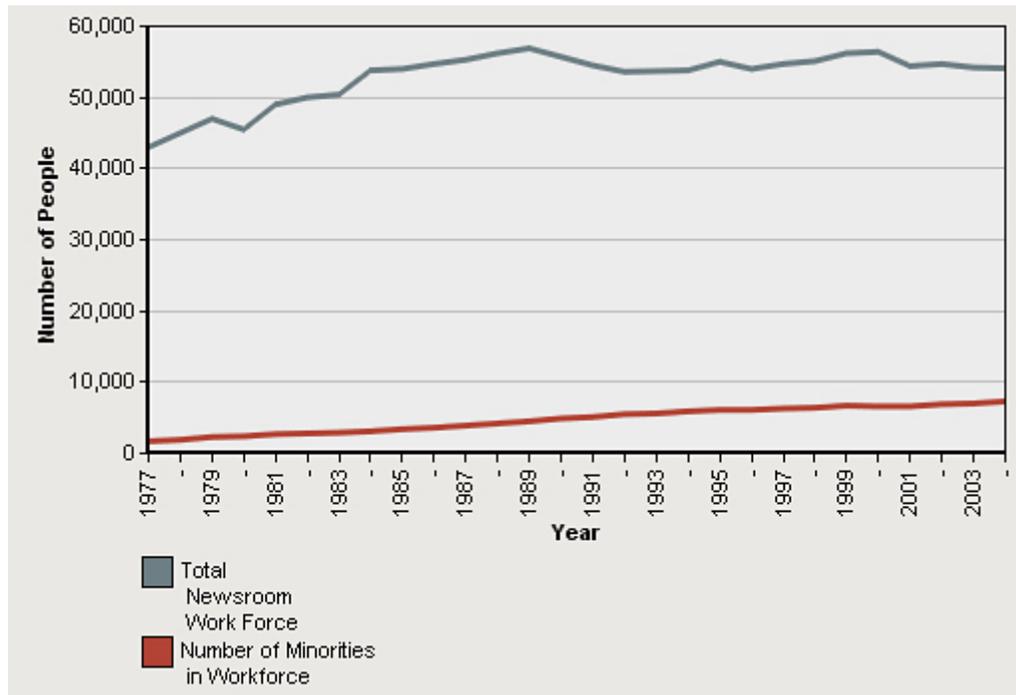
In contrast with the New York Times, some national newspapers, including the Washington Post, kept their basic newsroom staffs whole in 2005 and appeared to be increasing news investment online, which we will explain more below. Moreover, there is a cadre of independents, led by the St. Petersburg Times, Arkansas Gazette, and Bakersfield Californian, for whom larger-than-standard news investment (and slightly more modest profit margins) are a consistent commitment and central to business strategy.

Minorities and Women

There was some good news in the number of minority people working in newsrooms across the country. By the end of 2004, minorities represented 13.42% of newsroom staff — an increase of nearly half a percentage point over 2003, according to the annual newsroom census conducted by the American Society of Newspaper Editors. That marks the fourth consecutive year of growth, and since 2001 newsrooms have added 700 minority employees, with the largest number being Asian Americans.

The percentage of women in newsrooms increased a bit in 2004, and women now account for 37.5% of all newsroom employees. Yet the total number of women has increased just half of 1% since 2001. And while the number of white women has declined nearly 7 percentage points since 2001, the number of minority women has surged 20%. ¹⁶

Newspaper Newsroom Work Force 1977-2004



Design Your Own Chart

Source: American Society of Newspaper Editors, Newsroom Employment Census, 2005

* Minorities include Native Americans, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans.

Newshole: The Other Newsroom Resource

A new wrinkle on downsizing began in 2005 and will become more visible in 2006 and beyond. That is to reduce newshole, sometimes in tandem with trimming the width or weight of the paper. With newsprint prices on the rise to the tune of nearly 10% both in 2005 and 2006, it is an obvious place to turn for savings.

Usual targets for a deep slash are stock tables and TV listings. The Seattle Times eliminated Sunday tables in January 2005; the Chicago Tribune, the Los Angeles Times and Newsday announced cutbacks in tables in January 2006.

Cutting tables and TV listings is also easier to manage in the newsroom than cutting room for stories or cutting people. Yet cuts in such material are also probably even more noticeable to the public, and thus could accelerate the effect on circulation and advertising. On the other hand, papers can rightfully argue that all of that material is easily found elsewhere, and if a paper wants it to be, on its own Web site.

Regardless, it is a trend to watch because staff and space reductions tend to be reinforcing. Reduce the newshole by 10% and, executives can argue, you logically don't need as many people to fill it. By our scan, few if any editors or executives are directly claiming that less is more, but a number do claim that targeted content reductions will not be

missed much. Maybe — but the concurrent claim that the most ambitious reporting and consistently careful editing can be kept seems unlikely.

If people are asked to do more in the same amount of time, there is ample evidence in business literature and in academic research on journalism that quality suffers and that readers notice. The other problem is that the tradeoff doesn't apply if the paper is trying to offer more depth online, including some of the things that are being cut from the print edition .

Several newspapers undertook redesigns in which condensed format and quick reads played a part. Most closely watched were changes at the Minneapolis Star-Tribune, under study and development for more than a year with help from the Readership Institute at Northwestern University , before its introduction in the fall of 2005. In a general way it mandated much more rigorous attention to capturing reader interest, both with story selection and execution and design elements. 17

The Baltimore Sun and St. Louis Post-Dispatch both did major makeovers. They solicited reader comment and got a deluge of objections from traditionalists who thought the new look was dumbed-down.

Meanwhile 2005 marked another year in which conversions to tabloid or other reduced-sized formats remained a worldwide trend in which American publishers participated only in a small way. Especially in Great Britain , those making the change have recorded circulation gains — but at significant expense in converting presses and at least transitional reductions in advertising rates.

The Harrisburg Patriot-News, an Advance paper, began in July offering readers a choice between broadsheet or tab, with slight differences in content, too. The tab alternative never got as high as 10% of total print circulation and was abandoned in October with the curt explanation that “it didn't catch on.” 18

Gannett announced that its 37,000-circulation Journal Courier in Lafayette , Ind. , would convert to Berliner format (a taller and narrower tab format) when new presses were installed in August 2006. 19

Research

Philip Meyer's “The Vanishing Newspaper” was published in December 2004 and drew attention all through 2005. In a series of case studies, Meyer, of the University of North Carolina , argues that quality and investments in news capacity help circulation and business results. The evidence is strong, but, he concedes, not airtight. As a matter of logic, he adds, newspapers that are the most authoritative and accurate gain the most influence, an attribute of value to advertisers. 20

When newspapers instead cut investment in news, according to Meyer, they risk a “death spiral” in which circulation falls, revenue growth slows and those developments are the rationale for further cuts. The fit of Meyer's thesis to the events of 2005 was uncanny. 21

In less formal fashion, a second book, “Knightfall,” by W. Davis “Buzz” Merritt, charged Knight Ridder management with cutting the news core of its newspapers in self-destructive fashion. Merritt offered his own experience (as editor of the Wichita Eagle) as an example of how a mid-sized paper can lose its edge, public-service focus and statewide influence when the cutting gets too deep. 22

Jill Geisler of the Poynter Institute took the measure of years of cutting at newspapers and local television stations with a survey and an open-ended question of what news staff members would tell their bosses. Her key finding: besides leaving fewer people to do the work, persistent cuts do their damage by leaving those who remain harried, with little time for ambitious work. The survivors also have difficulty getting much attention from stretched-thin editors, leadership that is especially essential in a period of managing change. ²³

In scholarly research, Esther Thorson and associates at the University of Missouri continued a series of studies of small and mid-sized papers based on Inland Press Association data. They again found a strong correlation between above-average news investment and advertising revenue per copy. Put another way, they estimated that news investment accounted for 20% of the variance among papers. ²⁴

Scott Maier of the University of Oregon continued his studies of error rates in news stories with a group of 14 newspapers. As in an earlier study, more than half the stories were found by their subjects to have some kind of error, from misspelling to lack of context. The more frequent and severe the errors, the greater the decline in the newspapers' overall credibility. ²⁵

A contrarian study by Jack Rosenberry of St. John Fisher College took a broad sample of papers of varying sizes and found no correlation between content mix and circulation penetration. That would seem to dash some cold water on the thesis that intensely local coverage builds readership, though Rosenberry conceded that his methodology treated an investigative city hall story and a routine police report the same. ²⁶

For whatever reasons, the body of research on quality's relationship to business results doesn't seem to change minds within the business. Those in the pinching and cutting mode express occasional regret that they cannot afford more journalism while meeting financial targets, but they go right on cutting.

Online and Niche Publications

The contrast to all the cutting is in two specific areas. A year ago we characterized investment in the news effort of online newspaper sites as minimal at all but the largest newspapers. "Shovelware" — a rehash of a day's newspaper — was more often than not the extent of the offerings. Though hard information for any but the largest newspapers is hard to come by, there is evidence that neglect gave way to some improved efforts in 2005, and that upgrades may become even more visible in 2006.

Given that online and niche publications are the bright spots in revenue growth in 2005, it only stands to reason that what news investment growth there is will be directed to online and niche. Over time, we would expect new metrics measuring total news investment across platforms to supercede traditional benchmarks like newshole, news budget, and newspaper staff count.

To date, though, there is little uniformity or visibility within the industry in documenting a broader news investment story that might soften the picture of pinched resources in the print edition. At least one explanation, we have heard anecdotally, is that much of the work of feeding content to online and niche publications comes from re-deploying existing newsroom people rather than springing for big staff and budget increases dedicated to the new products.

Case in point: New York Times online has only 40 news people of its own, but is being fed more generously all the time by the newspaper's staff of 1,200. The New York Times and USA Today both announced in 2005 that they were combining print and online staffs, projects expected to take well into 2006 to execute. The Washington Post's online

staff remains separately located and organized, but is now coordinated with the mother newspaper with a special 24-hour-desk. A Post spokesman said the operation's total staff was well over 200, declining to specify how many of those are reporters, editors and producers. Our estimate is more than 100, making the Post the best-staffed newspaper online site (USA Today online, by our estimate, has between 80 and 100).

What is plain to readers of any of these sites is that newspaper reporters are now charged with filing major breaking stories online rather than hoarding the good stuff for the next day's paper. A mid-afternoon check of any of those will turn up a half-dozen staff-written updates since that morning's publication.

Much the same has taken place at the Associated Press, whose 3,000 reporters and editors worldwide are now charged with producing an online version first, then turning their attention to a newspaper or broadcast version. That may even represent a step beyond what newspapers are doing, and may offer a model of where newspapers might go.

The Wall Street Journal is a special case with more than 764,000 paid subscribers to its online version, and profits of its extended online operations, including indexes and "Marketwatch," now outstripping those of the print edition. The Wall Street Journal Online has a news staff of 60, according to the Dow Jones Web site, and draws on the work of 1,900 Dow Jones journalists worldwide.

The second breakthrough of 2005 was the widespread addition of nontraditional content to the sites. Audio is now standard. When Harriet Miers withdrew her Supreme Court nomination, the New York Times's Elizabeth Bumiller had filed both an online news story and an online voice commentary before noon. Fuller coverage by Bumiller and others followed in the next day's print edition. Video is also becoming more common online with improvements in quality and the rise of podcasting.

There has also been a cautious embrace of blogs and citizen journalism. The Greensboro News-Record and Dallas Morning News editorial pages are both deeply engaged in staff blogs, designed to elicit reader response. Some of the more prominent experiments in citizen journalism are "Northwest Voice" at the Bakersfield Californian and a network of neighborhood "Hub" supplements to the Rocky Mountain News. Such efforts require a minimal commitment of an editor or two; but the jury remains out on whether they are attracting audience or delivering news of any consequence. 27

Conclusion

We are left with a question raised in the first two editions of this report: Why do some newspaper companies, but so few, see logic in reinvesting in the core strength of their newsrooms and news quality? The national papers do. McClatchy does. So do several private companies and independents. They believe in putting the journalism first as a matter of principle, AND they make it work in a business way, too. The potential for circulation and advertising growth, however, appears much better in communities whose populations are growing rather than those that are stagnant and must be sustained over decades. But to take the obvious example, the Washington Post, consistently posting among the lowest margins in the business (12% or so in 2005) has performed fine as an investment over time.

The majority of companies, however, have appeared to be practicing a version of hard-nosed capitalism in which you reduce investments in those products or markets among your company portfolio that have lagging returns. Even as a business proposition, though, that viewpoint is subject to challenge when applied to the newsgathering capacity of a newspaper. The Boston Consulting Group matrix advocated liquidating "dogs" — low-profit businesses with limited

growth potential. But “cash cows” are another story. A cash cow is a very good thing that pays everyone’s salaries and provides the kitty for new ventures. They should be kept as strong as possible for as long as possible.

Our sense based on the data is that deep news-staff cuts, however logical a response to tough times, may be undermining the core product in dangerous ways. The practice is certainly eating away at the range and depth of newspaper journalism in many communities.

Note on updated employment figures dated May 8, 2006: The census, conducted primarily to measure industry progress on diversity goals, has been conducted for more than 25 years. This year 928 of 1,417 American dailies responded, and the response rate is the highest among the biggest circulation papers. The industry total is reached by projecting employment at non-responding papers according to their circulation.

This year the census added an estimate for 11 free dailies, most in large cities. With a smaller universe and several key non-respondents, ASNE is estimating employment of 1,300 in this group. It is also unclear whether the census captures newspaper online editorial employees, particularly at newspapers where online is treated as a separate unit organizationally.

Including the latest numbers, the industry has lost about 2,800 fulltime professional newsroom jobs so far this decade. But an important part of the jobs story is redeployment to online, free, youth-targeted, ethnic and non-newspaper publications, all important growth areas as traditional newspaper growth has stalled.

Footnotes

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Public Attitudes

Public Attitudes

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism and Rick Edmonds of The Poynter Institute

Newspapers continue to struggle as an institution when the public is asked to evaluate them. That is especially true for the largest of the country's newspapers, those with national influence.

Yet large numbers of the public still find newspapers to be a fact-based and comprehensive news source. And survey research also suggests they can still be a very attractive medium for advertisers.

Favorability

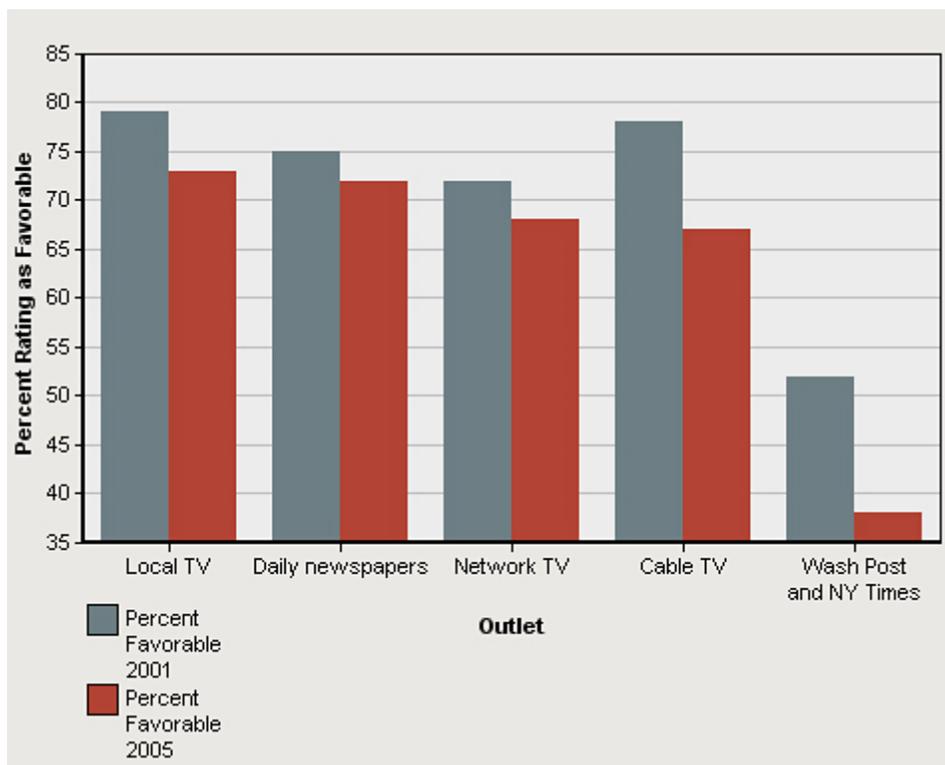
When the public is asked for its favorability rating towards newspapers, the local daily paper has regularly fared much better than national publications. The trend continued in 2005.

Nearly three quarters (72%) of those surveyed in June 2005 gave the daily newspaper they are "most familiar with" either a very favorable or mostly favorable rating, according to the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. That is about the same or slightly higher than ratings for other news sources: local television (73%), network television news (68%), and cable news (67%).

That is not true, however, for the country's national newspapers. For "large, nationally influential newspapers such as *The New York Times*" and *The Washington Post*," just 38% of the public gives a favorable rating — nearly half that of the local newspapers. Most analysts explain the gap as one of proximity and connectedness. The closer the staff is to the lives of the readers, the more the readers tend to trust them. ¹

Large national papers have historically been the least favored news source for Americans. Just 48% gave them a favorable rating in 1985, for example, according to Pew data. But what separates them from other news outlets is how much their favorability rating has dropped since 2001, especially compared to television and local daily newspapers. Since 2001, large national papers have fallen 14 percentage points, from 52% to 38%. While all other media types have experienced declines, those of the big papers, perhaps with the exception of cable television, have been the steepest. ²

Favorability Ratings of Media Outlets, 2005 vs. 2001



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Pew Research Center for The People and The Press, "Public More Critical of Press, But Goodwill Persists," June 26, 2005

* qu: Now I'd like your opinion of some groups and organizations in the news. (First) would you say your overall opinion of ... is very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable, or very unfavorable?

Confidence

Another way of evaluating public attitudes toward newspapers is to look at how much confidence Americans have in them compared with other major institutions in American society. In 2005, newspapers ranked in the bottom half in a list of political, business, civic and health organizations, according to a survey by the Gallup Organization. Fewer than 3 in 10 (28%) said they had a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in newspapers. Similarly, 24% had "very little" confidence, while the plurality had "some." Those percentages are about equal to those for TV news, but are less than half the scores for the highest ranked organizations, the military and the police.

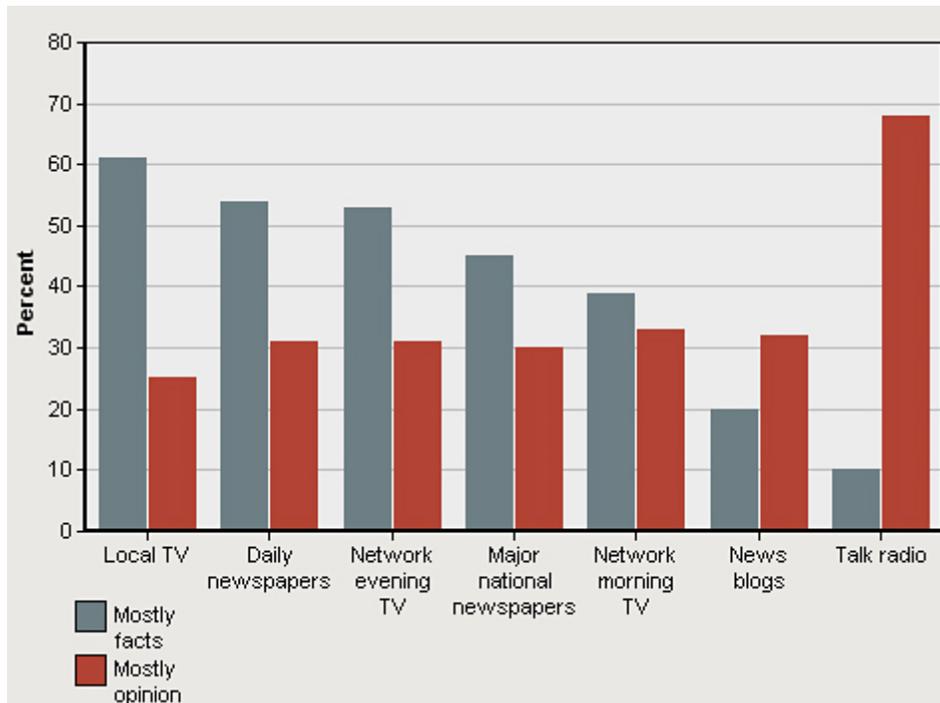
According to the survey research, most institutions had experienced some drop since 2002 and newspapers, again, were among those that experienced the most dramatic decline. In 2002, some 35% of Americans were highly confident of newspapers; that number dropped 7 percentage points in 2005. The dip was not the most severe, however. The presidency and the Supreme Court fell 14 and 9 points, respectively during that time. 3

Level of Fact

Despite the lower confidence levels, the public does give papers positive ratings for their factualness, especially compared with other news platforms. Here again, local papers get better marks than national.

Overall, a majority of Americans (54%) say local newspapers “mostly report facts about recent news developments” rather than “mostly give their opinions about the news,” according to a Pew Center survey. That is second in perception only to local television (61%). Fewer than half (45%) say national print outlets are more fact-oriented than opinion-based, placing them behind network evening news as well as local television. 4

News Organizations: Fact vs. Opinion



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Pew Research Center for The People and The Press, “Public More Critical of Press, But Goodwill Persists,” June 26, 2005

* qu: As I read a list, tell me if you think these organizations mostly report the facts about recent news developments, or mostly give their opinions about the news.

Are there any differences when we look at various demographic groups? At the national level, one demographic in particular stands out. Young Americans 18 to 29 years old, often regarded as the group newspapers have the hardest

time reaching, were significantly more likely than older Americans, especially those over 40, to view national newspapers as mostly factual. Indeed, that age group considered newspapers the most fact-oriented news medium of all those included in the survey.

In looking at local papers, having a college degree or being a self-identified Democrat made one more likely than others to say their daily newspapers were mostly fact-oriented. 5

Confidential Sources

One of the major stories for newspaper journalists and press critics in 2005 was the role of anonymous sourcing. Much of the discussion came in the aftermath of Judith Miller's imprisonment and the controversy that surrounded the way both Miller and her newspaper, The New York Times, acted to preserve the anonymity of her government sources. Earlier, there had been controversy over the paper's reporting on WMDs in Iraq, much of it, including work by Miller, also based on anonymous sourcing.

And heading into 2006, both the House of Representatives and the Senate were debating federal shield laws that would ensure journalists privilege to keep their sources confidential unless there were threats to the country's national security. As of early February 2006, the bills were awaiting committee hearings. 6

What are the public's attitudes toward confidential sources? Overall, survey research suggests public support for using them, though perhaps case by case. Despite broad support in general, the public raises concerns about the accuracy of stories that rely on confidential sources.

Nearly 6 in 10 (59%) agree that reporters should keep their sources secret even when ordered by a court to reveal them, according to survey research conducted almost immediately after the D.C. Circuit of the U.S. Court of Appeals ruled against both Matt Cooper of Time Magazine and Judith Miller. 7

Moreover, just 19% say reporters should always reveal their sources, which suggests most of the public understands the societal benefits of confidential sources. 8

Still, the public expresses some concern about the potential impact of relying on anonymous sources. According to the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, a majority, 52%, believe it is "too risky" for news organizations to use unnamed sources because it can result in faulty or unreliable information. But 44% thought it was "okay" to do so. 9 Other research found that 9 in 10 (89%) think it's wise to question the accuracy of news stories that include anonymous sources. 10

Finally, a small majority supports the passage of a federal shield law — 55% —while fully 87% of journalists show support. 11

The Engagement Medium

One key issue for newspapers is the argument that advertisements in print publications are more likely to engage the public than those on the Web and on television. That may be one reason why newspapers have generally been able to charge higher rates than online news sites. Survey research shows that newspapers may outperform other media when the level of advertising effectiveness is measured.

In June 2005, the Newspaper National Network, which is owned by the top 23 newspaper companies and the Newspaper Association of America, conducted survey research among those who read three or more issues of a newspaper a week. Consumers reported lower levels of multitasking while reading the newspaper and surfing the Internet than while watching television or listening to the radio. The findings also suggest that consumers believe newspaper advertising is more credible than advertising in other news media. Finally, a plurality of respondents said newspapers were most able to help them choose which products to buy. 12

Newspapers and Major News Events

Last year we reported that one of the most significant shifts over the last few years is that newspapers are losing more readers during major news events and are not pulling them back once the events wind down. Survey research on Americans' media preferences during 2005's biggest media event, Hurricane Katrina, suggests that the trend may be accelerating.

Television not only captures the drama of events like wars and abandoned people on rooftops but also provides a news anchor whose narration evokes the therapeutic lore of the storytelling that once occurred around the campfire. Television has been America's most popular news medium during major national events for generations. Perhaps the most illustrative example was JFK's funeral in 1963, when 93% of televisions in the country were tuned in to the coverage.

With the increase in television audience comes, logically, a decrease for other news platforms, especially newspapers. For example, immediately before September 11, 45% said newspapers were their main source of news; by mid-September, the number had plummeted to 11%.

The pattern was repeated with Katrina in 2005. Newspapers were the top news source for 44% before Katrina and for 35% during the events, even though single-copy sales and readership surged. 13 Moreover, many readers, both local and from around the country, visited NOLA.com, the New Orleans Web site, as the crisis unfolded.

But unlike the pattern in previous years, the post-Katrina newspaper audience failed to make up much ground after the news of the storm had generally fallen off the national radar. On other occasions, the gap between the number of Americans who said newspapers were their main news source before and after the events was around three points. And in 2003, the number actually increased a few points several months after the fall of Saddam's government. But two months after Katrina, the difference was 8%. 14 Whether newspapers can increase their audience share as the primary news source for Americans is something to watch for in 2006.

Public opinion data in 2005 suggested that the industry had done very little to improve its continuing credibility problems, but the more pressing questions heading into 2006 may be about what the public values in newspapers.

As papers try to pave a future for their industry, they need to know what it is that brings people in and what they find lacking. Do citizens still want a daily delivery that gives them in-depth reporting on a pre-selected list of stories? Survey research from the Newspaper National Network shows that newspapers are more likely than radio, television or the Web to deal with the issues readers most care about, and a plurality think newspapers are the most comprehensive source of news.

Perhaps the key challenge for newspapers is to stay relevant in an era when commutes are longer, when people spend more time in the office, and when consumers want their news when they want it, delivered in a less cumbersome format.

Is it that consumers prefer the new commuter tabloid formats? The 20-minute quick read that provides basic facts on a wide range of topics, but little in-depth reporting?

Or maybe the real future for newspapers is to move online — and the industry has clearly taken major steps in that direction in the last several years. The Internet offers an opportunity for newspapers to compete with other media in delivering breaking news, especially at work, where research shows more and more Americans are finding time to go online for news during the day.¹⁵

But right now, most surveys ask citizens to evaluate either newspapers or the Internet. With increasing audience numbers for online newspapers, it might be worthwhile to think of them as a combined news operation across two separate platforms.

In 2006, we should expect the conversation on such big questions and challenges to intensify.

Conclusion

So what in the end is the fairest interpretation of the tumult of 2005?

An optimistic reading is that the newspaper industry is in a multi-year transition in which news staff is being reorganized and retrained to produce on new platforms. In 2005 we saw the evidence of this with buyouts of older employees and investment in online and niche operations, while managers tried to stabilize the financial problems on the print side.

A more pessimistic reading is that this may be a repeat of the scenario a decade ago when existing or shrinking staffs were asked to pick up additional production work that had migrated from the composing room to the newsroom.

When more definitive staffing numbers appear, the key question to watch is whether they signal genuine losses that will undermine the industry's ability to make the transition to journalism's next era.

If this is an orderly transition to a brave new multiplatform way of doing things at newspapers, it is going to take a lot longer than a year or two. As the discussion of economics and circulation earlier in the report makes clear, the industry has problems with its fundamentals, and investors have soured on newspaper stocks. One likely resolution of the Knight Ridder auction is that the company would go to a bidder who would make much deeper cuts — particularly to the news core — as an avenue to improving profit margins.

So it remains uncertain whether 2005 was the beginning of the future for the medium or a marker of continued decline. It remains the case that if newspapers do lose their edge in reporting the news in a well-organized, aggressive, public-spirited way, there is little evidence to date that blogs, citizen journalism or the big online players will fill the void.

Footnotes

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Charts & Tables

Charts & Tables

AUDIENCE

Average Circulation of U.S. Daily Newspapers
Daily and Sunday Newspaper Readership
Daily Newspaper Readership by Age Group

Daily Newspaper Readership by Education
Daily Newspaper Readership by Race/Ethnicity
Number of U.S. Daily Newspapers
Sunday Newspaper Readership by Age Group
Sunday Newspaper Readership by Education
Sunday Newspaper Readership by Race/Ethnicity
U.S. Daily Newspaper Circulation
U.S. Daily Newspaper Circulation
U.S. Daily Newspaper Circulation Versus Number of Households

ECONOMICS

Daily Newspaper Advertising Revenue
Daily Newspaper Advertising Revenue Growth

OWNERSHIP

Percent of Daily Circulation Belonging to Largest Newspaper Groups
Percent of Daily Newspapers Owned by Largest Newspaper Groups
Percent of Sunday Circulation Belonging to Largest Newspaper Groups
Percent of Sunday Newspapers Owned by Largest Newspaper Groups
Top Ten Groups' Percent of Total Daily Circulation
Top Ten Groups' Percent of Total Sunday Circulation

NEWS INVESTMENT

Newspaper Newsroom Work Force

PUBLIC ATTITUDES

Favorability Ratings of Media Outlets, 2005
Favorability Ratings of Media Outlets, 2005 vs. 2001
News Organizations: Fact vs. Opinion

Roundtable

Roundtable

The threat to newspapers now appears from nearly every indicator. From 1950 through 1999, for instance, newspaper revenue grew seven percent a year. From 2000 through 2006, by contrast, it has grown by just 0.5%. Then in the first quarter of 2006, growth was even less: 0.35%.

And though online ad revenues continue to soar, they currently account for just five percent of all newspaper company revenue. In addition to sluggish ad growth, newspapers are challenged with circulation declines, a skeptical Wall Street, ownership changes — such as Knight Ridder's recent sale of its 32 papers— and perhaps most notably, adapting to the world of online news.

In this, the third of our roundtables on the future of the news media, six experts from inside the newspaper industry discuss its future, its fate, and the changes it must make to survive. They are:

- Phil Meyer, Knight Chair in Journalism, School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of North Carolina;
- John Carroll, editor of the Los Angeles Times from 2000 to 2005;
- Rick Edmonds, Researcher and Writer for the Poynter Institute and co-author of the newspaper chapter for the State of the News Media Annual Report;
- Paul Ginocchio, Media Analyst for Deutsche Bank. In 2005, Paul won a “Best on the Street” stock pricing award from the Wall Street Journal.
- Lou Ureneck, Chairman of the Department of Journalism at Boston University. Before his academic career, Ureneck serves as the deputy managing editor for the Philadelphia Inquirer and spent 22 years at the Portland Press Herald.
- Rick Rodriguez, Executive Editor and Senior Vice President of The Sacramento Bee, and in 2005-2006, President of the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

1. How much confidence do you have that traditional mainstream media organizations will survive and thrive in the transition to the Internet?

Paul Ginocchio: I have 100% confidence that the mainstream media organizations will survive. The toughest issue will be the transition period (from print to online, broadcast to broadband), but once the migration is over, cheaper distribution costs should enable media companies to more than fund the news gathering resources. The total cost of editorial for most newspapers is only 15% of sales, so current editorial resources can survive on a much lower revenue base.

Rick Edmonds: High. They have what democracy needs and it has market value too –original reporting and professional editing and packaging. I don’t see that emerging elsewhere as yet. But the economic transition will be long and tough.

Phil Meyer: Very little. The most successful applications of the Internet are likely to come from unexpected sources, as Craig Newmark has so clearly demonstrated. Traditional media organizations are risk averse and unwilling to invest enough in new experiments.

John Carroll: Some will survive and some will thrive, but there are real questions about the quantity and quality of original journalism that will be produced. We may well look back on the last forty years and view them as an anomaly, in which newspapers enjoyed such monopolistic conditions that they could afford to put an extraordinary number of reporters on the street. Our journalism may be leaner in the future – and possibly less principled and idealistic.

Rick Rodriguez: Much confidence. It will take strong leadership, vision, the willingness to take risks and some failures, but we'll get there.

2. Looking specifically at print now. Do you think newspapers printed on paper are on a path to extinction? If not, what strategy is most likely to avoid extinction? (Investment, daring, urgency, calm, reinventing news delivery and audience or venturing into non-news online moneymakers?)

Phil Meyer: Extinction is unlikely. The successful local news product will probably be a hybrid with online providing most of the volume of content, and a smaller summary, perhaps less than daily, providing portability and the convenient scanning of print. The new magazine *The Week* is an interesting model.

Paul Ginocchio: Newspapers on paper may only be a 4-5 day a week event, with the other days online only. Printing facilities will be rationalized to third parties. Print subscriptions will rise in price so that the subscription revenue fully covers the paper, printing, distribution and administration surrounding the paper product – and most readers will get the product online. There will be a nominal online subscription fee and potentially, some papers will have a much higher fee if you want to get the news without advertising.

Rick Edmonds: I think the print newspaper is a survivor for at least 10 or 15 years — I hope to be alive and reading for at least that long and there are platoons of first wave baby boomers like me. Newspapers will keep having lots of cash to invest for some time to come. Proceeding “with all deliberate speed” makes sense and that is what newspapers seem to be doing. These big boats do not turn fast, but the industry needed to get a lot more urgent and has.

Rick Rodriguez: I think newspapers will be around for decades but will change. I think investigative journalism and other unique content are key to long-term survival. Newsrooms will have to run on multiple tracks – immediate postings through the web, daily paper, and paper and web longer term projects. I think other niche products that repackage the news and distribute it in various ways will continue to grow. So I don't believe we're on the path to extinction but on one that will require lots of change, including looking at ourselves as delivering news and information in lots of different ways.

Lou Ureneck: They are not headed to extinction, but certainly to contraction. I think that some people will always find newspapers on paper more convenient. But paper is expensive, so every square inch of it will be filled by only the highest and best uses, such as analytical journalism. Of course, stories will be shorter. Newsprint in the future will serve as the substrate for only the highest-end work or for readers who are wealthy enough, and willing, to pay for their preference for paper, I'm guessing. This trend will not be unlike the purpose that glossy paper now serves for some high-end magazines, such as the *New Yorker*. Routine content will find its way online. The migration of financial agate typifies what I think will become a growing trend.

John Carroll: Printed newspapers are declining, obviously. It's possible that the printed paper could become a luxury item, sold at a high price, which would save the medium. Or – another hope – it's possible that technology will preserve newspapers by allowing them to be printed out efficiently in the home, thus saving the costs of big presses, circulation departments, production departments, etc. Another technological fix: newspaper-like products that appear on tablet computers or on thin, lightweight computers that imitate the printed page. It's not print, but it could be quite similar...

3. Do you think the economic model of the Internet has to shift from an advertising based model to something else for traditional journalism to continue to thrive? If so, do you have any thoughts on what that new model

might be?

Rick Rodriguez: I think print advertising is in many categories still more effective than online ads. That isn't necessarily true with classifieds, cars, travel and some others but many people just click through or block pop-ups and banners, even if they are creative. So the advertising model currently used isn't going to work. But does that mean people would be willing to shift and pay for content when basically they've received it for free with an internet connection. It will be difficult as well.

Rick Edmonds : That's unclear. Internet advertising has plenty of room to grow. Local search is at an infant stage and could be a goldmine. A mixture of free and paid premium content on the model of Times Select has potential too. The Bill Gates-Arthur Sulzberger presentation at ASNE persuaded me that Internet news will not look and read as it does now in another two or three years.

Paul Ginocchio: There will have to be some subscription revenues, but not as much as a print subscription. The print product will have to become a premium product to justify its cost and newspapers will outsource printing to third parties like Transcontinental (Canadian based printer). News gathering is only a small part of the total newspaper cost so it can survive on a pure ad model, as Phil Anschutz believes.

Lou Ureneck: Yes, I think future revenues will have to include higher proportion of fees from readers or users. As to a future model, this is the big question. We might be seeing the beginning of a return to some semblance, possibly, of private local ownership in places such as Philadelphia and St. Paul. Newspapers are profitable now and will be profitable in the future. The current crisis centers in large part on returns expected by investors who measure results against a range of businesses and whose only measure is financial.

The financial problem in newspapers continues to be the gap between current stock-price expectations and predicted future streams of revenue. At some point, this gap is going to close, and it will close, I think, in the direction of permanently lower stock prices. That will settle some of the problem, though many people and institutions will have permanently loss significant stockholder "wealth." But it's a readjustment that tilts, I believe, in the direction of a healthier and more settled environment for journalism. (Click here more of Ureneck's thoughts on newspaper economics).

John Carroll: It would be good if newspapers and other providers of online content could (a) control the use of their content, and (b) charge for it. That would give them a greater degree of say in their own fates. With advertising rates set largely by others (Google, for example) and by extremely competitive markets, and with subscription revenue reduced nearly to zero, newspapers will be hard-pressed to sustain the large staffs that make them valuable. Giving our content away to all, even to our competitors, seems suicidal to me. Perhaps the resulting on-line ads will justify it, but I'm not yet convinced.

Phil Meyer: The "influence model" that I describe in The Vanishing Newspaper is certainly advertising based, and I think it could be applied to a community-based Internet publishing enterprise. We'll soon know because it's such an obvious strategy to try and the entry costs are low.

4. Now, looking at classified advertising, are papers doing everything they should to compete with Craigslist and others, including possibly, Google? If not, what should they be doing?

Phil Meyer: They should be trying more radical experiments and not leaving it to Newmark and Google to do all the innovating. But you can't blame newspapers for being conservative. It's a consequence of their easy-money history. It's why I think the important innovations will come from outside. There are more Craig Newmarks out there.

Lou Ureneck: Newspapers either need to manage the decline of classified as a revenue source until it finally becomes free, or find a way to add value to the newspaper classified. Craigslist has changed the business forever. With its sorting functions, it's as if the internet were designed for classifieds.

Paul Ginocchio: Newspapers are not promoting their websites enough and not aggressive enough in going out and getting new business – I believe they are still happy to wait for the classified customer to call them.

Rick Rodriguez: I'm not sure we should try to compete with Google, which has a worldwide audience. Our future is basically local and to that extent we should experiment to try to compete directly with craigslist. Are we doing enough as an industry? Obviously not.

John Carroll: The classified bonanza is over. It's going to be a tough, very competitive game from now on.

Rick Edmonds : Local search has enormous potential and newspapers are racing Google et al. to get there. No one has mixed the magic formula yet, though, and it's not clear (to me anyhow) whether newspapers or the big tech companies have the strategic advantage.

5. Circulation, revenue and newsroom investment data suggest that the newspapers most threatened right now are the big-city metro papers. How serious do you see this threat and what does it portend for state and local news? Would another news entity pick up that role or would citizens in end be left with little coverage of those institutions?

Paul Ginocchio: State and local news will still be covered, but not in the depth as it is today and it will have less prominence than in today's paper. Some of the coverage will be from citizens helping out.

Rick Edmonds: I don't yet see a case that blogs, citizen journalism and the like will emerge with a substitute for what big metros do best. However, like John Carroll, I am encouraged by recent indications that wealthy individuals, local group and/or not-for-profit entities will emerge, if necessary, to make sure communities have the degree of serious local news and public service they deserve.

Phil Meyer: More specialized media will pick up that role. The interesting problem will be defining their specialties. Much experimentation will take place, and the problem will be that not all of the experimenters will be journalists steeped in our public service tradition. The role of non-profits will become increasingly important as philanthropy takes on the watchdog task. An exciting, dangerous time lies ahead.

Lou Ureneck: It's a very serious situation, and I worry that the work of the big metros will not be picked up by smaller newspapers or local television stations.

John Carroll: I see no sign of other, smaller papers extending their reach to cover these larger stories. If the big metros disappeared, perhaps some would come forward.

6. What, if anything, will it take for newspapers to get more young people to become regular readers, either online or on paper?

Paul Ginocchio: Hire more young people and cover the news they care about, not just what the editors and journalists want to cover – even if it is soft news. Every newspaper should have an affiliated website to the main newspaper website which completely caters to the interests of 18-34 year olds with a completely different set of values on what news is important.

Rick Rodriguez: In our market [of Sacramento, CA], younger readers often pick up The Bee, just not often enough. I don't think younger readers are turned off to all newspapers. Some of them have told us in focus groups they like the paper, they just don't want to pay for it. Online has to be more dynamic and can't be a stagnant rehash of the day's paper with a few updates.

Rick Edmonds: Doom and gloom studies notwithstanding, I think a reasonable percentage of young adults are interested in news (and even newspapers) and that more will be as they age. Chasing those who are basically uninterested or non-readers has always seemed a fruitless exercise. Of course newspapers should be adaptive but they equally need some confidence in the importance and utility of what they do. Realistically, the audience may grow older, narrower, more educated and more elite. If so, so be it.

Phil Meyer: That would require a cultural change, but it's not impossible. If and when the international situation deteriorates to where we have to bring back the military draft, that alone might do it. More civics instruction in high schools, as David Mindich has suggested, would help. Whatever pulls young people's attention away from popular culture and points them toward the real world could help newspapers – and society.

John Carroll: There is no single fix. At a fundamental level, we need to cover basic news that young people want, such as high school sports. I'm skeptical that we can compete seriously with other, flashier, less ethical outfits that provide gossip and entertainment coverage. More dauntingly, we need to provide news in forms that are appealing to young people, which may require insights and skills we don't have at the moment.

7. If you could recommend one thing the newspaper industry would do differently what would that be?

John Carroll: The forty-year marriage of journalism and the modern corporation has failed. At the very time newspapers need enlightened stewardship, they are being actively harmed by their owners. Newspapers need a different form of ownership, one that values journalism, believes in public service and is unwilling – as a matter of principle and of long-term business strategy — to strangle newspapers for their short-term cash. Profit margins merely equal to the average among Fortune 500 companies would be a good start. That would allow newspapers to breathe again, to reverse their circulation losses, and to invest seriously in the online future.

Paul Ginocchio: Get a new ad salesforce, one that knows how to make cold calls and one that has no history of entitlement.

Lou Ureneck: Be bolder in their coverage of news. Seek truth over balance.

Rick Edmonds: Clarify to Wall Street that the news core must be kept strong, even at the expense of profit margins and earnings for a period of years because investments and experimentation in new media is essential too.

Phil Meyer: Transfer routine content to online, starting with the stock pages. Use the savings to invest in higher quality and more specialized content. Invest in radical experiments to find the right combination of newsprint and online distribution...

THE STATE OF THE NEWS MEDIA 2006

AN ANNUAL REPORT ON AMERICAN JOURNALISM

Online – Intro

Intro

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

In 2005, the Web continued to grow as a source for news in America. The picture also began to look more nuanced. Rather than just something new and growing, we were beginning to see strengths, weaknesses and signs of maturity.

The universe of people who used the Web, for instance — for news or anything else — was not growing as fast anymore, but the frequency with which people turned to the medium was increasing. Rather than something more people were discovering, the Internet was becoming more a part of their daily life.

The economics of the Web were beginning to mature as well. More sites were becoming profitable, and there were more signs that producers could begin to charge for content on the Web, at least some content. And while revenues were continuing to grow rapidly, just how far the Web has to go financially to compete with the old media was also becoming clearer. The Web still does not appear to be as desirable a medium for advertisers as what it is replacing. Rivals on the Web that offer classified listings or aggregate other people's work, but produce very little journalistic content of their own, were continuing to steal revenues away. There still appears no clear path for transferring to this new medium all the wealth that has long financed journalism for the good of civil society. For now, unless things change, it appears that the resources devoted to skilled journalism will continue to shrink as the Web grows.

The wild cards that could change that involve technology, at least in part. Will broadband, searchable video, wireless devices and downloading TV news on a phone or iPod change the financial equation? If people won't pay for video on their computers, will they pay to get it so it is mobile on their PDA?

There was further evidence, too, that the big corporate owners of old media will continue to try to buy the Web. The explosive growth of citizen blogs (more formally, web logs) appeared to be slowing. Some prominent bloggers were moving to work inside corporate-owned Web sites to make a living. And the sites that get the most traffic continued to be owned by the biggest companies.

Perhaps, for journalism, the most promising news was that there finally appeared to be more investment in producing online journalism. In their rhetoric, too, the Web is becoming central. A major reason was likely that much of the financial growth many of those companies saw in 2005 came from new media. Yet that also suggests the Internet may still be a pay-as-you-go equation for many companies. The evidence, while sketchy, suggests that more of the investment is in technology, not in human resources to gather news. It is still not clear whether the old media have it in their corporate culture to be the innovators of the new.

Heading into 2006, it was clear that Americans eye the Internet with an increasingly complicated perspective. The appeal of the Web is its convenience, interactivity, diversity and control. Yet the more people use the Web, they less they trust it. The most trusted sites of all increasingly are those from the old-legacy media. Even people who enjoy blogs, for instance, are suspicious of them. They go for the energy, argument and authenticity they find there, not hard information. The public, it increasingly appears, accesses different parts of the Internet for different reasons.

The biggest questions remain those that touch the bottom line. Online journalism, in 2006, is still young. Like an adolescent, it is learning what it can do. It is even making a little money. But it is still not really paying its own way. And it isn't entirely sure what it will be doing when it grows up.

Economics

Economics

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

Largely fueled by a red-hot ad market, 2005 appeared to be a year of strong economic growth for online news. Significantly, the growth came at a time when many other media sectors such as print and local TV were suffering.

What's more, increasing revenue has created vast opportunities for further investment and technological development, though not always in traditional newsgathering operations. Many questions remain; probably the key one is whether the dominant online economic model can produce quality journalism.

Online Advertising Revenue

Growth in 2005

In 2004, the headline was the online ad industry's rapid recovery from the boom and bust of 2000. Preliminary data for 2005 suggest that the online ad market is still growing very rapidly.

According to data from the Interactive Advertising Bureau and Pricewaterhouse Coopers, online ad sales were expected to surpass \$12.5 billion for all of 2005. This number represents a 30% increase over the \$9.6 billion recorded in 2004. ¹ ²

And many of the country's largest advertisers moved more of their ad dollars online. For example, the Ford Motor Company reportedly shifted 15% of its billion-dollar ad budget to the Web. As Greg Stuart, CEO of the Internet Advertising Bureau, said, "At a certain point, the Internet isn't just a rational business decision [for brands] It's part of a big advertising idea." ³

Explaining Online Ad Growth

What accounts for such strong growth, besides the obvious increases in online audience numbers?

From the start, online advertisers have been lured by the ability to track their ads with greater detail and accountability than they can in any other medium. While advertisers in platforms like television and print could only estimate how many eyeballs were exposed to their ads, the Internet allows them to make a more precise measurement. Of course, counting the number of clicks is the most basic way to assess online advertising strategies, but advertisers also use such metrics as average frequency of exposures, ad exposure time, ad interaction rate, and view-through rate. ⁴

In 2005, the Internet continued to uphold its claim as one of the most accountable advertising platforms with the emergence of some new marketing programs. Akama a technology company headquartered in Cambridge, Mass. developed new software that allows advertisers to look at audience spikes during certain big news events.

Akamai's chief executive, Paul Sagan, hopes that the service "can be used to help reveal geographic and sociological trends in public spectacles," adding that "data generated by the index can be used by advertisers and investors to map social patterns and make buying decisions." 5

And in November, Google began offering Google Analytics as free software that allows customers to track how often Internet users click on ads that appear after a search is conducted. 6

Looking Ahead

Beyond 2005, the evidence suggests online advertising should continue to grow. The rate of growth may slow, however, according to at least one research organization Emarketer, a New York-based market research firm, is now projecting that from 2006 to 2009, online ad spending will decline each year: by 21.2%, 14.1%, 13.5%, and 10.4%, respectively. 7

"No medium before the Internet had more than 32% increases (the growth for 2004) after it had been around for a few years," the EMarketer analyst David Hallerman said. "Runaway growth isn't all that good, since it could end up like the early years of the Internet — hype." 8

Even more modest growth, however, would outpace what is occurring today for many other media platforms. Veronis Suhler Stevenson, a private equity investment firm that publishes an annual "Communications Industry Forecast," projected the compounded advertising spending growth for 12 different media and communications segments for the years 2004 to 2009. Advertising spending on consumer Internet, which includes advertising on television, newspaper and radio Web sites, was projected to grow 24% between 2004 and 2009, second only to videogame advertising (46%). 9

Growth of Advertising Spending By media platform

Year	Broadcast TV	Cable TV	Total TV	Newspapers	Broad. & Satell. Radio	Yellow Pages	Consumer Mags	Business-to-Business Mags	Consumer Internet	Out-of-Home	Movies	Videogame	Total
2000	12.4%	18.6%	13.8%	5.3%	12.3%	8.1%	8.2%	11.1%	75%	8.3%	50.4%	200%	11.6%
2001	-13.6	3.1	-9.5	-8	-7.5	5.4	-10.3	-13.5	-11.8	0	26.8	144.4	-7.8
2002	9.1	3.7	7.6	0	5.7	1.3	-0.9	-10.5	-15.8	0	22.4	100	1.7
2003	-1.1	10.6	2.1	2.1	1	0.9	4	2.6	20.9	5.2	19.9	79.5	2.8
2004	9.1	16.1	11.2	4	2.1	3.7	6	6.3	32.5	6	21.3	51.9	7.6
2005	1.9	14.6	5.7	3.7	2.7	3.7	5.5	7.2	31.2	5.3	19.3	48.3	6.1
2006	7.4	11.9	8.9	4	3.3	4.6	6	7.3	27.1	5.5	16.4	50	7.5
2007	2.1	10.8	5.1	3.3	4.1	4.6	6.3	6.9	24.6	5.7	14.2	50.6	6.2
2008	8.2	10.6	9	3.6	5.9	5	6.5	7	20.3	5.6	12.6	47.8	7.7
2009	2	12.2	5.7	3.1	4.9	5.3	6.7	6.5	17.2	5.4	10.4	34.7	6.3
1999-2004	2.7	10.2	4.7	0.6	2.5	3.8	1.2	-1.3	15.8	3.8	27.7	109.1	3
2004-2009	4.3	12	6.9	3.5	4.2	4.6	6.2	7	24	5.5	14.5	46.1	6.8

Source: Veronis Suhler Stevenson, Communications Industry Forecast 2005-2009, Nineteenth Edition, 2005 Out-of-home advertising includes traditional roadside billboards, as well as non-traditional forms of out-of-home media, such as bus stations and street furniture.

Total ad revenue online is still a fraction of that coming into other media platforms. Online ad spending accounted for less than 4% of all ad spending in 2004 compared with 24% for newspapers, 6% for magazines, 10% for radio, and over 30% for television. ¹⁰ Yet clearly those percentages are shifting.

Online Newspapers

Revenue in 2005

One way to illustrate the economics of online advertising is to talk about one sector. Newspapers are the biggest recipients of online advertising, and in 2005, it appears spending on them continued to surge.

According to research by Borrell Associates, online revenue for daily and weekly newspapers owned by publicly traded companies grew by 47% in 2004, from \$811 million in 2003 to \$1.19 billion. For 2005, Borrell projected revenues would climb another 28%, to \$1.52 billion. ¹¹

And the partial-year data suggest the projections were on target. For the first two quarters of 2005, online ad spending on newspapers grew 29%, according to estimates released by the Newspaper Association of America. By comparison, total spending on print advertising in the period had grown just 2%. ¹²

At the New York Times Company, to take one case, online advertising revenues were up approximately 30% while overall advertising, for both digital and print operations, grew only 0.9%. ¹³

Indeed, many newspaper companies have turned to their online ad growth as a remedy for their rather anemic print ad revenue. In May of 2005, Merrill Lynch estimated that half of first-quarter ad revenue growth for public newspaper companies came from their online operations. And in the second quarter, a Bank of America report indicated that more than 100% of the growth for some of the biggest companies — Dow Jones, Journal Register, Knight Ridder, and Tribune — was credited to online. Percentages were lower at other newspaper companies, but the median for all companies researched was nearly 80%. ^{14 15}

Despite their importance as a growth sector, however, online ads still contribute only a small percentage to their companies' overall revenue — between 1% and 7% of total newspaper advertising revenue. Newspapers currently can charge only a fraction for online ads of what they charge for ads in their print editions. The reason for that was a much-discussed topic at Forecast 2006, the latest in an annual conference on the future of media: the question of engagement. Namely, how much is an online ad worth if the viewer is not as engaged with the ad as he or she is with advertising placed in other media, particularly print media? The answer, at this point, is that no one really knows.

Newspapers in the Future

Looking ahead, at least one market research firm, Emarketer, projects that online newspapers will contribute as much as 8% to total revenue by 2009 (compared to 4% and 5% now). ¹⁶ Yet even if strong growth occurs, there is reason to believe that online ad revenue won't be able to compensate for many years of struggling print revenue. Rick Edmonds of the Poynter Institute, a collaborator on this annual report, has estimated that if online revenue grew annually by a third, and newspapers' print ad revenue grew by just 3%, online revenue wouldn't surpass print revenue until the year 2018. Yet as the discussion here makes clear, sustaining annual 33% growth rates online is probably unlikely, and may only get harder, especially if competitors like Google, Yahoo and craigslist remain growing players. ¹⁷

Online Revenue vs. Newspaper Revenue

Revenue in millions

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Online	3	4	5.3	7.1	9.5	12.7	16.9	22.5	30	40	53.3	71	94.6	126.1	168.1
Print	97	100.9	104.9	109.1	113.5	118	122.7	127.6	132.7	138	143.5	149.2	155.2	161.4	167.9

Source: Rick Edmonds, "An Online Rescue for Newspapers?", January 27, 2005, Poynter Institute. Projected revenue growth through 2018 is based on 2004 growth numbers of 4% for newspapers and 33.3% for online.

This is one of the critical questions for newspapers: will revenue from online advertising, even as it grows, be enough to bolster the struggling newspaper industry, which has long prided itself on its ability to do difficult investigative work that costs a lot of money? (For a closer look at newspaper economics, [click here](#)). If not, will anything else take up the slack? Could quality journalism become a philanthropic exercise? Could local interests begin to invest in journalism, and invest more, because they expected smaller returns than Wall Street and publicly traded media companies have typically demanded? As noted in past years, this is the probably the most fundamental issue underlying any discussion of media economics today. (See [overview](#).)

Rich Media

Defining “rich media” may be as difficult as agreeing on one definition for blogs. It may include video, graphics, text, animation or audio. Still, there are certain characteristics of almost all rich media, most notably that they are digital and interactive.

While spending on rich media has increased in the last few years, it has not yet increased its share of the online advertising market. After the first six months in 2005, rich media accounted for an 8% market share of all online advertising, as reported by IAB, the same as in the first half of 2004. ²⁶ In 2004, total spending on rich media grew 32%, increasing to \$963 million from \$727 million. ²⁷

Video, of course, is a large component of rich media. Many extol the new technology as a gateway to economic viability on the Web. As the New York Times described it, “new Internet video programming is a way to cash in on the demands of advertisers who want to put their commercials on computer screens, where new viewers are watching. And for many Web sites, viewers can’t skip the video commercials, the way they can when using TIVO and other video recorders.” ²⁸

There was considerable discussion in late 2004 that 2005 might be a breakout year for online video. Based on audience and preliminary economic figures, online video use is widespread, although regular use appears to be relatively small. But based on the increasing number of video clips that have become available on the Web, particularly on news sites, higher levels of both use and revenue from advertising seem likely in 2006.

Research from Comscore shows that nearly 60% of the online population consumes online digital media (streams and downloads) every month. ²⁹

Regular online video consumption, however, is small. As of 2004, just 5% of online users said they watched video over the Internet daily. ³⁰

There is some evidence that online video may surge during very large news events, particularly those that provide dramatic news footage. For example, online video traffic performed extremely well during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Media coverage of the storm’s aftermath generated 10 million video downloads on CNN.com on August 29; MSNBC.com generated 10 million video downloads by mid-afternoon on that same day. ³¹

Meanwhile, survey research shows that news clips are the most commonly watched type of online video, even surpassing movie trailers. Fully two thirds (66%) of online video watchers say they watch news or current-event videos on the Web, compared to movie clips and trailers (49%), music videos (29%), and sports highlights (27%), according to the Online Publishers Association. ³² ³³

It seems marketers have so far remained cautious toward investing in online video advertising. According to Jupiter Research, just \$121 million of the \$9.5 billion spent by advertisers in 2004 was spent on online video. Two research firms, Jupiter and eMarketer, however, project that video will grow exponentially over the next several years, with Emarketer projecting \$1.5 billion by the end of the decade. ³⁴

Several technological developments were made in 2005 that could lead to both higher penetration and more ad spending on online video in the immediate future. Google and Yahoo added links to video search engines on their home pages. Those two are, of course, the world’s largest search engines.

Other media companies have also made moves to showcase their growing online video inventory. In September, the New York Times reported that Time Warner and Viacom were beginning to post some of their video on the Web that could ultimately be indexed in online search engines. ³⁵

What's more, the former Internet titan Lycos announced in October that it had launched technology to take video publishing to the small-scale content operations — even the one-man show. Its technology, said the company's CEO, Brian Kalinowski, will allow users to self-publish their own videos. Users would have to post the video on the Lycos Web site, but they would maintain ownership of the content.

And as further evidence that online video is now being taken more seriously, the Internet Advertising Bureau announced in late November it had issued new guidelines for online video advertising and had formed a Broadband Committee to develop the standards for tracking commercial figures.

Though spending on rich media should grow, are there obstacles to overcome? Challenges may be “a dearth of inventory, with publishers unable to create content fast enough; technological obstacles to transferring high-quality video online and to broadband penetration; and consumer resistance.”³⁶ Also, a lack of standardization among online video players is a critical concern, and some consumers may not want to take the time to download the players from the Web.³⁷

In addition, production costs may still be too high for many marketers. Right now, an Internet commercial costs about \$15 to \$20 for each 1,000 viewers, nearly as much as broadcast networks charge. The price may be high because there is much more demand from advertisers than there is Internet video programming available — though that might change as software companies make it simpler and cheaper to upload video on the Web. For example, the Cambridge, Mass.-based company Brightcove allows amateur videographers to post their work on the Web and even make money through advertising.

Survey research among business leaders also seems to suggest cost may be an issue: 78% of executives reported that impressions on home pages, vertical channels, and rich media cost more in the second quarter of 2005 than in the first quarter.³⁸

Local Online Advertising

Spending on local advertising should continue to grow in 2006 and beyond as a mix of so-called old media and Internet companies compete for an increasingly lucrative market.

Local online advertising generally includes automotive, real estate and employment ads. It accounts for approximately 30% of all online spending. In 2005, spending on local advertising was projected to reach somewhere between \$3.2 and \$4.1 billion, up from \$2.7 billion in 2004.³⁹

The predictions seemed to be holding up in 2005. Media buyers and planners reported that they spent 18% of their clients' ad budgets on online local media in the third quarter, up from 13% in the first two quarters.⁴⁰

When we look closer at how local online advertising is shared across the different types of Web sites, we see that newspaper companies and non-traditional media companies, such as Google and Monster.com, continue to perform well. Newspapers grabbed 44% of the local online advertising marketplace while companies like Monster.com and Google, among other non-traditional companies, absorbed 40%.

Meanwhile, Yellow pages and television and radio sites are still receiving a relatively small piece of the pie, though growing. In 2004, TV stations increased their local online ad revenue nearly 59% to \$119 million, while radio stations' revenues nearly doubled, reaching \$34 million.⁴¹

Looking ahead, newspapers may find themselves facing even more competition from the non-traditional, Internet-based companies for local ad dollars. Research from the Kelsey group estimates that Internet companies' search engines will generate \$3.4 billion in local ad sales by 2009.⁴² In San Francisco, some analysts believe that if Google is successful in its bid to provide the city with free, universal WiFi, local newspapers — estimated to have lost between \$50 million and \$65 million in employment advertising revenue to Craigslist — could see their share of local ad revenue further reduced.⁴³

In addition to businesses and marketers becoming increasingly comfortable with and knowledgeable about the Web, perhaps another reason for higher growth at the local level is new developments in technology. Not surprisingly, Google jumped into the game with the 2005 launch of a product that combines its online maps with local search features that include links to local businesses.⁴⁴

Market analysts generally agree that there will be strong growth in local advertising, but differ over how strong and how it will get there. According to Jupiter Research, local online spending will reach \$5.3 billion in 2010. Borrell Associates anticipates that the market will grow to \$8.6 billion over the next five years. The reason for such a gap is that Jupiter Research analysts believe that the market will remain heavy on classified ads rather than moving toward a more lucrative, search-based market that currently exists at the national level. According to David Card, vice president and senior analyst at Jupiter Research, local businesses still lack a sense of comfort and familiarity with local online advertising:

“[Local advertisers] are going to have to go through the whole education process that multinational advertisers went through. It’s many years behind where current online advertising is.”

Borrell Associates, on the other hand, believes local advertisers will be able to adapt more quickly to a search-based market, and thus projects higher growth for the rest of the decade. ⁴⁵

Like the industry over all, the local online advertising industry is still maturing. Currently, around 2% of all local advertising is spent online, though it is projected to reach 6% of all local spending over the next five years. ⁴⁶ For online advertising to continue to grow at the local level, it will have to reduce its “dependence on bundling print or broadcast advertising with online advertising” and continue to “reach out to that large segment of advertisers that don’t currently do business with them,” according to Borrell Associates.

The Success of Other News Sites

Surging revenues from online advertising have not been limited to traditional newspaper companies. In 2005, non-traditional news sites like Google and Yahoo continued to generate headlines for their astonishing economic performances.

Google

Google became a public company in the summer of 2004 and quickly became the world’s biggest media company, at least in stock value. Deloitte Touche has named Google the fastest-growing company ever with its five-year revenue growth at over 400,000%. ⁴⁷ In 2004, Google’s revenues were \$3.1 billion, a huge increase over the \$1.5 billion in 2003 and just \$440 million in 2002. ⁴⁸

Of course, almost all of Google’s revenue comes from search advertising. In 2004, 99% of Google’s total revenues were from advertising, according to the company’s SEC filing. ⁴⁹ And Google made a significant move in late 2005 to preserve its position atop the online search industry. In late December, it was announced that Google and AOL had agreed to a sale that would give Google a 5% stake in AOL. The agreement was generally seen as further consolidation in the online search industry and a setback for Microsoft, which had hoped to increase its revenue from online search advertising and increase its chances to compete with Google and Yahoo.

As of October 2005, Google was worth \$80 billion in stock market capitalization, ahead of Time Warner, which was valued at \$78 billion. Google’s annual revenues, though, are comparatively just a drop in the bucket — slightly over \$3 billion in 2005 compared to \$42 billion for Time Warner. ⁵⁰ The Silicon Valley-based company’s ad sales for 2005 were projected to put them fourth among all American media companies. ⁵¹ At the end of 2005 there was discussion of whether Google’s stock valuation needed to be realigned. In late November, the stock fell from nearly \$20 a share to \$403.54. ⁵²

How has the company managed such success? In some ways, Google’s business strategy has been compared to the one adopted by ABC, CBS and NBC in the first days of network television. Google first allows people to conduct searches on almost any conceivable topic free, just as the networks distributed free programming. Then both Google and the television networks use advertising to produce revenue. And finally Google links together smaller Web sites with national advertisers, in much the same way that networks placed national advertising on local TV stations.

Yahoo

In 2004, Yahoo's revenue increased from \$1.6 billion to \$3.6 billion — a 125% increase.⁵³ That was even higher than the 113% increase at Google. In the third quarter of 2005, 87% of Yahoo's revenue came from advertising. The other 13% came mainly from subscription-based services, like broadband access fees and Musicmatch.⁵⁴ While Google's appeal to advertisers is mainly built around the incomparable popularity of its search engine technology, Yahoo attracts advertisers for additional reasons.

First, it has registered over 190 million users, which means it can provide marketers with a wealth of personalized information they can use to customize ads. Google, on the other hand, has just started to collect personal information through its Gmail and blogging software.

Second, Yahoo users, who are exposed to a diverse range of features on the site such as sports, financial, health and entertainment information, personal and real estate ads, music downloads, e-mail, an instant message service, and a link for booking flight and hotel reservations, prove more engaged than users on other sites. For example, Yahoo generated 178 million page views in May 2005 compared to 96 million for MSN, 68 million for Google, and 39 million for AOL, according to Comscore Media Metrix.⁵⁵ For many marketers, the number of page views is a key indicator of the level of consumer engagement with the ads.⁵⁶ (For a fuller discussion on how Yahoo and Google invest in their news operations, see the news investment section of this report.)

AOL: Don't Call It a Comeback

Another big economic story from 2005 is the quiet — at least initially — resurgence of AOL. As Randall Stross of the New York Times pointed out, AOL has long been the online world's "dead man walking," but has rebounded time and time again.⁵⁷

Soon after AOL acquired Time Warner in January 2000, broadband service began to take over the lucrative dial-up system on which access to AOL was based. As a result, AOL saw its subscriber base dwindle from 26.5 million in 2002 to 21.2 million in January 2005.⁵⁸

In December 2004, AOL announced it was becoming a largely free portal basing much of its revenue from advertising, much like Yahoo, Google and MSN, although it said it would charge for several features its research showed were most appealing to subscribers, including special features for children with access control for their parents, Spanish-language pages, protection against viruses and spam, and e-mail addresses at AOL.com.⁵⁹ In the fall of 2005, AOL began an estimated \$50 million campaign to promote the site as a free portal.⁶⁰

The shift to a more advertising-dependent site has helped soften the blow of its losses in subscription revenue. In the second quarter of 2005, that revenue decreased 9%, or \$168 million, but advertising revenue surged 45% over the year before to reach \$99 million for the quarter. Combined with the increase in advertising revenue has been a reduction in expenses that has resulted in a 33% increase in operating income, from \$276 million in the second quarter 2004 to \$368 million in 2005.⁶¹

In addition to opening up many of its features to non-subscribers, AOL is also hoping to increase traffic through use of its free accessories, including Netscape and the AOL Instant Messenger chat system. Combined, those services are used by more than 50 million people a month who are not AOL members.⁶²

AOL has also looked to video as way to increase its overall audience figures and appeal to more advertisers. Video coverage of the Live 8 concert drew 5 million viewers the day of the performance and tens of millions more who logged on later, according to Jim Bankoff, executive vice president of AOL.⁶³

While some analysts speculate that AOL's best days are behind it because it is already too far behind the other free, advertising-based portals, others say that AOL's previous history with many former AOL subscribers and the belief that broadband is only in its early days could help AOL over the long run.⁶⁴

Moreover, the AOL brand is still considered an "awfully powerful brand," an important reputation not only for advertisers but for an audience that seeks reliable, trustworthy, and virus-free content.⁶⁵

Profitability

Until recently, it would have been a major event for an online news site to report a profit. Over the last two years, that has changed. There is still a fair amount of unevenness, and some sites have a long way to go. But the trajectory is increasingly clear.

Last year we discussed the difficulty of reporting profit figures for online news, including the fact that different companies handle the accounting for their online operations differently. Still, there are indicators that offer an overall picture.

For online newspaper sites, survey research from Borrell Associates Inc. suggests that large spikes in ad revenue have helped push profits upward. According to a survey of 719 daily and weekly newspapers across the country, the average online profit margin was nearly 70% — an increase of nearly 10 percentage points over 2003. Moreover, 90% reported they were making some profit, up seven percentage points from the previous year.

It also appears that there is a direct relationship between a newspaper's circulation and its online profitability. Generally, with a few exceptions, the sites with the largest audience figures tend to be the most profitable. ⁶⁶

At least one online news division appeared to be collecting more profit than its print counterpart. In the second quarter of 2005, the Dow Jones print publishing division, publisher of the Wall Street Journal, reported an operating income of \$7.2 million, a decrease of nearly 60% from the same period in 2004. The electronic publishing division of Dow Jones, however, which includes WSJ.com as well as Market Watch, reported an operating income of \$29 million, an increase of 28% from the year before. ⁶⁷

Only two public media companies were still reporting online losses in 2004, according to Borrell: Belo had a loss of \$4.7 million on revenues of \$31.1 million from its digital operations, while Media General Interactive reported a loss of \$6.3 million on revenues of \$13.9 million. ⁶⁸

Local television Web sites, meanwhile, are still struggling to earn a profit. More than three quarters (75.8%) of TV stations were unprofitable in 2004, although that was better than 2003 (85.2%).

The Online Economic Model

The flip side of profitability online, of course, is that some of the gains are coming at the expense of the traditional print media, which supply the online news sites not only with the content but with investment dollars as well. In other words, the Web sites might be eating the lunch of the old media they are so dependent on, and this is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the alarming number of layoffs at newspapers across the country.

Up to this point, the economic model of traditional media online has been largely dependent on advertising and support from the parent company, with the content offered free as consumers have seemed to resist paying. ⁶⁹

In 2005, there was finally some evidence that the efforts of online newspaper sites to diversify their revenue stream by charging for content might be making headway — at least a little. Indeed, roughly 40% of online newspaper editors and managers expect to charge a subscription fee in the future. In late September 2005, the New York Times started charging readers access to its opinion columns, frequently the most popular features on its site. In mid-November, the Times reported that it had registered 270,000 for the TimesSelect; approximately half of those were new, online-only subscribers. Heading into 2006, though, of the nation's 1,456 daily newspapers, only one national newspaper, the Wall Street Journal, and approximately 40 small dailies charged their online readers. ⁷⁰

The question of paying for content is critical for several reasons. If online advertising revenue is not likely to catch up to print anytime soon — or at all — the profitability of online journalism, and the resources of the newsrooms that produce it, may depend heavily on whether a second revenue stream can be developed.

And since newspapers on average generate 20% of their revenue from circulation, if the Internet cannot begin to charge, that would represent a major blow to revenues as well. As Colby Atwood, vice president of Borrell Associates Inc. told the New York Times in March, 2005:

“A big part of the motivation for newspapers to charge for their online content is not the revenue it will generate, but the revenue it will save, by slowing the erosion of their print subscriptions.” ⁷¹

Conclusion

There was much talk in late 2005 of another economic bubble like the one that devastated the online industry at the turn of this century. But most signs point to much healthier, stable economic conditions in 2006 and beyond.

As John Battelle and Chris Anderson have written, there are several key reasons not to expect a repeat of 2000. First, as suggested earlier, broadband penetration has increased rapidly since the online world began to emerge from the ruins of 2001 and 2002. And broadband access is the engine for much of the industry's growth.

Second, the technological infrastructure to run online sites is much cheaper now, which helps keep down operating costs. That is particularly true for servers that are needed to host both existing and new sites. Moreover, less expensive hardware means less of a risk in launching a new site and thus encourages more entrepreneurship.

Finally, there is considerably less venture capital circulating in Silicon Valley. According to Chris Anderson, venture capitalists are now investing "less than a fifth" of their 2000 level.⁷² Less venture capital has meant many fewer public offerings. Rather, hot new companies are being woven into more secure, corporate media structures like the News Corporation or the New York Times Company.

Footnotes

1. Final numbers are expected to be released in April 2006. "Internet Advertising Revenues Estimated To Exceed \$12.5 Billion For Full Year 2005," Interactive Advertising Bureau, March 1, 2006.
2. Survey research of Madison Avenue also suggests a healthy market. In May 2005, Forrester Research, a global technology and market research company with headquarters in Cambridge, Mass., interviewed 99 major advertisers and 20 ad agencies. According to the research, 74% of the advertisers said their clients' third-quarter spending on online advertising increased from the second quarter, and 60% said they expected their clients to spend more in the fourth quarter. Online Media Daily, "Media Execs Bullish On Ad Spending," October 18, 2005.
3. Mike Shields, "Rational Exuberance," Media Outlook Report, AdWeek Magazines, September 26, 2005. One anecdote that illustrates the strong online ad market is the Super Bowl-like rate MSN has been able to charge for a 24-hour spot on its home page. In November, MSN told the Wall Street Journal that it was charging between several hundred thousand and \$1 million — up from \$25,000 to \$50,000 just four years ago. "Online ad sales soaring, report says," CNN/Money, November 16, 2005. Available online at: http://money.cnn.com/2005/11/16/technology/web_ads/
4. Rick E. Bruner, "The Decade in Online Advertising, 1994-2004," Doubleclick.com, April 2005.
5. Eric Auchard, "Web Map Tracks Demand for Major News," Reuters, August 18, 2005.
6. "Google adds software designed to track success of customers' ads," Bloomberg News, November 15, 2005.
7. Antone Gonsalves, "Online Ad Spending Projected To Slow," Tech Web News, May 6, 2005.
8. To provide another opinion on this matter: paid search, the largest category of online ad spending, could slow, according to Jupiter Research. Click here for an article on the study's findings: http://news.com.com/Paid+search+growth+may+slow/2100-1024_3-5301622.html].
9. Communications Industry Forecast 2005-2009, Veronis Suhler Stevenson, pp.112-113. The growth rates were much smaller for other media platforms: cable and satellite television, 12%; broadcast television, 4%; newspapers, 4%; and radio, 4%.
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Another concern that could slow down online advertising is consumer anxiety about credit card fraud and identity theft and the potential impact it may have on overall online consumption. Research conducted by Consumer Reports WebWatch found that a quarter of Americans have stopped buying things online and nearly 3 in 10 (29%) online shoppers have reduced how often they make purchases over the Web. The study also found that nearly a third (30%) had reduced their overall use of the

Internet. Consumer Reports WebWatch, "Leap of Faith: Using the Internet Despite The Dangers," October 26, 2005. Available online at: <http://www.consumerwebwatch.org/pdfs/princeton.pdf>.

11. "What Local Web Sites Earn: 2005 Survey," Borrell Associates Inc., March 2005. Looking specifically at the top 10 publicly traded newspaper companies, Borrell reports that their total online revenue increased from \$508 million in 2003 to \$722 million in 2004, a 42% surge.
12. Michael Deibert, "Newspaper Ad Spending Climbs, Albeit Mostly Online," Media Post, August 23, 2005
13. "New York Times Company Reports First-Quarter Results," Times Company press release, April 14, 2005.
14. Jennifer Saba, "Online Growth Proving to Be Industry's Life Raft," Editor and Publisher, August 19, 2005
15. Who Advertisers on newspaper Web sites? The sources at this point resemble those of the print papers. In 2004, nearly 70% of online newspaper local ad revenue came from automotive, real estate and recruitment — the same percentages as newspapers in print. One reason for the similarity may be that nearly half (46%) of all online revenue at newspapers comes from up-selling, or selling online add-ons to print advertisers. Borrell Research explains how upselling works at online newspaper sites:

"These add-ons can be as subtle as 'assumed' sales in which a classified advertiser is charged extra (unbeknownst to the advertiser) because the ad also appears on the newspaper Web site, or as a specifically sold 'combo' buy in which an advertiser elects to complement his print ad with an online banner on the newspaper site." These advances have put newspapers in the lead for local online ad buys, though there is some evidence that companies like Google and Monster.com are right behind. In 2004, they received 44% of all spending with \$1.19 billion in revenue — up five points from 2003. "What Local Web Sites Earn: 2005 Survey," Borrell Associates Inc., March 2005.

Other research supports this finding. A survey of online editors and managers by the University of Nevada in 2005 found that 76% of the respondents reported that half or more of their revenue was from classified advertising — up from just 15% in 1996. Donica Mensing and Jackie Rejtek, "Prospects for profit: The (un)evolving business model for online news," Paper presented to the International Symposium on Online Journalism, University of Texas at Austin, April 9, 2005.
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17. Rick Edmonds, "An Online Rescue for Newspapers?" Poynter Online, January 27, 2005.
18. Interactive Advertising Bureau, "Q2 Reports Close to \$3 Billion in Internet Advertising Revenues," September 26, 2005.
19. Interactive Advertising Bureau, "Interactive Advertising Revenues Grow Nearly 33% As 2004 Totals \$9.6 Billion," April 28, 2005.
20. "The online ad attack," The Economist, April 27, 2005.
21. In October 2005, nearly half of all searches were conducted on Google (48%) while Yahoo captured 22%. The next most popular sites were MSN (11%), AOL (7%) and Ask Jeeves (3%). "Volume of Search Queries Jumps 15% In Past Five Months, Driven By the 'Big Three' Search Engines, According to Nielsen//Net Ratings," Nielsen//Net Ratings press release, December 13, 2005.
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23. Interactive Advertising Bureau, "Interactive Advertising Revenues Grow Nearly 33% As 2004 Totals \$9.6 Billion," April 28, 2005.
24. Interactive Advertising Bureau, "Q2 Reports Close to \$3 Billion in Internet Advertising Revenues," September 26, 2005.
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27. Interactive Advertising Bureau, "Interactive Advertising Revenues Grow Nearly 33% As 2004 Totals \$9.6 Billion," April 28, 2005.
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31. Online Publishers Association bi-weekly newsletter, August 22-September 2, 2005.
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37. "Kris Oser, "Online Video Ad Spending To Triple By 2007," AdAge.com, November 17, 2005.
38. Wendy Davis, "Deutsche Bank: Online Ad Spending Up 11 % in Q2," Media Post, July 18, 2005.
39. Borrell Research has projected \$4.1 billion ("2006 Outlook: Local Online Growth Continues—for Some," September 2005); Jupiter Research has projected \$3.2 billion (Pamela Parker, "Classifieds Still King but Paid Search Looms Locally," Clickz.com, September 22, 2005).
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41. "What Local Web Sites Earn: 2005 Survey," Borrell Associates Inc., March 2005.
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45. Pamela Parker, "Classifieds Still King but Paid Search Looms Locally," Clickz.com, September 22, 2005.
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50. "\$80bn Google takes top media spot," BBC News, June 8, 2005.
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52. "U.S. Stocks End Slightly Lower; Oil at 5 1/2 Month Low," Dow Jones, November 29, 2005.
53. SEC form 10-K for Yahoo Inc., March 11, 2005. Available online at: <http://biz.Yahoo.com/e/050311/yhoo10-k.html>.
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65. David A. Vise, "AOL Rediscovered Success With Free Web Sites," the Washington Post, October 19, 2005.
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67. SEC form 10-Q for Dow Jones and Co Inc., August 1, 2005.
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69. Recent survey research confirms the overwhelming economic importance of advertising to online newspaper sites. A survey of editors and managers conducted by the University of Nevada found that almost 80% of the respondents reported classified advertising as a "very important" revenue source, and nearly 6 in 10 (58%) said display advertising was "very important." Considerably smaller percentages regarded subscriptions, revenue from archives, and other sources as "very important" to their economic health. In fact, roughly 7 in 10 reported no income from subscriptions — virtually the same as in 1996 when the Internet first took off. Fewer than 3% report

even charging a subscription fee. Donica Mensing and Jackie Rejtek, "Prospects for profit: The (un)evolving business model for online news," paper presented to the International Symposium on Online Journalism, University of Texas at Austin, April 9, 2005.

Meanwhile, research among Internet users suggests very few pay for news online or would willing to do so. Just 6% have ever paid for access to online news, and only 7% would consider paying a fee, according to research conducted by Consumer Web Watch. Younger viewers were a little more open to idea (16% of Gen Xers, 17% and Gen Yers. Consumer Reports WebWatch, "Leap of Faith: Using the Internet Despite The Dangers," October 26, 2005. Available online at: <http://www.consumerwebwatch.org/pdfs/princeton.pdf>

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72. Chris Anderson, "The New Boom," Wired, February 2006.

Ownership

Ownership

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

It appears that much of what was said about who owned news Internet in 2004 was true again in 2005.

The most popular news sites were the same four that have long been at the top of the list. And the news sites generating the most traffic continue to be owned by the richest U.S. media corporations.

A few developments in 2005 were worth noting—-. After speculation that Time Warner planned to sell AOL, what came about was a limited partnership with Google. Thus further consolidation was probably avoided.

And one site that showed some of the highest growth in traffic during 2005, the BBC, was not American or even a for-profit corporation.

Online News Leaders

Two organizations are the central providers for online traffic figures: Nielsen//Net Ratings and Comscore MediaMetrix. Both show increases in 2005 traffic among the top sites, though their numbers for specific sites vary somewhat.

The top 20 news sites, as measured by Nielsen//Net Ratings, averaged 10.7 million visitors a month from January through December 2005. That was an increase of 9% over 2004. 1

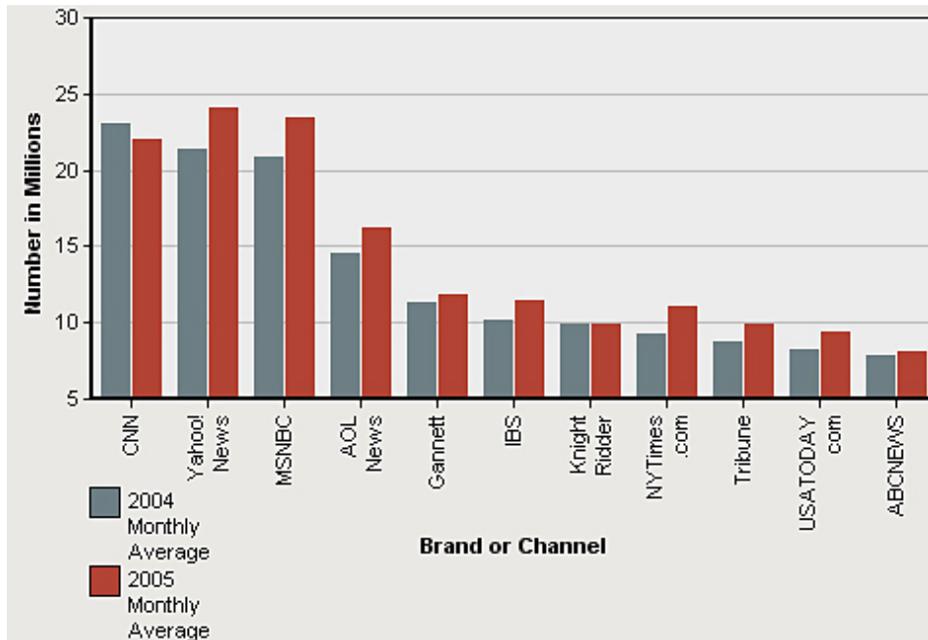
At the very top, four sites continue to generate the most traffic, though there was some reshuffling among those leaders.

In 2005, Yahoo News moved to the top, averaging 24.1 million unique visitors a month. That was up 12% over the previous year, the most of the major players.

At No. 2, MSNBC's online audience stood at 23.4 million in 2005, an increase of 11%. CNN, the overall leader 2004, experienced a slight decline in 2005, dropping 5% to 22 million unique visitors.

And AOL News remained fourth at 16.2 million, up 11% in 2005, according to data from Nielsen//Net Ratings. After the big four, there was a steep drop – off in traffic — an average of around 8 million unique visitors a month, according to Nielsen//Net Ratings. 2

Top Online News Sites (Nielsen)
January to December 2005



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Nielsen//NetRatings

* Beginning with Sept. 2004 data, Nielsen//NetRatings—to increase accuracy—has improved its NetView home panel sample weighting methodology by updating projections for key segments of the Internet universe. Caution should be used with trending data.

Data from Comscore also shows the same four sites dominating , but has AOL News with a considerably higher monthly average than the one from Nielsen//Net Ratings. Yahoo led the way, with an average of 27 million unique visitors a month in 2005 with MSNBC (26.2 million) not too far behind. CNN (21.9 million) and AOL News (20.9 million) were the next sites on the list. After those four , there was a very significant drop off in traffic. The next news site on the list was Internet Broadcasting (11 million), an aggregation of television news sites. 3

As in 2004, “traditional” journalism brands still seem to hold the most appeal, judging by audience numbers. The Internet has long been known for a seemingly unlimited number of news sites from across the political spectrum. The most popular sites, however, are generally associated with the media establishment. Of the top 20 Nielsen//NetRatings sites in 2005, 17 were associated with traditional news companies — those that produce most of their content offline for newspapers, television, or magazines.

Madison Avenue has followed the audience trends, with more and more branding dollars going to the largest portals, such as Yahoo, MSN, and AOL. According to Pricewaterhouse Coopers, the 50 largest Web companies attract 96% of all ad spending, with most going to the biggest of the big: AOL, Yahoo, Google and MSN. 4

The Rest of the Top 20

Of the top 20 sites for 2005, 12 were individual sites. In addition to CNN, Yahoo, MSNBC and CNN, they include, in order, AOL, the New York Times, USA Today, ABC News, Google News, WashingtonPost.com, CBS News, Fox News, and BBC News. The rest were multiple sites whose totals are aggregated under one corporate roof, such as the combined Web sites of the newspapers of Knight Ridder or Gannett.

The site that exhibited the highest rate of growth this year was the BBC, which has been recognized not only for its strong international reportage but also for an increasing number of interactive tools for its readers. Those strengths became especially evident during major international events such as the tsunami and the London subway terrorist attacks. In 2005, the BBC News Web site averaged 5.6 million unique viewers, an increase of 30% over 2004.

As noted in our discussion of the newspaper industry, national newspapers like the New York Times and USA Today bucked the trend of declining print circulation in 2005. They also fared well online. The audience for those sites grew 19% and 15% respectively in 2005. Some papers with more regional print circulation, such as the Washington Post, which suffered declines in print circulation in excess of 6%, grew even more online. The Post's Web site traffic in 2005 surge by 31%.

Another site that fared exceptionally well is Google News, which launched in September 2003 and emerged from its experimental or "Beta" testing stage in late January 2005. The front page of Google News is based on an algorithm that crawls the Internet for stories and ranks them according to what the algorithm deems most relevant. This often results in a mix of material from sources outside the mainstream news pool. In 2005, Google News averaged a monthly unique audience of 7.8 million visitors in the United States — an increase of 25%.

Of the other sites in the top 20, the collections of sites, in addition to Knight Ridder and Gannett, include a host of local TV news sites called Internet Broadcasting, Tribune Newspapers, Hearst Newspapers Digital, World Now, Advance Internet , and the Associated Press.) Some of these sites experienced strong growth while others showed sluggish growth or none at all. For example, World Now, a network of local news media, grew 26% in 2005. But Gannett grew only 5% and the Associated Press appeared to decline. 5

Online Media Ownership Trends

The traffic numbers for the top sites raise another issue. In its earliest days, the Internet was celebrated as a liberating force from what many derided as the homogenized, mass -market approach that characterized so-called old media: radio, television, newspapers and magazines. And while anyone with a modem and computer can now produce either a news site or a blog, the most popular online news sites remain very much a mirror image of other news industries in which a relatively small handful of media conglomerates own a large majority of news outlets.

Some media critics, most notably Ben Bagdikian, former dean of the graduate school of journalism at the University of California, Berkeley, see a dangerous lack of diversity in the online news world:

"The American population is remarkably diverse in background, politics, geography, and tastes, and has always needed this variety reflected in a parallel diversity in its public information and entertainment...With the country's widest disseminators of news, commentary, and ideas firmly entrenched among a small number of the world's wealthiest corporations, it may not be surprising that their news and commentary is limited to an unrepresentative narrow spectrum of politics." 13

As we have noted in earlier years, of the top 20 online news sites, 80% are owned by the 100 largest media companies in terms of total net media revenue generated in the U.S., as reported by Advertising Age. For example, Time Warner was the top company in media revenue (\$37 billion) and it is the parent of the third and fourth most popular sites, CNN.com and AOL News. Gannett is 12th among leading media companies, and it owns two of the most popular news sites, USA Today.com and the aggregation of its own many local newspaper sites. 14

Compared to last year, the same percentage of sites (80%) are owned by the top media companies while the share of sites owned by the 10 sites with the most revenue fell from 32% to 25% in 2005.

What accounts for the relative stability in media concentration trends? Perhaps one reason is the FCC's decision in 2005 not to rule on the "cross-ownership" ban that bars companies from owning newspapers and television stations in the same market. (For a more detailed discussion of potential FCC actions in 2006, see the ownership section in the local television chapter).

Two of the four sites not owned by leading U.S. media companies are the property of behemoths in their own right, BBC News and the Associated Press. The other two, Internet Broadcasting and World Now, are really aggregations of many sites.

BBC and the Associated Press are media organizations that offer a business model different from the traditional media corporation. BBC is financed by a television license owned by households and "does not have to serve the interests of advertisers, or produce a return for shareholders." 15 Meanwhile, the Associated Press is a not-for-profit cooperative with 3,700 employees working in 240 news bureaus around the world. 16

Acquisition of Non-News Sites

One of the major 2005 trends in media economics was the acquisition of smaller Internet properties by huge media companies, enhancing their already dominant position. Over 16 months, Scripps bought Shopzilla; Dow Jones bought MarketWatch; the New York Times Company bought About.com; and Gannett, Knight Ridder, and Tribune Co. acquired 75% of the local-news aggregator Topix.net .

Other media companies may be keeping a close eye on the demographic changes that lie ahead for big media. In the late summer of 2005, News Corp. spent \$1.5 billion on three Internet companies in just seven weeks, including mySpace.com, which receives 32 million visits in the U.S. each month. 17 According to the New York Times, Rupert Murdoch "has been particularly concerned about younger audiences spending less time reading newspapers and watching television, while spending more time online and embracing such features as interactivity and virtual communities." With the acquisitions, News Corp. will rank fourth in total monthly page views, behind Yahoo, Time Warner and MSN, but ahead of eBay and Google. 18

Why has there been such a flurry of activity? Some analysts speculate that the acquisitions are a strategy to compete for a larger slice of the Internet advertising pie, which some fear is quickly being gobbled up by Yahoo and Google. In other words, some traditional media companies feel they cannot afford not to participate in the market right now.

Another reason is that such acquisitions please Wall Street. "Rather than taking small stakes in promising start ups," one analyst praised Rupert Murdoch's News Corp., for instance, for "focusing on buying companies outright that are somewhat proven and generating operating earnings." 19

Footnotes

1. Unpublished data from Nielsen//NetRatings.
2. Ibid.
3. Unpublished data from comScore.
4. Deutsche Bank, MediaPost, eMarketer, January 18, 2005; "Online ad sales soaring, report says," CNN/Money, November 16, 2005.
5. Unpublished data from Nielsen//NetRatings.
6. Steve Case, "It's Time to Take It Apart," the Washington Post, December 11, 2005.
7. Saul Hansell, "Big Hitters Said to Want Piece of AOL," the New York Times, October 13, 2005.
8. Ben Elgin, "Gunning for Google," Business Week, November 8, 2005.
9. "The battle of the portals," The Economist, October 22-28, 2005.
10. Julia Angwin, Kevin J. Delaney and Peter Grant, "Google, Comcast Seek Piece of AOL," the Wall Street Journal, October 13, 2005
11. "The battle of the portals," The Economist, October 22-28, 2005.
12. Sandy Brown, "Google Does Web Another Favor," TheStreet.com, December 20, 2005.
13. Ben Bagdikian, The Media Monopoly, (Beacon Press: 2000)
14. Advertising Age, "100 Leading Media Companies," AdAge.com. Companies are ranked by their total media revenues collected in the U.S. in 2003. The list is available online at: <http://www.adage.com/page.cms?pageId=1158>.
15. BBC News Web site, last accessed January 24, 2006.
16. AP.org Website, last accessed January 24, 2006.
17. Saul Hansell, "As Gadgets Get It Together, Media Makers Fall Behind," the New York Times, January 25, 2006.
18. In December, the Internet chief at News Corp. told investors the company was considering a partnership in sponsored search. (Seth Sutel, "Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. Expands Its Online Strategy," Associated Press, December 6, 2005).
19. Richard Siklos, "News Corporation, With IGN in Its Stable, Backs Up Promise to Be Bigger Web Player," the New York Times, September 9, 2005.

News Investment

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

As more eyeballs and ad dollars migrate to the Web, there is anecdotal evidence that both traditional and non-traditional news organizations are finally beginning to invest more heavily in their online news platforms. And certainly their rhetoric is designed to show Wall Street that they understand this is where their future lies.

A closer look, however, suggests it is wise to continue to raise questions. Are the investments being channeled toward improving news content? Is the innovation in journalism or mainly in technology? Do the journalism companies have it in their DNA to make the kind of innovations that will keep them as journalism's leaders in the new century? And will mature journalism businesses be given the leeway by Wall Street shareholders to make the kinds of investments and gambles that their high-technology rivals — who are stealing their audience and their advertising but do not produce the content — are being capitalized to make?

One issue we addressed in last year's report was the nature of this investment. Looking at the major players it seems to be taking two forms.

One is investments in personnel — people power, to gather more information, do more original reporting, synthesize material already in the public domain.

The other is investment in technology to improve the gathering, sorting and disseminating of news and information to the consumer.

For many news sites, a combination of the two could be best. Sites from traditional news outlets like the New York Times or CNN.com offer a good deal of original reporting, which requires a significant, continuing investment in news staff. But those sites are also working to offer the reporting in the most usable form, particularly for the Web, and that demands an investment in non-news staff and technology of the sort that new-technology companies are making.

So far — and there are some exceptions— it may be that investments in personnel are not keeping up with expenditures in technological and software capital, which do not necessarily improve the quality of reporting. The challenge may be even harder in years to come, because news organizations that employ those who produce the content for news sites have made major cuts in their editorial staffs over the last few years.

Meanwhile, other sites like Google and Yahoo do either no original reporting whatsoever or have just begun to publish original content in a very limited form. Their service is generally to help the user sort through what is already out there and ultimately find that relevant piece of information.

To get a fuller sense of the major players' commitment to quality information, let's look at two major types of online news providers: the traditional news producers and non-traditional news aggregators.

Traditional news producers

Unlike local television and newspapers, which collect industry-wide statistics on staffing levels, there are few data available for how many journalists work in online news. Many sites with original news content mainly carry stories from their sister platforms. Washingtonpost.com, for instance, can post stories directly pulled from the newspaper, thus using the same print reporter for both platforms.

For television outlets, the translation is slightly more involved, at least for now. The stories produced for CNN, for example, are normally put in written form for the Web site. Even here, though, the additional work is minimal and the story is usually posted under the same correspondent's name.

Clearly, many news organizations still see the online operation as a spin-off of their “primary” platform. That makes some sense, since most of the online ventures could not yet stand alone financially (though that may change). It also suggests that any staff cuts in the main reporting arm greatly affect the online reporting capacity as well.

Many traditional news sites have begun experimenting by offering more citizen-based content. The level of experimentation has varied. The News & Record, the daily newspaper in Greensboro, N.C., was encouraged by its owner, Landmark Communications, to “break free” of the conventional method of newsgathering. The News & Record site showcases a virtual town square complete with blogs on news, sports, religion, food, cooking, and music. The site also offers an opportunity for citizens to submit their own news stories, which are only lightly edited for grammar and spelling. ¹

As a way of testing new waters at a more comfortable remove, other traditional news organizations have experimented by partnering with technology-based sites that themselves are doing more experimental reporting. Knight Ridder, for instance, launched SiliconValley.com in early 2001. The site offers a range of interactive tools for readers, including blogs and a number of virtual round tables.

In 2005, one site that took steps to make its content more of a public square yet reinforced its commitment and priority to the classic tenets of journalism was CBSNews.com.

CBS News

For now, it appears CBS News has invested more in its Web operation than most traditional news organizations.

In the summer of 2005, at a time when network television news broadcasts continued to experience shrinking audience ratings, CBSNews.com announced it was going to rethink its role as a traditional television and radio news provider and begin shifting much of its content to the Internet. CBS Digital’s president, Larry Kramer, who founded MarketWatch.com, even audaciously predicted that the move would undermine the existing cable television news model because it would cater to the online news consumer’s growing habit of seeking news during the day, and from a computer.

The move has happened. CBSNews.com’s revamped Web site is built around three core principles that enthusiasts have championed as the promise of the Internet: transparency, interactivity, and multimedia capability.

One major component of the new look at CBS News.com is a Web log hosted by Vaughn Ververs named the “Public Eye.” Ververs’s blog is intended to illuminate the newsgathering process at CBS News, and the site has offered Webcasts of editorial meetings. NBC and ABC are also offering online sites that pull back the curtain on how the news is made at the major networks.

In an interview with CJR Daily, an online media-criticism arm of the Columbia Journalism Review, Kramer provided an example of what is meant by more transparency:

“The other thing [Ververs] will do is he’ll be proactive in explaining how CBS does its business. And by that I mean he’ll go in, and he might decide one day to videotape the story conference for the evening news — at 10:00 in the morning they get together and talk about what’s likely to be on the evening news tonight — and give people a glimpse of how those decisions are made. And show the editors pitching stories, and saying, ‘No we have that, we should put this here, and let’s spend our time on this.’ ”

“Public Eye” is also striving to make the online news experience more interactive by serving as a “liaison” between readers and reporters at CBS. Andrew Heyward, then president of CBS News, even created a new title for Ververs: “nonbudsman.” Ververs was supposed to survey what the online community was saying about CBS News, then deliver that criticism to management and news correspondents, who in turn would offer Ververs their explanations for posting publicly on the “Public Eye” blog. ²

Some critics saw CBS’s move as designed more to restore the news organization’s credibility, which was tarnished during the “Memogate” incident of September 2004 — particularly among bloggers — than to innovate newsgathering.

CBS, however, also sought to deliver on the Web’s promise of multimedia capability. Kramer argued that in the new 24-hour digital universe, online users will want their news all the time, and especially at work, where the growth of broadband has created more opportunities for video news consumption. Through a video player named “The EyeBox,” users were supposed to be able to stream over 25,000 new and archived videos. Users were also allowed to build their own newscast, and CBS plans to offer daily and weekly video programming from Bob Schieffer, John Roberts, Hannah Storm, and others. There was also talk of sending crews into the field to shoot video footage of bloggers who have particularly valuable commentary on the organization’s news products.

Investment has not been exclusively limited to technology. In July, Heyward and Larry Kramer of CBS Digital said they planned on expanding editorial staffing at CBS News.com as well as the total resources of CBS News. ³

Reactions from the blogosphere to the launch of “Public Eye” were generally positive (source: “Eye on CBS,” American Journalism Review, October/November 2005). But some bloggers criticized the decision to edit readers’ comments and posts — which violates orthodox blogging protocol. Jay Rosen, a journalism professor at New York University who blogs on the news media industry, said he hoped that the move toward more transparency would ultimately improve the quality of the network news programming, but he remained rather skeptical. ⁴

One important question lingers for other news organizations that consider CBS’s strategy a harbinger of things to come. As Kramer told CJR Daily, the Web site was largely funded by existing television revenue, though it hoped to cash in on the lucrative online advertising market. Is this a viable long-term strategy, if the television audience ratings continue to decline and revenue from TV ads dries up? Again, the question of a stable online business model continues to loom for the online news universe.

Non-Traditional News Aggregators

Google News and Yahoo News are currently two of the most popular online news sites, according to data from Nielsen//Net Ratings. While both are often lumped together as the two most successful online only ventures, they have taken different approaches to their news operations. Perhaps the differing strategies reflect how each company sees itself: one a technology company and the other a media company. We decided to examine each company’s approach to newsroom investment.

Google News

Before September 11, Google did not see itself as anything more than the world’s dominant search engine. In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, however, millions of Americans went online for more information but were unable to access traditional news sites like cnn.com and abcnews.com because of the overwhelming surge in traffic. ⁵ Many

turned to Google as an alternative. While at the time it did not have a “Google News” page, it did offer links to major online news sites such as the Washington Post and BBC. It also linked to cached versions of earlier reports done by major online news organizations — its first attempt at producing an editorial product. ⁶ Shortly after seeing the value in those links during the 9/11 news frenzy, Google added a separate “News and Resources” link to its homepage. And by 2002, Google News became part of the online news experience for an increasing number of Americans and others around the globe. ⁷

Google News does not use human editors but rather an algorithm that crawls over 4,500 news sources from around the world and then ranks them based on many factors, including how often they appear in other places on the Internet. And although Google News promotes itself as a non-subjective news aggregator, it is still relying on the editorial judgment of other online news organizations to rank the world’s most popular pages. ⁸

To succeed as online news aggregator, Google relies on its enormous bandwidth, which of course was a vital asset after 9/11. According to John Battelle, author of “The Search: How Google and Its Rivals Rewrote the Rules of Business and Transformed Our Culture,” Google’s search engine is powered by over 175,000 computers — more than all that existed on the entire planet in the 1970s. ⁹

In its drive to continuously add news sites to its crawl, Google must expand its bandwidth. Expanding and maintaining such enormous bandwidth requires an army of engineers — engineering being the academic background of the company’s two founders — and technology consultants, and the most sophisticated software to keep the engine humming rather than reporters to produce original news. And this lies at the heart of Google’s news investment: software, hardware and engineering personnel to keep driving the search engine that publishes other news’ organizations stories rather than an investment in reporters and editors to produce the news. ¹⁰

Yahoo News

Like Google News, Yahoo News largely aggregates material from other news organizations, such as the Associated Press, Reuters and the Los Angeles Times. And while Yahoo News relies on a small number of human editors — rather than a computer algorithm like Google — to publish the news on the site, it has not traditionally published its own unique news content. But that began to change in 2005.

As a whole, Yahoo does not see itself exclusively as a technology company, which Google is often considered. According to some analysts, Yahoo wants to become the first and last stop for the online visitor. As reported in the New York Times in September 2005, Yahoo’s new strategy is to see itself as an online version of Time Warner that mixes both original content and distribution. This strategy, the Times reported, is built around four “pillars”:

- ■ Improving its search engine capabilities.
- Creating a community of bloggers and civic reporters who can post their own musing and photographs.
- Producing its own original content, including news coverage.
- Developing personalization technology that allows users to sift through the seemingly endless number of choices available in the online universe, including video, where Yahoo is

trying to compete with Google and Microsoft. 11

Many in the industry are watching to see whether Lloyd Braun can get Yahoo to where it wants to be. In November 2004, Yahoo hired Braun to head its Media Group. Braun had previously served as the chairman of ABC's Entertainment Television Group. During his tenure at ABC, Braun initiated and oversaw the development of such hit television series as "Alias," "Lost," and "Desperate Housewives." His role at Yahoo has been to oversee all business and creative aspects of Yahoo's content properties, including news. 12

Braun's first original news project was to hire Kevin Sites, a veteran television reporter, to report on different wars spanning the globe. Sites's blog embraces the multimedia quality of the Web: blogging, video, audio commentary, online chats, and photo essays. Sites, moreover, said he saw the site as an opportunity to embrace transparency, long championed as an asset for online journalism. Sites's program was launched in September, 2005. 13

Yahoo also added exclusive sports commentary and in September, it began offering original columns to its financial news page, including one from the popular financial author Suze Orman, who regularly appears on CNBC. And in late October, Yahoo announced it had signed an original content deal with The Week, a weekly news magazine, and would begin publishing a daily digest of print and online business news on Yahoo's Finance page.

Though Yahoo has taken only the first steps toward publishing its own original news content, it will be interesting to see how this mixed identity plays out in 2006 and beyond. Will consumers turn to Yahoo for original reporting in place of more longstanding providers? Will Yahoo succeed in a mixed brand or will it, in the end, fail to reach expertise on either front? Will it inspire others to do the same, hiring real reporters who can publish their own unique, tech-savvy journalism? Those areas are worth watching in 2006.

Web Video

There were signs in 2005 of bigger investment in online video.

For now, advertising on online video — though growing — remains a minor factor. A market research firm, Broadband Enterprises, estimates about \$200 million will be spent on Internet video ads in 2005, up from \$75 million in 2004. pales in comparison to the \$65 billion spent on broadcast and cable television ads, but it is growing faster. 20 It may be that news sites are in an experimental phase, waiting to see whether audiences will become increasingly comfortable with watching video news reports over the Internet.

In 2005, CBS News was not the only news organization to begin offering more news video on its web site. After its subscription-only strategy was implemented in 2003, CNN announced in the spring of 2005 that it would begin offering some of its video online free. 21 It will continue to also charge for most of it, through an online news channel known as Pipeline, where users can sign up for an annual, monthly or even daily subscription for 99 cents a day. 22

In July, the Associated Press announced it would launch an online video news network for its newspaper, television, and radio Web sites in the United States. 23 And then in November, Microsoft announced it would develop the AP's online video network and share in any ad revenue generated by the newspaper and television news sites that distribute the video. Specifically, MSN's role would be to provide the software to play the video and technical support. Moreover, it would sell the advertising. 24

And CBS's rivals got more serious about online video in 2005. MSNBC.com announced it would start posting the entire video newscast of "NBC Nightly News," though ads on the television newscast would not transfer to the online version. A spokeswoman for the Web site discussed, however, the possibility of selling ads that would appear on both the television broadcast and the Webcast. ²⁵ Later in the year, MSNBC.com announced it would also make "Meet the Press" available as an on-demand video; the ad sales model had not been completed as of December, 2005.

And in January 2006, ABC News also announced a similar project to showcase its new co-anchors, Elizabeth Vargas and Bob Woodruff. ²⁶

There are plenty of hurdles ahead. Growth in video is linked with growth in broadband. Another obstacle to more frequent use, according to the research, is exposure: more than half of Americans (52%) have said they are not watching more video because they were not aware of its availability. ²⁷ The biggest question, however, is probably whether consumers like watching video online, not just on computers but on iPods, phones, and PDAs. Or will video, for better or worse, just be better on television?

Other Technology Investment

Perhaps the most significant investment that media companies have made over the last year or so is in the distribution and marketing of news (both as text and video) over wireless technology. Increasingly, news, especially breaking news, is becoming available on cell phones and personal digital assistants (PDAs), such as a BlackBerry, which can access the Internet through a WiFi, cellular, or Bluetooth technology connection. ²⁸

One example of how wireless technology has allowed news to become more portable and on-demand can be seen in Verizon's V Cast multimedia partnership with CBS News. Subscribers can view breaking news stories and segments from the CBS Evening News on their cell phones. "At the intersection of the mobile phone and the television lies programming promotion and brand extension potential. This deal with Verizon Wireless represents a major step for us into mobile entertainment and another point of contact with the consumer to promote out great content brands," Cyriac Roeding, vice president of wireless for CBS Digital Media, told EcommerceTimes.com. ²⁹

Several online news sites have also continued to make investments in software in an attempt to make their news products more appealing to the on-demand news consumer and allow more opportunities for citizen journalism. ³⁰ In 2005, two news features that furthered the discussion of citizen journalism and on-demand were wikitorials and podcasting.

Wikitorials are "online communities that encourage users to collectively write and edit articles." "Wikitorial" comes from the Hawaiian "wiki wiki," which means "quick" in English. The Los Angeles Times was one news organization that experimented with wikitorials last year, and the result can be seen either as one step in an experimental process or somewhat embarrassing. After allowing readers to respond to, and even rewrite, the newspaper's editorials, the site was soon overrun with profanity and pornographic photos and then suspended. ³¹

Podcasting is a way to distribute audio and video programming over the Web that differs from earlier online audio and video publishing because the material is automatically transferred to the user's computer and can be consumed at any time, usually on an Apple iPod or another kind of portable digital music player commonly known as an MP3 player. ³²

News sites that began offering podcasts in 2005 included the Denver Post, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Forbes and the Washington Post. One survey estimated that 4.8 million people had downloaded a podcast from either a radio

station or an other source in 2005 — up 485% from 2004. The study also found that 20% of “podcasters” download them on a weekly basis. 33

Investments in wikitorials and podcasts are relatively inexpensive . For example, the Wall Street Journal reported that the Philadelphia Daily News spent “just a few hundred dollars” on microphones, an audio mixer, and recording software when launching its podcast. There is also very little evidence that news organizations have added any editorial staff. Rather, it seems that existing news staff have been used or the work has been outsourced, as when the Denver Post hired college students to record and edit its site’s podcasts. One pressing question for 2006, of course, is whether any revenue can be generated from these new online news features. 34

Broadband Technology

For years, experts have argued that the future of online news audience and economics will hinge on the development of broadband technology. With broadband will come speed, video, more interactivity, better graphics, and more.

What is broadband? A simple answer is that it means higher-speed Internet : 35 36

Broadband connections generally use either a cable modem or DSL (digital subscriber line) which together make up an estimated 95% of the residential and small – business broadband market. 37

But it should noted that what is of ten meant as broadband in the United States is almost a generic term for any connection faster than dial – up. In many other developed countries, by contrast, broadband refers to much faster connections with more capability. The frankly vague way that broadband is defined in most discussions in the U .S , some critics argue, clouds both the demand and the po tential.

How many Americans are accessing the Internet through a broadband connection? The data vary on the exact figure, but it is clearly growing and is more prevalent in the workplace than at home. For residential use, the figure ranges from 33% to 48% of the population, depending on the survey. (The Pew Internet project reported that as of December 2005, 72 million Americans, or 61% of those who go online from home, had high-speed connections at home. This is up from 5 million in June 2000.) 38

In the workplace, broadband access appears to be even higher. Pew Internet reports that 70% of employed Internet users use a high-speed connection at work compared to just 10% who use dial – up. The rest say they do not know what type of connection their employer has. 39

While U.S. broadband use is growing, it still lags behind other parts of the world, particularly Asia and Western Europe, and there are signs that growth in other regions is outpacing growth here at home. According to December 2004 data published by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the U . S . has dropped two slots since 2003 and now ranks 12th overall in the number of broadband subscribers.

What’s more, there is reason to believe that growth may slow in coming years. Kagan Research has projected 9.3 million new broadband subscribers in 2005 , down from growth of 9.5 million in 2004. 40

Slower growth is significant because of the economic ramifications for the online industry. Various surveys suggest broadband users are more likely than dial-up users to perform these online activities:

- Go to more news pages

- Download more video
- Spend more money
- Spend more time online
- Play games
- Do banking
- Use search engines
- Access product info
- Access financial info
- Perform work-related research
- Browse for fun
- Access weather info
- Access sports info
- Get skills or training to help in their jobs 41

Online video use is expected to grow as broadband penetration increases. So far it appears that regular online video use is limited to a very small percentage of the overall population, and while spending on it continues to grow, it is still a nascent media platform for Madison Avenue ([click here for more on online video usage and economics](#)).

In addition to investment in online video, there are even larger economic implications for increased broadband penetration. One estimate is that “widespread” adoption of broadband access would create 1.2 million new jobs and add as much as \$500 billion to the national economy. 42

Footnotes

1. For more information on the experimentation at the News-Record, see Jay Rosen, “Greensboro Goes Open Source: A Follow Up,” *Pressthink*, December 21, 2004.
2. Samantha Henig, “Larry Kramer on CBSNews.com, Transparency, and Having 1,500 Employees for a Web Site,” *CJR Daily*, July 29, 2005.
3. Gavin O’Malley, “Bypass Surgery: CBS Skips Cable, Uses Web For 24-Hour News Channel,” *MediaPost*, July 13, 2005. Another traditional news organization that took bold steps in 2005 to further digitalize its news was the New York Times. In August, the *Online Journalism Review* reported that the Times was planning on hiring more people for its digital side, though it was not clear whether they would be reporters or technology people (Mark Glaser, “GrayLady.com: NY Times explodes wall between print, Web,” *Online Journalism Review*, August 8, 2005).

4. Jay Rosen, "The Net Knows More Than You: An Open Letter to the People of CBS News," PressThink, September 16, 2005.
5. John Battelle, "The Search: How Google and Its Rivals Rewrote the Rules of Business and Transformed Our Culture" (Portfolio Hardcover: 2005).
6. "The Effects of September 11 on the Leading Search Engine," by Richard W. Wiggins.
7. John Battelle, "The Search: How Google and Its Rivals Rewrote the Rules of Business and Transformed Our Culture" (Portfolio Hardcover: 2005).
8. Link to Google's FAQs on how Google News works: http://news.google.com/help/about_news_search.html
9. John Battelle, "The Search: How Google and Its Rivals Rewrote the Rules of Business and Transformed Our Culture" (Portfolio Hardcover: 2005).

And as Saul Hansell reported in the New York Times: "For every page that Google shows, more than 100 computers evaluate more than a million variables to choose the advertisements in its database to display — and they do it in milliseconds. The computers look at the amount bid and the budget of the advertiser, but they also consider the user — such as his or her location, which they try to infer by analyzing the user's Internet connections — as well as the time of the day and myriad other factors Google has tracked and analyzed from its experience with advertisements." (Saul Hansell, "Google wants to dominate Madison Avenue, too," the New York Times, October 30, 2005.)

10. For a look at Google's hiring practices, see Pui-Wing and Kevin J. Delaney, "Google's Growth Helps Ignite Silicon Valley Frenzy," the Wall Street Journal, November 23, 2005.
11. Saul Hansell, "An Ex-ABC Impresario Aims to Build the Studio of the Future," the New York Times, September 24, 2005.
12. Yahoo Media Relations press release, 2004
13. Saul Hansell, "Yahoo Hires Journalist to Report on Wars," the New York Times, September 12, 2005.
14. In November 2005, the Fresno Bee, with 800 employees, announced it too was combining its online operations with other departments within the newspaper.
15. New York Times newsroom-integration memo posted by Jim Romenesko of the Poynter Institute, August 2, 2005.
16. Mark Glaser, "GrayLady.com: NY Times explodes wall between print, Web," Online Journalism Review, August 8, 2005
17. And USA Today, which said in mid-December 2005 that it too would be joining print and online divisions, had earlier said that it would be taking a more cautious, incremental approach rather than a swift or comprehensive one. According to Kinsey Wilson, vice president and editor in chief at USA Today.com: "We've learned a great deal about what it takes to publish in real time across multiple platforms. But [the online] medium is still in the process of being invented. It often requires a different approach to the news. And it is staffed at a fraction of the level of the parent organization. If the goal is to create a stronger, more flexible organization, it only makes sense to move with some care and deliberation in bringing such disparate operations together. Our inclination at this point is to signal our intent to the

staff, but experiment on a small scale, in discrete areas, where we can afford to innovate and occasionally make mistakes, before embarking on a full-scale integration." Mark Glaser, "GrayLady.com: NY Times explodes wall between print, Web," Online Journalism Review, August 8, 2005.

18. Mark Glaser, "Two Times One," Media, October 2005.

19. Jennifer Saba, "Dispelling the Myth of Readership Decline," Editor and Publisher, November 28, 2005.

20. Saul Hansell, "More People Turn to the Web to Watch TV," the New York Times, August 1, 2005.

21. Paidcontent.org Web site, April 7, 2005.

22. For more on Pipeline, see Ken Kerschbaumer, "CNN Opens Up Pipeline," Broadcasting and Cable, December 5, 2005

23. According to the organization's press release, AP would provide its members, which include over 1,700 daily and weekly newspapers across the country, with their own branded video players to display AP and other video content on the Web. Members and the AP would then share revenue from the streaming video advertising. The network would be available to the AP's members at no charge in the first quarter of 2006 ("AP to launch online video network; Board approves general assessment and licensing plan," Associated Press press release, July 21, 2005).

24. "Microsoft and Associated Press to Join in New Video Distribution," Bloomberg News, November 10, 2005.

25. Gavin O'Malley, "MSNBC.com To Post Entire "NBC Nightly News," Online Media Daily, November 1, 2005.

26. Peter Johnson, "ABC News team makes formal debut Tuesday," USA Today, January 2, 2006.

Also, Yahoo reached agreements with CNN and ABC News to increase its online video inventory (Saul Hansell, "Yahoo plans to connect services with TiVo," the New York Times, November 7, 2005)

27. Online Publishers Association, "Drivers and Barriers To Online Video Viewing," February 8, 2005.

28. The most recent data from the Pew Internet and American Life Project shows that 25% of online users said they had logged onto the Internet using a wireless device (Pew Internet and American Life Project, November, 2004).

29. Joel Lunenfeld, "Online Video Advertising is Growing Up," Media Post's Online Video Insider, January 23, 2006.

30. J.D. Lasica has offered a definition of citizen journalism, also known as participatory journalism: "Call it participatory journalism or journalism from the edges. Simply put, it refers to individuals playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, sorting, analyzing and disseminating news and information — a task once reserved almost exclusively to the news media." (J.D. Lasica, "Participatory Journalism Puts the Reader in the Driver's Seat," August 7, 2003).

31. "Los Angeles Times suspends 'Wikitorials,' Associated Press, June 21, 2005.

32. The term "podcast" was coined by the journalist Ben Hammersley, according to the BBC ("Listen Up! Oxford Dictionary Picks Its 'Word of the Year,' and It's 'Podcast,'" Editor and Publisher, December 8, 2005).

33. "Critical Mass Podcasting Expected by 2010," The Center For Media Research, December 8, 2005.

34. David Kesmodel, "Papers Turn to 'Podcasting' In Bid to Draw More Readers," the Wall Street Journal, May 13, 2005.

35. Perhaps the most important aspect of broadband is the speed with which it can both send and receive data over a high-speed network. Broadband access is approximately nine times the speed of a modem using a standard telephone line, or "narrow band service," more commonly known as dial-up service. Within the IT industry, there is some disagreement about the minimum speed that is acceptable for Internet access to be labeled broadband. For example, Jupiter Communications says the minimum connection speed is 256 kilobits (kbps) per second, while the U.S. Federal Communications Commission regards broadband as 200 kbps ("The Broadband Revolution: You Say You Want a Definition," emarketer, March 30, 2001). Broadband is often called high-speed Internet because it usually has a high rate of data. In general, any connection to the customer of 256 kbit/s (0.256 Mbit/s) or more is considered broadband Internet. The International Telecommunication Union Standardization Sector (ITU-T) recommendation I.113 has defined broadband as a transmission capacity that is faster than primary rate ISDN, at 1.5 to 2 Mbit/s. The FCC definition of broadband is 200 kbit/s (0.2 Mbit/s) in one direction, and advanced broadband is at least 200 kbit/s in both directions. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has defined broadband as 256 kbit/s in at least one direction, and this bit rate is the most common baseline that is marketed as "broadband" around the world. There is no specific bit rate defined by the industry, however, and "broadband" can mean lower bit rate transmission methods. Some Internet Service Providers (ISPs) use this to advantage in marketing lower bit rate connections as broadband.]

36. In 2005, a number of major communities, including New Orleans, Tempe, Ariz., Philadelphia and San Francisco, began discussions about developing so-called Wi-Fi networks. A Wi-Fi-enabled device can connect to a local area network when near one of the network's access points. The connection is made by radio signals; there is no need to plug the device into the network. If the local area network is connected to the Internet, the WiFi device can have Internet access as well. The geographical region covered by one or several access points is called a hotspot.

"Wi-Fi (also WiFi or wifi) is a trademark for sets of product compatibility standards for wireless local area networks (WLANs). Wi-Fi was intended to allow mobile devices, such as laptop computers and personal digital assistants (PDAs) to connect to local area networks, but is now often used for wireless Internet access and wireless VoIP phones. Desktop computers can also use Wi-Fi, allowing offices and homes to be networked without expensive wiring. Many computers are sold today with Wi-Fi built-in; others require adding a Wi-Fi network card. Other devices, such as digital cameras, are sometimes equipped with Wi-Fi." (Answers.com; last accessed January 27, 2006. Link: <http://www.answers.com/topic/wifi>)

37. Robert McChesney and John Podesta, "Let There Be Wi-Fi," Washington Monthly, January/February 2006. The Internet can also be accessed through satellite and wireless technology, but those have very little market share.

38. Unpublished data from the Pew Internet and American Life Project, January 2006. Another survey, conducted by Arbitron/Edison Media, reports that the number of Americans with broadband connections in their homes has quadrupled to some 48% since 2001 (Arbitron/Edison Media Research, "Internet and Multimedia 2005: The On-Demand Media Consumer," March 23, 2005).

39. Unpublished data from the Pew Internet and American Life Project, January 2006.

40. "Broadband Subscriber Growth Slows," Associated Press, October 17, 2005.

41. A report from the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration found that those users with "broadband at home are more likely than other internet users to use the internet frequently and engage in a wider variety of online activities, such as entertainment and information gathering." Source: "A Nation Online: Entering the Broadband Age," U.S. Department of Commerce, September 2004.
42. Thomas Bleha, "Down to the Wire," Foreign Affairs, May/June 2005. Also, some argue that broadband access will help U.S. firms stay competitive in the global marketplace. For example, Litan and Rivlin argue that the "penetration rate of Internet access, especially broadband, will affect the extent to which firms face intensive competitive pressure to change existing management methods, among other practices." (Robert E. Litan and Alice M. Rivlin, "Projecting the Economic Impact of the Internet," American Economic Review, 91:2, 2001).
43. Robert W. Crandall, Robert W. Hahn, Robert E. Litan, and Scott Wallsten, ("Universal Broadband Access: Implementing President Bush's Vision," AEI-Brookings Joint Center For Regulatory Studies, May 2004. Available online at: <http://www.aei-brookings.org/admin/authorpdfs/page.php?id=941>.
44. Thomas "Down to the Wire," Foreign Affairs, May/June 2005.
45. Department of Commerce research suggests cost is the second most popular reason for not adopting broadband access (lack of interest was the most common explanation) ("A Nation Online: Entering the Broadband Age", U.S. Department of Commerce, September 2004).
46. Robert W. Crandall, Robert W. Hahn, Robert E. Litan, and Scott Walls¹⁰, ("Universal Broadband Access: Implementing President Bush's Vision," AEI-Brookings Joint Center For Regulatory Studies, May 2004. Available online at: <http://www.aei-brookings.org/admin/authorpdfs/page.php?id=941>. And in August 2005 the FCC ruled that phone companies held the right to deny other Internet Service Providers (ISPs) such as AOL the use of their phone lines.
47. "U.S. Broadband Use Tops 60%—Maybe," TelecomWeb, October 7, 2005.
48. Arshad Mohammed, "Verizon Executive Calls for End to Google's 'Free Lunch,'" the Washington Post, February 7, 2006.

Public Attitudes

Public Attitudes

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

Why do people increasingly prefer the Internet for news? And how much do they trust what they get there, from the Internet overall and online news in particular?

The answers appear to be that control and convenience drive the Internet's appeal. But with time, trust in the medium is not growing, it's shrinking.

The Appeal of the Internet

When it comes to the Internet's appeal, a year ago we found that its convenience and a variety of viewpoints were its key attractions. In 2005, new research again suggests the importance of convenience. According to research conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, nearly three quarters (73%) say they prefer the digital version of a newspaper to the print version because it is more convenient.

Cost may be less of a factor, which may encourage producers who want to start charging. Only 8% told Pew they preferred the net because it was free. ¹

Control or interactivity is a major appeal as well. A survey conducted by the Online Publishers Association in partnership with the Media Management Center at Northwestern University found that the top driver for online site use was that the Internet "entertains and absorbs me."

The researchers also studied engagement with newspapers and television and found that several other drivers were unique to the Internet, often related to control. These included: "connects me with others," "tailored for me," "guides me to other media," "a way to fill my time," "my guilty pleasure," and "tries to persuade me." ²

Trust

Yet for all its obvious advantages, access and interactivity may also be part of the Internet's Achilles heel as an information source. Last year we reported that even as the Web was becoming a ubiquitous and accepted news source, there was evidence that trust in the Internet was declining. ³

And new survey research shows that the trend continues. In 2004, the Center for the Digital Future at the USC Annenberg School found that the proportion of users who believed that most or all of the information on the Internet is reliable and accurate had declined for the third consecutive year, to just 49% — a steep decline from 58% in 2001. ⁴

News Web sites are as trusted as traditional news media, according to the data. A majority (68%) of those who go online say they believe "almost all" or "most" of the content on their primary online news site, according to survey research done by Consumer Reports. That level of trust is about equal to those who trust newspapers and television news. ⁵

Trust in news Web sites also trumps trust in other kinds of Web sites. Indeed, no other type of Web sites registered a majority of users who could trust the site to provide accurate information most of the time, according to Consumer Reports. And the Center for the Digital Future at the USC Annenberg School found that the public considered established media and government sites more credible than information posted by individuals. Nearly 8 in 10 (79%) said most or all the information on established media sites such as the New York Times or CNN.com was reliable and accurate, with government (78%) right behind. Meanwhile, just 12% said the Web sites posted by individuals were reliable and accurate. ⁶

	2005		2002	
	Always/Most of Time	Some Time/Never	Always/Most of Time	Some Time/Never
Newspapers and TV News	56%	42	58	41
News Web Sites	54%	39	—	—
Web Sites for Children	34%	36	—	—
Web Sites that Provide Advice to Consumers	31%	62	33	59
Large Corporations	29%	69	32	66
Web Sites that Offer Products for Sale	26%	69	29	64
Blogs	12%	57	—	—

Source: Consumer Reports Web Watch, "Leap of Faith: Using the Internet Despite the Dangers," October 26, 2005.

One episode that raised interest about the credibility of individual postings unfolded in early December, 2005. After an anonymous poster had published a largely fictional entry for John Siegenthaler Sr., a former editor of The Tennessean in Nashville, on the online encyclopedia site Wikipedia. Siegenthaler wrote about the posting in an op-ed in USA Today. Later, an amateur cybersleuth traced the posting to a computer in Nashville, which led to the perpetrator's eventual confession. While no civil suits were filed, the incident did raise questions about the reliability of Wikipedia and other online sites that generally do not have the same levels of accountability that traditional news sites do.

There is also research that suggests Americans are demanding that the Internet, particularly news sites, deliver more on its self-championed capacity to provide transparency and accountability. And those expectations have only increased over the past few years. Almost 7 in 10 (69%) of online users consider it very important for news Web sites to clearly label all advertising, and that ads must be distinguishable from news and information — up 10 points from 2002. And more users want news sites to prominently display their pages for corrections and clarifications: 44% now report this as very important, also an increase of 10 percentage points from 2002.

Users also want to be able to communicate with editors and reporters: 47% say it is very important for news sites to provide readers with e-mail addresses to contact the site's editorial staff, up from 36% in 2002. ⁷

As for blogs, despite the desire for more accountability, people are drawn to them even though they don't necessarily trust them. This skepticism is true even among those who read blogs.

Just 1 person in 8 (12%) considers the information on blogs believable most of the time. Meanwhile, 36% say blogs are accurate some of the time, with another fifth (21%) reporting they are never or almost never accurate. And just 23% of blog readers say they can trust blogs at least most of the time while three quarters (73%) say they believe only some or nothing of what they read on blogs. ⁸

We have also recently witnessed a growth in the use of digital photography over the Internet. Concerns about fakery surrounded the publication of a Reuters photograph of President Bush at the United Nations writing a note to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice about a "bathroom break" that was widely and quickly circulated both at home and abroad. The photo, though embarrassing for the president, was real.

Does the American public worry about digitally enhanced, modified or even fake photos? Apparently not as much as one might suspect, according to survey research. While nearly half (47%) of online users say they have come across a

manipulated digital photo, more than two thirds (67%) say they trust online news sites a lot or somewhat to use authentic photographs; 30% have little or no trust . 9

Young Americans and their Attitudes Toward the Web

What do we know about the attitudes toward the Web as a news and informational source for the young, who are among the Web's heaviest users?

In 2005, we learned that many young people consider the Internet to be a learning tool. According to data from the Carnegie Corporation of New York , 41% of Americans 18 to 34 say the Internet is the most useful way to learn, compared with 15% for local television, which ranked second. 10

There may be some evidence that young people view online news as slightly more trustworthy than older generations do. The Carnegie Corporation found that "being trustworthy" was considered a very critical reason why young people prefer the Web for news to other media platforms. 11

There also appears to be a generation gap on the question of blog credibility. A survey by Hostaway.com, a Web hosting company with offices in Chicago, Tampa and Vancouver, found that Americans under 30 were much more likely than their older counterparts to consider blogs credible sources of information. In fact, blogs were found to be just as credible as traditional media among this age group. 12 That is not surprising when we consider that blog use is considerably higher among younger Americans than among older ones.

Footnotes

1. The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, "Public More Critical of Press, But Goodwill Persists," June 26, 2005. Available online at: <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=248>.

2. "New Online Publishers Association Study Identifies Key Experiences That Drive Web Usage," Online Publishers Association press release, June 1, 2005.

3. As more evidence about the mainstream acceptance of online journalism, the Pulitzer Prize Board announced in December that it would begin accepting nominations for Breaking News Reporting and Breaking News Photography published solely online. Previously, material from these two categories was required to have appeared in the newspaper's print edition as well.

4. Center for the Digital Future at the USC Annenberg School, "Fifth Study by the Digital Future Project Finds Major New Trends in Online Use for Political Campaigns," December 7, 2005. Available online at: <http://www.digitalcenter.org/pdf/Center-for-the-Digital-Future-2005-Highlights.pdf>

5. Consumer Reports WebWatch, "Leap of Faith: Using the Internet Despite The Dangers," October 26, 2005. Available online at: <http://www.consumerwebwatch.org/pdfs/princeton.pdf>.

6. Center for The Digital Future at the USC Annenberg School, "Fifth Study by the Digital Future Project Finds Major New Trends in Online Use for Political Campaigns," December 7, 2005. Available online at: <http://www.digitalcenter.org/pdf/Center-for-the-Digital-Future-2005-Highlights.pdf>.

7. Consumer Reports WebWatch, "Leap of Faith: Using the Internet Despite The Dangers," October 26, 2005. Available online at: <http://www.consumerWebwatch.org/pdfs/princeton.pdf>.

8. Consumer Reports WebWatch, "Leap of Faith: Using the Internet Despite The Dangers," October 26, 2005. Available online at: <http://www.consumerWebwatch.org/pdfs/princeton.pdf>.

Moreover, it should be noted that a third (31%) of online users could not assess blogs' accuracy, supporting other survey research that shows Americans are still relatively unfamiliar with the blogosphere.

Lydia Saad, "Blogs Not Yet in the Media Big Leagues," The Gallup Poll, March 11, 2005. Available online at: <http://poll.gallup.com/con10t/default.aspx?CI=15217>.

9. Consumer Reports WebWatch, "Leap of Faith: Using the Internet Despite The Dangers," October 26, 2005. Available online at: <http://www.consumerWebwatch.org/pdfs/princeton.pdf>.

10. Carnegie Corporation of New York, "Use of Sources for News." Available online at: <http://www.carnegie.org/pdf/AbandoningTheNews.ppt#0>.

According to survey research done by the Annenberg School Center for the Digital Future at USC in 2005, among users age 17 and older, 56.3% consider the Internet to be a very important or extremely important source of information for them — up a bit from 2003 (55.2%). Looking exclusively at online habits for information on political campaigns, the study's authors wrote that "more than three quarters of users who went online for political campaign information sought insight regarding issues and candidates about which they were undecided." The study also showed that a larger percentage sought campaign information on traditional Web sites than from information placed online by the candidates. Center for The Digital Future at the USC Annenberg School, "Fifth Study by the Digital Future Project Finds Major New Trends in Online Use for Political Campaigns," December 7, 2005. Available online at: <http://www.digitalcenter.org/pdf/Center-for-the-Digital-Future-2005-Highlights.pdf>.

11. Carnegie Corporation of New York, "Use of Sources for News." Available online at: <http://www.carnegie.org/pdf/AbandoningTheNews.ppt#0>.

12. Rob Lever, "Blogs take giant step towards mainstream," AFP, October 19, 2005.

Charts & Tables

Charts & Tables

AUDIENCE

Minutes Online News Users Spent Reading Print Magazines, 2005
Minutes Online News Users Spent Reading Print Newspapers, 2005
Minutes Online News Users Spent Watching Television, 2005
Percent of Internet Users Who Access News Online
Percentage of Population Ever Going Online

ECONOMICS

Growth in Online Revenue at Select Newspaper Companies, 2004
Online Revenue as Percent of Total Company Revenue

Online Revenue as Percent of Total Revenue, 2001-2004
Online Revenues for Select Newspaper Companies, 2004
Where Local Online Advertising Goes

OWNERSHIP

Average Monthly Unique Visitors for Top 20 News Web Sites, 2005
Number of Unique Visitors to Newspaper Web Sites, 2005
Number of Unique Visitors to Top-10 News Web Sites, 2005
Number of Unique Visitors to TV News Web Sites, 2005
Ownership of Most Popular News Sites
Top News Web Sites
Top Online News Sites (comScore)
Top Online News Sites (Nielsen)
Unique Visitors for Top 20 News and Information Sites

PUBLIC ATTITUDES

How Much of the Internet is Reliable and Accurate?
Perceptions of Internet's Reliability, Overall

Roundtable

Roundtable

Later in 2006, the Project will conduct online discussions with industry leaders about each media sector. If you would like to receive an email alert when they are completed, [click here](#).

Content Analysis

Content Analysis

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

By 2005 users were already getting a significant level of choice in style and personality from news on the Web. Virtually all original newsgathering, though, was still being done by the old media, and some of the major new Internet-only challengers appeared to have made less progress in content over the previous year than the sites of the old media.

There was also a range of serious attempts to exploit the multimedia dimensions of the Web some places, immediacy in others, and to turn the Web into a space for advertorial revenue.

In our first two years of studying news online, we found that the extent to which sites were taking advantage of the potential of the Web varied dramatically, and that still appears to be true. We also found that the notion of a new form of journalism forming in this medium was premature. That is still true. Over all in past years at least the top stories people found online were often deeper in sourcing and content than what was on television, but it lagged behind print. Our sample this year suggests that may be changing. The Internet is an environment that may now, on some sites at least, be richer than what is available anywhere else.

In those previous studies, we examined a variety of news sites several times a day for 20 different, randomly selected days. This year, as part of our Day in the Life of the News study, we examined seven sites repeatedly through the course of the one day — May 11, 2005 — comparing them to what was offered elsewhere and to each other. Beyond just a purely statistical or quantitative look, we delved more deeply into the sites, forming qualitative impressions as well.

By the numbers, the Web environment was rich. The five national Internet sites we examined were more deeply sourced than any other media studied, including national newspapers. Fully 85% of top stories on the Internet contained four or more sources, outstripping any other media (in national newspapers it was 78%, and on network evening news, the most deeply sourced TV outlet, it was 31%). The two local-news Internet sites studied also scored high on sourcing.

The Web also rivaled major papers in how much was disclosed about sources. In both national newspapers and Web sites, 9 out of 10 stories contained at least two sources who were so thoroughly identified that audiences not only knew what their expertise was but any potential biases they might have. Consumers could evaluate for themselves what sources were saying.

The major Internet sites were also second only to the major national papers in how much context their stories offered audiences about events. In our index measuring how many contextual elements the big stories of the day contained, 45% of the ones online contained three or more, as opposed to 57% for national newspapers. The highest scoring TV outlet was network morning news at 39%.

The national Internet sites were also relatively free of reporters' opinions, at least in their lead stories. Only 6% contained opinion from journalists, compared with 15% of all national newspaper stories, 48% of network morning news stories, and 46% of cable news stories.

The main national sites also tended to agree on the top story of the day. At 9 a.m., four of the five national sites had the same top story, violence in Iraq. Twelve hours later, four would again agree on their top story, the scare in Washington over a small plane that violated restricted airspace.

Beyond the numbers, however, there was far more difference to these sites than might appear at first glance.

The New York Times

Online, the Gray Lady of journalism has had a little more work done than people may realize.

The site is still distinctly that of a newspaper, and the differences between it and online sites managed largely by machines are enormous. But NYTimes.com makes notable use of interactive and multimedia functions. Even more important, it updates stories far more than many other newspaper sites, and a good deal more than it did a year earlier. By 5 p.m. on May 11, and even more so by 9 p.m., this was much different site from when the day started. The sense a visitor gets dipping in and out of NYTimes.com through the day is that of a living newsroom, with new stories coming in as reporters complete them, and adding to those again as new updates come in.

The news was always organized by a strong sense of what was significant, not just what was new, and that distinguished the Times from sites like Yahoo and Google.

In a sense, the approach may be “all the news that’s fit to post.”

The basics of the page, which as 2006 began had not changed since May 11, 2005, start with four top stories and a large photo. Next to the lead stories at the top, users are shown three other major stories, plus the editorials for the day, the op-eds for the day, and the latest on markets around the world. In the middle of the page, under the top four stories, was a section-by-section breakdown of the print edition that day, which gave users access to 61 additional stories, plus eight of the latest stories from AP and Reuters, all from the Web site's front page.

At 9 a.m., the site is essentially the morning paper on-line but not completely. Already the updating has begun. As early as 7:24 a.m. EDT on May 11, the top story on the page was changed from the lead of the May 11 paper. The paper had already posted a bylined piece about violence in Iraq that occurred overnight. Next users could read about Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's plans for a leaner military, United Airlines winning the right to default on employee pensions and a piece on AIDS in Africa .

NYTimes.com Lead Stories

9 a.m.	1 p.m.	5 p.m.	9 p.m.
Iraq Bombing	Iraq Bombing — updated	Plane Prompts Evacuation	Plane Prompts Evacuation — updated
Rumsfeld Seeks Leaner Army	Trade Deficit Falls Unexpectedly	Iraq Bombing – updated	Iraq Bombing
United Air Pension Plans	North Korea Nuclear Rods	North Korea Nuclear Rods	North Korea Nuclear Rods
AIDS attitudes in Africa	AIDS attitudes in Africa	AIDS attitudes in Africa	AIDS attitudes in Africa

Throughout the day the news that got top billing changed as stories moved around on the site. And, unlike what we saw in cable's use of immediacy, the time an event occurred didn't necessarily determine where a piece appeared. Take the plane-scare story. It started as a secondary item when the news was still coming in. It wasn't until later, after the event was better understood, that it became the page's lead piece, at 5 and 9 p.m.

The Iraq story remained among the lead pieces all day, even after it was technically "old news." It was updated three out of the four times we checked the site — the "at least 60 are killed in New Round of Attacks in Iraq" would become "At Least 79" dead by 4 p.m. that day. The byline would also change, from a co-byline early in the day, John Burns and Terence Neilan (editor-reporter for the Web edition), to a sole author, Burns, by the evening. A piece on a drop in the trade deficit went from a secondary story to a lead, back to a secondary and finally off the page.

By 9 p.m., five of the six top stories on the page would be new or significantly updated from the morning. Across the whole front page, basically more than half of the stories linked would be new — before the next day's paper was posted. Across the whole front page, indeed, 31 of the 67 stories were new or significantly updated after 9 a.m. (28 of them altogether new). If you remove the 16 stories from weekly special sections such as Dining & Wine, Home & Garden or Automobiles, the degree of updating is even greater — 31 updated and 20 unchanged.

When it came to exploiting the interactivity and multi-media nature of the Web, the Times fell behind some of its TV-oriented rivals, but often ahead of the online aggregators. A quarter of its top stories (25%) contained links to video, such as the piece on Rumsfeld's plans and the stories on the D.C. plane scare (compared with 45% on average of all

Google News Lead Stories

9 a.m.	1 p.m.	5 p.m.	9 p.m.
Georgia Confirms Grenade Found Near Bush's Speech Site	White House, Capitol Evacuated	2 Men Arrested in Plane Scare at White House, Capitol	White House, Capitol Emptied in Plane Scare
Suicide Attacks Kill at least 61 in Iraq	Russia-Georgia Relations	Budget Provides Billions for Education (Canadian Budget)	White House says Bush Never in Danger in Georgia Incident
Afghans Riot over Koran Report	US Depending on China in N. Korea Policy	Anti-US Riot Turns Deadly in Afghanistan	Four Shot Dead as Afghans Riot at Reported US insult to Koran
\$82 Billion Spending Bill for Wars Heads to Bush	\$82 Billion Spending Bill for Wars Heads to Bush	White House says Bush Never in Danger in Georgia Incident	Authorities: Ill. Father Admits Killings

The site leads with two top stories in its main, middle column and five more headlines right of that, which vary from business to sports news. Below that are a list of subjects "In The News"— on May 11 the keywords included Delta Air Lines, Riverside County, Van Gundy and the Detroit Pistons.

That is followed by three top stories under each of eight different topic headings — World, U.S., Business, Sci/Tech, Sports, Entertainment, Health and More Top Stories.

For each news event, Google News offers apparently every related story it can find. On May 11, for instance, the top story at 9 a.m., about a grenade found near the site where Bush delivered a speech in the former Soviet Republic of Georgia, linked to 1,968 other stories about the event. In all, the 31 "stories" highlighted on Google News's front page at 9 a.m. this day were actually links to 14,228 separate stories. The depth is breathtaking. The utility of it, for an average person, is harder to fathom.

With each subsequent visit, we found new stories in most of the spots. According to the numbers, 80% of the top stories were new on Google. Again, however, usually they were about the same news event, just new versions from a new outlet. At 1 p.m., for instance, the story about anti-American protests in Afghanistan was from CNN, plus links to NPR, the San Diego Union Tribune, Radio Australia and others. At 5 p.m., there were stories from the Associated Press, ABC News, the International Herald Tribune. At 9 p.m., a story from the Scotsman (UK) plus Reuters and the Guardian on top. The actual accounts didn't vary much, sometimes not even the original source. At 5 p.m., for instance, the story on Afghan riots came from the Guardian Unlimited, but on a closer look it was actually an AP story. The story on the riots just underneath it is from ABC News, it says, but it is also the AP story.

On Google, some topics got more prominence than they did elsewhere. Sci/Tech, for instance, comes third in their list, followed by Sports, and Entertainment. Subjects that get more prominence elsewhere, such as politics, are not in the headings here.

In exploiting the potential of the Web for multimedia and interactivity, Google fell behind, at least on this day. Only 5% of the stories on the site had links to video of the event in the news compared with the average of the sites monitored of 45%, though again since that was a result of grabbing stories from a variety of sources, the inclusion of video was ultimately the call of those outlets. None of Google's stories had links to graphics, maps or special text boxes (the average on this day was 17% of stories). Only 5% of stories had some link by which users could manipulate or

customize data, whereas the average was 18%. And only 15% of stories on Google had links through which users could follow up with queries or communicate with someone, compared with 39% in our sample over all.

The only multimedia element in which Google was above average was in the use of audio. Some 15% of the top stories had such links, versus the 6%.

How did the news agenda offered by Google's computers compare with those of the editors of NYTimes.com? At 9 a.m., Google led with the story about the unexploded grenade found near where President Bush had spoken, a story that never was near the top of the New York Times news agenda this day. Both sites had Iraqi violence at the top. Google had the Afghan riots next, a story the Times would not post for two more hours. But the Times had exclusives, an interview with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and a story about AIDS in Africa that were nowhere on Google's site. The United Airlines pension story that would dominate elements of the American press this day was not listed among Google's top stories anywhere on its page.

By 9 p.m., the grenade story was again one of the "Top Stories" on Google (after being displaced by a general US-Georgia relations story at 1 p.m. and a piece on the Canadian budget at 5 p.m.) The Times also had the plane scare but continued to think violence in Iraq was important, a story now replaced on Google by the next day's relative calm. Throughout the page, the stories also tended to differ, topic by topic. Apparently, at least on May 11, the choices made by Google's machines differed from the choices made by editors at the New York Times.

Yahoo

Yahoo News takes the spirit of Google News — the user is the editor — a step further. It separates the news in multiple ways and allows users to pick the way they see it — by source, by topic, by genre (photos, opinion), by most popular stories, most viewed and even something called "weird news."

Users also have the capacity, within distinct limits, to add or remove categories and change the layout.

But Yahoo isn't culling from 4,500 news sources as Google is. It is focusing more heavily on the judgment of six sources — AP, Reuters, Agence France-Presse (AFP), the Los Angeles Times, USA Today and the Christian Science Monitor. Users also can select their own sources from a list of 14.

If Google News is about mining the Web for maximum depth, in other words, Yahoo News is more about navigating it within clearer limits for maximum choice.

(The page has been redesigned since May 11, 2005, but the effect is similar. Users sort through the different sources using tabs, so that more classifications are easier to view. There are a few more top stories offered at the beginning of the page, and some new sources are offered, such as NPR. Heading into 2006 users were also now offered some minimal original content from Yahoo journalists, under the heading "YAHOO EXCLUSIVE," though the quantity of original content was more symbolic than substantial.)

On May 11, the top of the page at 9 a.m. was a story about the bombing in Iraq, from AP, that featured a big headline, a photo of a badly damaged car and a one-paragraph lead-in with the dateline. It was the only story on the page played with such prominence. Then came mainly a listing of headlines: There was a "Top Stories" heading, an inventory of the six sources from which the site got its news, and five headlines from each of them. On this day, several of the stories were the same as elsewhere, but not all: The slayings in Illinois were a top story in four of the six outlets at 9 a.m. and the Iraq story was a top item on all the wire services at 1 p.m. The Christian Science Monitor, with its

orientation toward news features rather than breaking headlines, also offered a different news agenda (“Pivotal days for Frist and the GOP,” “L.A. mayor’s race signals new ethnic alliances.”)

The page’s main listing of headlines was followed by a link to the New York Times homepage (no longer offered in the same place). Then came categories that traditional journalists sometimes find tantalizing, challenging and even a little horrifying: users can click on the stories that are “most popular” followed by “most viewed” and “most recommended.” It’s not entirely clear what the differences are. But at 9 a.m. on May 11, the “most popular” stories bore little relationship to the top stories as defined by any of the news organizations listed. The most popular story was “New World islands emerge from Dubai’s waters.” The second was, “Mark Hamill Reminisces on ‘Star Wars.’” The “Most viewed” was closer to the AP news agenda. But the most recommended stories were the most intriguing of all: “Puget Sound in declining health,” and “Realtors fight cost-cutters with rule to keep fees high,” and “Experts: flares may have helped planets.”

By the numbers, Yahoo was fairly typical when it came to updating. Just under half of its top stories (45%) were replaced during the day. Another third were updated in some fashion. As with Google, though, the updating is not a decision made by the staff; in this case it is the latest postings from each of the key news outlets — or on this day from three of them (AP, Reuters and AFP). The difference from Google is in what the two sites draw from and how they offer it to users. Yahoo pulls from a small pool of outlets and lists the stories by the outlet. Google pulls from a nearly limitless number of outlets and lists them by topic.

When it came to exploiting the interactive and multimedia dimensions of the Web, Yahoo again was about average among the sites we found over all. Just over half its stories contained links to video of the events described (55% versus 45% on average) and the video links hit most of the big stories of the day — the Iraq bombings, the Zion slayings, North Korea’s fuel rods. Two thirds (65%) offered photo galleries. A quarter of the stories had links by which users could customize or manipulate data (slightly higher than the 18% average). And three quarters of its stories offered users the chance to communicate or interact with someone to follow up (nearly double the 39% average) in a variety of ways, from e-mailing the piece to visiting message boards so as to post views. Here, Yahoo scored much higher than its online rival Google, and higher than the New York Times, and about on a par with sites that have their origins in television, like CBS and CNN.

Only in the use of audio did Yahoo lag. None of its top stories, at least back in May, had audio links (compared with 18% overall).

CBSNews.com



If Google and Yahoo represent Web search companies that are moving into journalism, CBSNews.com is at the leading edge of TV networks trying to manage their way into the interactive world. May 11 captured a day before the site was redesigned after the hiring of the online entrepreneur Larry Kramer as head of CBS Digital.

On the date of our Day in the Life study, however, CBS already offered users a clear top story that featured a photo, an interactive feature and video, followed by a second story that, with a click, also offered multiple features. A list of 14 more headlines sat under those. Some of the stories, however, were repeated in more than one place. This section was followed by the CBS Evening News Online Edition, a chance to watch the newscast online.

There were then 47 other headlines on the page, divided by categories — U.S., World, Health Watch, Entertainment, Opinion, Sci-Tech, Politics, Business, Evening News, Early Show.

Last May, the level of updating on the page was substantial, but there was also some effort to make the level of change look greater than it may have been. The top story and the second story, for instance, tended to be swapped back and forth, and other stories moved around the page. At 9 a.m. the Iraqi bombing led the page. By 1 p.m., the plane scare in D.C. grabbed the top story position, while the testimony of the actor Macaulay Culkin was second and the Iraq story moved to the right margin under a piece on the Zion slayings. At 5 p.m., the Culkin and plane-scare stories were reversed. There was also a noticeable slowing of the updating as time went on. At 1 p.m., 10 of the roughly 65 stories were either new or updated from 9 a.m. (though that wasn't always signified to the reader). At 5 p.m. another 10 were new. By 9 p.m. just one more story was new, from WebMD.

CBS News Lead Stories

9 a.m.	1 p.m.	5 p.m.	9 p.m.
Iraq Bombings	Air Scare Prompts DC Evacuations	Culkin: Jackson Did Not Molest Me	A Tale of Two Child Stars (Culkin)
Dad Charged in Girls' Murders (Zion slayings)	Culkin: Jackson Did Not Molest Me	"Errant Pilots" Spark DC Scare	No Charges in DC Air Scare
Georgians Play Down Bush Grenade	Series of Bombs Kill 61 in Iraq	Prosecutor: Dad Admitted Stabbings (Zion slayings)	Prosecutors On Dad's Rage Killing (Zion slayings)
United Gets OK to Ditch Pensions	Georgians Play Down Bush Grenade	Series of Bombs Kill 61 in Iraq	Series of Bombs Kill 61 in Iraq

When it came to the numbers, the nature of a television-based site — versus an online aggregator or a newspaper — came into clear relief. Only some of the text on CBS.com came from CBS. None of the main text stories on the site through the day were produced by CBS alone, but 95% of them cited CBS staff and wires together. That is far different from the New York Times, where 90% of the stories were staff-written.

On the other hand, in non-text news, the amount of original content went way up. The site included dozens of video stories that were wholly original to CBS, mostly pieces from different broadcasts.

Indeed, like other TV-based Web sites, even back in May 2005, the site tended to excel at exploiting the multimedia nature of the Web. A remarkable 85% of its top stories had links to video of the events described, while none linked to just audio. Only 5% of the top stories gave users the ability to customize, and none of the top stories offered users specific links by which they could communicate with CBS about the presentation.

All that changed. The CBS page available in 2006 is significantly more of a continuous news source. The site includes a good amount of Internet-only video. It will track news events well after the nightly news is off the air, includes a section on “interactives” where users can find all the interactive features on the page in one place, and includes a special section for “Strange News,” an echo of the spirit of “Odd News” on Yahoo.

The site notably also contains a section called “Build Your Own Newscast,” where users can select and order from 20 top stories from the day and 18 other packages. This creates the capacity for viewers to see a newscast online that is far different from what is available from either the evening more morning news, and far larger. And there is a substantial section where users can download programming for podcast listening, PDAs and MP3s.

The left rail of the new site also contains an “Only on the Web” feature in which CBS News correspondents generate large amounts of video content that is unique, not “repurposed” from television.

Uniquely among the networks and most other sites, CBSNews.com also contains CBS Public Eye, an effort launched after Kramer’s arrival to allow consumers to react to, talk about, criticize and even interact directly with CBS news officials. More than a page, this is a site within a site. It includes essays from outside contributors, comments from viewers, responses by CBS journalists, and blogs by authors from Public Eye.

It is probably the most serious attempt at transparency and dialogue we saw in our sample. It adds a dimension to the CBS approach that makes it, along with one local newspaper we monitored, the most significant attempt to create a sense of a news organization offering a distinct product with a different personality online, rather than just a news source that is involves multimedia and constant updating. Yet Public Eye also feels like a work in progress, and the visitor senses that in a year or two it may be quite different, particularly if blogs begin to fade or evolve as a new dimension of the Web.



The Web site of cable news's oldest channel has become one of the most popular sites on the Web, consistently among the top three (with Yahoo and MSNBC). What people find there is a site whose top stories on May 11 stood out by nearly all our measures — the level of original content, updating, newness of content, and use of the multimedia nature of the Web. Yet beyond those lead items, much like cable news on television, there is less underneath. The rest of the site relies on AP wire copy for most of its news and amounts to less than people can get in various other places.

CNN.com falls squarely in the camp of old media, making choices for people about what news is most important, though it does offer a button for “Most Popular” stories. Still, if the wire copy and original material are added together, CNN.com offers a diet of news very similar to what viewers could find on the cable channel throughout the day.

The page on May 11 (and its setup had not been changed as of early 2006) featured a lead story, which users were drawn to by a major photo. At 9 a.m., it was the news that “Six bombs kill 54 in Iraq,” the same lead as on many of the sites studied. (Incidentally, CBS.com at 9 a.m. had the number at 61, NYTimes.com at “more than 60,” Reuters “at least 70,” and AFP “at least 64”). This top story also had links to two separate video pieces — on the bombing and the general fighting in Iraq — plus a story about Senate funding for the war and a special report, “Iraq: Transition of Power.”

After the morning, though, the top spot would be dominated by the plane scare — at 1 p.m., 5 p.m. and 9 p.m. The story was updated throughout the day and there were fresh pictures and links, but like its cable TV parent, CNN's Web site found the wayward Cessna's journey into restricted airspace the day's big story.

To the left of that lead, CNN's site offered seven more headlines under its “More News” heading. And there was a lot of crime reporting on this day — at 9 a.m. the Illinois slaying, another multiple homicide, in California, the Jackson trial and the sentencing of a “cannibal-inspired killer” all made the list. But there was also substantial use of links and multimedia. Four of the seven stories featured video links, and there was yet another special report, this one on Michael Jackson.

9 a.m.	1 p.m.	5 p.m.	9 p.m.
Six Bombs Kill 54 in Iraq	US Capitol, White House Briefly Evacuated	Two Held After Capitol, White House Evacuated	Two Held After DC Security Scare
Father Charged in Girls' Slayings (Zion slayings)	Macaulay Culkin Testifies for Jackson	Culkin: Jackson "Never" Molested Me	Bush Asked to Explain UK War Memo
Three Children Among Six Found Slain	Father Charged in Girls' Stabbings (Zion slayings)	Prosecutor: Dad Admits Killing Girls (Zion slayings)	Culkin: Jackson "Never" Molested Me
Officials: Grenade Found Near Bush was In active	Six Bombs Kill 54 in Iraq	Six Bombs Kill 54 in Iraq	Prosecutors: Girls Stabbed 31 Times (Zion slayings)

That section was followed by yet more multimedia, the latest updates from CNN Radio and video on Britain's Prince Harry joining the military. Then came a link to the homepage of the news channel's No. 1 show, Larry King, followed by a stock market report and stock quote check.

Below that came the rest of the news menu broken down into topics — U.S., World, Technology, Entertainment, Politics, Law, Health, Science and Space, Travel, Education, Sports, Business — each offering a couple of headline stories, 24 in all. Yet there CNN's effort at original work had stopped. Those 24 stories were all wire copy, mainly AP.

Thus this is really two sites — the eight or so main stories for which CNN has produced packages and text stories through the day, including a couple of background non-breaking news reports, and the larger menu of news from the AP.

During the day, CNN paid fairly close attention to those stories that it produced itself. Nearly half, 45%, of those would turn over by 9 p.m., and another 40% would be updated in some manner. Unlike the aggregators' computerized updates, these were the work of CNN correspondents, and also often linked to the latest TV reports as well as other video or audio components.

Three quarters of stories through the day included video and three quarters photo galleries. Three quarters of them would also allow users to customize or manipulate data. One in every five (20%) included audio links, and half included graphics and maps. By 9 p.m., for instance, the top story on the plane scare in Washington also included seven different links to sidebars, photo galleries, or video — everything from a timeline ("the key 47 minutes") to a package on "How the decision to shoot down a plane is made."

Yet the multimedia emphasis, updating and interactivity was again limited to the top eight stories. In the larger section below that makes up the bulk CNN's homepage, only four of the 24 wire stories would be replaced by newer material through the day. And there was little in the way of multimedia or other links.

As for news agenda, excluding the AP, the Web site has something of a balance that the news channel on TV does not. Online, the plane-scare story was the lead, but it didn't dominate the space on CNN's Web page the way it did the time on TV. Users could sample as much or as little of the plane issue as they wanted.

Still, compared with Yahoo, the New York Times or Google, CNN's popular page is offering users a much more limited menu of news.



As the name implies, JSONline represents the effort to create a news experience for users online distinct from what they find in print but related to it, all with the resources of a paper with a circulation of 240,000 on weekdays and 430,000 on Sundays.

That morning's Milwaukee Journal Sentinel was augmented on the Web with a clear section signaling to users new breaking news in a self-described "Weblog," plus a menu that broke down the news by city, links to online chats, staff blogs, reader photo galleries, and even ways to get RSS (a web feed format), and a link so that people could easily submit news tips.

JSONline.com Lead Stories

9 a.m. Investigation Finds Election Fraud	1 p.m. GOP Sends DNR Pick Back to Doyle (Daywatch)	5 p.m. Testimony: Oswald Got Delusions from Dad (Daywatch)	9 p.m. Doyle, GOP Work on Minimum Wage Deal (Daywatch)
Museum Layoffs Expected Soon	Existing Home Sales Up 10.4% in Area (Daywatch)	Casino Won't Sap Potawatomi, Study Says (Daywatch)	Testimony: Oswald Got Delusions from Dad (Daywatch)
Board Regroups Amid Gold Outcry (Marquette)	Green Pleads Not Guilty to Charges (Daywatch)	Marquette to Start Over on Nickname (Daywatch)	Casino Won't Sap Potawatomi, Study Says (Daywatch)
Student Who Wore Dress to Prom Suspended, Fined	Investigation Finds Election Fraud	Marquette to Start Over on Nickname	Marquette to Start Over on Nickname

Some of what follows, particularly the generous offering of staff-written blogs, is an update from how the site looked on May 11, 2005, but the general philosophy was already there.

The emphasis on JSONline is not simply to update a given morning's paper — to deliver the newspaper in real time. The Journal Sentinel seems to be approaching the task as if the Internet is a different medium, rapidly developing a different personality that goes beyond the capacity for real-time immediacy.

The Journal Sentinel, on May 11, was trying to exploit the possibilities of the Web as much as any site we found, and in some ways more than the online-only sites Google and Yahoo. The difference was the ability to offer original content and the fact that the paper clearly was connected closely to a community.

JOnline at 9 a.m. that day looked a good deal like the morning paper, leading with a local election-fraud story in the right margin, a controversy over changing the name of the Marquette sports teams and a story on a local male student suspended for wearing a dress to his high school prom. As the day wore on, the site added "DayWatch, a Weblog of today's developing news" — local home-sales figures, a legislative battle over taxes, and testimony in a local trial — in a box sitting atop the site's top story. "DayWatch" is not strictly a blog in the typical sense. Rather, the paper is posting the first few paragraphs of stories that seem likely to appear in the following day's paper. Rather than filling the page with new developing headlines, however, the new postings are strung together on one page in chronological order. As the day goes on, "DayWatch" grows. Updates are posted as new material, not changes in existing stories, the same feel as one gets from personal blogs.

Other changes on the site during the day were sparse, though at 5 p.m. the lead story was also new, as the Marquette name controversy had taken a new turn. The "Warriors," who had seen their name changed to "Golden Eagles," were again finding their nomenclature being reconsidered. The Marquette story bumped the election-fraud story into the right margin.

Below "DayWatch" users find the main stories from that morning's paper unchanged. Under those come wire stories from around the nation and world that are updated throughout the day.

Down the left side, the news is offered not first by sections but by cities and towns — Milwaukee, Waukesha, Washington, Ozaukee, Racine. Here the stories are listed not just from this day but earlier days as well. Again, immediacy is not the only value here; localism is important, too. Under sports, the next header, users again can navigate directly where they want — Packers, Bucks, Brewers, Marquette, etc.

By the numbers, JOnline was not particularly focused on multimedia. Only about 2 of its top 10 stories featured video, less than any site other than Google. No story on May 11 featured a photo gallery or audio. But the site was among the leaders in stories that allowed users to manipulate and customize information.

And every top story invited readers to communicate and ask questions — the only site to reach that level. Each story also included the e-mail address of the reporter — click and you are sending a message.

Since we studied the site, it has expanded its Web offerings. "DayWatch" averages somewhere around 20 posts a day, and the site added "FirstWatch," a blog entry that offers readers a conversational preview of that day's news. JOnline has also begun investing more in multimedia, adding more audio slideshows, video and interactive packages.

The sense one gets, generally, is of a site that by design is trying to explore not certain aspects of what the Web may offer but, within the range of a paper in a medium-sized city, as many of them as they can think of.

KPRC-TV's Click2Houston.com

Click2Houston.com, the Website of KPRC, Channel 2, the NBC affiliate in Houston, is produced by Internet Broadcasting Systems Inc., a company that designs and manages sites for about 75 different stations and programs, from Telemundo.com to the syndicated program Access Hollywood.

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content at the top of the page — from “Dating” (a page “powered by” the online dating company eHarmony) to “Save on Everything,” a link to 34 pages of coupons.

Those 20 advertising tabs, moreover, appear above and below half as many tabs for the news sections of the site, “news, weather, traffic, sports, editorials, money, health, entertainment, and tech.”

By the numbers, Click2Houston fell in the middle of our sample. The top stories were frequently updated (45% were changed sometime during the day on May 11 and another 40% were updated). More than half (55%) of the top stories included video, and 0% still photos. None linked to audio.

But it was the more aggressive intermingling of advertorial and editorial that stood out. By proportion, perhaps more than half of the site appeared to be paid content.

[Click here to view content data tables.](#)

Audience

Audience

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

What trends do we find in people using the Internet for news heading into 2006?

Our sense, looking across the data, is that:

- The percentage of adult Americans who get news online at all appears to have stabilized.
- But the ones who do are beginning to go there more often.
- The use of newspaper Web sites in particular is growing.
- And there are various reasons researchers expect all those numbers to accelerate again.

The Number of Americans Online

While a Web site can gather all kinds of detailed information about its users, from the kind of products they buy to the time of day they log on, no clear method for tallying overall use of the World Wide Web has been firmly established. The best data still come largely from public opinion surveys, and one survey finding often contradicts another. What’s more, to understand the universe of news consumption online, one first has to define the broader universe of those who use the Internet at all.

For that universe, two survey groups — the Pew Internet and American Life Project and the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press — both put the number at about 7 out of 10 adults in 2005 using the Internet in some way. In absolute numbers, that would mean that roughly about 137 million adult Americans reported going online at the end of 2005. 1

And the number may be higher if one includes more young people. The USC Annenberg School Center for the Digital Future, asking not just about adults but about anyone 12 or older, found that 79% of Americans had gone online in 2005, up from 76% in 2003 and 71% in 2002. ^{2 3}

Online News Use

So how many of those people go online specifically for news? That answer, too, varies from one survey to the next, but some generalizations seem clear.

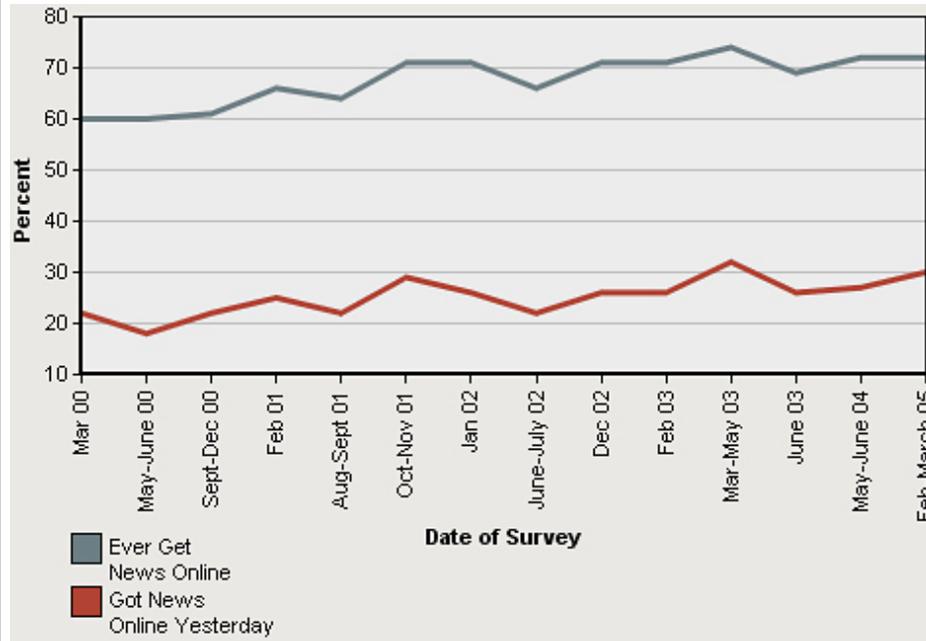
First, the vast majority of adults who use the Internet do at some time go there for news.

In 2005, approximately 70% of American adults who had gone online said they had used the Internet for news, roughly the same number as a year earlier, according to the Pew Internet project. In real numbers, that is approximately 97 million adult Americans. And with changes in population, that number is up from the 86 million estimated in November 2004. ⁴

The main area of growth in 2005 seemed to be in regularity. Everyday use grew seven percentage points, according to the Pew Research Center, to roughly a third (34%) of users, up from 27% in 2004. Asking the question slightly differently, Pew Internet found that those who said they got news online “yesterday” was up to 30% of users, or three percentage points from 2004. ⁵

Percent of Internet Users Who Access News Online

Percent accessing news online ever or yesterday, 2000 to 2005



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Pew Internet and American Life Project tracking surveys

Another way to measure online news appeal in relation to other news media is to flip the question around: Ask not if you go online for news but more broadly where you get most of your news. Measured that way, Americans' reliance on the Internet for their daily news has doubled over the last few years. Survey research from Consumer Reports shows that 11% now get most of their news over the Web, up from just 5% in 2002. ⁶

Thus, only slightly more people seem to be using the Web for news, but even more seem to be using it regularly — perhaps an even more important figure for those investing in the medium.

And there is some evidence that newspaper Web sites in particular are gaining. More than two thirds (67%) of American adults said they read either local or national newspaper Web sites in late 2005, an increase of five percentage points from earlier in 2005. ⁷ If those people are substituting the online version of the paper for the print version, as some of the data suggest, that is probably one of the reasons print newspaper circulation losses are accelerating.

It is also worth repeating something we noted last year, that some observers say online news consumption numbers may be undercounted. First, the argument goes, people could get news from a variety of places they do not necessarily think of as news sites — such as the front page of Yahoo, MSN and AOL. And second, surveys do not usually include teenagers (link to “Youngest of the Young”), some of the heaviest users of the Web. ⁸

Looking Ahead

How much growth in online news consumption can we expect to see in 2006 and beyond? Projecting online news use is necessarily speculative. Still, most observers do see growth continuing, though more slowly now than before. Jupiter Research, one of the key forecasters of online economics and audience figures, predicts that by 2010, overall Internet penetration will reach 74%, up from 68% in 2005, or roughly a 1 % increase each year over the next four years. While this suggests more of a “maturation phase” than explosive growth, it still signifies growth. ⁹ And the evidence suggests that as overall Internet use grows, so will using the Internet for news.

Analysts cite three factors in predicting continued growth, two of which could increase not only the number of people who use the Internet but how much they do so:

U.S. teenagers

Racial and ethnic groups

Broadband

Teenagers and Growth

Much of the existing survey research generally excludes those younger than 18 years of age, or the so-called “digital natives” in the words of Rupert Murdoch. ¹⁰ Research from the Pew Internet and American Life Project show that nearly 9 in 10 teenagers (87%) are Internet users, compared to almost 7 in 10 (68%) adults. ¹¹

Moreover, teenagers are slightly more likely than adults to access news online, and their use is growing. In 2005, 76% of teens got news online — up from 38% in 2000, and six percentage points greater than those over 18, according to the Pew Internet and American Life Project. As the teenagers enter the general U.S. adult pool that pollsters usually draw from, overall online use should grow.

Ethnicity and Growth

There is also projected growth among several racial and ethnic groups, although those estimates are for overall Internet use and not exclusively news. Jupiter Research, for instance, estimates that African-American household penetration will grow from 56% to 64% from 2004 to 2010; Hispanic penetration from 52% to 64%, and Asian-American from 71% to 83%.¹²

Broadband and Growth

Finally, there is the question of how the expansion of broadband connections will affect news. “Broadband” is a term for high-speed Internet and data connections. More and more Americans are moving to this faster connection mode. And research suggests broadband users are more likely than dial-up users to perform a number of online activities, including consuming news. What’s more, there is a strong possibility that the availability and ease of accessing video news clips and stories over broadband connections will prompt further growth in online news consumption; growing numbers of news organizations are offering the video feature. There is also a possibility that as more private citizens contribute news content, either on formal news sites or on amateur sites and blogs, the menu of news will expand and attract new markets. Thus any increase in broadband adoption would logically include an increase in online news use as well.

Is the Net Cannibalizing Traditional Media?

Competition with newspapers and television for advertising revenue is front and center in the minds of those following the news industry. The economic implications are critical to the future of journalism and to what we can expect the media landscape to look like as the Net becomes a bigger factor in the American news diet.

In last year’s annual report, we cited evidence that online news use was beginning to chip away at overall television news consumption. And for the first time we saw more firm evidence of substitution in print newspaper audience numbers as well.

How do things look heading into 2006?

Newspapers

For print, there is even more evidence of cannibalization, and it seems to be occurring on two fronts, in consumption of news and in advertising dollars.

News consumption survey data from the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press confirms what we saw last year, that some consumers who go to the online version of the newspaper are abandoning the print version. According to these data, more than a third (35%) of online newspaper readers say they are reading the print version “less often.”¹³

Another study looked at the question more deeply, concentrating on one market — Washington, D.C. The study, conducted by Matthew Gentzkow of the University of Chicago, developed a mathematical model to assess the extent to

which online news either crowds out or complements print newspapers. According to that research, the city's major online newspaper site, www.washingtonpost.com, reduced newspaper print readership by 27,000 a day, which Gentzkow called "a moderate amount." To what extent other newspaper Web sites might be reducing Washington Post print readership was not clear. ¹⁴

There also appears to be some difference in which kinds of newspaper readers are abandoning the print version. Data from the USC Annenberg School suggests that the heaviest online news readers were spending almost the same amount of time in 2005 with both the print and online versions of the paper as they were in 2003. But lighter online news consumers report spending less time with the print form in 2005. ¹⁵ That might mean that newspapers will have a harder time in the future converting casual readers into core audience.

Yet the trend away from the print version has become a critical issue for the newspaper industry, most notably evidence that the Web is starting to compete with print newspapers' biggest source of revenue: advertising. At the local level, consumers are increasingly turning to the Internet, at the expense of newspapers, for information about local products and services, according to research by the Kelsey Group and Constat, Inc. About 70% of households used the Web in February 2005 to hunt for local merchants and stores — up from 60% in October 2003. And the number of households seeking information about nearby stores and services from print newspapers has slightly declined, from 73% to 70%. ¹⁶

Even more troubling for newspapers, some of the online sites that consumers are migrating to are not online newspapers but sites with no news at all, such as eBay and craigslist. ¹⁷ Thus, as the dollar numbers already show, some of the advertising revenue in this migration online is moving away from journalism completely.

Television

Turning to television, the data also continue to be suggestive but not conclusive. For several years, some surveys suggested that online news consumption was chipping away at television news viewing even more than with newspapers .

Three new surveys added to this sense in 2005. Research by Nielsen/Net in the winter of 2005 found that 47% of respondents who go online for news or information said they spent more time online than a year before, and some 20% said they spent less time watching television. ¹⁸ And a survey by Big Research, an online marketing research firm, looked at general media use among Americans 18 to 24 years old and concluded that increased use of new media in that age group had had a "negative effect" on television viewing. ¹⁹ Finally, survey findings from Jupiter Research suggest Americans are now spending as much time with the Web as they are with television. ²⁰

But there was some contradictory evidence in 2005 as well. Prof . Bob Papper of Ball State University argues that telephone surveys of ten fail to provide full information on how much media Americans consume every day . For the last two years, Papper has conducted observational studies in Muncie, Ind., that found no evidence that overall online consumption comes directly at the expense of overall television consumption.

And Papper's conclusions are supported by the large base of data on the Internet from the Center for the Digital Future at the USC Annenberg School . It found that weekly television viewing increased last year among online news consumers , particularly among the lightest online news consumers. ²¹

In the end, the impact on television is now less clear than it appeared to be a few years ago, and is something to watch.

Younger Americans and the Web

Is the Web still ruled by the young? While it may be true that young people are the heaviest users of the dizzying array of available online functions such as instant messaging and downloading music, does that also apply to online news use?

Young Americans clearly lead the way in a number of non-news activities available to Internet users. According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, they are most likely to say they use instant messaging, visit an adult Web site, take part in a chat room, use online classified sites like craigslist to sell or buy something, download music, watch a video clip or listen to an audio clip, play video games online, gamble online, look for information about a job or place to live, share files, participate in a fantasy sports league, and use a Webcam. ²²

It also turns out that young people are considerably more likely than other age groups to say the Internet is their main source of news. Currently, 36% of those 18 to 29 say the Internet is their primary source, more than those 30 to 49 (30%), 50 to 64 (16%) and those over 65 (4%), according to the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. ²³

Other research also suggests that younger Americans rely on the Web as their main source of news to a greater degree than other age groups. Consumer Reports found that nearly one in five Americans (19%) 18 to 40 consider the Internet their primary news source, more than double those 41 to 59 (8%), and far surpassing those 60 or over (1%). ²⁴

There is evidence, however, that older Americans are more likely than younger ones to be frequent news consumers, which raises questions about the devotion of young people over time to any online news product, and about the best use of ad dollars.

While 29% of those 18 to 29 say they get news online every day, 37% of those 30 to 49 are every-day online news consumers, according to the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. ²⁵

That is also true when the question is about going online for news “yesterday,” which is another way to measure frequent use. Just over a quarter (26%) of online users 18 to 29 years old received news yesterday, fewer than the 35% of online 30-to-49-year-olds or the 29% of those 50 to 64, according to the Pew Internet and American Life Project. ²⁶

Finally, where do young Americans go for online news? The Carnegie Corporation of New York surveyed Americans 18 to 34 and found that Internet portals such as Yahoo were the most popular daily news source, with local TV news sites second, and network or cable TV sites and newspaper sites tied for third. ²⁷ This, too, could have major implications for the future, especially since newspaper Web sites are not high on the list.

The Youngest of the Young

In the spring of 2005, the American Society of Newspaper Editors held its annual conference in Washington, D.C. Rupert Murdoch, managing director of News Corp., told the delegates about research by Merrill Brown for the Carnegie Corporation of New York that evaluated media patterns among Americans 18 to 34. Specifically, Murdoch spoke about the future of newspaper journalism and how the industry needed to adapt in order to stay relevant to those even younger — teenagers and pre-teens — whom he referred to as “digital natives”:

“The challenge, however, is to deliver that news in ways consumers want to receive it. Before we can apply our competitive advantages, we have to free our minds of our prejudices and predispositions, and start thinking like our

newest consumers. In short, we have to answer this fundamental question: what do we – a bunch of digital immigrants — need to do to be relevant to the digital natives?”²⁸

There has been a lot of discussion of those digital natives, but how do they use media? In this year’s annual report, we have decided to expand our understanding of young people and the future of the Web to an even younger cohort, those 8 to 18 years old.

The Kaiser Family Foundation survey discussed earlier examined daily media consumption habits. In short, this study suggests this is a generation that still watches a lot of television, reads considerably less, and consumes a great deal of interactive media. Television is the most dominant media platform for these young Americans, with more than 8 in 10 watching for more than three hours on any given day. But only 6% of that viewing time was allocated to the news.

Meanwhile, these young people are spending very little time with the print medium outside of school or work. According to the study, “no single print medium garners attention from as many as 50% of kids, and fewer than 20% read for pleasure for more than an hour daily.” Just 43 minutes a day outside of school were spent on reading all print materials, and only six of those were devoted to newspapers.

Computer use outside of school and work was higher than print consumption and appeared to be growing. Children 8 to 18 spent over an hour a day with computers, more than doubling the 27 minutes a day reported in 1999, according to the study. Playing games was the most frequent activity; visiting Web sites ranked second.²⁹

With all the obvious caveats about predicting the future, the findings have some potentially major implications. Unless habits change as these children become adults, the findings portend some significant changes in who will thrive and who will suffer online.

The overall trend appears to be an acceleration toward more visual, digital and interactive media platforms and further away from those with their history in print.

What Are People Reading Online?

How does choice of subjects among online readers compare with those among newspaper readers ?

Perhaps because online news competes with so many other activities that can be performed while one is “logged on,” users seem to gravitate to different topics here than they do when reading a print newspaper.

Surveys in 2003 and 2004 of daily print newspaper readers by Mediamark Research, Inc. found that the most read sections of the newspaper include general news (60%), sports (36%), the editorial page (37%), business and finance (35%), the classified pages (32%), and movie listings and reviews (27%).³⁹

To get a sense of how those figures compare with online choices, we looked at the habits of regular users, in this case those who said they had gone online “ yesterday. ” The most recent data suggest that they are accessing something quite different online than they do in print. The types of news they go online regularly for include general news (30%), news or information about politics and the campaign (18%) , information about movies (13%), sports scores (11%) , financial information (8%) , and classified ads on sites like craigslist (6%).

Merely occasional online consumption, meanwhile, more closely resembles daily newspaper reader habits. The most recent data available from the Pew Internet and American Life Project showed that 73% of occasional online users say

they had looked for “information about movies, music, books, or other leisure activities”; 72% had at some time read general “news”; 44% had gone online to “get financial information, such as stock quotes or mortgage interest rates”; 43% said they had gone online to “check sports scores or information” and 36% had used “online classified ads or sites like craigslist to sell or buy items, find a job, or meet other people online.”⁴⁰

Blogs

Following extraordinary growth in 2004, perhaps fueled by a highly partisan presidential election, it appears blog readership slowed in 2005. Although blogs are often seen as a symbol of the new, democratized citizen media that Dan Gillmor and others have championed, there is some evidence that the heaviest readers of blogs are members of the Washington establishment.

Meanwhile, bloggers wrestled with ethical questions about the impact advertising could have on their content, and a debate emerged on Capital Hill and in the courts on whether bloggers had the same legal rights as traditional journalists.

Blog Readership

After extraordinary growth in 2004, the data suggest blog readership slowed in 2005.⁴¹ From February 2004 to January 2005, the number of online Americans who said they had ever read a blog increased nearly 60% — from 17% to 27%, according to the Pew Internet project. Since then, the percentage of blog readers has remained stable.⁴²

But in aggregate numbers, that means blog readership grew from 32 million to 37 million. With overall growth of the Internet population, that still means 16% more people were blog readers by the end of 2005, compared to the end of 2004.⁴³ But the explosion in blog consumption, for now, appears over.

Regular blog readership, as distinct from occasional or one-time, has not grown much, either. According to the Pew Internet Project, the proportion of Internet users who were regularly reading blogs year to year remained at 7%.⁴⁴

With only about a quarter of the population having ever read one, blogs remain a relatively unfamiliar platform for much of the public. In February 2005, only 26% of Internet users said they were “very familiar” or “somewhat familiar” with blogs, according to a Gallup/CNN/USA Today poll.⁴⁵

And who makes up this minority of Americans who consume blogs? Research suggests they are more likely to be younger and male. And ironically, the most fervid blog readers are journalists — the group perhaps that feels most threatened by them.⁴⁶

Indeed, there is some evidence that blogs have become a fundamental part of journalists’ news diet. A 2005 University of Connecticut study found that 41% of journalists access blogs at least once a week and 55% say they read blogs as part of their work duties.^{47 48}

Blog Creators

The growth in number of Americans who produce blogs also appears to have slowed. In 2004, the number of blog creators doubled, which meant that 10% of Internet users had written a blog at some point, according to data from the Pew Internet and American Life Project.⁴⁹ In 2005, the growth was much more modest, up just 5% from the year before. That translated into roughly 9 million American adults who had created blogs by the end of 2005.⁵⁰

There is some contradictory evidence if one looks not at the number of bloggers but the number of blogs — different sites on different subjects. As of January 2006, Technorati had indexed nearly 27 million blogs spanning about 1.9 billion links, and estimated earlier that 70,000 new blogs were being created every day.⁵¹ Other research shows an even larger blogosphere. Perseus Research, a Massachusetts-based developer of Web survey systems, estimated that the number of blogs could exceed 53 million by the end of 2005.⁵²

Why the discrepancy? How could the growth in bloggers be slowing while more blogs are being identified? It could be because Technorati's index includes blogs worldwide while survey research is generally conducted exclusively among Americans. It also could be that the software identifying blogs is improving. Or it could be that some individual blog creators are creating more than one blog.

Whatever it is, the growth in the blogosphere appears more robust than the growth in the audience for it.

(Please see “Changes in the Blogosphere” in the side bar for a discussion on how the blogosphere is adapting to technological advances).

Blogging Economics

The next big question is whether blogging can make money by becoming a substantial ad platform. While bloggers have so far been reluctant to say publicly how much revenue their sites generate, it seems that most still need day jobs to pay the bills. In an interview with the New York Observer, Nick Denton, the host and publisher of Gawker Media (described by Arianna Huffington as the “Rupert Murdoch of the blogosphere”) said he charged \$4 for every 1,000 appearances, or page views, of an ad. If the blog got, say, 5.5 million page views a month, that would be \$22,000 in monthly revenue.

But then again, how many bloggers actually generate 5.5 million page views a month? As David Hauslaib, founder of Jossip and Queerty, told Wired magazine, “At the bare minimum, a lone blogger will likely need to attract high four-to-five-figure daily visitor figures to even attempt a blog-based livable wage.”⁵⁶ The number of blogs getting thousands or tens of thousands of unique visitors is small indeed.⁵⁷

There is growing evidence, however, that blogs have the potential to become a more attractive investment for advertisers by becoming more integrated into corporate media. That presents a dilemma for the bloggers, many of whom wish to continue practicing an exclusively citizen-based form of journalism, which is their essence.

In October, AOL announced it had acquired Weblogs Inc., the publisher of nearly 90 blogs, for roughly \$15 million and possibly as high as \$25 million if Weblogs meets certain performance targets. The acquisition was seen as a move for AOL to increase its overall audience numbers and provide marketers with the opportunity to reach online niche markets.⁵⁸ Other blog “collectives” have sprung up over the last few years, most notably Gawker Media, Weblogs, Inc. and B5 Media.⁵⁹

And advertisers are curious. In early 2005, a Forrester Research survey found that 64% of national marketers said they were interested in placing ads on blogs.⁶⁰

As suggested above, not every blogger is so eager to cash in. AOL's acquisition, as well as the decision by Andrew Sullivan to take his blog to Time.com, created a stir within the blogging community.⁶¹ Denton fears that the big media companies will destroy the independent, grass-roots spirit that bloggers believe separates them from the mainstream media, which they deride as the MSM: “The whole point about blogs is that they're not part of big media,” Denton told

the Washington Post. “Consolidation defeats that purpose. It’s way too early. Like a decade too early.”⁶² In November, Yahoo announced it was adding feeds from some of Gawker’s blogging team, though Denton emphasized that the blog content would only be licensed, not sold.⁶³

Others, however, think most blogs will inevitably be forced into finding a business model. In the words of Edward Wasserman, Knight professor of journalism ethics at Washington and Lee University: “Everywhere the Internet is turning into the most skillfully calibrated marketing instrument since people first made money that folds. The whole logic of commercialization ensures a privileged platform for whatever moves products. That logic creates both noise and silences, loud benefits and quiet costs. It’s why none of this is free.”⁶⁴

Katrina and the Internet

It is no longer a secret that disasters push people online in droves. The Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004 and the London bombings of July 2005 showed a flurry of online activity with citizen-produced content in the foreground. Blogs of eye-witness accounts, digital photography and amateur video delivered unedited reporting and reactions from the scene. When Katrina leveled the Gulf Coast in late August 2005, the Web was ready to deliver once more. What was different this time — with little citizen-produced content coming out of stricken Louisiana and Mississippi — was that mainstream media took the lead. Newspapers and television stations from New Orleans to Biloxi started blogs to provide constant updates from the field.

Some American news organizations also allowed bloggers to create blog posts on their sites or link to the sites of bloggers who were reporting from their communities. This practice followed the lead of the BBC, which did the same things for bloggers and vloggers during its coverage of the tsunami and the bombings in London.

Recognizing huge interest in the Katrina story, broadcast outlets packed their archives with storm footage. The Monday after the storm made landfall, visitors to CNN.com downloaded more than 9 million video clips. A week later the total figure had climbed to more than 35 million. MSNBC.com did even better with a record-setting 50 million clips streamed in a week.⁶⁸ And WWL Channel 4, the only local outlet to stay on the air, provided a live Webcast of its coverage.

The New Orleans Times-Picayune emerged as a poster organization for its use of the Internet. The paper was forced to cease publishing its print version after the storm and moved to the Web, where it published an online edition for a couple of days. In addition to the staff-updated blogs and photo archives, nola.com provided neighborhood forums to allow evacuees and their families to connect and share information about loved ones and their neighborhoods. The August traffic on nola.com jumped by 277% compared to July.

The online pundit Jeff Jarvis, who blogs at BuzzMachine.com, wrote in a column in the Guardian: “Trust me: before Katrina, this is not how American newspaper editors talked about the Web and Weblogs. But after Katrina, they will.”

Other large media organizations seized the power of the Web to document the magnitude of the storm — the New York Times produced detailed interactive graphics, while the Washington Post carried NASA simulations showing New Orleans under water. Interest in the storm was so high that even the Weather Channel site registered record numbers of visitors.

In the immediate aftermath, citizen-created journalism would also establish a presence. New media mainstays such as blogs, the user-produced encyclopedia Wikipedia, and even the online classifieds giant craigslist were again up to the challenge. Based on an earlier experiment undertaken during the tsunami, Wikipedia created a Katrina portal that was

a clearinghouse for news and relief information. Craigslist created special classifieds categories: temporary housing, volunteer listings and lost and found. The Yahoo-owned photo service Flickr allowed users to sort through thousands of images by looking for “tags,” or key words associated with the photographs. As of November 2005, more than 15,000 photos were tagged “hurricaneKatrina.”⁶⁹

Non-media blogs, such as Metroblogging New Orleans, abounded, providing everything from accounts of the storm to commentary on the news to criticism of the relief effort. Blog-tracker Web sites like Technorati, which indexed nearly 27 million sites as of January 2005, offered separate listings of Katrina-themed postings.

The reporting challenges brought by the winds and surging water showed that the dinosaur the online world calls MSM can navigate the digital realm and even set the standard. After the rise of blogs in 2004, citizen-produced content was expected by some to dominate 2005. What happened instead was that mainstream news organizations caught up and blended old-fashioned reporting with new technology. And when they did, as in the case of Katrina, they came out on top.

Footnotes

1. The Pew Internet and American Life Project, unpublished data, January 2006. The Pew Project’s surveys in September and December 2005 found the number of American adults who accessed the Internet or sent e-mail at school, work, or home was 68%. That was nine percentage points higher than the total measured at roughly the same time in 2004.

The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, “Public More Critical of Press, But Goodwill Persists,” June 26, 2005. Available online at: <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=248>. Data from the Pew Research Center put the overall number of people who accessed the Internet at a similar level, 69%, but suggests that was just one percentage point higher than the total measured at roughly the same time in 2004.

2. Center for The Digital Future at the USC Annenberg School, “Fifth Study by the Digital Future Project Finds Major New Trends in Online Use for Political Campaigns,” December 7, 2005. Available online at: <http://www.digitalcenter.org/pdf/Center-for-the-Digital-Future-2005-Highlights.pdf>.

Meanwhile, survey data from the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, which does not include e-mail use in its question, found that the number of people saying they had ever gone online was 74% in October 2004, fell to 66% in December 2004 and climbed back up to 70% in March 2005. 3. The Pew Internet and American Life Project, unpublished data, January 2006. According to the Internet Project, the percentage of the public going online “yesterday” grew by 2 percentage points in the last year — from 61% in November 2004 to 63% at the end of 2005. In absolute numbers that amounts to 16% growth from 75 million to 87 million in those who use the Internet to get news.

4. The Pew Internet and American Life Project, unpublished data, January 2006. The Internet Project found that 61% of adult Americans were at least occasional Internet users in the fall of 2005. Using 2004 adult population numbers from the U.S. Census Bureau Web site, we can estimate that 61% of the adult population is approximately 123 million adults. The PIP then found that 70% of adult Internet users, or 97 million, used the Internet to get news at least occasionally at the end of 2005. On methodology: PIP uses a lower Census base number to do its calculations. The adult population represented by its surveys in 2005 was 202 million. PIP surveys only in the 48 contiguous states and only the landline-phone-using population, which is about 92% to 94% of the entire population. Thus the online news

user population would be calculated as 202 million times 68% (which gives the overall adult user population) times 70% (which gives the news-consuming population).

5. The Pew Internet and American Life Project. These numbers come from the "Usage Over Time" spreadsheet, available online at: <http://www.pewInternet.org/trends/UsageOverTime.xls>
6. Consumer Reports WebWatch, "Leap of Faith: Using the Internet Despite the Dangers," October 26, 2005. Available online at: www.consumerWebwatch.org/pdfs/princeton.pdf.
7. The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, "Alito Viewed Positively, But Libby Takes a Toll," November 8, 2005. Available online at: <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=262>.
8. According to Lee Rainie, director of the Pew Internet and American Life Project, another possible reason for the undercount is that simply asking the single generic question "Do you ever use the Internet to get news?" sometimes only prompts certain kinds of recollections among respondents. The Pew Internet Project recently found that asking more detailed questions yielded higher numbers of news consumers. For instance, some people who did not say "yes" to the question "Do you ever use the Internet to get news?" did say "yes" to the questions "Have you ever used the Internet to get international news?" and "Have you ever used the Internet to get local news?"
9. ClickZ, "Internet Penetration: Critical Mass, Then What?" July 6, 2005. Available online at: http://www.clickz.com/experts/crm/actionable_analysis/article.php/3517561.
10. News Corporation press release, "Speech by Rupert Murdoch to the American Society of Newspaper Editors," April 13, 2005. Available online at: http://www.newscorp.com/news/news_247.html.
11. The Pew Internet and American Life Project, "Teen Content Creators and Consumers," November 2, 2005.
12. ClickZ, "Internet Penetration: Critical Mass, Then What?" July 6, 2005. Available online at: http://www.clickz.com/experts/crm/actionable_analysis/article.php/3517561.
13. Pew Research Center for The People and The Press, "Public More Critical of Press, But Goodwill Persists," June 26, 2005. Complete findings can be found at <http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/248.pdf>.
14. University of Chicago, "Valuing New Goods in a Model with Complementarity: Online Newspapers," Matthew Gentzkow, January 24, 2006. Available online at: <http://www.gsb.uchicago.edu/fac/matthew.gentzkow/research/PrintOnline.pdf>.
15. Center for the Digital Future at the USC Annenberg School, unpublished data, January 2006.
16. Wendy Davis, "Online Rivals Papers, Surpasses Yellow Pages Among Local Shoppers," Media Daily News, March 23, 2005.
17. The Pew Internet and American Life Project, "Selling items online," November 2005. The Pew Internet and American Life Project has found that significant numbers of online Americans find online classified ads attractive. In September 2005, a Project survey found that 17% of Internet users had sold something online and 22% had used online classifieds ads. Data from comScore Media Metrix indicated that the most popular online-classified sites were

places like the non-profit craigslist and for-profit auto and apartment-hunting sites. The report is available at: http://www.pewInternet.org/pdfs/PIP_SellingOnline_Nov05.pdf.

18. "washingtonpost.com: News consumption growing online," Online Publishers Association Intelligence Report, March 7, 2006.

19. Center for the Media Research, "18-24 Year Olds Most Influenced by New Media," July 11, 2005.

20. Heidi Dawley, "Time-wise, Internet is now TV's equal," Media Life Magazine, February 1, 2006.

21. And findings from yet still another survey — this one also looking at overall media use rather than just news — are more in line with Papper's data. The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation found Americans 8 to 18 years old are spending increasing time on new media such as the Internet but are not cutting back on such old media as TV, print and music. The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, "Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year-olds," March 2005. Available online at: <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/upload/Generation-M-Media-in-the-Lives-of-8-18-Year-olds-Report.pdf>.

22. The Pew Internet and American Life Project. These numbers come from the "Usage Over Time" spreadsheet, available online at: <http://www.pewInternet.org/trends/UsageOverTime.xls>

23. Television (70% saying it is their main source of news) is still the most popular news source for the 18 to 29 age group and newspapers (37%) are the second most popular, according to research conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. Trailing the Internet (36%) are radio (18%) and magazines (6%). Pew Research Center for The People and The Press, "Public More Critical of Press, But Goodwill Persists," June 26, 2005. Complete findings can be found at <http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/248.pdf>.

24. Consumer Reports WebWatch, "Leap of Faith: Using the Internet Despite The Dangers," October 26, 2005. Available online at: <http://www.consumerWebwatch.org/pdfs/princeton.pdf>.

25. Pew Research Center for The People and The Press, "Public More Critical of Press, But Goodwill Persists," June 26, 2005. Complete findings can be found at <http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/248.pdf>.

26. The Pew Internet and American Life Project. These numbers come from the "Usage Over Time" spreadsheet, available online at: <http://www.pewInternet.org/trends/UsageOverTime.xls>

27. Carnegie Corporation of New York, "Use of Sources for News." Available online at: <http://www.carnegie.org/pdf/AbandoningTheNews.ppt#0>.

28. News Corporation press release, "Speech by Rupert Murdoch to the American Society of Newspaper Editors," April 13, 2005. Available online at: http://www.newscorp.com/news/news_247.html.

29. The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, "Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year-olds," March 2005. Available online at: <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/upload/Generation-M-Media-in-the-Lives-of-8-18-Year-olds-Report.pdf>

30. Center for the Media Research, "Media Habits of Affluent Adults," February 22, 2005.

31. The Pew Internet and American Life Project. These numbers come from the "Usage Over Time" spreadsheet, available online at: <http://www.pewInternet.org/trends/UsageOverTime.xls>

32. Ibid.

33. Pew Research Center for The People and The Press, "Public More Critical of Press, But Goodwill Persists," June 26, 2005. Complete findings can be found at <http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/248.pdf>.

34. The Pew Internet and American Life Project. These numbers come from the "Usage Over Time" spreadsheet, available online at: <http://www.pewInternet.org/trends/UsageOverTime.xls>

35. Pew Research Center for The People and The Press, "Public More Critical of Press, But Goodwill Persists," June 26, 2005. Complete findings can be found at <http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/248.pdf>.

36. Ibid. And as discussed above, Jupiter Research has projected that overall Internet penetration among Hispanics, Asian Americans and African Americans though this was general Internet use and not merely news (ClickZ, "Internet Penetration: Critical Mass, Then What?", July 6, 2005. Available online at: http://www.clickz.com/experts/crm/actionable_analysis/article.php/3517561.)

37. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, "Public More Critical of Press, But Goodwill Persists," June 26, 2005. Complete findings can be found at <http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/248.pdf>.

38. Ibid. Meanwhile, the Digital Future Project found that the fastest growing use of the Internet for any purpose is among Americans with incomes of less than \$30,000. Available online at: <http://www.digitalcenter.org/pdf/Center-for-the-Digital-Future-2005-Highlights.pdf>.

39. Media Mark Research, Inc. (Prepared by NAA Business Analysis and Research Department), "Newspaper Section Readership 2005," Spring 2004 study. Available online at: http://www.naa.org/marketscope/readership2005/section_readership_2005.pdf.

40. The Pew Internet and American Life Project. These numbers come from the "Usage Over Time" spreadsheet, available online at: <http://www.pewInternet.org/trends/UsageOverTime.xls>

41. For a good definition of a blog, see "Towards a Critical Media Studies Approach to the Blogosphere," by Vincent Maher, a South African professor who writes on blogs and citizen journalism. Link: <http://nml.ru.ac.za/menthol/?p=129>. Another definition is offered in "Just what is a blog, anyway?" an article published by the Online Journalism Review at the University of Southern California.

42. The Pew Internet and American Life Project, "The state of blogging," January 2005. Available online at: http://www.pewInternet.org/pdfs/PIP_blogging_data.pdf.

43. Pew Internet and American Life Project, unpublished data, January 2006. Research from comScore Networks also reports that nearly 50 million Americans, or about 30% of the total U.S. Internet population, visited blogs in the first quarter of 2005. This was an increase of 45% compared to the first quarter of 2004. comScore Networks, "50 Million Americans Visited Blogs During the First Quarter 2005, According to New comScore study," August 8, 2005.

Consumer Reports WebWatch, "Leap of Faith: Using the Internet Despite the Dangers," October 26, 2005. Available online at: <http://www.consumerWebwatch.org/pdfs/princeton.pdf>. Other research from Consumer Reports also shows similar blog readership figures: 27% report having visited a blog in the past several months.

44. Pew Internet and American Life Project, unpublished data, January 2006.

45. And when asked about political blogs, the most popular type according to comScore research, just 2% report reading them daily, according to Gallup. As a comparison, the same research found that 39% watch cable news, 36% watch network news, and 21% listen to talk radio daily. CNN.com, "Poll: Most Americans unfamiliar with blogs," March 3, 2005.

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46. Age. According to survey findings from Consumer Reports, 39% of those 18 to 29 read a blog in the past few months, compared to 22% of those 30 or older. Consumer Reports WebWatch, "Leap of Faith: Using the Internet Despite The Dangers," October 26, 2005. Available online at: <http://www.consumerwebwatch.org/pdfs/princeton.pdf>. Other research from Consumer Reports also shows similar blog readership figures: 27% report having visited a blog in the past several months. Research from the Pew Internet and American Life Project also suggests that some of the youngest Americans may be heavier blog readers than older Americans. According to one survey, nearly four in 10 (38%) of those 12 to 17 say they read blogs. In addition, 40% of the Internet users ages 18-29 told the Pew Internet and American Life Project they were blog readers, compared with 20% of Internet users over 50. (Pew Internet and American Life Project, "Teen Content Creators and Consumers," November 2, 2005). Gender. Research from Consumer Reports found that 3 in 10 men (30%) visited a blog site while 23% of women did. The Pew Internet and American Life Project also found differences in the overall reader audience of blogs — 30% of online men and 25% of online women said they were blog readers.

Income. Numbers from the Pew Internet and American Life Project show that household income does not matter much as a predictor of blog readership.

47. American Journalism Review, "Journalism's Backseat Drivers," August/September 2005.

48. Interestingly, the slowdown in blogs came even as technology was developed to make combing the blogosphere easier. For instance, Technorati, a search engine that crawls over 26 million blogs, has emerged as a popular source for navigating the blogosphere. Then in September 2005, Google launched blogsearch, a search engine specifically designed to sift through the blogosphere. In October, Yahoo News announced that its online news search tool would also begin adding blogs to its index — another potential boost to blog readership. MSN was expected to introduce one of its own in the immediate future as well. (Michael Liedtke, the Associated Press, "New Google Search Engine Boosts Blogging," September 14, 2005). Finally, the elections of 2006 could revive interest — and growth — in blogs.

49. The Pew Internet and American Life Project. These numbers come from the "Usage Over Time" spreadsheet, available online at: <http://www.pewInternet.org/trends/UsageOverTime.xls>. Also, different survey research from the Pew Internet and American Life Project found that 19% of online users 12 to 17 years of age have created their own blogs — approximately 4 million people. The Pew Internet and American Life Project, "Generations online," December 2005. Available online at: http://www.pewInternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Generations_Memo.pdf.

50. Pew Internet and American Life Project, unpublished data, January 2006. The key demographic story for blog creators in 2005 was the role of younger Americans. Some 19% of Internet users age 18 to 29 had created blogs, compared to 9% of Internet users over age 50, according to data from the Pew Internet project. Otherwise, there were not notable differences in blog creators among men and women, different races, or income classes.

51. Technorati Website, located at <http://www.technorati.com/>, last accessed January 31, 2006.

52. Perseus, "The Blogging Geyser: Blogs Blast from 31.6 Million Today to Reach 53.4 Million by Year End." April 8, 2005.

53. Robert MacMillan, "Tsunami Prompts Online Outpouring," The Washington Post, January 3, 2005.

54. Antonio Regalado, "Video Blogs Break Out With Tsunami Scenes," the Wall Street Journal, January 3, 2005.

55. "Mobile blogs give citizen journalism legs," Reuters, May 21, 2005.

56. Adam L. Penenberg, "Can Bloggers Strike It Rich?" Wired News, September 22, 2005.

57. And how much advertising is there if a blog did have that kind of traffic? According to Charlene Li, an analyst at Forrester Research, businesses will have spent only \$50 million to \$100 million in 2005 on blogs, not much compared to spending levels on other media platforms. Louise Story, "As Corporate Ad Money Flows Their Way, Bloggers Risk Their Rebel Reputation," The New York Times, November 26, 2005. Perhaps one reason advertisers have generally been reluctant to embrace the blogosphere relates to blogs' unique *raison d'être*. Blogs are by nature "imbued with the temper of their writer," as the blogger Andrew Sullivan has put it. In other words, they are highly opinionated, which may turn off potential advertisers who do not want to market their products next to politically charged narrative. As one ad executive said, "The problem is that the blogs generating all the buzz are those that our clients think too risky to associate with."

58. David A. Vise, "AOL to Buy Blog Site in Bid to Expand Reach," The Washington Post, October 7, 2005.

59. For a fuller look at blog collectives, see Paul Berger's "Get it together: Blog collectives seek to draw ads," Online Journalism Review, December 9, 2005.

60. Louise Story, "As Corporate Ad Money Flows Their Way, Bloggers Risk Their Rebel Reputation," the New York Times, November 26, 2005.

Scale is an important point when discussing advertising on blogs. Henry Copeland, founder of Blogads, estimates that the ad market for blog advertising is somewhere between \$10 million and \$20 million. Comparatively, the NAA projects that \$49 billion was spent on advertising in newspapers in 2004. See Paul Berger's "Get it together: Blog collectives seek to draw ads," Online Journalism Review, December 9, 2005.

61. See Joshua Micah Marshall's discussion of bloggers and editorial independence on his blog, Talking Points Memo, posted November 14, 2005.

62. David A. Vise, "AOL to Buy Blog Site in Bid to Expand Reach," the Washington Post, October 7, 2005

63. David A. Vise, "Yahoo to Add 5 Gawker Media Blogs to Web Site," the Washington Post, November 16, 2005.

64. Edward Wasserman, "Selling the blogosphere," the Miami Herald, October 17, 2005.

65. Mark Fitzgerald, "Shield Law Sponsor: Bloggers 'Probably Not' Considered Journo," Editor and Publisher, October 10, 2005.

66. John Doe No. 1 v. Patrick Cahill and Julia Cahill (Supreme Court of the State of Delaware). Available online at: <http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/data2/delawarestatecases/266-2005.pdf>.

67. Interview conducted on NPR's "On The Media," October 28, 2005.

Another case worth watching in 2006 is taking place in Maryland. It examines whether the online publisher of a financial newsletter should be forced to disclose his subscriber list, sought in this case by the drug company Matrixx, which is arguing that comments on the site are defamatory (Alex Dominguez, "New Shield Law Test as Court Hears Internet Anonymity Case," Associated Press, November 2, 2005).

68. Mike Shields, "Online Video Comes of Age," MediaWeek, September 19, 2005.

69. In South Korea, a citizen-journalism site that has generated considerable attention is OhmyNews.com, launched in 2000. A majority of the site's content is produced by the 38,000 citizen reporters who contribute stories. The site's editors "vet" the articles and reject around a third of all submissions. In 2004, an English-language edition was launched. Source: "The People's News Source," Time, May 29, 2005.



Network TV – Intro

Intro

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

This was the year people in network TV news had anticipated for a generation.

What would happen, they wondered, when the three flagship evening news anchors left their chairs? Privately, at least one of those anchors worried that his network might stop airing a nightly newscast altogether. ¹ If that occurred, could what remained, mostly to produce morning shows and prime-time magazines, really be called a news organization?

And then it came, seemingly all at once and mostly without planning. Only Tom Brokaw at NBC managed to arrange a smooth transition to a successor. At CBS, scandal hastened the anchor Dan Rather's departure, and at ABC cancer claimed Peter Jennings. "It is hard to imagine this place without Peter," one veteran said weeks after Jennings died and months after he had been on the air. ²

As it turned out, it was not the evening news that ABC decided to jettison, but Ted Koppel and the format of "Nightline." Koppel and his longtime executive producer, Tom Bettag, left and went to Discovery on cable, arguing that commercial network television was no longer amenable to serious long-form broadcast journalism.

The underlying problems of network news continue without apparent interruption. The evening news lost more viewers in 2005. The audience for news continues to skew old, and advertisers remain preoccupied with the young.

Yet somewhere between anticipating the change in generations and its arrival, something new happened. The end of an era had already begun to feel like the start of the new one.

A year earlier, NBC News was emphasizing continuity with its new anchor — the announcer named every anchor the network had ever had before naming Brian Williams. But ABC in 2005 chose differently, opting for dual anchors and launching a 15-minute newscast that could be viewed on the Web three and a half hours before it aired on TV. At CBS News, one of the more significant hires in 2005 — even in a year when Sean McManus was named to replace Andrew Heyward as president of the division — may turn out to be not a new anchor, but an Internet billionaire entrepreneur: Larry Kramer, who took over CBS Digital, soon announced, "You'll see us morph our news business into a Web-centric one." ³

In 2006, the popular press would no doubt focus on the choice CBS News makes for a new anchor. How would he or she compare with the anchors of old? Would the choice boost ratings?

Five years from now, however, we may look back and think the most important changes of the year in network news were about other things. Did the three news divisions really begin to innovate television news on the Internet? Did they start to see broadcasting as no longer their core delivery platform for news? To what extent did they start to see their TV channels as a way to drive traffic to the next generation of television news, online?

The answers did not come in 2005, nor were they likely to come in 2006. But the conversation looks to have finally begun.

Footnotes

1. Private conversation with Tom Rosenstiel, director, Project for Excellence in Journalism, principal author of the State of the News Media annual report.
2. Ibid.
3. Posted online by Andrew Nachison, the Media Center at the American Press Institute blog: Morph, June 22, 2005 , 4:53 p.m.

Network Content Analysis

Content Analysis

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

The architecture of network TV news is a holdover from another time, an age when news consumption was something that occurred only at home — at breakfast and after work.

The way the news broke on May 11 revealed how network journalists work within that structure.

The most heavily covered story of the day, a private plane in Washington, D.C.'s "No Fly" zone, happened at noon, after the morning news shows were off the air and six and half hours before the evening newscasts.

Violence in Iraq , another of the major stories, had happened overnight. A third, an arrest in an Illinois double murder, was announced before that.

Would the evening news skip some of those stories because they were old? Or delve more deeply into them because there was more time for reporting? In the 21 st century, is time an enemy of good journalism or an ally?

A close examination of one Day in the Life of the News found:

- Time slot rather than network seems to define news judgment. There was little overlap in what was covered between the morning newscasts and the evening. And that was less because

new events had overtaken the news than because of the starkly different definitions of news between the types of programs.

- Morning news programs build stories around emotion, though that varies somewhat by network. One way of doing so is by interviewing “average” people involved in the news and asking them how they feel rather than merely what happened. Another method is to have anchors and reporters lace their openings and closes with emotional keywords — “stunning... horrifying...horrific” and phrases such as “a serious warning every parent needs to hear” — as if trying to tell viewers how they should feel about these stories. In the first five stories this day, we found more than 30 cases of such terms among the three programs.
- The commercial evening newscasts are so strikingly similar to each other that on this day the first 12 minutes of news time on the three programs covered the same stories. ¹ By the shows’ end, ABC and CBS had only one “package” that was unique to their newscasts, NBC had two, and all four of the “exclusives” were feature stories. The main distinguishing characteristic of the programs was the personality of the anchor.
- The “NewsHour with Jim Lehrer,” on PBS, seems increasingly distinctive now in television news in its definition of news and its treatment. On this day, it did not cover any of what proved the top four stories in the rest of the media landscape, beyond in its brief news summary. It was the only daily outlet not to. Instead, in its six stories, it offered more that was exclusive than any other national television program studied, and in the one story it covered that was widely reported elsewhere, its longer treatment meant it offered a more complete and nuanced account.

In the end, citizens would get in the 30 minutes of the three nightly commercial newscasts roughly as great a range of topics as they would from cable over four hours — and the programs averaged just 10 stories each. Yet the stories seem so attenuated on these nightly newscasts that it is less clear how much viewers retain, and fewer angles on the stories are explored than in the morning.

In the first two years of this report, we examined network news by looking at a randomly constructed month of programming. That allowed us to look at the broad contours of the network news — how many stories were on different topics, what was the general nature of the reporting, etc.

We found that morning news, the economic powerhouses at NBC and ABC, are interview-based programs, with a “softer” news agenda and stories with a more limited range of sources and viewpoints than many other media. Evening news, which still commands the biggest audience at any given moment, has a more “hard news” agenda. The reporting is generally deeper, and the stories are still told through taped, edited “packages” reported by correspondents, where the facts are double-checked and the pictures and words carefully matched.

This year, we examined one day, May 11, in detail. For network news, that meant closely studying what appeared in the first hour of the three morning shows, and in the evening scrutinizing the three commercial network evening newscasts and PBS’s “NewsHour with Jim Lehrer.” We studied the day two ways — quantitatively, breaking it down by the numbers, and qualitatively, watching the stories and forming more specific impressions based on individual stories. First, the numbers.

Depth of Reporting

The evening network newscasts on May 11 followed the pattern we have seen in earlier years of featuring deeper sourcing than other kinds of national television. First, they featured more sources in their stories. Some 40% of nightly news stories contained four or more sources, compared with 23% on morning news and 12% on cable.

Total Number of Sources in News Stories

#	Comm. Net. Evening	Network Morning	Cable	National Newspapers
0	24%	25%	26%	0%
1	11	29	35	3
2	16	15	20	7
3	11	8	8	12
4+	40	23	12	78
Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.				

Looking more closely at the amount of information provided about these sources so audiences could judge what they were hearing and seeing, the evening newscasts (as well as morning) again outperformed cable. (At night, 37% of stories on the commercial networks contained at least two fully identified sources, as opposed to 31% on network morning shows and 12% on cable.)

But a new index we created this year that probes how much context stories offered — in effect how many questions about a story a segment explored — favored the morning news this day, not the evening. 2 Fully 39% of the major morning news stories that day touched on three or more potential elements of the events covered. On the nightly news, 27% of the stories answered three or more questions or story elements.

So the live-interview format of morning news may have limited how many sources citizens heard from, but the longer time devoted to the segments allowed room to cover more aspects of the story. In the morning those stories seemed to include looking for ways to connect people to the news in an emotional sense and, occasionally, to focus on what people themselves could do.

Other Numbers

When it came to the other raw numbers, the commercial evening newscasts tended to stack up as less opinionated and more transparent than the morning news and cable.

Anonymous Sourcing

Over all on the broadcast networks, both the morning and evening newscasts on May 11 were more likely than media on average to use anonymous sources. Fully 42% of the commercial evening news stories contained at least one, compared with 31% of the media generally. On the morning news, it was 40%.

Reporter Opinion

Nightly news, however, was measurably more restrained than either morning news or cable when it came to reporters offering their opinions about the news. That might surprise those who complain that traditional nightly news is more filtered or controlled by the journalists than the more live and open format of morning and cable. On May 11, 32 % of commercial evening news stories contained reporters' opinions. That was less than on morning news (48%) or cable (45%). Yet all of national television features more opinion than the media generally (13%). Here, incidentally, network news and cable stand in contrast to local TV news (1%).

To see this in practice, it is useful to walk through the day of network news as it happened.

The Day Begins: Morning News

As the day began, all three morning newscasts skipped a series of major stories that had happened overnight and would become major news in the next day's newspapers. In Iraq , for instance, a day of brutal bombings seemed to culminate two weeks of escalating terror and would lead the New York Times the next day. The morning shows referred to them only in passing. In Afghanistan , the worst anti-American protests since the overthrow of the Taliban had occurred in reaction to U.S. press accounts of treatment of prisoners in Guantanamo Bay . That was also a Page 1 story in the papers the next day but absent from the morning shows.

At the same time, the three shows were also fairly similar in approach and even to some degree in what they did cover.

All gave a fair amount of attention, for instance, to the news that a day earlier the authorities in the former Russian republic of Georgia had found an unexploded grenade about 100 feet away from where President Bush had given a speech.

Top Story Treatment on Morning News May 11th				
	Grenade Thrown	Zion Murders	Jackson Trial	United Pension Default
ABC	1. reporter package 2. live int. with Citibank security consultant	reporter package	reporter package	No story
CBS	1. headline summary	1. reporter package 2. live interview with prosecutor	1. reporter package 2. live interview with legal consultant	Reporter package
NBC	1. correspondent set up piece 2. live int. with Citibank security consultant	1. set up package 2. live interview with prosecutor	No story	Reporter Package

That story, about which the details were confused, was never more than an inside brief in any newspaper in our sample, at most a few paragraphs. Yet something about it made it more attractive for TV.

The three morning shows even agreed on how to cover the grenade story; they did so identically. Each began with a “live” report from a correspondent outlining the facts. Then each followed with an interview with, as it happened, the same person, a former Secret Service agent who now worked for Citibank. Thus in the end, each of the reports heard from basically one source, the consultant. Everything else was filtered through the correspondent.



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Despite the similarity in style, however, the facts of this story were conflicting and differed from network to network. The crowd the president spoke to seemed to vary in size — it was 50,000 on ABC and then also 150,000. It was 100,000 on CBS. The hand grenade was “not operational” on ABC, but it apparently was operational and was “later rendered safe” on NBC. Was it a Soviet-made grenade, sounding distinctly military? Or was it an engineering grenade for demolition purposes? Or a dummy used for training that was not actually explosive? Had people seen it thrown, as one account put it, or was it found and possibly missed in an earlier security sweep, as another suggested? The answers differed depending on which program one watched. ³

The seriousness of the incident was also a little hard to determine, and the networks seemed unsure themselves how to portray it. Pierre Thomas on ABC said “something very scary may have happened.” Bill Plante on CBS said, “It could have been fatal if detonated at close range, but the Georgian security chief says the president was in no danger and that it was unlikely that the grenade would have been detonated.” In other words, it wasn’t close enough to the president to be fatal and the grenade couldn’t detonate. And viewers who watched NBC would have learned that the President was surrounded by bulletproof glass in any case — even if the grenade had been operational, and if it had gone off, he would not have been harmed. The only real danger, the segment said, would have arisen if the grenade had been meant to create a diversion for some more serious attack.

One problem appeared to be that the Georgian authorities offered differing details of the event, but the network accounts didn’t make that clear. Instead, the journalists themselves tried to appear more certain, as if they didn’t want to acknowledge that they didn’t know.

Another quality of the stories was that each wanted to focus on the potential danger and sense of alarm. Yet even those two elements, which apparently were what made this story a lead, were somewhat hypothetical. There was no alarm at the time since the administration wasn't informed of the grenade until hours later, and the danger was unclear because it was unclear at the time if this was a working grenade, or a dud or a dummy. (In the end it was determined to be a live grenade that did not explode.)

The morning shows all gave a good deal of attention to the murder in Zion, Ill., too. And they handled this story similarly. Two of the three did it with a live interview —the same person, Michael Waller, the prosecuting attorney from the Lake County state's attorney's office.

The facts this time did not differ. The main distinction among programs was that CBS and NBC — especially NBC — strove to emphasize emotion by repeating key adjectives. The "Today Show" told viewers in rapid succession that the case was "shocking... horrific... horrible...horrific...unbelievably brutal...disturbing...absolutely horrific."

CBS told us it was "shocking...horrific...brutal..."

The habit of having anchors and reporters tell people how to react was a feature not only of this story but of others, too, on morning news. Certain words applied to several stories, among them "shocked"... "alarmed" ... "stunned" ... "disturbed." In its first five stories this day, CBS used 11 such terms, and NBC 17. ABC engaged in this technique less than the others.

The terms showed up in three distinct ways. Anchors and reporters would use them in the setup or introduction of the story. Soundbites in taped stories were selected in which sources used the words. Or anchors would react after a story was over by using some of the terms as a kind of coda.

On May 11, such stories as the murder in Zion (all three networks), the story of a woman who had a needless mastectomy because her medical records had been mislabeled (NBC), the story of a woman who had been killed on an amusement ride (ABC), the case of a man whose young daughter was murdered by a sex molester living next door (CBS), and the story of a new ATM scam (ABC) all featured such emotive keywords.

In our first two years of this report we found that the morning shows were more likely to emphasize stories about lifestyle, celebrity, and crime than the networks' evening newscasts. May 11 followed that pattern. Of the 18 story topics that were covered with more than a brief mention in the first hour of the three morning shows, five dealt with foreign affairs or terrorism, three with domestic or economic issues, six with crimes or terrible accidents, and four with celebrity/entertainment subjects.

Network Morning News Lineups

ABC

- Grenade found after Bush Speech (reporter standup)
- United Airlines pension (reporter standup)
- Grenade story: (interview with security consultant)
- Father arrested for murdering daughter and her friend (reporter package)
- Woman killed in Amusement Park Accident (reporter package)

A new scam to steal money from ATMs (reporter package)

Interview with Nancy Reagan

CBS

Events in Middle East (reporter standup)

Grenade found after Bush Speech (reporter standup)

Murder in Zion Illinois (reporter package)

Michael Jackson trial (reporter package)

United Airlines defaults on its pensions (reporter package)

Father arrested for murdering daughter and her friend (interview with prosecutor)

Preview, child actor Macaulay Culkin to testify at Michael Jackson's molestation trial (interview with CBS legal consultant)

Father of daughter (9 yrs) murdered by next door sex offender; Megan's law isn't working (Reporter package)

Interview with CBS Amazing Race competitors

NBC

Grenade found after Bush Speech (reporter standup and interview with security consultant)

Father arrested for murdering daughter and her friend (setup piece and interview with prosecutor)

United Airlines pension default (reporter package)

Confusion over homeland security classifications (interview with NBC "terror analyst")

Mistaken mastectomy victim (interview)

Interview with Mick Jagger and Keith Richards

Evening News

By 6:30 p.m. on May 11, not much new had happened that received significant coverage on television news in the intervening hours. Cable had been consumed largely by one event, a single-engine Cessna that had accidentally violated D.C. airspace and led to the brief evacuation of the White House, the Capitol and the Supreme Court, but not other federal buildings. The networks wouldn't ignore the story.

But as it turned out, four of the five of the "news events" that the nightly newscasts covered at 6:30 had occurred the night before in the Middle East or Asia but had been skipped by the morning shows. The evening newscasts all did packages on violence in Iraq and brief tell stories on the protests in Afghanistan, and one did a brief tell story on threatening nuclear moves by North Korea.

Journalistically, timeliness was not something on May 11 that the nightly newscasts considered a prerequisite for something's being news.

The news agenda was so starkly different between the evening and morning newscasts that just one story that had appeared in the first hour of “Good Morning America” would appear on ABC’s “World News Tonight” — even with the same anchorman on both newscasts that day. Only two stories were repeated on CBS, and two on NBC. 4

Only one of the nightly newscasts even mentioned the story that across all media in our sample was the fourth most heavily covered of the day that the actor Macaulay Culkin had testified at Michael Jackson’s molestation trial. The network was ABC, which did a 30-second anchor read.

Nor did any of the newscasts do anything with the No. 2 story of May 11 in the media generally, news of an arrest in a murder in Zion, Ill., in which a father was accused of killing his 8-year-old daughter and her friend, supposedly for riding their bikes after he had grounded them. The case would consume several days on morning news. Records over the last year show it earned only a brief single mention on any evening newscast, a 20-second anchor read on May 10 on ABC.

The newshole on the nightly network newscasts on May 11 — the time for news after subtracting for promotions, teases, commercials, and the programs’ introductions and closes — was actually 19 minutes and 40 seconds on average. To fill that time, the commercial newscasts averaged 10 stories per program (10 on CBS, 11 on ABC, nine on NBC). Of those, three on average were anchor reads. Six were longer, taped packages. One segment on each program was a live interview with a correspondent or a newsmaker.

Perhaps to an even greater degree than we found in the mornings, viewers got strikingly similar information regardless of which of the three evening newscasts they chose. The likenesses so outweighed the differences that the biggest variable among the shows on this night was probably the differences in style and personality of the anchors, NBC’s Brian Williams, CBS’s Bob Schieffer and ABC’s Charles Gibson.

In the first two thirds of the newshole on May 11, the newscasts covered the same news, and in much the same way. In the remaining seven minutes, ABC and CBS had only one “package” that was unique to their newscasts. NBC had two, and all four were feature stories.

Network News Lead Stories, May 11, 2005

ABC	CBS	NBC
DC Plane Scare pkg.	DC Plane Scare pkg.	DC Plane Scare pkg.
DC Plane Scare staff int.	DC Plane Scare staff int.	DC Plane Scare staff int.
Grenade Incident	Iraq Bombings	Grenade Incident
Iraq Bombers	Afghan Riots	Iraq Bombings
Afghan Riots	UA Pensions	UA Pensions

The Top Story: The D.C. Plane

Even though the scare was long over and cable news, particularly CNN, had given over most of the afternoon to it, all three commercial newscasts still chose to lead with the Cessna that wandered into restricted Washington airspace.

Indeed, all offered more than twice as much time to it than they did to any other story.

Each also began the same way, with a play-by-play retelling of the event. ABC and NBC even told the story nearly identically, with a minute by minute accounting: “11:59, the threat level at the White House and the Capitol is raised to yellow, the plane is just 15 miles away; 12:00 noon, two F-16s are scrambled from Andrews Air Force Base,” as NBC put it.

Each network also followed that with an anchor interview with one of its correspondents. Each interview tried to take a more focused look at one aspect of the incident.

That practice, of covering the lead story of the day with two or more substantial correspondent pieces, is something network evening newscasts have done since the technique was introduced by ABC News in the late 1980s. It is a way to go deeper into a story without running packages that run more than two or three minutes.

In tone, the stories on the network nightly news were also less congratulatory to the administration than the ones viewers might have seen on cable, a reflection of the fact that they contained more sources offering different perspectives.

Still, CBS was the lone network to explore whether the evacuation and response were appropriate given the potential threat, and the fact that the Air Force seemed to sense fairly quickly that the plane’s intrusion was an accident.

“Some aviation officials question the need for alarm, saying a plane as small as a Cessna could not cause significant damage or injuries,” the correspondent Bob Orr reported. “But one security official said, ‘The government had no choice but to treat this as an imminent threat.’ Still another mocked the hair-trigger response, saying officials ‘are predisposed to overreaction. Evacuate first,’ he said, ‘and try to figure it out later.’

“Beyond that, as it turns out, not everybody here in Washington was in the loop,” Orr continued. “For example, officials in charge of security at the Labor Department, right next to the Capitol, and other buildings say they knew nothing about the threat until the whole thing was nearly over.”



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The nightly news reports included more background and context than we found on cable, though less than online or print accounts. In our index measuring how much context a story contained, 4 of the 10 reports offered at least 2 of 10 possible elements on the plane story. On cable, despite its larger newshole, it was 10 out of 29 that offered that many.

Second Story

After leading with the plane scare, all three commercial evening newscasts followed with a slate of foreign stories, most of which the morning shows had skipped.

NBC and ABC each first offered a brief anchor read about the grenade incident (CBS passed) and then moved to more substantial coverage of the recent bombings in Iraq — the overnight news event the morning newscasts had ignored.

One criticism of the press is that it keeps focusing on such events, which may mask other, more positive news in Iraq . Another concern is that the incremental coverage of individual bombings may become numbing after awhile. Putting the larger picture together becomes daunting.

On this day, more than 12 hours after the incidents occurred, each of the three commercial networks tried to move beyond the news of the bombing itself. NBC addressed it briefly but mainly used it as a news peg to explore the reasons why violence in Iraq seemed to have escalated, “a particularly bloody illustration of just how serious the situation there is.” ABC used the day of violence as a hook to do a piece on why young men feel moved to become suicide bombers. CBS did a review of the day’s events, followed by a taped phone interview with the U.S. Army colonel in charge of the American offensive on Iraq’s Syrian border.

ABC and NBC also aired another, related piece later in the newscast. ABC’s was the fourth segment in a series on dealing with pain — a joint project with USA Today — this one on the right way to treat pain from war wounds in Iraq . NBC did a feature on the death in Iraq of a Marine captain who had been part of the color guard that escorted the casket of Ronald Reagan.

Yet none of the pieces, even at lengths of two minutes, really answered the questions they were wrestling with. After two years of war, for example, the answer to why the violence continued and the recruiting of bombers thrived was ultimately probably too complicated for a two-minute story.

Terrorist activity in Iraq was a heavy news item for the evening news in 2005. Data from Andrew Tyndal’s ADT Research, which analyzes every night of the evening newscasts for the year, found that over all, the networks devoted approximately 164 minutes of their time to reporting terrorist attacks in Iraq . That number, however, represented 8% of all the evening news coverage about Iraq . The lion’s share of Iraq coverage, 44%, was about U.S.-led combat operations. Incidentally, the amount of coverage of the situation in Iraq over all fell by more than a third in 2005 from a year earlier.

Pension Plans

The third correspondent package on each evening newscast was not among the four that dominated the news agenda in the media generally, though it might arguably have been one of the more far-reaching of the day. It was fallout from a bankruptcy judge’s decision to allow United Airlines to default on its pension plans.

The pension story was the only one to get substantial treatment in both morning and evening newscasts (an average of three minutes in the evening). Each report was an exploratory package on what was happening to pensions in America in the wake of the United Airlines ruling, and the capacity of the government’s Pension Guaranty Corp. to cover all the pensions corporate America had defaulted on.

Interestingly, that was probably the only story to get more substantial treatment on TV than in print.

The Rest of the Newscasts

From there, the newscasts moved in slightly different directions — CBS to a story about lawsuits against the Catholic Church over sex abuse, NBC to a story on the economic and environmental costs of illegal immigration in U.S. border towns.

ABC and NBC both carried stories about new computer software being used to more accurately imagine what King Tut actually looked like. It was a story ideally suited to TV, since the computer animation can be seen gradually drawing in the face. As its close, CBS ran a feature on parents teaching toddlers sign language before they learn to talk.

In the end, however, the sense one gets from May 11 is that the evening news is not an update of what viewers might have learned in the morning. It is a different newscast, aimed apparently at a different America, concerned with different issues.

The 'NewsHour'

On PBS, the "NewsHour" stood out as distinct, not only in evening news but against any other daily program on television we studied — cable, broadcast, national or local.

It began by handling most of the breaking news stories of the day in a news summary, with further coverage of just two — the bombings in Iraq and the plane scare. Both pieces had correspondents, tape and sound, but they were something not seen elsewhere on national TV — shorter packages, something less than a minute. Yet because they were more straight-news pieces, not thematic, magazine-style reports that tried to touch on other issues, they were fairly complete, straightforward news accounts. The retelling of the Iraq bombing story, for instance, gave more on the basic facts of the day's violence than the longer pieces on network news.

The "NewsHour" skipped altogether the grenade story that led morning news and came second on the evening newscasts as a brief tell story. It also passed on the Jackson trial, which was a major focus of morning and cable news (MSNBC's top story). It did nothing on the Zion murder trial, a big feature of the morning and on cable (it was Fox's top story).

The "NewsHour's" primary "focus" piece following its news summary was a deeper discussion of the fallout from the judge's decision the day before that United Airlines could default on its pensions. With its substantial treatment on network evening news, this was the most heavily covered topic across network news, though not on cable.

The discussion was billed as a look at "the likely impact of the bankruptcy judge's decision on United, its workers, and other Americans enjoying or expecting retirement pensions." While the piece covered much the same ground as other nightly newscasts, the taped package, followed by a 12-minute discussion between Margaret Warner and three pension experts, was more than four times longer than what appeared on the commercial newscasts and went much deeper into the story's various elements.

That report was followed by one from the Arctic Circle on the melting of the ice pack, and how it is changing life there. The next piece was a lengthy discussion on the fights over judicial nominations. Anchor Gwen Ifill interviewed two federal judges who had "gone through the wringer" of the nomination process, Judge Charles Pickering, who eventually won a recess appointment from President Bush, and James Wynn, who never got to a vote.

The program closed with a feature on King Tut, a story carried by two of the three commercial networks.

Of the "NewsHour's" four longer segments, in other words, half were long-term developments that were not breaking news — global warming and judicial nominations — and were not seen elsewhere on network news this day. One was a followup to breaking news, and a piece seen widely on network news. The fourth was a feature, also widely seen

elsewhere. As a percentage of the newshole, more was unique on the “NewsHour” than we saw on cable or on morning or evening commercial television.

Conclusion

If morning and evening news on the commercial networks are not simply updates at different times of day, but in many ways different products aimed at different audiences, it presents an interesting question for network news going forward. What do these programs do if the news is something that moves online, something that is downloaded so it can be watched on demand?

Do they continue to remain distinctly different shows, which may be updated as news changes? Would the evening newscast, for instance, offer some kind of update in the morning hours for those who prefer its style? Would there be something akin to an afternoon update of the stories highlighted half a day earlier on “Good Morning America”?

Or do the networks instead offer their Web sites as their own product separate from the different programs — with elements of the shows included but with the Web as something new, the online product of the news division? That is probably closer to the direction they operate in now. But as the audience increasingly moves online, does that solution threaten to weaken the existing newscasts rather than broaden them? (The answer is somewhat more complicated, perhaps, for NBC, whose Web site is a joint operation with Microsoft.) Whatever path the networks choose, the move toward continuous newsgathering online will put new demands on the resources of the news divisions.

The path seems simpler for the “NewsHour.” It stands distinctly apart from any other evening newscast on television today. And with the change in format and decline in ratings of “Nightline” after the departure of Ted Koppel, that may be even truer in the future.

Footnotes

1. The only exception was that CBS did include a 20-second anchor read about North Korea that was not on other shows.
2. The index measured the presence of ten different elements that a story might contain. They were the presence of: background information, future implications, the impact of the story on citizens, a human face to the story, some separation of fact and conjecture, potential action someone could take as a citizen, potential action to take as a consumer, contact information for the journalist or news outlet, the underlying principles at play, where to go for additional information.
3. In the end, it was determined to be a live grenade hurled that failed to explode. Vladimir Arutyunian, a Georgian citizen of Armenian descent, was arrested and convicted of the crime and sentenced to life in prison.
4. On the two ABC programs, the only story that repeated was a brief tell story that evening about the Michael Jackson trial. On CBS and NBC, both the morning and evening newscasts did stories about United Airlines pensions, and the evening newscasts both had brief tell stories about the grenade incident.

Network Audience

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

In 2005 the decline of network news viewership continued.

- On the evening newscasts, the audience declines accelerated.
- The lone exception was CBS Evening News, whose audience and ratings rose for the first time in years.
- The general audience declines extended to the highly profitable morning news programs as well in 2005, something worth watching to see if that becomes a trend.
- The audience for prime-time magazines, however, at least those that had survived, stabilized in 2005, a sign perhaps that the genre has completed its thinning-out process.

The audience declines in the mornings and evenings, moreover, took place during a year when major national and world crises occurred at a rapid and steady pace. There was Hurricane Katrina and its failed response, followed by Hurricane Rita; the death of Pope John Paul II and the appointment of Pope Benedict XVI; and the continuing war in Iraq.

The question heading into 2006 was whether network news would begin to make a serious move toward Web newscasts and other innovations that will free the medium from the limitations of television time slots, and if it did, whether that would bring audiences back to network news and attract sought-after younger viewers.

Nightly Newscasts

The evening network news programs continued their steady but bumpy decline.

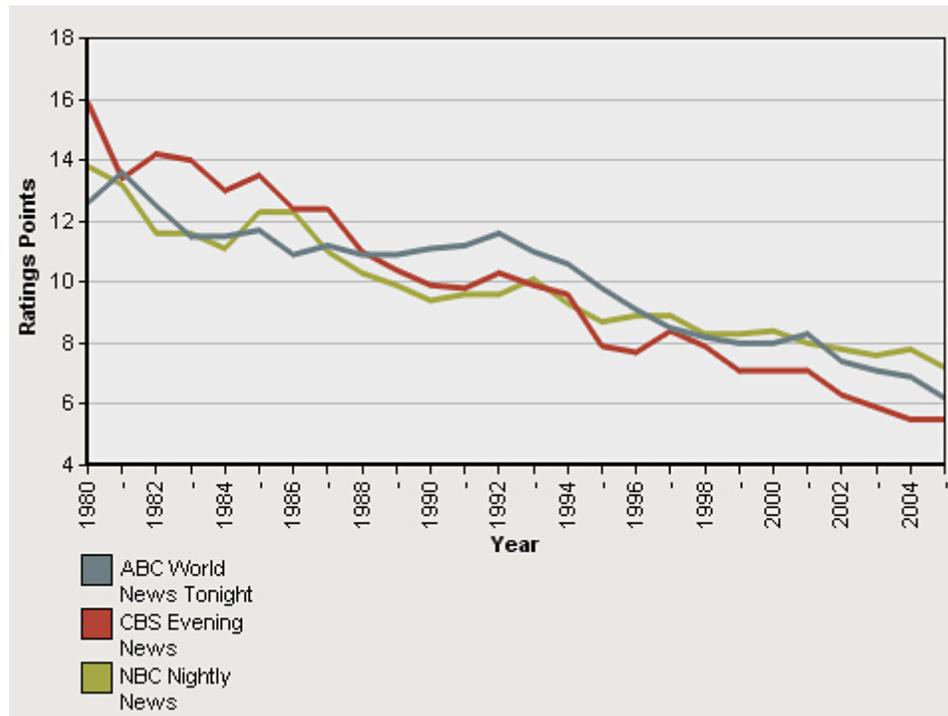
Between November 2004 and November 2005, ratings for the nightly news fell 6% and share fell 3%. That is an acceleration of the pace of decline in recent years. It translates into overall viewership on the three commercial nightly newscasts of 27 million viewers, or a decline of some 1.8 million viewers from November 2004. From the start of CNN in 1980, nightly news viewership for the Big Three networks has fallen by some 25 million, or 48%.

As measured in ratings, the percentage of nightly news viewing in all TV households, the three network evening newscasts had a combined 18.9 in November 2005, down from 20.2 a year earlier.

As measured in share, the percentage of just those television sets that are on at the time, the three newscasts earned a 37 share in November 2005, a drop from the 38 earned in November 2004.

In the previous editions of this report, we have illustrated the decline in viewership for the nightly network newscasts by using two landmarks: 1969, the historic peak of nightly news viewership, and 1980, the launch of the cable news network CNN. In 1969, the three commercial nightly network newscasts had a combined 50 rating and an 85 share. In 1980, they had a 37 rating and a 75 share. Based on November data for 2005, ratings have fallen 62% since 1969 and 48% since 1980. Share has fallen 56% since 1969 and 51% since 1980. 1

Evening News Ratings November 1980 to November 2005



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Nielsen Media Research, used under license

* Ratings taken for month of November.

In its first year, 2004, this report discussed in detail the various factors affecting nightly news viewership. In brief, those factors include longer work days, expanded commutes, growing competition from new technology, the end of the cold war, cutbacks in network news content, and generational lack of interest in the news.

What is it, then, that does bring viewers to the Big Three network newscasts? In a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (conducted in association with the Project for Excellence in Journalism) people with a favorable view of network television news were asked in follow-up interviews to explain what they felt was best about it. Respondents agreed “that these programs do a good job of summarizing news, and provide a considerable range and breadth of coverage in an understandable fashion.”² Taking that a step further, the convenience of a 30-minute news wrap-up in the evening or first thing in the morning suited those viewers.

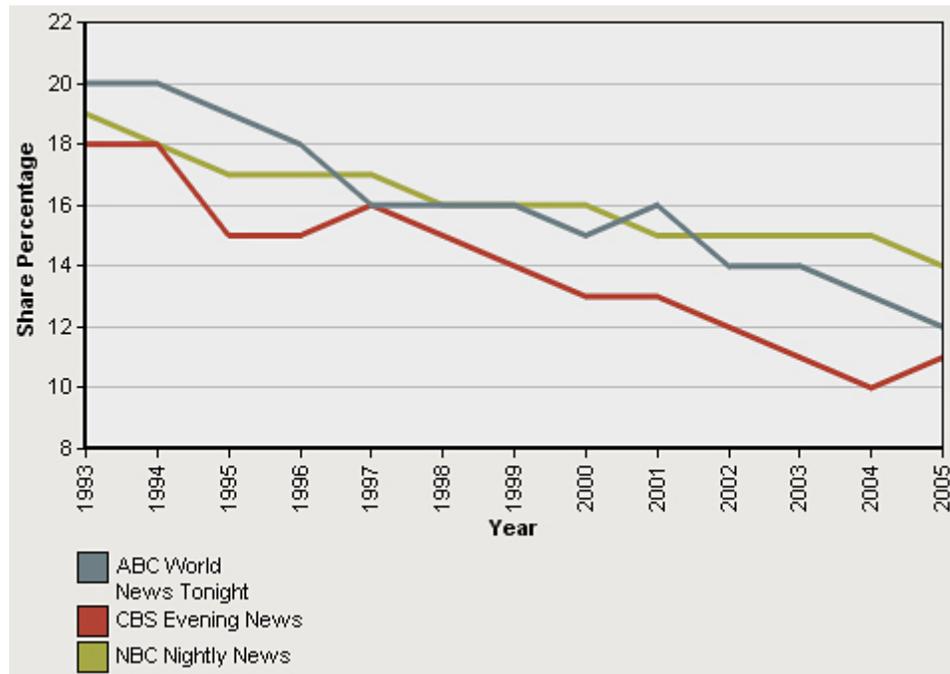
But the same survey found that more people, roughly a quarter of respondents, said they got their news on national and international issues from cable outlets like CNN (24%) or Fox News’s cable channel (22%). The Big Three broadcast networks were cited to a lesser degree: ABC (16%), NBC (16%) and CBS (12%).³ Cable viewers said what they liked was the up-to-the-minute news that, in addition, could be tuned in anytime.

The challenge for network evening news producers ever since 1980 with the start of CNN has been how to match whatever experience, brand and story-telling strengths they have with the constant availability and rapid response of cable. After 25 years, the network overall nightly news audience still accounts for the largest number of people watching news at any one time. The notion that these programs are dying is clearly exaggerated. But the continuous decline in audience makes the size of the audience by itself less reassuring.

Heading into 2006, however, the Big Three network news organizations may never have been in a better position to re-conceptualize the evening broadcasts than they were in 2005. Each had anchor chairs to fill, with the stepping aside of Dan Rather and Tom Brokaw and the death of Jennings at age 67. Each had held his anchor chair since the 1980s, and the programs were inevitably identified, despite whatever changes were made, with figures who were older, male and white and delivered the news in a traditional, authoritative anchoring style. Yet the continuing presence of the old anchors probably inhibited innovation. Changes were minor, not revolutionary (Brokaw stood rather than sat). Now, with new faces at NBC and ABC and new ones coming at CBS, there was at least the opportunity for a greater pace of change and higher level of innovation. Network news was standing at the edge of a new-media revolution where information is traded online, over cell phones, by bloggers and even vloggers (the v is for video). Probably the most interesting question moving into 2006 was whether new faces in the anchor chairs signaled a new kind of network news, in particular one where the TV set is not the only serious focus. That certainly was part of what the networks were saying publicly.

At the same time, the sheer size of the network evening news audience always seemed to make the networks leery of risk. Jim Murphy, executive producer of the CBS Evening News for six years until being replaced at the end of 2005, put it this way: "The winners will be the ones who stick to smart plans and the right people. The losers will be the ones who think they are being bold or daring but sacrifice their traditional audiences." 4

Evening News Share 1993-2005, November to November



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Nielsen Media Research, used under license

* Ratings taken for month of November.

Nightly News Audience Demographics

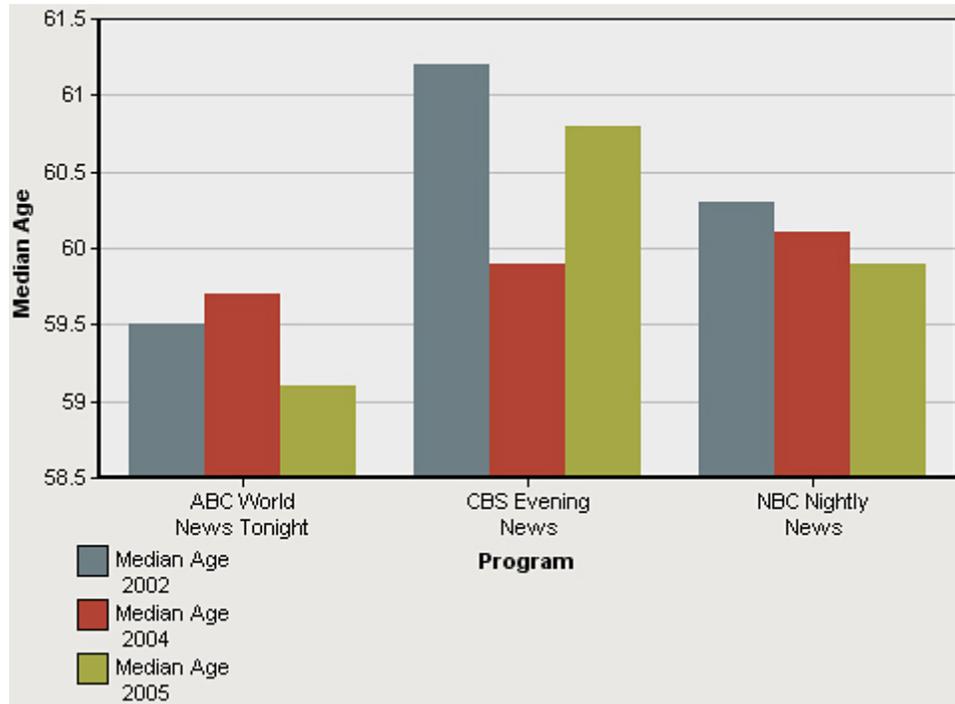
A major factor in all such calculations is the age of the audience of the network evening news. The evening newscasts, according to information from the December 2005 edition of MAGNA Global's quarterly "daypart briefings" report, skews older than any other component of network programming. An expanding range of media options heightens this concern. Age groups that once naturally began watching the nightly newscast as they spent evenings at home with their families may now be as likely to turn to online or other alternative resources for news.

According to the December season-to-date numbers, the median age of nightly network news viewers remained basically unchanged at roughly 60. ⁵ But the figures were not the same across the board. The median age of two of the Big Three's broadcasts, ABC and NBC, was slightly younger in 2005. The CBS Evening News audience, fronted in 2005 by 66-year-old Bob Schieffer, was older compared to data from 2004.

The changes naturally raise the question whether placing younger people in the anchor chairs (the NBC Nightly News anchor Brian Williams is 46, ABC's Bob Woodruff is 44 and Elizabeth Vargas is 43) will attract younger viewers. Or do the limitations of time slot, the pull against innovation for fear of losing the existing audience base, and the traditional anchor-dominated style of an 18-minute evening newscast put inevitable limits on how much younger viewers will gravitate to those programs?

Median Age of Nightly News Viewers

2002, 2004, 2005



Design Your Own Chart

Source: MagnaGlobal USA

The Race Among the Networks

When it comes to horserace, “NBC Nightly News” remained first in audience among the evening newscasts in 2005, following the arrival of Brian Williams as anchor in November 2004. The program continued to lose viewers in the past year, but still led in ratings, share and number of viewers. Roughly a year after the departure of Tom Brokaw, it fell from 11.2 million to 10.3 million viewers, fewer than in November 2003.

The declines should be put in perspective. The evening news under Williams had to contend with significant declines in NBC’s entertainment programming, which means fewer people to watch promotions for NBC news and fewer sets tuned to NBC when they were turned off and then turned back on. Williams retained more of his program’s audience, relatively, than the rest of NBC programming. The same problems, and same relative success, are also true of the “Today Show.”

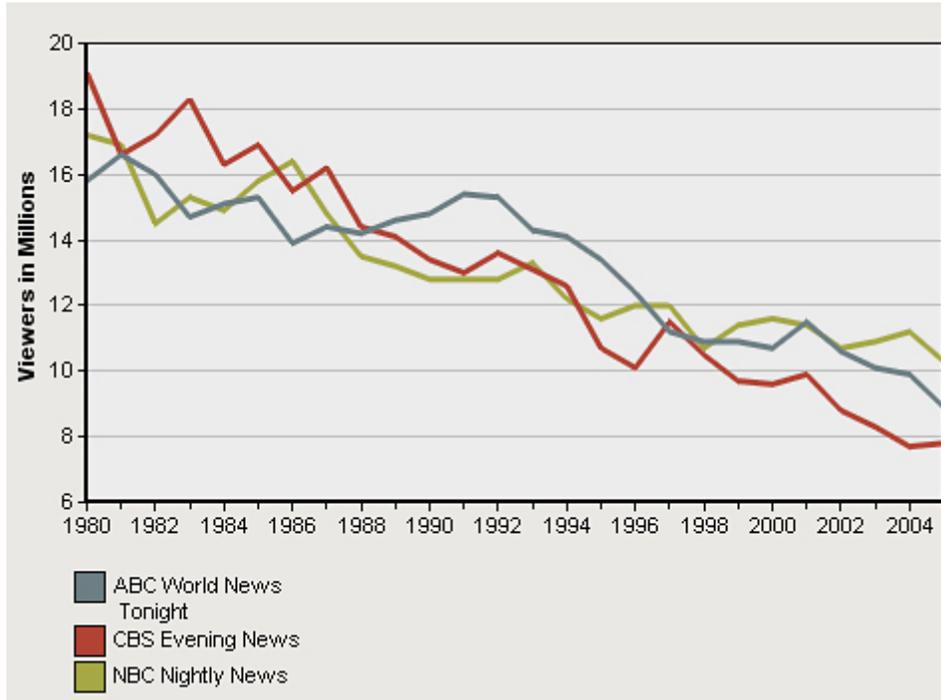
ABC’s entertainment line-up was faring better but in a year when “World News Tonight” relied on substitute anchors, it suffered the biggest drop, falling to 8.9 million viewers by November 2005. That was a 16% decline in November

viewership since 2000 and a 10% decline from November 2004. The unexpected death of Jennings, and the on-air search process for a replacement seemed to hurt ABC. That would particularly have disappointed Jennings, who had hoped that Brokaw's departure followed by Rather's would provide his network with an opportunity to regain the No. 1 position.

Meanwhile, "CBS Evening News" with the interim anchor Bob Schieffer crept up by some 100,000 viewers, moving from 7.7 million to 7.8 million. That success under Schieffer bears note. NBC and ABC brought in younger anchors that also function as in-the-field reporters but CBS, unsure about its long term, picked Schieffer as an interim choice. He epitomized tradition, a familiar face from the older generation of network news, someone who in the last quarter-century had anchored morning, mid-day and weekend newscasts and functioned as Chief Washington correspondent. He has also been the anchor for "Face the Nation" since May of 1991. According to the biography posted on the CBS News Web site, Schieffer is also "...one of few broadcast or print journalists to have covered all four major beats in the nation's capital — the White House, the Pentagon, the State Department and Capitol Hill." 6

And it was Schieffer, not his younger rivals, who enjoyed the audience gain in 2005. What might explain that? One argument might be that being in third place, CBS was the most likely to grow after an anchor change. Another factor might be that some viewers who would no longer watch Rather preferred Schieffer and were likely to give him a try as a known commodity. A third factor could be that uncertainty at ABC with Jennings's illness put viewers in play, and some of them might have been older viewers. A fourth factor might be change in the newscast under Schieffer, who seemed to become increasingly comfortable over time, and to interact naturally and skillfully with his correspondents, asking them probing questions with an apparently genuine curiosity. Schieffer also was the beneficiary of the success of CBS's prime-time lineup. It is possible, too, that Schieffer's long experience simply paid off, giving him a depth some viewers appreciated. If so, the fact that the other networks have looked to people in their 40s for their next anchors may give CBS pause as it looks to replace Schieffer, the anchor who today is enjoying the best audience trend line.

Evening News Viewership, by Network 1980 – 2005, November – November



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Nielsen Media Research, used under license

PBS

When viewed alongside the declining overall viewership of the three commercial broadcast television networks, the health and stability of “The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer” on PBS is impressive. Data provided by the NewsHour indicate that viewership of the program continues to remain close to 3 million each night, with some 8 million unique viewers watching at least one night a week. ⁷ According to information provided to the Project by the NewsHour, that nightly number has remained at the 3 million level for the past several years. ⁸ The program is carried by some 300 PBS member stations and, according to data from A.C. Nielsen, is capable of reaching 98% of U.S. television households. ⁹

As with its commercial counterparts, however, there have been leadership changes at the NewsHour. Executive producer Lester M. Crystal, whose significant career includes having been the executive producer of the “NBC Nightly News” with John Chancellor from 1973 to 1976 and president of NBC News from 1977 to 1979, ended a run of more than 20 years with the program. Crystal continues his association with the production as the president of MacNeil/Lehrer Productions.

As the three commercial networks see decline, and the cable news channels other than Fox do, too, that naturally raises the question whether PBS should be trying to expand its news offerings to capture the kind of dramatic audience growth of National Public Radio, whose listeners have increased nearly 50% over the last five years.

Morning News

Among the morning programs offered by the three network news divisions, viewership declines occurred across the board. NBC's "Today Show" remained the industry leader, followed by ABC's "Good Morning America" and the CBS "Early Show."

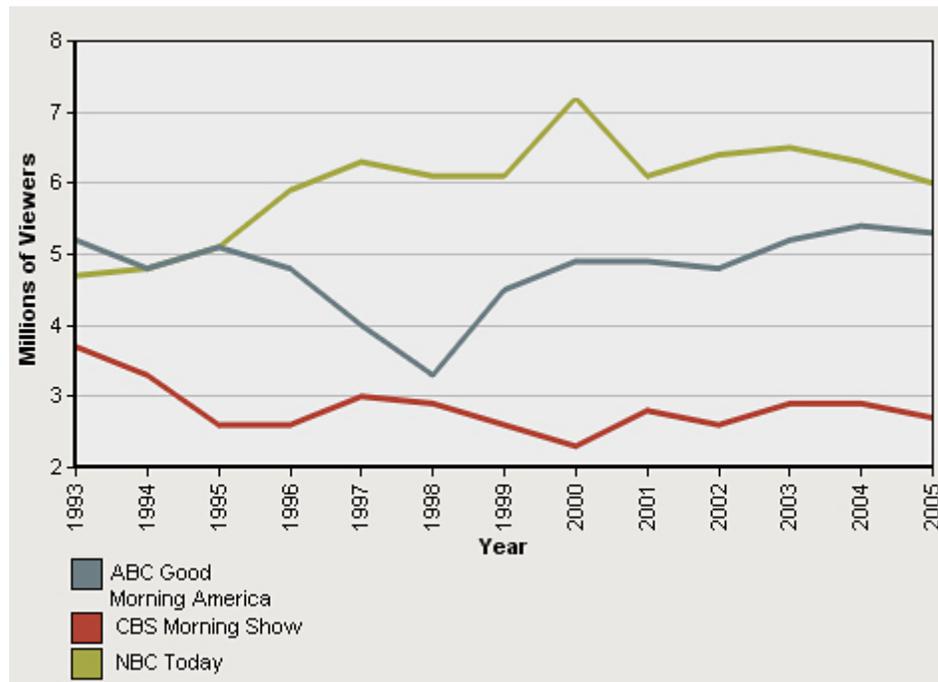
On Thursday, July 14, 2005, "Today" achieved an unprecedented 500 weeks at the top of the morning-show ratings. In December, it celebrated a full 10 top-rated years.

"Good Morning America" edged closer to "Today" in 2005, but seemed unlikely to overtake the peacock's morning show in 2006, particularly since NBC would be airing the Olympics. But faced with two years of declining audiences and rumors that the "Today" host Katie Couric was being courted by CBS to fill its evening anchor chair, it was not likely that NBC was taking the closing gap lightly.

From November 2004 to November 2005, overall morning news viewership dropped from 14.6 million viewers to 14.1 million. The viewership trend line for morning news has always been a bit more erratic than its evening news counterpart. While November 2005 viewership was lower than in 2003 or 2004, the decline still left total viewership higher than in either 2002 or 2001.

Morning News Viewership, by Network

November 1993 to November 2005



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Nielsen Media Research, used under license

* Ratings taken in month of November.

In November 2005, “Today” averaged 6 million, down 5% from 6.3 million in 2004. Perhaps more worrisome for NBC, it was the second straight year of decline.

At ABC, meanwhile, “Good Morning America” averaged 5.3 million viewers, down 2% from 5.4 million in 2004. The “Early Show” averaged 2.7 million, down 7% from 2.9 million in November 2004.

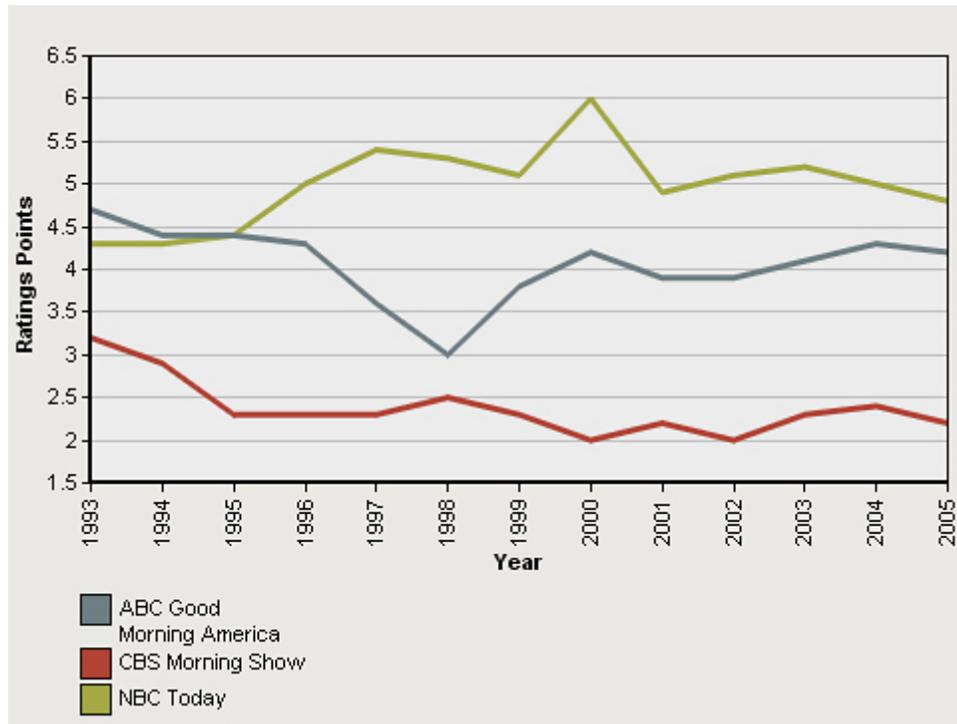
What might account for the decline in morning viewers? Is it anything more than a temporary bump that will pick up, as it did in 2003?

Trying to sort that out is probably premature. Despite some major news events in 2005, with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the death of a Pope, the Terry Schiavo right-to-die case and more, there may have been some letdown in viewership because the year earlier was an election year. There was a similar decline in audience from 2000 to 2001. But it is also possible that the growing reliance of people on the Internet, the expansion of local morning programs before 7 a.m. and other competition were beginning to cut into the networks’ morning shows. The next year should provide at least some indication.

To turn those a.m. programs into two-hour-a-day economic Energizer Bunnies for their corporate parents (three hours in the case of “Today”) the networks go further with sponsored segments, cross-promotions, and product tie-ins than anything else in network news. “Today” played host to Donald Trump’s fired apprentices (contestants from Martha Stewart’s version appeared on her own morning program). Failed “Survivor” contestants took a seat on the couches of CBS’s “Early Show,” and “Good Morning America” doled out deleted scenes from “Desperate Housewives” for viewers who hadn’t gotten enough of ABC’s hit Sunday night series.

At least occasionally, though it does not appear to be common, those packages violated even more basic standards. In April 2005, the Wall Street Journal reported that the “Today Show” tech editor Corey Greenberg had been receiving payments from companies like Apple, Seiko Epson and Hewlett-Packard, whose products he was advocating in his role as tech editor. The Washington Post writer Howard Kurtz noted in an article the following day that when Greenberg appeared in a July 2004 segment of the “Today Show” he referred to Apple’s iPod as “a great portable musical player... the coolest-looking one” and suggested a compatible device to “share your music with other people.” “This is the way to go,” he declared.¹⁰ In what Kurtz noted was a well-placed though unintentionally accurate comment, the host Matt Lauer told Greenberg, “Let’s cut the Apple commercial right now, okay?”¹¹

Morning News Ratings 1993-2005, November to November



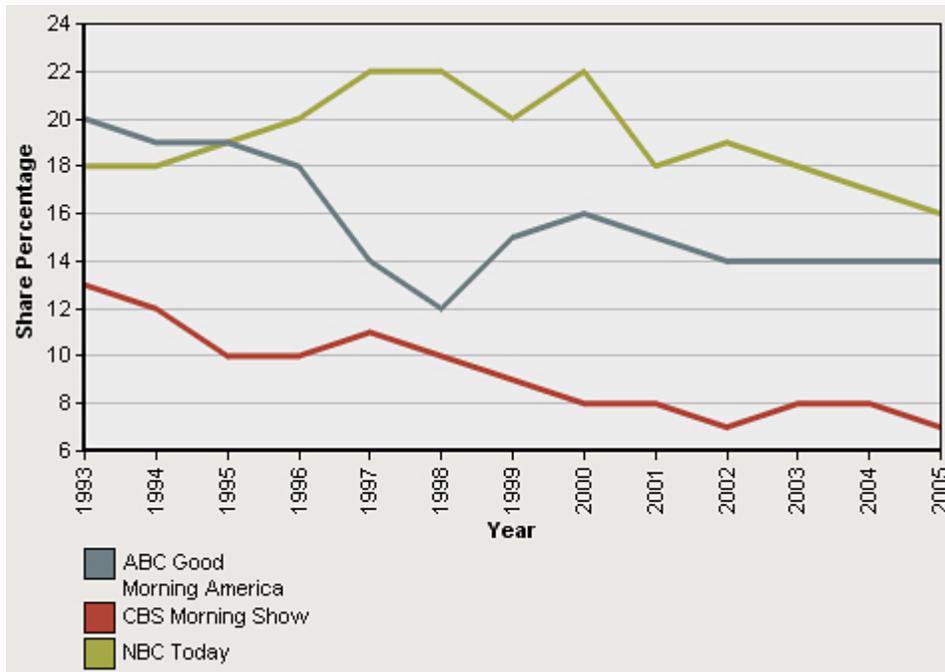
Design Your Own Chart

Source: Nielsen Media Research, used under license

* Ratings taken for month of November.

While there was some movement in the median age figures for individual morning news shows, the overall picture remained the same from December 2004 to December 2005, much as it did for the evening newscasts. The median age of the Big Three morning viewers combined was 53. While the “Today” audience age moved from 51 to 52 the program still enjoyed the youngest audience of the Big Three. The median age of the “Good Morning America” audience moved downward from 54 to 53. The “Early Show” audience held at roughly 53.

Morning News Share 1993-2005, November to November

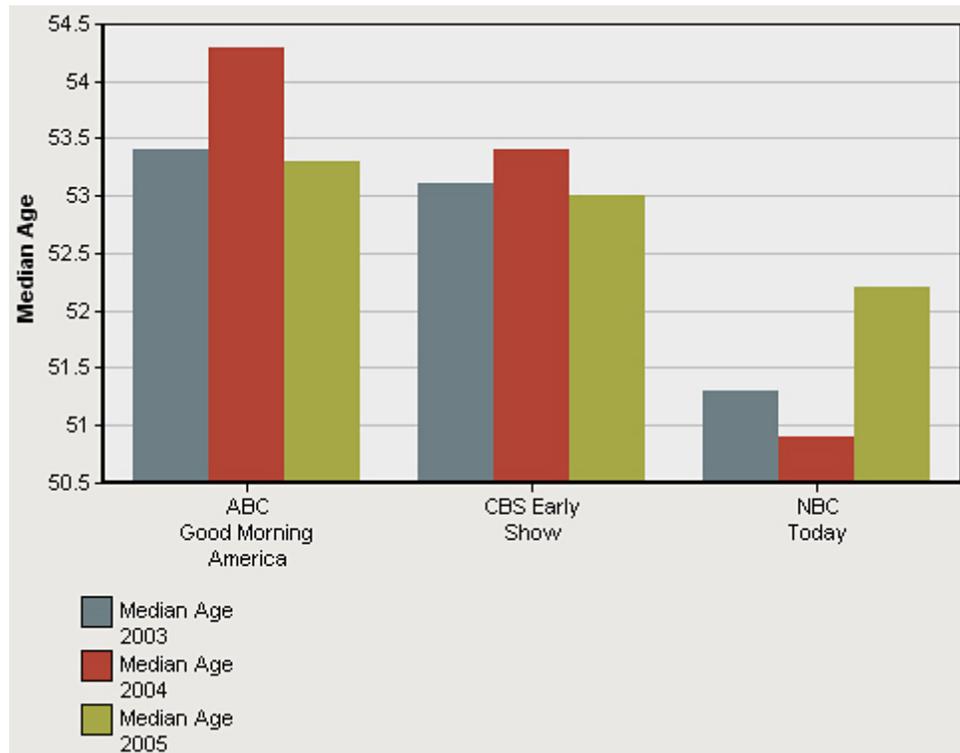


Design Your Own Chart

Source: Nielsen Media Research, used under license

* Ratings taken for month of November.

Median Age of Morning News Viewers 2003, 2004, and 2005



Design Your Own Chart
Source: MagnaGlobal USA

The Sunday Shows

Any discussion of the state of network broadcast news would be incomplete without mention of the Sunday morning programs. The vast majority of the public knows those shows less from actually viewing them and more from the references to them in the Monday morning papers or clips on other TV news programs. The Sunday shows are largely designed and programmed for a stable, affluent, influential niche audience that is demographically appealing for advertisers. A survey of Sunday Nielsen weekly average numbers on Media Life Magazine's Web site shows a picture almost identical to a year earlier —particularly striking because 2004 was an election year when most politically focused programs experience swells, with dips the next year. It appears that contemporary Sunday morning news is immune to that pattern.

Network by network, the picture looks the same as well. NBC's "Meet the Press" leads, with ABC's "This Week" holding a lead over "Fox News Sunday" but still trailing CBS's "Face the Nation." In November 2005, "Meet the Press" won the sweeps period with an average of 4.3 million viewers. That was 34% more than "Face the Nation" (3.2 million) and more than 60% over "This Week" (2.6 million). "Fox News Sunday" was a distant fourth with just 1.4 million viewers. 12 Sunday morning is the only part of the day all week when Fox's news operation competes directly with the networks on

its broadcast stations. At other times its competition is confined to its news cable channel. That may change in 2006. Fox is reportedly preparing a half-hour broadcast news program to compete each evening as well.

There is also the perennial odd man out of the Sunday programs. CBS's long-running "Sunday Morning" program is a blend of arts and culture reporting that stands in contrast to the hard-line political conversations of the other network other fare on those mornings. It also contrasts with the celebrity, show-business focus of the weekday morning programs' entertainment coverage. And it more than holds its own. (PBS's NewsHour does devote a fair amount of time to the subject, our content studies suggest.)¹³

Prime-Time Magazines

It was not that long ago that the prime-time news magazine was a programming and profit mainstay of each of the Big Three networks' news divisions. These slickly produced hours, often specializing in long-form pieces on consumerism, true crime, human interest and celebrity, peppered the schedule. As PBS's NewsHour noted, in 1999 prime-time news magazines were broadcasting "six nights out of seven and have exploded in just nine years from four hours of prime time programming per week to the currently scheduled 13."¹⁴ Part of their appeal was that they cost much less to produce than an hour of drama or sitcoms, and added value to a news division within the network budget to boot. (On the other hand, prime-time magazine segments, generally, do not offer the same potential for re-runs that entertainment programming does.)

But with the rise of reality programming, prime-time magazines lost their edge as a source of cheaper programming that could earn a profit with a smaller audience. A reality hit could be even cheaper to produce and had the potential for a huge audience. What's more, news magazines tend to attract an older demographic — people not falling into the prized 18-to-34 age range.

In 2005 the decline of the news magazine format continued with the death of "60 Minutes II." Moving into 2006, only NBC's "Dateline" continued regularly to air more than once a week.

The decline of the prime-time magazines, however, has other consequences for the news divisions, beyond shrinking the share of profit they contribute to their networks. One adverse consequence, network officials told us, was seen in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. In the days when the magazines were seemingly ubiquitous during prime time, they afforded the networks an easy way to compete with the cable news channels, allowing for expanded hard-news coverage without having to pre-empt entertainment programming. In September 2005, the networks could cover Katrina in the morning, in the evening, and on ABC late at night, with "Nightline." They failed to take the lead in Katrina coverage during prime time.

The effect of having fewer news magazines, however, has not been uniformly negative on the surviving programs.

Nielsen data for November 2005 showed a largely stable picture for the remaining news magazines. Despite a rocky year in 2004, the "60 Minutes" flagship edition on Sunday nights led the field with 14.9 million viewers. NBC's signature "Dateline" program was second with 19.7 million viewers (over 2 nights) followed by ABC's "20/20" (8.8 million), CBS's "48 Hours Mystery" (7.4 million), "Primetime Live" (6.7 million) and "Nightline's" (3.9 million).

Despite "Dateline's" success, the network has other commitments. For now, "Dateline Friday" is moving to "Dateline Saturday," and next season the thinking is that "Dateline Sunday" will be eliminated because of the network's new NFL

commitment. One possibility is that “Dateline” might move to two hours on Saturday or come back with more episodes in the spring.

Meanwhile, the ratings numbers alone may not be a safe predictor of the future. The key questions for a magazine show, network officials say, are 1) how does a magazine do in the time slot relative to what had been there or relative to the lead-ins? and 2) how committed is each network to a magazine?

In 2006, CBS appears the most committed. Its “60 Minutes” is an institution. “Dateline” may be more vulnerable. Saturday is always a risky time slot because the networks have begun using the night for rerunning prime time dramas such as “Law and Order” and “CSI,” and those reruns negate the economic advantage of a magazine. For the moment, however, insiders say, “48 Hours Mystery” (on Saturday) appears secure.

At ABC, as the prime-time schedule improves, the magazines may be vulnerable. On Thursday, for instance, “Primetime Live” was considered secure because the network thought it had limited prospects at 10 p.m. , up against ER on NBC. So an inexpensive news magazine was a good alternative. Yet that may be beginning to change. ER is aging, and the program that leads into “Primetime Live” last year saw better ratings. The network may begin to feel it can now draw more viewers with a drama at 10 p.m. rather than with a news magazine. Until now, the prospects for that—up against ER on NBC and CSI on CBS, were considered dim. If that changes, “Primetime,” say insiders, could get bumped.

At NBC, Saturday night is a difficult night for magazines. Some network officials believe that “Dateline,” which for years had been an economic engine for the network, could be in real danger.

By the end of the 2004-2005 season “60 Minutes” was the only news magazine to make the top 25 programs. That was despite the cancellation of the program’s “60 Minutes Wednesday” (also called 60 Minutes II”) and the potential backlash from that program’s airing of an ill-conceived report concerning President George W. Bush’s Air National Guard service. 15

‘Nightline’

“Nightline,” over the years, was something of an outlier among evening magazines. First, it existed outside prime time. It followed local news, and while it competed against comedy programming, it maintained a seriousness that made it difficult to categorize.

In 2005, the “Nightline” program that had been on the air for a quarter-century ended and was replaced by a new one with the same name. The impact of the change remains to be seen.

In late March 2005, Ted Koppel announced that he would be leaving the program and the ABC network when his contract expired in December 2005. The resignation came amid debate at the network about the future design of the show. (The battle became an almost iconic symbol for the critical importance of network news, at least in public-relations terms, when it became known that ABC was trying to replace the program with a talk show vehicle hosted by the CBS personality David Letterman.)

According to a Washington Post article by Howard Kurtz, while one proposal had “Nightline” becoming a “younger and hipper hour-long show...without anchor Ted Koppel...an alternative approach [was] being developed by Koppel’s staff, a more traditional ‘Nightline’ [that] would expand to an hour while remaining largely a taped and edited program...” 16

Disney was reportedly entertaining talk of a “sports or entertainment show that would end the quarter-century run of ‘Nightline’...”¹⁷

It would be October 2005 before ABC would (at least temporarily) secure the program’s future and announce a replacement, or rather a team of replacements, for Koppel. ABC News would field a three-anchor team: Martin Bashir (a reporter perhaps best known for his tabloid interview with Michael Jackson), the “Primetime” co-anchor and senior legal correspondent Cynthia McFadden, and “World News Tonight Sunday’s” anchor, and the senior White House correspondent, Terry Moran. The program would broadcast from Washington, and from ABC’s Times Square studios in New York, where Bashir and McFadden would be based. In addition to multiple anchors and locations, the program would break from its former approach of focusing on a single topic and instead deal with multiple topics.

Koppel’s final show took place on November 22, 2005.

Much of the talk surrounding the premiere of the “new Nightline” focused on the fact that it abandoned two of its hallmarks, the single-topic focus and its simple, unadorned packaging. When the show finally premiered (at 12:45 a.m. EST November 28th, 2005) following Monday Night Football), viewers were greeted not by the focus they had come to expect but by what Robert Bianco of USA Today called “a half-hour version of ‘20/20.’”¹⁸

The new “Nightline,” indeed, was more similar to other programs on network TV than to what it replaced. It carried two or three pieces in a 22-minute newshole. The packaging, graphics and framing of the pieces were more hyperventilated than in the past, and several critics contended that the program’s reports did not always deliver on some of the more grandiose promotional promises. The premiere episode featured the first installment in a series called “Iraq : Stay In or Pull Out?” The following morning, USA Today’s Bianco noted that while “...Moran’s taped interview with U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad was newsworthy, we’ll apparently have to wait for him to address the question in the segment’s title...”¹⁹ There have also been signs of some of the same cross-promotional use of the program that has come to characterize other network news programs, particularly in the morning. One early segment, for instance, was a celebrity interview with the comedian Sarah Silverman, whose boyfriend, the program mentioned, is Jimmy Kimmel. Kimmel’s show, “Jimmy Kimmel Live!” airs after Nightline.²⁰ Still, some of the segments remained focused on major news events.

More structurally, doing more stories each night logically raises the risk that people will have less time to work on their pieces. TV critics were mostly negative. Initial responses were that this was no longer “Nightline” as it used to be but a different program with the same name, and one that was less distinct from what is available elsewhere on the dial.

But it is perhaps unfair to judge the new “Nightline” so early in its transition. It was probably predictable, after all, that the program would be dinged after such a long and serious tenure. The argument could be made that critics and media watchers expected too much out of the box, or were primed to be critical.

Early ratings indicated that “Nightline’s” audience has not fully made up its mind about the new format, either. According to Media Life magazine, “For the week ended January 15, ‘Nightline’ averaged 3.6 million viewers, its highest viewership since the triumverate of Cynthia McFadden, Martin Bashir and Terry Moran took over as hosts in late November. But that was down 8% from the comparable week last year, when Koppel averaged 3.9 million viewers.”²¹

Public Television and the Documentary

In last year's report, we discussed the unique role played by PBS's "Frontline" program. With the new multi-story format of "Nightline," Frontline stands even further apart from other network journalism offerings. With its focus on a single theme, "Frontline's" documentary filmmaking approach and high production values attracted some 3 million viewers for each program during the 2004-2005 season. 22

Heading into 2006, some observers speculated that the situation for journalistic documentaries might be improving. Certainly documentaries have found a new foothold in theaters and on DVDs. Films like "Supersize Me" and "Fahrenheit 9/11" broke through the perception that documentaries were stuffy, academic affairs. Oscar-nominated works like "The Boys of Baraka," "March of the Penguins" and "Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room" illustrated the versatility of the genre.

While network television news divisions were moving away from documentaries, Public Broadcasting continued giving them an outlet. Along with "Frontline," programs like "Wide Angle," "POV" and "American Experience" offered viewers the opportunity to see current events, quite literally, through a new lens. "Wide Angle's" "Border Jumpers" was an hour-long piece devoted to the subject of people attempting to illegally cross the national border of their wealthy neighbor in search of better jobs and opportunities. The countries in question, however, were not Mexico and the U.S. but Zimbabwe and Botswana. On "POV," the filmmaker Ross McElwee's "Bright Leaves" looked at the tobacco industry from an autobiographical perspective — his great-grandfather founded Bull Durham Tobacco. "American Experience" devoted a program to the September 1970 hijacking and eventual destruction of four commercial aircraft by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

Some of those programs have had a decided liberal cast, but that is hardly the case exclusively. Perspective could become more of an issue, however, and add to pressures on PBS, if documentaries were found to play a significant role in future elections.

Meanwhile, cable channels like the History Channel, Discovery and others have always included documentaries in their programming, and some new players are moving high-profile projects to the airwaves. Showtime will be airing a new video version of the highly popular public radio show "This American Life." Ted Koppel and members of the former "Nightline" team have moved their shop over to the Discovery Channel to start a documentary program on that network (See Economics, The Message of Nightline).

Footnotes

1. As noted in the State of the News Media 2005, a ratings point (1% of American homes with a TV set) implies many more people in 2005 than it did in 1969. With population increases and demographic trends like more single heads of households, there are many more homes than there were some 35 years ago. Thus, the decline of viewership is not as sharp as the decline in ratings.
2. Pew Research Center for People and the Press, "Online Newspaper Readership Countering Print Losses: Public More Critical of Press but Goodwill Persists," June 26, 2005, pg. 4. Survey information regarding public opinion on the assets of various media outlets was generated during follow-up interviews with a sub-sample of respondents who gave favorable opinions of the particular news source.
3. Ibid, pg. 19 (Numbers equal more than 100 percent for multiple responses).
4. Peter Johnson, "Webcasts, blogs allow flexibility," USA Today, January 3, 2006.

5. The figure edged just slightly down, though the change was too small to be statistically significant.
6. Taken from a biography of Bob Schieffer posted at CBS Evening News Biographies.
7. Data supplied to the Project for Excellence in Journalism by the NewsHour with Jim Lehrer.
8. For the past decade, the Erdos & Morgan Opinion Leader survey has ranked The NewsHour first among all television news programs as the most credible, most objective, most influential and most current news program on television. The survey measures 58 broadcast, cable and public TV news programs.
9. Data taken from the NewsHour Web site: <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/ww/history.html>
10. Howard Kurtz, "Firms Paid TV's Tech Gurus To Promote Their Products," Washington Post, April 20, 2005.
11. Ibid. The Today Show later changed its rules for contributors to prevent such incidents in the future.
12. MSNBC.com, "Meet the Press No. 1 in November 2005 sweeps," December 6, 2005.
13. The 90-minute "Sunday Morning" is part of a two-hour package of programming on CBS, followed by "Face the Nation," the only one of the interview programs with a 30-minute format instead of an hour. In most markets, "Sunday Morning" precedes the political interview programs. Those programs tend to be in head-to-head competition with one another. "Sunday Morning" is the "number one news program on Sunday mornings among households and most demos," Magna Global notes. The audience for "Sunday Morning" is just slightly younger than for ABC's "This Week" or NBC's "Meet the Press" (with a median age of 57 it ties "Face the Nation").
14. Taken from the online transcript of The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, January 13, 1999. www.pbs.org/newshour.
15. "60 Minutes II" was renamed after it aired a story regarding President George W. Bush's service in the Air National Guard which, it would later be revealed, was largely based on fraudulent documents. The program became "60 Minutes Wednesday," only to revert to being "60 Minutes II" in July 2005, when it was moved to Friday nights. Its final broadcast was on September 2, 2005 .
16. Howard Kurtz, "ABC Mulls Changes to 'Nightline' With Or Without Koppel," Washington Post, February 9, 2005.
17. Ibid.
18. Robert Bianco, "More is Much Less in Revamped 'Nightline,' " USA Today, November 30, 2005.
19. Ibid.
20. The program aired on Friday, December 16, 2005 , in a segment called "Pushing the Envelope." According to a transcript of the program, the correspondent Jack Tapper noted in a voiceover, "Silverman is involved with the man who hosts the show that airs after this one, Jimmy Kimmel."
21. Abigail Azote, "A winter's chill descends on 'Nightline,' " Media Life, January 26, 2006.
22. Audience information supplied to the Project for Excellence in Journalism by Frontline.

Network Economics

Economics

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

Pinpointing the economics of network TV journalism becomes more difficult as the news operations become smaller parts of larger and more diversified conglomerates with multiple media platforms. Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that news remains a significant contributor to the bottom line.

This year, three trends stand out.

- While only one of the three nightly newscasts, ABC's, reported increases in ad revenue in 2004, the latest year for which complete results are available, partial-year data for 2005 hinted that all three would see growth by the end of the year.
- Mornings were even better. All three morning shows saw double-digit increases in ad revenues in 2004, and partial-year data for 2005 suggest that would continue.
- In prime time, NBC's "Dateline" (along with that network's entire lineup) was suffering, but the various prime-time magazines at its rivals were showing robust growth, especially on CBS (along with that network's line-up generally).

Determining the operating profitability of the network news divisions is difficult to anyone outside the corporate accounting offices. Figures are difficult to find and even more difficult to verify. For the purposes of this report, we have attempted to track a more concrete aspect of the network news — advertising revenue. As we have noted before, however, using those numbers is not without its own problems. Networks bundle advertising between programs, making it difficult to allocate figures. Even so, the figures still offer some independent data to consider.

Nightly News Revenues

In our report last year, an analysis of partial-year data suggested that the 2003 increase in advertising revenue for the Big Three evening news broadcasts would reverse. With complete figures for January 2004 to December 2004 that was true for only two of the three. Advertising revenues for NBC's "Nightly News" and CBS's "Evening News" declined. "World News Tonight" on ABC continued the rebound it started in 2002 and, once again, assumed a No. 2 position in advertising revenue totals among the three programs. The revenue totals are much closer to one another than the audience sizes and, in contrast to other news programming, invite more direct economic comparisons between networks. ¹

In 2004, the last year for which we have complete data, figures from the research firm TNS Media Intelligence show that NBC maintained its No. 1 position, earning some \$155 million during the calendar year. That was a decrease of 4% from the year before. ABC evening-news ad revenue was up 1% to \$151 million. CBS, which had been steadily increasing its advertising revenue since 2001, stumbled in calendar year 2004, declining 4% to \$149 million. But that only brought revenue back to roughly where it was in 2002.

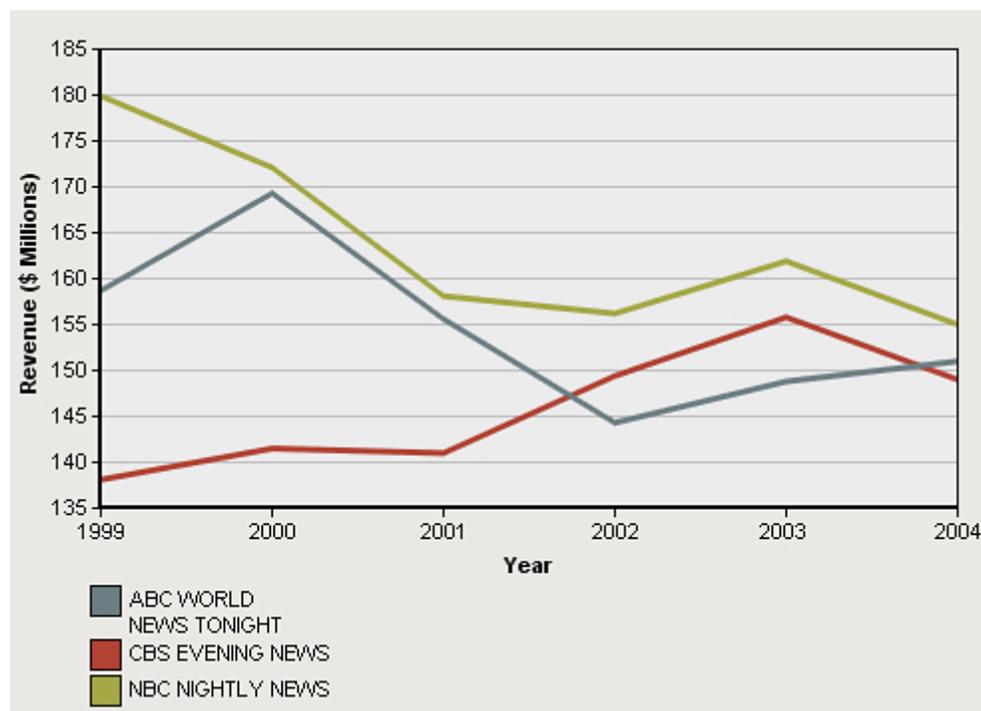
An examination of TNS data through August 2005 gives an admittedly rough idea of what took place with advertising revenue over the whole calendar year. And the hint is that NBC may have fallen into third place for ad revenue, even while retaining first place in audience size. According to TNS, CBS and ABC were about equal with some \$113 million. That would project to roughly \$169 million by year's end. NBC's evening newscast had fallen behind its competitors with \$110 million, which would project to \$165 million. Why would the No. 1 audience show be in last place for advertising revenue?

Part of the answer probably has to do with the fact, discussed in earlier years, that so much network advertising today is bundled across more than one program and even one platform. An advertiser might be sold time on the nightly news along with other NBC or even MSNBC programs. Thus, untangling how revenues are allocated across shows can be difficult. The data are the best available, but they should be taken for what they are, especially the projections for 2005.

Added to that, ad bundling may tie NBC News's fortunes somewhat more to the larger picture for NBC TV, which has lost its prime-time leadership to CBS and ABC, dragging down its advertising revenues. 2

Over the six calendar years between 1999 and 2004, ad revenues for NBC's "Nightly News" had dropped 14%, based on the TNS data. ABC's "World News Tonight" advertising revenue dropped 5%, while those for CBS's "Evening News" climbed 8% (though still remaining on the bottom of the stack). None of those declines or increases took place in a direct fashion. The trend lines, like so many when discussing statistical data for the Big Three network news programs, are rocky and tend to move in cycles. Over all, though, in ad revenues at least, CBS tends to be on the biggest upswing and NBC on the biggest downturn.

Evening News Revenue, by Network 1999-2004



Design Your Own Chart

Source: TNS Media Intelligence/CMR unpublished data, www.tnsmi-cmr.com

Morning News Economics

Even with a decline in viewership, and audiences that are notably smaller than their evening news counterparts, the morning programs continue to be the economic powerhouses of the news divisions. The reason is fairly simple. They are on for two hours (three hours in the case of NBC's "Today Show"), versus 30 minutes for nightly news.

The morning programs also feed important revenues to the networks' owned stations and other affiliates, compounding their economic importance to their companies.

In calendar year 2004, according to data provided to the Project by TNS, "Today" and "Good Morning America" continued the horserace that has been going since we began collecting data in 1999. CBS remains a distant third in advertising revenue but, like NBC and ABC, continued its climb.

In 2004 (January to December), "Today" took in \$552 million in advertising revenue, up 17% from 2003. The shorter "Good Morning America" took in \$528 million, up 13%. CBS's "Early Show" brought its advertising revenue up 14% to \$249 million. It is important, however, to keep these figures in perspective. "Today" airs for three hours each weekday, while GMA and the "Early Show" air for two. If those advertising revenue figures are compared by the hour, the two-hour "Good Morning America" actually earns more per hour than "Today." In fact, calculations using data from TNS

indicate that in value per hour, "Good Morning America's" revenues may actually exceed those of "Today" by more than 40%.³

Partial data through August 2005 suggested that by year-end, GMA might overtake or at least equal "Today" in absolute advertising revenue. As of August, "Today" had taken in some \$380 million, slightly below "Good Morning America" with \$381 million. That projected to \$571 million in advertising revenue for both programs by the end of calendar year 2005, more than three times the totals generated by their networks' shorter, yet more highly rated evening newscasts. CBS's "Early Show" had advertising revenue of \$181 million through August, which would project to \$272 million by the end of 2005.

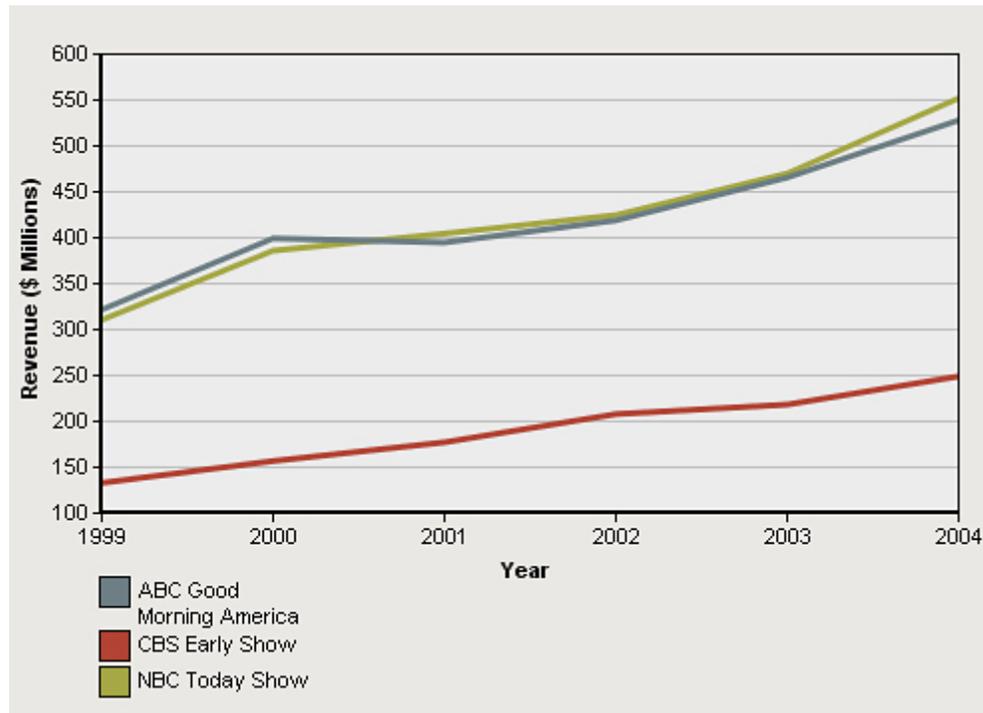
(Again, however, the networks internally have different numbers than TNS, and insiders say that NBC's accounting shows "Today" ahead of GMA. All we can safely rely on are the numbers that are public.)

Looking back, the three networks have all come to expect large yearly revenue increases in their morning programs. According to TNS, between 1999 and 2004, each of the morning news programs improved advertising revenues by well over 50%. Indeed, with a 64% increase over that time, ABC's "Good Morning America" was the only one of the top three programs not to improve by more than 75%. "Today" climbed 78% while the "Early Show" (while operating from a much lower baseline) improved 87%.

The length of the morning shows is the most obvious factor in their ability to generate higher revenue than their evening news counterparts, with roughly half the viewership. Data from Andrew Tyndall reveal that in 2004, the morning shows averaged about four times as much time for commercials and network promos on weekdays. (Since they are four times the length (not counting the third hour of Today) that means the ratio of editorial to advertising is similar.)¹

In 2005, Tyndall tracked commercial time on the three morning shows over the course of one month. According to the data, commercial time increased slightly between the first and second hours of "Good Morning America," from 17.2 minutes to 17.6 minutes. It similarly increased on the "Today Show," from 16.6 minutes in the first hour to 16.8 minutes in the second. Commercial time between the first and second hours on the "Early Show" dropped from 17.6 to 17.2 minutes. Commercials make up just over 25% of the time of each morning program.

Morning News Revenue, by Network 1999-2004



Design Your Own Chart

Source: TNS Media Intelligence/CMR unpublished data, www.tnsmi-cmr.com

News Magazine Economics

The economic picture for prime time news magazines appeared to be improving as well. Here, too, it is impossible to view advertising revenue as an absolute measure given ad bundling and other strategies, but there are some signs that surviving programs have benefited from the thinning of the herd since the category boomed in the late 1990s.

NBC's "Dateline" is now the last of the magazine franchises producing two editions each week. Unfortunately, according to data from TNS, "Dateline's" other distinction is the continuing decline of its advertising revenues. Over calendar year 2004, it earned \$232.3 million in advertising revenue, down from \$237 million in 2003, a 2% decline. But to keep things in perspective, that 2% is substantially less than the decline in the rest of NBC's primetime schedule.

CBS's "60 Minutes," in contrast, climbed 21% in 2004 to \$108 million in advertising revenue, from \$89.3 million in 2003. Last year, we noted that some insiders suggested that the decline in "60 Minutes's" 2003 advertising revenue and the apparent increase in the advertising revenues for "60 Minutes II" was caused by CBS's decision to alter the ad rates for both broadcasts — in essence, boosting the new program at the expense of the flagship. That makes determining the size of "60 Minutes's" rebound murkier.

Data from TNS shows that “60 Minutes II” (which alternated between being 60 Minutes II and 60 Minutes Wednesday and even changed its broadcast night) had a 12% decline in advertising revenue, from \$70 million to just under \$62 million. And while “60 Minutes II” was cancelled in September of 2005, a projection based on data from TNS indicates that the advertising revenues assigned to the program would have continued to decline.

The CBS News program “48 Hours Mystery” appears to be another sign of the network’s improving fortunes. The program’s advertising revenue has climbed 41% compared to calendar year 2003, moving from \$55.7M to \$78.5M.

In calendar year 2004, meanwhile, ABC’s “20/20” showed an ad revenue climb of 10%.

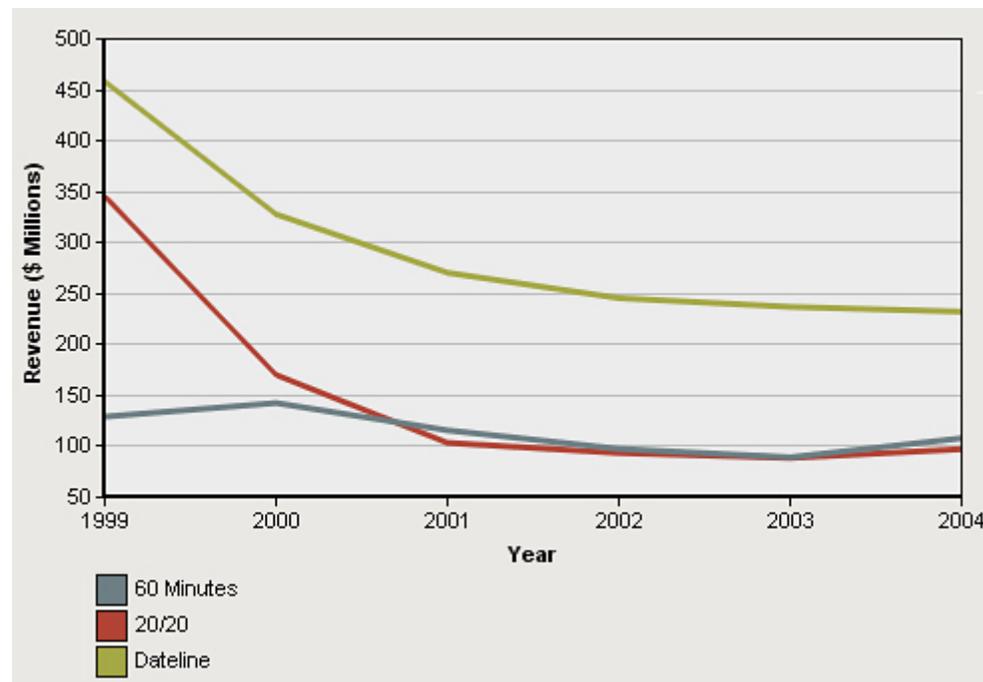
Three things make up a magazine show’s ratings success, network officials say: program content, the lead-in show that precedes it, and the show’s competition.

CBS’s “48 Hours” has benefited here. NBC’s “Dateline,” especially on Friday nights, suffered because it was up against a big CBS hit, “Ghost Whisperer.”

“Nightline,” which had a revenue drop in 2003, regained some ground in 2004. Revenue increased from \$69.5 million in 2003 to \$75 million in 2004. Projecting to the end of 2005, it appeared that that figure would hold. (Most of the year, of course, was the older single-topic format for “Nightline.” The new program was launched in November.)

News Magazine Revenue, Select Programs

1999-2004



Design Your Own Chart

Source: TNS Media Intelligence/CMR unpublished data, www.tnsmi-cmr.com* asterisk

The Message of 'Nightline'

The case of "Nightline" deserves a moment for its implications about the economics of television journalism today, both in the move of Ted Koppel and a team of his producers to the cable channel Discovery and in their departure from ABC.

"If you want to do serious journalism in this country, this is the best place we could possibly find," producer Tom Bettag was quoted as saying about Discovery.⁵ Something significant is at play here.⁶

Cable has a very different economic model from broadcast TV. Broadcast is financed entirely by advertising. Cable TV adds subscription fees to the mix—fees paid by cable operators and fees paid by individual households. Channels like Discovery that carry advertising often make half their revenue from fees paid by cable operators who want to include the channel in their system packages. Premium cable channels such as HBO are funded entirely by "premium" subscriptions paid directly by viewers.

Thus, any program that can tip the scales to make a cable operator treat a cable channel as indispensable can have huge financial value. Consider the impact the "Daily Show" with Jon Stewart had in raising the profile of Comedy Central.

In other words, a program that changes viewer perception of a channel can have a value in cable far beyond whatever ratings it gets for its own episodes. It can influence the brand.

In this sense, Koppel and Bettag may be doing more than finding a place to keep doing some documentaries. They may be trying to pioneer a new value for serious journalism elsewhere on television than where it currently exists.

If they are right, documentaries about major issues of the day, once a major element of network news departments but for so long their disappearing feature, could bring an economic value to cable.

That would represent a major change and add to the opportunity that Koppel, Bettag and their colleagues are pioneering.

Interestingly, Koppel made it clear that he thought the appropriate venue for this was not the traditional cable news channels (CNN, Fox News, MSNBC), which historically have not made a mark in documentaries. "I think there is a tendency on the part of some of the cable networks to be in a desperate race to be first with the obvious," he said.⁷

Just as interesting is the fact that Koppel ended up at a standard cable channel, not a premium one. On a premium channel, where there are no commercials, a single program may be enough to tip a nonsubscriber into becoming a subscriber. How many people watch "Curb Your Enthusiasm" or "Deadwood" on HBO because they first subscribed to get the "Sopranos"? Koppel's decision suggests that documentaries could do more to help a channel's negotiations with cable operators than as a marketing tool to attract individual viewers.

The other implications of the “Nightline” situation relate to the reasons ABC wanted to scrap the program’s format, which led to Koppel’s leaving.

ABC executives had said they wanted a program that would appeal to younger audiences, something hipper and faster-paced, and that if “Nightline” couldn’t do that, it might be replaced with an entertainment show. Implicitly, the network is arguing that every program in network TV is now viewed as its own profit center. Whatever can maximize revenues in a given time slot is the goal. That was the signal that Disney sent in 2002 when it courted but failed to lure the comedian David Letterman to replace “Nightline.” Disney executives made it plain that if Letterman could earn more money for the network in that time slot, he was preferred.

In other words, while there are economies of scale, the notion that the sum of a network is greater than its parts is now much diminished. It used to be that way, when the government viewed broadcasters as public trustees who had an obligation to present news even if it was a loss leader. In the era of deregulation, that is no longer a concern. Koppel himself made it clear that that was his understanding now. ABC had once allowed him to do four prime-time documentaries a year, just as it allowed its prime anchor, Peter Jennings, to do several. “They were indulging me,” Koppel told the Washington Post upon signing with Discovery. “They were indulging Peter.” Tom Bettag then added, “And the days of indulging are just about over.”⁸

Adding to that is the excessive concern at the networks, Koppel and Bettag argued, with luring younger viewers because of the Madison Avenue conviction that they are the most valuable audience.⁹

Aside from what they say publicly, is this really how networks now operate? It is difficult to argue to the contrary. Adverse publicity might keep a network from changing its programming if it thought it would cast management negatively, be perceived as hurting credibility, or hurt the stock price. News accounts at the time quoted Letterman’s people as saying he did not want to be seen as the guy who killed “Nightline.” Would such negative publicity dissuade a network from killing a news program today?

That might be the case for only one particular program — the nightly newscast. A network might be loath to be the first to abandon airing that one even if it thought it could make more money producing something else in the same time slot. Given that all three networks run the evening news, the first one to kill the program would probably generate significant bad publicity and risk a public backlash. Decline or no, the combined evening news audience is still more than 25 million viewers.

But that might be the last exception now.

A second argument also floated above the “Nightline” case: Were Koppel and Bettag saying that network broadcasting in general was no longer a place where viewers could find serious long-form journalism at all — in any time slot?

That notion is probably an exaggeration.

Koppel himself never said that outright. The closest he came was in the New York Times, where the reporter Bill Carter noted: “Mr. Koppel said that no broadcast network would be interested in the kinds of programs he and his team wanted to make, which he said would occasionally take the form of one-hour documentary-style special followed by a two-hour town-meeting discussion. If he asked for three hours of prime time on ABC or even on a cable news network like CNN, Mr. Koppel said, he would have no chance of success. ‘That kind of programming simply doesn’t fit anymore’ on network television.”¹⁰

Certainly there isn't much in the way of long-form documentaries, examining significant topics or events of the day, on commercial broadcasting. What is wrong with the health care system? Are drug companies helping or hurting the situation? Are the new Medicare reforms working? Is the situation in Iraq getting better? What effect will the war have on the U.S. economy?

Commercial broadcast television news was once an occasional place for just that kind of broad stock-taking. It has not been for some time. Partisan documentary theatrical movies, on the other hand, are now more popular than ever.

But while such programming is diminishing, it is probably unfair to suggest that there are no serious longer pieces on the networks at all of the kind to which "Nightline" used to devote 20 minutes or so. As we noted in earlier content reports such work does occur on programs such as "60 Minutes," Sunday Morning and occasionally on certain topics by certain reporters on other prime-time magazines. It is shrinking. It seems too broad to say it is gone.

Footnotes

1. The nightly news programs on all networks run for half an hour and (in general) air at the same time. That allows for easy side-by-side comparison, but it will soon change. ABC has changed the model by airing three live over-the-air broadcasts in different time zones and one live Web-based edition.

2. Consider the following. In Broadcasting & Cable magazine's 2006 annual revenue rankings, NBC's network revenue sits below both CBS and ABC. According to those rankings, NBC's 2005 network revenue dropped 23%, to \$3.9 billion, from \$5 billion in 2004. Both CBS and ABC, on the other hand, saw revenues rise, CBS's by 5 percent, from \$4.4 billion to \$4.7 billion in 2005 (CBS was also ranked the No. 1 network). ABC's revenue climbed 11 percent, from \$3.5 billion to \$3.9 billion.

A year earlier all three networks had seen revenue increases, NBC the biggest. Between 2003 and 2004, indeed, NBC enjoyed a 13.5% increase (climbing to \$5 billion in 2004, up from some \$4.5 billion the year before). Both CBS and ABC experienced revenue increases that year as well, but not nearly at the level of NBC. Several factors have most likely contributed to NBC's abrupt slide. First, the network's average prime-time viewership (9.1 million) is lower than either CBS (12.9 million) or ABC (10.3 million). Second, 2005 was not an Olympic year, so NBC was not able to capitalize on the cross-program draw the games offered in 2004 and will presumably offer the network in 2006. What remains to be seen is whether a rally for the network as a whole will benefit "Nightly News." (John M. Higgins, "CBS: In the Money," Broadcasting & Cable, January 8, 2006.) 3. To arrive at this estimate the total annual advertising revenue of a program was calculated by dividing that total by 12 months, then by an estimated 20 days per month, then by the number of hours a program ran, then by 60 minutes.

4. In the State of the News Media 2005 editions, we noted that 60 Minutes' advertising revenue had dropped, from \$97.6 million in calendar year 2002 to \$89.3 million in 2003.

5. Gold, Matea, "Koppel will do in-depth shows for Discovery; Ex-Nightline anchor to focus on topics like international affairs, race, religion," Los Angeles Times, Jan. 5, 2006

6. Koppel also agreed to do commentaries for National Public Radio and for the New York Times, both outlets that probably reflect similar news values to those Nightline tried to uphold when Koppel hosted the program at ABC.

7. Ibid.

8. Kurtz, Howard, "Ted Koppel and Nightline Crew Turn Down HBO for Discovery Deal," Washington Post, Jan. 5, 2006

9. Ibid.

10. Bill Carter, "Ted Koppel and Crew to Join Discovery," New York Times, Jan. 5, 2006 .

Network Ownership

Ownership

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

It has not been an easy year for the big media companies — or, more precisely, the ever-expanding corporate entities that own the significantly smaller 'big' three broadcast television networks.

Disney (which owns ABC), Viacom (which owns CBS) and GE (which owns NBC Universal) all watched their stock prices fall over the first three quarters of 2005. And all three entered 2006 with major changes ahead. Disney was replacing its CEO. Viacom was splitting into two separate entities. NBC was working to regain the strong ratings and financial footing it had when it merged with Vivendi Universal, as its entertainment offerings lagged and Microsoft pulled out of its partnership in MSNBC, one of the network's cable news offerings.

One method of evaluating the companies and their individual components is to compare revenue totals for the parent companies with those of their subdivisions. Every year, Advertising Age publishes a list of the 100 largest media companies, listing their worldwide parent revenue as well as total revenue for their television and cable holdings. Figures for broadcast still combine news with other programming, but sampling the three figures gives a sense of how crucial (at least financially) the news components are to the parent company. We'll look at one company at a time.

Viacom posted total company revenue for 2004 of \$22.5 billion. ¹

Its television revenue (broadcast and cable) accounted for 68% of that figure (\$15.2 billion) and broadcast alone made up 38%, or \$8.5 billion. The share from broadcast (network and local stations), moreover, was up over 2003, but that is due mainly to Viacom's total revenue falling, not broadcast's increasing. Total revenues fell \$3.9 billion from 2003 while broadcast revenues increased slightly, by \$700 million.

In 2004, Disney's total company revenue was \$30.8 billion. That was up from \$27 billion in 2003.

Television made up 36% of that with \$11.2 billion. And broadcast revenue in 2004 made up \$4.8 billion of that, matching revenues from the previous year. That broadcast share was a slightly smaller percent of the company's overall revenue (16%, down a point from the year earlier).

Meanwhile, GE took in total revenue in 2004 of \$152.4 billion, up some \$18 billion from 2003. Perhaps unsurprisingly, television (broadcast and cable combined) accounted for a small component at such an expansive parent company. In 2004, NBC's broadcast revenue increased to \$7.5 billion from \$6.2 billion a year earlier, but made up just 5% of GE's total company revenue.

Cable contributed just 1% to the overall picture. And what will happen to that small figure following Microsoft's decision to cede the MSNBC cable network to NBC Universal is uncertain.

Television Revenue as Percent of Total Corporate Revenue, 2004
Dollars in Billions

	2004 Broadcast Revenue	2004 Cable Revenue	2004 TV Revenue (Broadcast + Cable)	2004 Total Revenue	2004 Broadcast Revenue as % of Total	2004 Cable Revenue as % of Total	2004 TV Revenue as % of Total
Viacom	\$8.5	\$6.7	\$15.2	\$22.5	38%	30%	68%
Disney	\$4.8	\$6.4	\$11.2	\$30.8	16%	21%	36%
(GE) NBC Universal	\$7.5	\$2.1	\$9.6	\$152.4	5%	1%	6%

Source: Advertising Age, "100 Leading Media Companies," 2004 data, www.adage.com.

Journalism, of course, is only a tiny fraction of those figures. If 5% of GE's revenue is derived from broadcasting and cable, what comes from news is only a very small portion of that — a portion harder still to determine. Along with MSNBC, GE's cable operations include Bravo, USA and more. NBC's revenues include the hours of entertainment programming, not just the fraction that comes from news programming. The same rule of thumb plays out across the other networks. As companies grow and assume increasingly diverse industries under their various umbrellas, news, even if it happens to be growing in absolute terms, becomes an ever-smaller component.

For example, consider NBC and its position within NBC Universal, a division of conglomerate GE. With six separate business divisions (it was an even more daunting 11 until mid-2004) NBC Universal is something of an odd-man-out in a lineup that includes GE Infrastructure, GE Industrial, GE Commercial Financing, GE Healthcare and GE Consumer Finances. The same parent company that brings you the "Nightly News" and the "Today Show" is also creating aircraft engines, locomotives, private-label credit cards, medical imaging technologies and nuclear energy equipment.

On the other hand, when Viacom decided to divide into two entities, one based on broadcast television and the other on cable television, CBS News became a larger component of its new conglomerate parent.

Broadcast Revenue as Percent of Total Corporate Revenue, 2003 vs. 2004
Dollars in Billions

	2003 Broadcast Revenue	2004 Broadcast Revenue	2003 Total Revenue	2004 Total Revenue	2003 Broadcast Revenue as% of Total	2004 Broadcast Revenue as% of Total
Viacom	\$7.8	\$8.5	\$26.6	\$22.5	29%	37%
Disney	\$4.8	\$4.8	\$27	\$30.8	18%	16%
(GE) NBC Universal	\$6.2	\$7.5	\$134.2	\$152.4	5%	5%

Source: Advertising Age, "100 Leading Media Companies," 2004 data, www.adage.com.

Television Revenue as Percent of Total Corporate Revenue, 2003 vs. 2004
Dollars in Billions

	2003 TV Revenue (Broadcast + Cable)	2004 TV Revenue (Broadcast + Cable)	2003 Total Revenue	2004 Total Revenue	2003 TV Revenue as% of Total	2004 TV Revenue as% of Total
Viacom	\$13.4	\$15.2	\$26.6	\$22.5	50%	68%
Disney	\$10.3	\$11.2	\$27	\$30.8	38%	37%
(GE) NBC Universal	\$8.2	\$9.6	\$134.2	\$152.4	6%	6%

Source: Advertising Age, "100 Leading Media Companies," 2004 data, www.adage.com.

Parent Company:	(GE) NBC Universal	
Parent Company Revenue (2004):	\$152.4 billion	
Network Revenue- NBC (2005)	\$3.9 billion	
Top Executive	Bob Wright, Chair/CEO, NBC Universal	
Parent Company Divisions:	GE Commercial Finance	<p>GE Commercial Finance provides loans, operating leases, financing programs, commercial insurance and reinsurance, and other services.</p> <p><i>Capital solutions</i></p> <p><i>Corporate financial services</i></p> <p><i>Healthcare financial services</i></p> <p><i>Insurance</i></p> <p><i>Real Estate</i></p>
GE Consumer Finance	<p>Provider of credit services to consumers, retailers and auto dealers in countries around the world, offering financial products such as private label credit cards, personal loans, bank cards, auto loans and leases, mortgages, corporate travel and purchasing cards, debt consolidation and home equity loans and credit insurance.</p>	
GE Healthcare	<p>Medical imaging and information technologies, medical diagnostics, patient monitoring systems, disease research, drug discovery and biopharmaceuticals GE Healthcare offers a broad range of services to improve productivity in healthcare and enable healthcare providers to better diagnose, treat and manage patients with conditions such as cancer, Alzheimer's and cardiovascular diseases.</p>	
GE Industrial	<p>Provides a broad range of products and services throughout the world, including appliances, lighting and industrial products; factory automation systems; plastics, silicones and quartz products; security and sensors technology, and equipment financing, management and operating services.</p>	<p><i>Advanced materials</i></p> <p><i>Consumer & Industrial</i></p> <p><i>Equipment services</i></p> <p><i>Inspection technologies</i></p> <p><i>Plastics</i></p> <p><i>Security</i></p> <p><i>Sensing</i></p>

**GE
Infrastructure**

Provider of fundamental technologies to developed and developing countries, including aircraft engine, energy, oil and gas, rail and water process technologies and services. Also provides aviation and energy leasing and financing services.

**NBC
Universal**

Media and entertainment company for the development, production and marketing of entertainment, news and information to a global audience.

NBC

Telemundo

Bravo

*International
channels*

Mun2TV

*Sci Fi
Channel*

Trio

USA

NBC Sports

NBC News

*NBC
Olympics*

*NBC local
stations*

MSNBC

CNBC

*Universal
HD*

*NBC
Universal
Television*

*NBC
Universal
Distribution*

*Universal
Production
Studios*

*Universal
Pictures*

*Universal
Studio DVD*

*Focus
Features*

*Universal
Studios
Hollywood*

*Universal
Studios
Orlando*

*Universal
Studios
Japan*

Source: Division descriptions taken from General Electric's corporate Web site NBC Universal divisions taken from NBC Universal Web site, www.nbcuni.com * Data from Broadcasting & Cable, Annual Ranking of broadcasting and cable networks

It's been over two years since NBC and the French company Vivendi Universal merged their holdings into a single media company, NBC Universal (GE holds 80% of it, Vivendi Universal the remainder). At the time, in 2003, NBC was a broadcast network powerhouse with the top morning news program, the top evening news program and a coveted entertainment lineup. Vivendi Universal, on the other hand, reportedly brought \$1.7 billion in debt to the relationship. Heading into 2006, however, NBC had lost some of its value. NBC Universal's third- quarter revenue declined 26%. The once top-rated network now sits in the No. 3 position for prime-time ratings.

The cable division, NBC Universal Cable, reached an on-demand programming deal with Time Warner Cable in late 2005. The agreement, which includes carriage agreements for USA Network, Universal HD, mun2 and Telemundo

Puerto Rico, will equip programs on several NBC properties with “Start Over.” As the name implies, Start Over allows viewers to, start programs over once the programs have already begun. Reportedly, the deal “also includes the rights to on demand content from NBC News (Nightly News and Meet the Press) and for the first time, cable...”² including programs from MSNBC and CNBC.

On December 24, 2005 , however, Microsoft announced its plans to walk away from its joint-venture cable channel, MSNBC, giving full control to NBC while maintaining joint control of MSNBC.com.

In many ways news — along with its strong sports presence derived from the Olympics — seems to be the network’s strongest asset. Its nightly newscast, morning news program and Sunday morning news shows all lead in viewership. For some time now, “Nightly News” and “Today” have earned more advertising revenue than their competition (though that may be shifting in the near future). Those two and “Meet the Press” are audience leaders in their respective spots. In other words, while NBC News is a small part of the overall picture for NBC Universal, it has the undeniable cachet of being the leading force in network news.

ABC

The Walt Disney Company–At A Glance

Parent Company:	The Walt Disney Company		
Parent Company Revenue (2004):	\$30.8 billion		
Network Revenue- NBC (2005)	\$3.91 billion		
Top Executive	Anne Sweeney, president, Disney-ABC Television Group		
Parent Company Divisions:	Studio & Entertainment	The foundation on which the company was built, creator of the company’s animated features and live-action motion pictures.	Walt Disney Pictures
			–Feature animation
			–Disneytoon studios
			Touchstone Pictures
			Miramax
			Buena Vista Home Entertainment

The Walt Disney Company–At A Glance

Studio &
Entertainment

The foundation on which the company was built, creator of the company’s animated features and live-action motion pictures.

Buena Vista
Theatrical
Productions

Walt Disney
Records

Buena Vista
Records

Hollywood
Records

Lyric Street
Records

Parks &
Resorts

Walt Disney Parks and Resorts operates or licenses 10 theme parks on three continents, along with 35 resort hotels, two luxury cruise ships and a wide variety of other entertainment offerings.

Disneyland
(CA)

Disney World
(FL)

Tokyo Disney

Disneyland
Paris

Hong Kong
Disneyland

Disney Cruise
Lines

Disney
Vacation Club

ESPN Zone

Consumer
Products

Merchandise ranging from apparel, toys, home décor and books to interactive games, foods and beverages, electronics and fine art.

Disney
Hardlines

Consumer
Products

Merchandise ranging from apparel, toys, home
décor and books to interactive games, foods
and beverages, electronics and fine art.

Disney
Softlines

Disney
Publishing

Hyperion
Books for
Children

Disney Press

Disney
Editions

Disney
Adventures

Buena Vista
Games

Baby Einstein

Disney Stores
Hollywood
Records

Media
Networks

Encompasses company properties on the television,
cable, radio and Internet landscape

ABC News

ABC
Entertainment

ABC Daytime

ABC Sports

ABC Kids

Touchstone
TV

ESPN

Media
Networks

Encompasses company properties on the
television,cable, radio and Internet landscape

Disney
Channel

ABC Family

Toon Disney

SoapNET

ABC Local TV

Radio Disney

ESPN Radio

ABC News
Radio

Walt Disney
Animation

Fox Kids
International

Buena Vista
Television

Buena Vista
Television

International

Hyperion
Books

Walt Disney
Internet

Equity
Interests in:

Lifetime
Entertainment

A&E Television

E! Networks

By the time James B. Stewart's book "Disney War" was released in February 2005, anyone paying attention knew that all was not magic in "The Magic Kingdom." While Michael Eisner, who had come to be perceived as a public and fiscal liability to the company, was planning to retire in 2006, the Disney board had another plan. In March 2005 the board elected Robert A. Iger (president and COO of the Walt Disney Company) to the position of CEO. Iger took the position on October 1, 2005 just weeks after he and Eisner appeared at the opening of Hong Kong Disneyland.

Among the big three networks, ABC is the hot entertainment property and has become a new model for prime-time success (a model quickly duplicated at CBS). While other networks were developing more and more reality programming, ABC trotted out the scripted programs "Lost" and "Desperate Housewives." Programs like "Grey's Anatomy," "Invasion" and "Commander in Chief" followed, attracting audiences and winning over critics. The network even generated new reality hits with the new series "Dancing with the Stars" and with "Supernanny."

On cable, the company's namesake Disney channel has reportedly become the channel of choice for the lucrative 'Tween' market (ages 6 to 14). The channel launched the career of Hilary Duff, has turned former the Cosby kid Raven Symone into a virtual brand powerhouse, and appears not to have lost its touch when it comes to turning small screens into movie screens (think "The Wonderful World of Disney") with features like the made-for-cable "Twitches," which scored a massive 21.5 million viewers over four broadcasts in a single weekend.³ According to an article in USA Today, the Disney Channel charges cable operators nearly twice as much as its most obvious competition, Nickelodeon (owned by the new Viacom company). In 2001, the Disney Channel had audience of 1.6 million viewers. That increased to more than 2.1 million in 2005.⁴

Disney's holdings also include the cable sports network ESPN.⁵ Launched on September 7, 1979, the 24-hour cable network has more than 89 million subscribers in 2006 and broadcasts more than 5,000 hours of live and original sports programming. The network and its signature SportsCenter program (watched by some 88 million monthly viewers) are part of an expansive franchise that includes ESPN2, ESPN Classic, ESPNNews, ESPN Radio, a magazine and the sports-themed ESPN Zone restaurants.⁶

Heading into 2006 Disney's stock prices climbed to better than anticipated levels thanks, at least in part, to the strong performance of its theme parks, the acquisition of Pixar Studios and a merger of its ABC Radio holdings with Citadel Communications.⁷

For ABC, it was the first period of sustained positive news since the merger with Disney more than a decade earlier. To what extent would that carry through to the benefit of ABC News? Unlike NBC, this network is housed within a larger corporation that is almost entirely focused on media and communications.⁸ Eisner, as CEO, was rooted primarily in the world of Hollywood film and TV production; Iger comes squarely from network broadcasting. Whether that lineage

makes a difference — and a difference for news — will reveal itself in time. Disney’s assets are still much more heavily focused on broadcast entertainment rather than broadcast journalism.

The other distinction inside ABC is that David Westin, president of the news division, has no journalism background at all. A lawyer by training, he is close to Iger. With the departures in 2005 of Andrew Heyward at CBS and Neal Shapiro at NBC , he is also now the senior man among the three network news division presidents. And the death of Jennings , the retirement of Barbara Walters and the departure of Koppel mean that Westin hired many of the current ABC anchors. Vargas, Woodruff, Stephanopoulos and the new “Nightline” crew all earned their positions under his charge. People inside ABC have told the Project that Westin was sometimes dismissed by many of the best-known and most powerful journalists at ABC for not really understanding news and being a poor defender of the news division, internally and externally. Going into 2006, however, ABC News was now David Westin’s in a way it had never been before.

CBS

CBS—At A Glance

Parent Company:	CBS Corporation	
Parent Company Revenue (2004):	CBS Corporation was formed in 2005 when Viacom divided its vast media holdings into two separate entities: CBS Corporation and the new Viacom. Viacom’s 2004 worldwide revenue was \$22.5 billion.	
Network Revenue-NBC (2005)	\$4.7 billion	
Top Executive	Leslie Moonves, president, CEO, CBS Corporation	
Parent Company Divisions:	CBS Television	CBS News CBS Entertainment CBS Sports
CW	Joint venture with Warner Brothers- network will replace UPN and WB and program with content from both.	
CBS Television Stations	Local television stations	
Paramount Television	Producers and distributors of programming for network, cable, prime time, daytime, first-run syndication and international platforms.	Paramount Network Television Paramount Domestic

King World Television Syndication
Showtime

Television

CBS

Paramount

Int'l Television

Showtime

Showtime Too

Showtime
Showcase

Showtime
Extreme

Showtime
Beyond

Showtime Next

Showtime
Women

Showtime HD

Showtime on
Demand

Family Zone

TMC Xtra

The Movie
Channel

Flix

The Movie
Channel on

CBS Radio Formerly Infinity Broadcasting
CBS Outdoor Out-of-home media company
Simon & Schuster Book publishing

Demand
Sundance
Channel

Simon &
Schuster Adult

Publishing
Group

Simon &
Schuster

Children's
Publishing

Simon &
Schuster Audio

Simon &
Schuster
Online

Int'l
companies:

Australia

Canada

United
Kingdom .

Paramount Parks Developer and operator of theme parks and location-based attractions

Paramount
Canada 's
Wonderland (
Toronto ,
Ontario)

Paramount
Parks

Developer and operator of theme parks and
location-based attractions

Paramount 's
Carowinds

(N.C)

Paramount 's
Great

America (CA)

Paramount 's
Kings

Dominion (Va)

Paramount 's
Kings

Island (OH)

Developed and
operates:

STAR TREK:
The

Experience at
the Las

Vegas Hilton
(NV)

Manages:

Bonfante
Gardens

horticultural
theme park (CA)

Paramount Parks	Developer and operator of theme parks and location-based attractions	CBS Television City at the MGM Grand Hotel & Casino (NV)
CBS Digital Media	Responsible for overseeing all consumer digital properties, exploring opportunities in the new media sector (including streaming of network programming, live shows produced exclusively for the Internet, podcasts and mobisodes of CBS shows).	CBS.com CBSNews.com CBS SportsLine.com UPN.com
CSTV Networks, Inc.	Digital sports media company.	Final acquisition deal pending.
CBS Consumer Products	Manages the worldwide licensing, merchandising and video activities for a diverse slate of properties from CBS, Paramount Television and King World Productions.	

Source: All descriptions taken from The CBS Corporation Web site * Data from Broadcasting & Cable, Annual Ranking of broadcasting and cable networks

At the end of 2005, Viacom announced that it would divide its vast cross-media holdings into CBS Corporation and what was being called the new Viacom. CBS Television would join UPN, 9 Viacom Outdoor, Viacom Television Stations Group, Paramount Television, King World, Simon & Schuster, Showtime, Paramount Parks and Infinity under the banner of CBS Corporation. The other company, which would operate under the Viacom name, would include the MTV networks and their associated stations (VHI, Nickelodeon, Spike, TV Land), BET, Paramount Pictures, Paramount Home Entertainment and Famous Music. Les Moonves would become CEO of CBS Corporation while Tom Freston would assume the CEO position at the new Viacom. Going into the split Viacom revenues had climbed 10%, led by its cable holdings. 10 When the new companies launched on January 1, 2006, the stock market reacted favorably, with CBS stock closing at \$26.20 a share, 70 cents higher than it opened. 11

CBS has benefited from some solid entertainment programming, starting with its "CSI" franchise. A review of the top 25 programs (based on end of 2004-2005 season ratings), indeed, reveals CBS the leader with 12 programs making the list. They included "60 Minutes," which, while falling in the ratings, continued to place high in weekly Nielsen

rankings. CBS news programming as a whole, however, continued to fall behind. Both the evening news and the “Early Show” continued to occupy third place among the three broadcast networks.

For CBS News, one crucial change heading into 2006 was the arrival of Sean McManus, president of CBS Sports and son of the famed sportscaster Jim McKay, to head the news division as well. McManus is now in charge of the same divisions, news and sports, that Roone Arledge used to build his empire, turning ABC News into the dominant network news operation of the 1990s. While McManus brings a strong track record with him to the job, he has no prior hard-news experience, and the network news business itself is more complicated, though arguably less influential, than when Arledge took over ABC. But like Arledge, McManus also has a news division that is in third place in many key programming slots and a mandate as a consequence to take risks and make big changes. Leslie Moonves, chairman of CBS, was quoted in an October 27, 2005 , Baltimore Sun article as saying, “I’ve seen him take CBS Sports from an also-ran to what I consider the pre-eminent network in sports... He’s a great leader. He’s very smart... He’s a perfectionist when it comes to production. And I think these skills will translate when he heads news.”¹²

What difference does the splitting of Viacom make in all this? It makes the network a more important part of its parent company financially and operationally than either of its broadcast network counterparts are to their corporate parent. The new company is also headed by Moonves, a man who, as he told Washington Post, considers himself “...still a network broadcaster at heart.”¹³ On the other hand, wary traditionalists also point out that if the future of network news rests online and not over the airwaves, CBS will now be led in that transition by an entertainment broadcaster and a sports broadcaster.

Footnotes

1. All figures in this section, unless specifically noted, reflect the holdings of the original Viacom, before the January 2006 separation of the company into the “new” Viacom and the CBS Corporation.
2. Financial Wire, “NBC, Time Reach Agreement,” October 25, 2005.
3. Gary Levin, “Disney finds place for tweens,” USA Today, October 26, 2005.
4. Ibid.
5. Disney owns 80 percent of ESPN, Inc. The Hearst Company owns the remaining 20 percent.
6. Based on information taken from the Disney Corporation Web site and from the Hearst Corporation Web site.
7. This merger did not include Disney Radio or ESPN’s Radio Network.
8. This marks a significant contrast to its previous owner, Capital Cities, which was fundamentally a broadcast company, whose business included a good deal of local TV news.
9. On Tuesday, January 24, 2006, CBS Corporation and Warner Brothers announced that they would be merging UPN and WB into a single network to be known as the CW. Its ownership would be split 50-50 by CBS and Warner Brothers and it would be programmed with content from both organizations.
10. AP, “Viacom Details Split Plans,” CBS News Web site, August 5, 2005 .

11. Steve Levingston, "A Trial Separation," Washington Post, January 4, 2006.
12. David Zurawik, "At CBS News, hopes for a resurgence," Baltimore Sun, October 27, 2005.
13. Steven Livingston, "A Trial Separation," January 4, 2006.

Network News Investment

News Investment

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

Inside network newsrooms, 2005 may go down as a year of beginnings as much as endings. That was the year, in one case tragically, in another more because of controversy that two remaining long-time anchors departed, setting the stage for a generational change. Less noticed, yet equally significant, two of three networks saw turnover in news presidents. One network hired a major media figure to take over its online operations.

Three broad trends stand out:

- In 2005 the networks took their first significant steps toward using the Web as a new media platform rather than an extension of their newscasts.
- The basic newsgathering resources beyond that, however, appeared as pressured as ever. If anything, the emphasis was on technology and away from reporters, bureaus and crews.
- The search for evening news anchors appeared to be leading ABC and CBS toward innovation in contrast to the direction taken by NBC, which tried to emphasize continuity in transition. Even in its new introduction, one hears the echo of anchors past as every predecessor is named, up to and including John Cameron Swayze.

On the web

Over the course of 2005, the networks made statements suggesting new recognition that instead of the TV set, the key to their future might be the Web, with its interactive, multi-media and on-demand qualities. But recognition and action do not always connect. What has happened so far?

CBSNews.com

Of the three, CBS has certainly attracted the most attention. That began with the hiring in April 2005 of Larry Kramer, the creator of CBS MarketWatch, to a new position as president of CBS Digital. Two months later, Kramer publicly told a gathering in Virginia : "You'll see us morph our news business into a Web-centric one. We're doing what we call the cable bypass. The Web is going to be our cable news network." Part of that would be what Kramer called "a continuum of coverage throughout the day. You'll have a menu of video, a continuous stream of video that you can pick and choose from." He added that CBS would put its entire archive of news video online, making it free initially, and even

ventured that “I would argue that the vaunted CBS news operation is going to be substantially supported by Web revenues. It’s not rocket science — if the audience is spending time on the Web, you’ve got to be on the Web.”¹

Some of that is evident on the CBS Web site. By January 2006, CBS was the only network that allowed users to “Build Your Own Newscast” by creating a video playlist from CBS’s offerings, pulling together stories in a particular order and watching a newscast of their own creation. Through a video player named “The EyeBox,” CBSNews.com allows users to stream over 25,000 new and archived videos. CBS also announced it plans to offer daily and weekly video programming from Bob Schieffer, John Roberts, Hannah Storm, and other correspondents.

CBS has also devoted itself to unprecedented “transparency,” another hallmark of the Web. It created a separate Web site, Public Eye, that is more independent of the newsroom than anything at other networks. The site serves as a kind of online ombudsman, adopts the informal voice of the Web, involves outside contributors and includes a central discussion thread, monitored by the site’s editor, in which citizens can openly criticize and question CBS decision-making. The criticism often invites responses from the CBS News people who were involved in the stories being criticized.

The site also includes a fairly sizable menu for podcasting, where listeners, if not yet viewers, can download various CBS programs.

NBCNews.com

NBC News was probably first to innovate on the Web, for two reasons. First, the Web site of its news division is produced in cooperation with its online cousin, MSNBC.com, a joint venture of NBC and Microsoft. MSNBC.com provides prominent links to the homepages of MSNBC TV, the “Today Show,” “Nightly News,” “Dateline” and “Meet the Press,” alongside stories from the latest edition of Newsweek magazine, video packages from NBC’s broadcast and cable entities (on January 23, 2006 the site headlined CNBC video about the Ford Company’s plant closures), and a vast listing of stories on topics ranging from U.S. and international news to sports and entertainment (For more, please see the Cable News Investment chapter from this year’s report).

NBCNews.com also offers podcasts of NBC news programs including highlights from “Today,” the complete broadcasts of the “Nightly News” (as of 11 p.m. EST) and the full broadcast of “Meet the Press.” The site also hosts a variety of options from MSNBC including content from “Hardball,” “Scarborough Country” and “The Situation.”

NBC Nightly News also attracted the attention of many media writers when Brian Williams, still new to his role as the program’s anchor, wrote the first posting for “The Daily Nightly.” Launched on May 31, 2005 , it was designed to provide the evening newscast with a degree of transparency. It opened up a window for citizens to hear how decisions were made, why stories were selected and the things that go on when the cameras aren’t rolling. On September 29, Williams opened his post: “This afternoon we did a Special Report for our NBC stations on the swearing-in ceremony for Chief Justice John Roberts. While the White House notified the networks that they had scheduled a 3 p.m. EDT event, (and we had planned accordingly for that ‘hard start’ time) we received a two-minute warning (while I was in our afternoon editorial meeting) at 2:51:50 , almost ten minutes early. By the time I got to the studio (after traveling at a high rate of speed, past at least one tour group walking between our NBC News studios) we had missed the top of the President’s remarks. We have protested via e-mail to members of the White House communications staff.”²

NBC's approach is interesting. Many enthusiasts believe the new media environment — online broadcasts, podcasts, blogs and vlogs — emphasizes the role of the citizen/user. Individual news consumers are able to choose what stories to view and listen to or read them in whatever order they wish. By choosing to place the “Nightly News” broadcast online in its entirety, and build the blog around the anchor, NBC is signaling the importance of the anchor as editor and manager of the network's news content.

ABCNews.com

ABC's big distinction is that it is for now the only network to Webcast a live pre-edition of its evening news. A version of the program airs on the Web at 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time and is then made available for download at any time after 4:00

“World News Tonight's” blog serves very much the same function as NBC's “Daily Nightly,” offering viewers or online readers an opportunity to get additional information about the stories of the day, to hear about what goes on behind the scenes and to hear it told in a fashion that they might not get in the more formal setting of a news broadcast. During the Supreme Court hearings for Samuel Alito, “This Week's” anchor, George Stephanopolous, sent Blackberry messages to the site including: “Only after Joe Biden snarkily promised that he wouldn't ask Alito for the ‘blood test’ his conservative colleagues seemed to want from President Bush's last nominee Harriett Miers did Alito let loose with a little grin that seemed to say... ‘what a jerk.’”³ To be sure, ABC News was already very familiar with the possibilities of blogs. The network's political unit made a notable online impression with its groundbreaking political blog “The Note” in January of 2002. That blog, which actually started out as an internal e-mail, has become a significant online destination for political junkies and insiders.

Beyond the differences, a review of the three sites heading into 2006 showed that to a casual observer, the three sites had much in common: each featured blogs; each offered video online; and each offered its newscast online. Each site offered content beyond what had aired on TV, and each was trying, in varying degrees, to take advantage of what the Web offers that TV does not — infinite space and time (on January 13, 2006, ABC News offered a podcast of the co-anchor Bob Woodruff speaking to ABC News's Hari Sreenivasan and Jake Tapper about his trip to the Mideast); the ability to scroll through complicated packages of information at the visitor's own pace (CBSNews.com featured a graphics-rich timeline and deconstruction of the CIA Leak story); and the ability to pull news and news stories (including video) at a time that suits the visitor's schedule, not that of the network.

What the three sites really offered heading into 2006 was the sense that the networks have come to the conclusion that the Web may be their future rather than their demise. What is not yet clear, realistically, is what they will make of it or how they will make money from it. But the recognition, it seems, is now there.

Staffing and Workload

The long-term picture for staffing and workload in network news has been grim. As the networks have seen their audiences cut in half, putting huge pressures on revenue, they have repeatedly cut staff.

One strong indication of that came from researchers counting how many different correspondents appeared on the news programs each year. Joe Foote at Arizona State University tracked the pattern over 20 years and found that the number of reporters who appeared on network news had declined by more than a third from its peak in 1985, from 76.7 to 50 in 2002. That is a drop of 35%.

That reduction in staff in turn meant an increase in reporter workload. In 1985, reporters appearing in evening newscasts did an average of 31.4 stories a year. By 2002, that number had climbed to 40.9, according to Foote.

Research by Andrew Tyndall's ADT Research has tracked a similar decline using a slightly different sample. (Tyndall tracks newscasts on weekdays; Foote, who ended his research in 2003, on all seven days.)

In 2005, data from Andrew Tyndall's ADT Research found basically no change from a year ago in the number of correspondents or in the number of stories being done.

There are, however, differences by network, or at least at one network.

The CBS "Evening News" continues to have notably fewer correspondents than NBC or ABC (about 15% fewer) doing substantially more work.

In 2004, by Tyndall's count, NBC had 46 correspondents averaging 39 stories each (to be counted, a correspondent had to produce at least 5 stories during the year). In 2005, the figure changed just slightly with 45 correspondents averaging 39 reports. Tyndall notes that "Nightly News's" anchor, Brian Williams, did more field reporting than his predecessor, Tom Brokaw, meaning fewer correspondents were used.

At ABC, the network in 2004 had 47 correspondents producing on average even fewer pieces, 35 a year. Those figures remained the same in 2005.

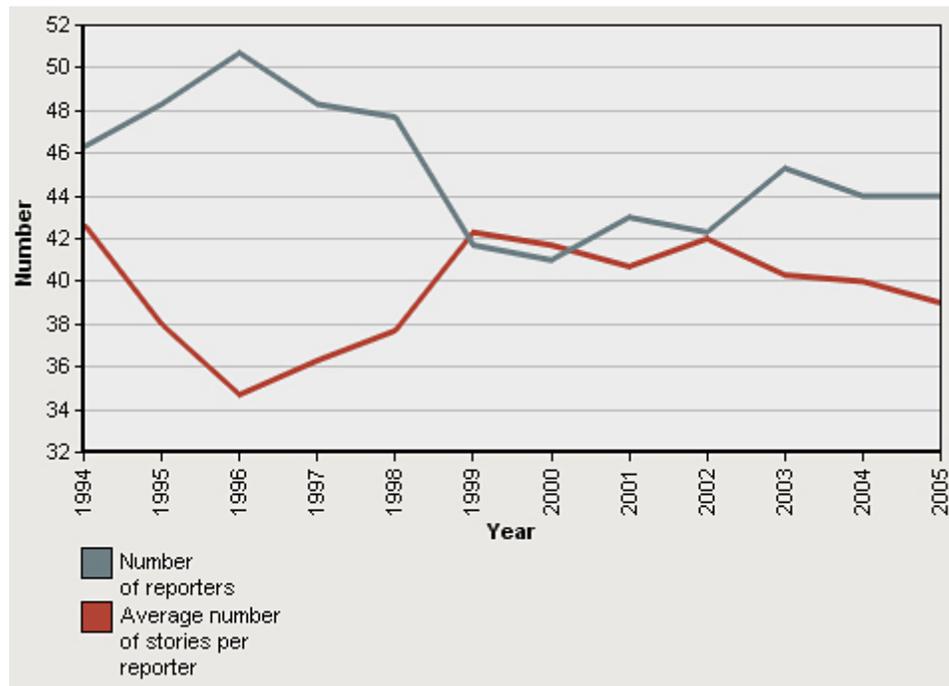
In 2004, at CBS, there were only 39 correspondents, with an average of 46 stories. In 2005, the folks at CBS continued to be the network workhorses with 41 correspondents averaging 44 reports.

While there are no comparable data for off-air personnel, most people in network TV whom the authors of this report have talked to over the years acknowledge that the cutbacks in such staff members are probably comparable or even greater as technology has reduced the number of people necessary to produce television news programming.

What to make of those numbers each year is always a matter of some debate. Some argue that fewer reporters are necessary today because technology makes it is easier for reporters to "front" stories that are developed by other staff people and using feed material. A reporter need not always be on the scene. That may even be advantageous; a reporter can integrate material from more sources. Others argue that having a correspondent assemble material back in a bureau or in New York makes for a less informed, more generic kind of coverage, lacking feel or deeper knowledge of the situation. Either way, the assembly approach is a major change in TV newsgathering.

It is also impossible to know from the data whether all the cutbacks in staff have occurred because of increased productivity or whether productivity has been increased because there have been so many cutbacks. Nor can we know whether those two trends are in balance.

Average Network Newsroom Size and Reporter Workload 1994-2005



Design Your Own Chart
Source: ADT Research

Bureaus

Another measure of newsgathering resources is the number of bureaus, particularly abroad, since the networks can, in effect, use their affiliates' newsrooms as a domestic bureau when the need arises — as when Katrina struck New Orleans or when wildfires struck Texas . As noted in past years, the number of overseas bureaus at the networks has been roughly cut in half since their peak in the 1980s, about the time that network news divisions began to feel the impact of cable and began to be viewed by owners as profit centers.

According to accounting by American Journalism Review, ABC had gone from 13 foreign bureaus to 6 by the summer of 2003. NBC had done the same. CBS had gone from 10 to 6. ⁴

In 2005, CBS reported 11 foreign bureaus, with operations in Amman, Baghdad, Beijing, Bonn, Johannesburg, London, Moscow, Paris, Rome, Tel Aviv and Tokyo. ABC failed to respond to repeated requests by the Project for numbers for 2005. As of 2004, ABC was operating six bureaus — Baghdad, London, Hong Kong, Jerusalem, Nairobi and Beijing .

And NBC reported that it was operating bureaus in 11 foreign cities: Amman, Baghdad, Beijing, Cairo, Frankfurt, Hong Kong, London, Mexico City, Moscow, Tel Aviv and Tokyo.

Network correspondents have frequently argued that the number of bureaus by itself can be an incomplete measure. Some bureaus today are staffed by producers without correspondents, which was less often the case two decades ago when networks controlled a much larger share of the TV audience.

It is not clear, however, how many of the current bureaus have correspondents and crews and how many are places that have a producer or just a part-time stringer, in some cases working from home.

This difference arguably influences coverage. Traditionalists argue that a producer in-country does not have the same leverage to get stories on the air as would a producer and correspondent together, or even the same leverage to go out and produce enterprise pieces on their own. Nor, perhaps, would the knowledge of the country, particularly top-echelon officials, be the same without a correspondent on the scene full time.

Others, however, argue that the nature of foreign coverage has changed. Globalization, cultural and economic, has moved some news organizations to the idea that most news items depend less on strong familiarity with a foreign culture and more on knowledge of the topic itself. So, for example, a news division is more likely to send a medical reporter to cover the bird flu outbreak in China or a business reporter to do a story on service outsourcing to India . Some also argue that it can add to the quality of foreign reporting to recruit strong foreign producers and off-air reporters (who speak the language and know the culture) to make certain the story is told accurately. That is not to say that traditional foreign bureaus couldn't work, but the cost of maintaining a skilled overseas bureau is something the networks have often decided they can no longer afford. Yet the alternative approach, its proponents contend, is not without its advantages.

The question is whether the networks are adopting the approach of hiring skilled local journalists or merely local logistical fixers who know how to arrange hotels and cars when a correspondent team parachutes in.

In the inaugural 2004 edition of this report we included a full discussion of the implications of the cutbacks, and we refer anyone who wants to examine this issue in depth to that. In brief, however, some network news professionals we have consulted with argue that counting people does not tell the whole story. The networks in the 1980s, they suggest, were bloated. New technologies have also allowed more productivity. And if one were to compare a network story today to one 20 years ago, the number of elements and video sources that can be assembled into a piece is notably higher today, even with fewer correspondents.

Network veterans who tend to see the cutbacks differently argue that the scale of the cuts exceeds what might be justified by efficiency, that what has been lost is often the institutional memory and skills of veteran correspondents, and that forcing fewer people to do more stories has an unavoidable impact on the time put into stories. Reporters are forced to rely more on releases and talking points without being able to do original reporting and newsgathering. It limits the ability to go to where the news is being made and to research, verify, edit and write reports — in addition to the ability to do enterprise stories off the beaten path, to break news or blaze new trails. The networks' political teams used to consist of five or six correspondents; more recently the number has been two or three.

The embrace of new media and the cross-media portfolios of many networks' parent companies are forcing reporters to operate in an environment that, because they are now producing for multiple platforms, virtually exceeds the 24-hour news cycle.

There is merit, we think, to both arguments. A viewer can be dazzled by the quality of a nightly newscast, on a heavy news day in particular. It is on the days when the obvious news is not so heavy, and in the ability of the newscasts to sustain coverage over an extended period of time on a major story without fatigue, that network insiders say and our own viewing affirms that the differences become clear.

Andrew Tyndall, a collaborator on this report, says he finds that the cutbacks do not affect the major stories but the middle-tier ones. Iraq and campaign 2004 were both covered as heavily as they would have been 20 years ago. What gets cut is the middle-rank story, which requires assignment expense to dispatch a correspondent. That is more likely to become a read-only or voiceover video nowadays.

Newshole

In addition to staff and bureau cutbacks, the networks have also cut back on the amount of news in each newscast, the block of the newscast that excludes advertising and network promotions and teases. The notion that the 30-minute newscast was really a 22-minute newscast is no longer true. It is closer to 18 minutes.

Some in television believe that the shrinkage of the newshole is an underrated factor in audience erosion. If TV news viewing involves some trade-off between the annoyance of watching commercials and the gain of watching the news, then the annoyance factor is up by over two minutes from an earlier era. Conversely, Tyndall believes that the fact that two of the morning news programs (“Today” and “Good Morning America”) now offer an initial 20 minutes of programming uninterrupted by commercials is a factor in their recent audience growth.

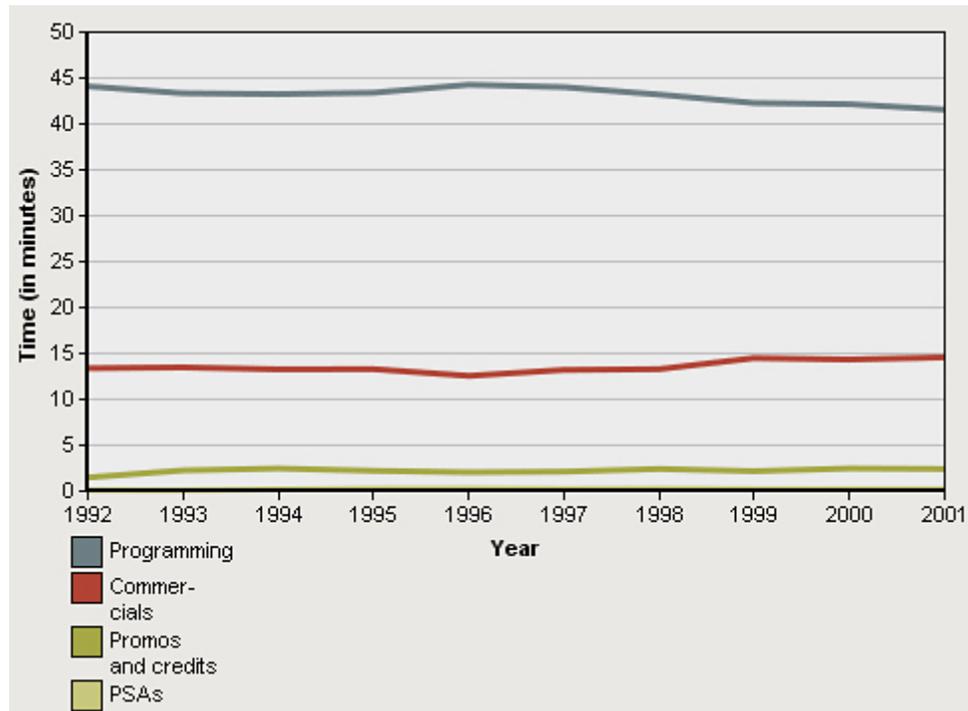
Data from Tyndall show that the amount of time devoted to news on the half-hour nightly news broadcasts shrunk 11% in 12 years, from 21 minutes in 1991, after the first Gulf War, to 18.7 minutes in 2002, on the eve of the second Gulf War. Extra time devoted to coverage of the September 11 attacks in 2001 accounts for the only anomaly in the downward trend.

In 2005 the average time devoted strictly to news showed a slight increase after four years of decline. Data from Andrew Tyndall show 19 minutes on average with just slight differences among the networks. NBC had the largest news hole, 19.2 minutes, and ABC the smallest, 18.1, with CBS at 18.7.

Information on the news hole of the morning shows is more limited, but it shows a similar trend. Over 10 years, every hour of morning news contains 2 fewer minutes of programming — 44 minutes 10 seconds in 1992, down to 41 minutes 57 seconds in 2001 — according to a study from the American Association of Advertising Agencies and the Association of National Advertisers. The study was discontinued after 2001.

Last year, Andrew Tyndall did a census in which he found that morning shows were averaging 42.5 minutes of news each hour. This was an uptick from the American Association of Advertising Agencies 2001 figure of 41.6 minutes.⁵ Data from a one-month study conducted by Tyndall in 2005 indicated that the news hole figure for morning shows increased slightly to 42.7 minutes. Over the course of his study, “Good Morning America’s” newshole averaged 42.6 minutes an hour, the “Early Show” averaged 42.4 minutes and the “Today Show” 43.3 minutes.⁶

Average Division of Time on Morning News 1992-2001



Design Your Own Chart

Source: American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA) and the Association of National Advertisers, Inc.,

There are several facets to consider. Shrinking the news hole reduces the size of the product, and packs more ads, teasers and promos into the show, which may make it more irritating to viewers. On the other hand, all that also translates into more revenue for the news division that could be used, if executives were so inclined, for correspondents, equipment, salaries and other resources to gather the news. Shrinking the news hole also means that less news has to be gathered each day to fill a newscast.

The Evening Anchors

Even more than staff size, bureaus, or other newsroom statistics, though, much of the 2005 discussion of investment in network news stemmed from changes behind the anchor desks. What kind of investment would each of the networks make in choosing replacements? Would they bring someone with fresh ideas to shake up and hopefully add life to the struggling broadcasts in the long run? Would they stay with what they already knew? How much support would the new anchors have? How much money could be saved by replacing a celebrity with a relative rookie? How much money would have to be spent to attract another network's celebrity to jump ship?

ABC

In early April 2005, ABC found itself in an unexpected position. The only Big Three network that was expected to maintain its evening news anchor lost that advantage when Peter Jennings took leave to undergo chemotherapy treatments for lung cancer. Anticipating the 67-year old Jennings's return, the network filled the anchor position temporarily, rotating between the "20/20" co-anchor Elizabeth Vargas and "Good Morning America's" Charles Gibson. As it would play out, Jennings would not return. The man who had been the "ABC World News Tonight" anchor for 22 years lost his cancer battle on August 7.

Jennings's death left ABC in a different position from its rivals. At CBS, Dan Rather's final days as anchor were marred by "Memogate" and third-place ratings, and management seemed almost eager to move out from under his shadow, not asking Rather to cover Hurricane Katrina, precisely his kind of story. At NBC, viewers saw anchor Tom Brokaw gradually hand the reins over to Brian Williams. Jennings's departure, by contrast, was unplanned and unwanted. In the end, though, ABC seems to have invested heavily in the future.

After months of mulling it over, ABC announced in early December 2005 that it would move the broadcast to a two-anchor format. Elizabeth Vargas and Bob Woodruff would now fill Jennings's chair. Not since the 1960s when Chet Huntley and David Brinkley anchored for NBC had a multiple anchor arrangement led to a No. 1 ranking in a national newscast. The four subsequent attempts all proved problematic. Barbara Walters and Harry Reasoner anchored the ABC newscast starting in 1976. Jennings, Max Robinson and Frank Reynolds tri-anchored for ABC from 1978 to 1983 (with Reynolds in D.C., Robinson in Chicago and Jennings as foreign desk anchor). Roger Mudd and Tom Brokaw co-anchored on NBC between April 1982 and September 1983, when Brokaw took over as the solo anchor. Dan Rather and Connie Chung shared the CBS anchor desk from 1993 to 1995.

The most basic problem, according to the conventional wisdom, is that in a modern 30-minute network newscast (18 minutes of news time) dominated by correspondent packages, the anchor is on screen talking for only about 5.5 minutes. Unlike local TV newscasts around the country, which are on for many more hours and involve fewer correspondents and more anchor "tell stories," that might not be enough airtime to share.

ABC's argument is that in the 21st century, that may be changing. The network says it plans to make the anchors more onscreen — and on-the-road — reporters rather than omniscient news readers. And as the network newscast moves into an online environment, where the user is deciding which stories to access, the single anchor is no longer the navigator of the news. The consumer may be. In that environment, two anchors may be two brand figures, covering stories, being on the scene, offering flexibility. In a USA Today article on January 3, 2006, the day of the debut of ABC's new setup for "World News Tonight," co-anchor Vargas was quoted as saying, "This is not a cosmetic dual-anchor role... This is two people doing two people's work."⁷ As executives at ABC see it, one anchor could be reporting from the field while another worked from inside the studio. When "World News's" new anchors made their formal debut, Woodruff reported from Iran while Vargas anchored from the network's New York studio.

The strategy is not without its consequences, as ABC learned after Woodruff was seriously injured while reporting from Iraq when an improvised explosive device struck the convoy he and cameraman Doug Vogt were traveling in. It was unclear, as of March 2006, if Woodruff would recover enough to return to his job, and if so, whether he would ever be healthy enough to resume the role of field reporter ABC imagined. If not, one question was whether ABC and other networks would see Woodruff's injury as too great a risk and retreat from the anchor-as-field-reporter strategy.

The dual-anchor format was just one part of ABC's evening news strategy. Another key element was time.

ABC's nightly newscast expanded from being simply a broadcast live at 6:30 p.m. on the East Coast. It created three successive live broadcasts that offered the West Coast its own edition rather than an updated taped package. Conscious of the changes that have occurred in the workday since the launch of the 6:30 p.m. broadcast time, "World News Tonight" also created a live 15-minute webcast that can be viewed live at 3 p.m. on ABCNews.com or downloaded anytime after 4 p.m. ET .

CBS

Heading into 2006, the changes facing CBS remained uncertain. The network still needed to find a new anchor for its nightly newscast and a new primary personality to front its news division under a new news president. Perhaps no network had reached the point where it depended as much on a single personality as CBS did on Rather. The network had never succeeded in creating a major morning anchor. Rather also anchored "48 Hours," one of its prime-time magazines, and the mid-week edition of "60 Minutes" program and operated in any case as a kind of island inside the news division.

Rather already had problems fronting "Evening News" before he left. Since 1997, its viewership had been in decline, and since 1998 it had been sliding deeper and deeper into third place. Even after Rather's departure the program's ratings suffered. For the week of April 17, 2005 (about one month after Rather's departure and after Peter Jennings left the ABC anchor chair) the CBS's "Evening News" averaged roughly 6 million viewers. According to Media Life Magazine, that was the lowest rating the program had posted "since Nielsen started people meter measurement in 1987." ⁸

Most of the speculation focused on CBS management's not-so-private efforts to lure NBC's "Today Show" host Katie Couric to the "Evening News" anchor chair. Couric made no attempt to deny that such a move was contemplated and even addressed the early critics, such as Jon Friedman at "MarketWatch," who suggested she lacked the gravitas to anchor in the evening. Bill Carter, in a December 2005 article for the New York Times, wrote that Couric, while acknowledging that the diverse programming of "Today" suited her, "added that she believed the broader television news business was changing. 'People don't want to see robo-anchors regurgitating whatever is on the teleprompter in front of them. They want people to be natural, people who feel things, who react to things.' ⁹ " The interim "Evening News" anchor, Bob Schieffer, also gave Couric an early vote of support in December, saying, "I'm hoping we can get her... People believe her. They take her seriously." ¹⁰

NBC

On December 2, 2004 , Brian Williams took over the anchor chair at the NBC "Nightly News." As far as viewership is concerned, NBC and ABC have been in close competition, and some wondered what impact the transition would have.

Nielsen ratings for the week ending January 2, 2005 found NBC (11.2 million viewers) maintaining its lead over ABC (10.4 million viewers) and continuing its dominance over CBS (8.1 million viewers). ¹¹

With Williams, the program's seventh anchor and managing editor, NBC has been working to rewrite the role of the traditional network news anchor. Williams has often stepped from behind the anchor desk, on-camera to cover stories from the field, online in the "Daily Nightly" and even into the guest chair of the leading source of "fake news," the "Daily Show."

There are numerous questions to consider moving forward. As the network news programs establish their online identities, will a new audience be created? Will limited resources hinder the possibilities generated by the availability of multiple platforms? Will the network news divisions' online experiments lead to true innovation?

Footnotes

1. Andrew Nachison, "Larry Kramer: CBS will be web centric and bypass cable," Media Center Blog, Posted on June 22, 2005 04:53 p.m..
2. Brian Williams, "Jumping the Gun, and Counting the Dead," The Daily Nightly, www.msnbc.com, posted 5:05pm EDT, September 29, 2005.
3. George Stephanopoulos, "Why is Judge Alito Smiling?," The World Newser, January 9, 2006.
4. Lucinda Fleeson, "Bureau of Missing Bureaus," American Journalism Review, October/November 2003.
5. The AAAA and Association of National Advertisers, Inc. report was discontinued in 2001.
6. Data from ADT Research.
7. Peter Johnson, "ABC News team makes formal debut tonight," USA Today, January 3, 2005.
8. Abigail Azote, "Post-Rather, CBS news really sinks," Media Life Magazine online archives, April 25, 2005
9. Bill Carter, "Amid Rumors, 'Today' Marks 10 Years as Weekly Ratings King," New York Times, December 8, 2005.
10. Robert P. Laurence, "Network news opts for style over substance," The San Diego Union-Tribune, December 22, 2005.
11. Diego Vasquez, "It's NBC's Brian Williams by a length," Media Life Magazine online archives, January 6, 2005.

Network Public Attitudes

Public Attitudes

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

There is nothing simple about the relationship between the public and the network news outlets. A year ago we noted that public attitudes did not always correlate with use of media. People who said that they distrusted news organizations watched no more or less than those who said they trusted them. More recent survey data reinforce this complicated, indeed conflicting, relationship.

The basic picture is this: While viewership of the nightly newscasts is down, survey data show residual goodwill toward the fundamentals of the network newscast brands, particularly the evening programs. People see them as factual and have a generally favorable impression of the news divisions. Add to that the fact, noted last year, that the basic audience for network news, aside from being old, was geographically and ideologically diverse, and the data suggest

that if the network news can make its delivery system more favorable and more modern, the potential audience for this old medium may be there.

To get a sense of the complexity, consider that the overall perception of bias in the media is rising. A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press in June 2005 found that 60% of Americans felt the press was politically biased. More than 70% believed that the press tended to favor one side of a political debate over another. Fully 40% felt that news organizations were “too critical of America.”¹ That is up 7 percentage points from when Pew Research asked this question in July 2003.

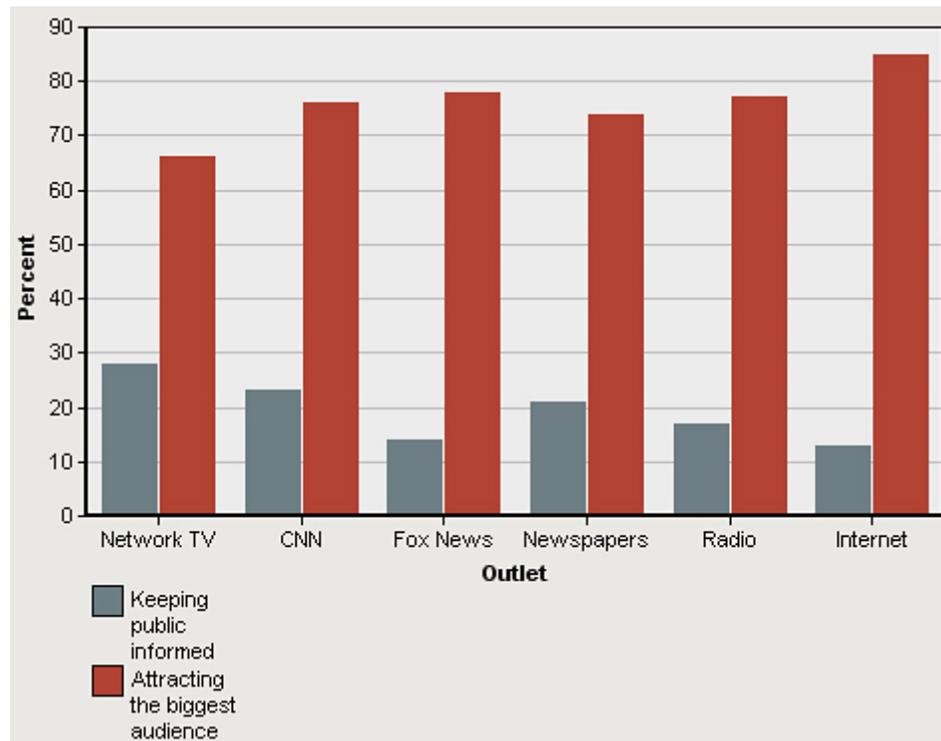
But there is some evidence that public response to such an inquiry may be directly influenced by cultural events. For example, in early September 2001 fully 36% of those surveyed said they believed the press was too critical of America. That number dropped 19 points to 17% in November 2001, presumably in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11. The number hovered in the mid-thirties when the question was asked in the summers of 2002 and 2003, as the war in Afghanistan continued and the war in Iraq began, before climbing to 40% in June 2005.

The primary audience for network news also believes the news divisions are more interested in ratings generally than they are in informing the public. Fully two thirds of Americans (66%) who said network television was their main source of news also said they believed that news organizations cared more about attracting the biggest audience than they did about keeping the public informed (28%).

While troubling, those scores were actually better than those given by people who said their main source of news was either CNN or Fox News. Fully 76% said that audience numbers were more important to CNN and fully 78% said the same about Fox News.

Indeed, a lower percentage of network news viewers (66%) believe network news cares more about attracting bigger audiences than viewers were said they preferred newspapers (74%), radio (77%) or Internet (85%).

Public Perceptions of News Media Motives



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Pew Research Center for People and the Press, "Public More Critical of Press, But Goodwill Persists," June 26, 2005

* qu: What do you think news organizations care about most when deciding what stories to report...

If a majority of Americans feel the press is biased and in it for audience ratings rather than informing the public, why are they still tuning in? According to data from the Pew Research Center for People and the Press, fully 74% of those surveyed indicated that their main source of news is television.

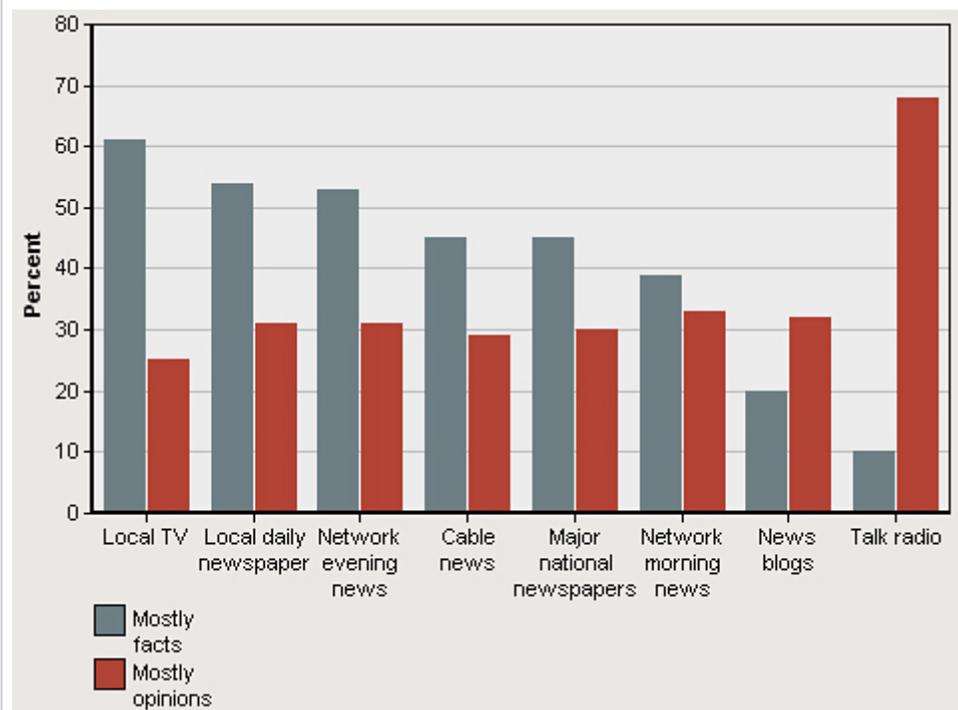
Looking specifically at network news, the percentage of Americans who say they have a generally favorable opinion of network news has declined just 1% between 2001 and 2005. In 2005, fully 75% of those surveyed expressed a favorable opinion. While declining less than other media sources, network television's favorability score is still lower than those for daily newspapers (80%) and local and cable TV news (both 79%).²

Even though viewers may not like how network news people are presenting the news, the majority also believe they are providing their audiences with the facts.

More than half (53%) of Americans rated network evening news as being mostly factual, while 31% believed it to be mostly opinion. Compared to a variety of other sources, the evening newscasts fell just below local television news

(61%) for being factual, but well ahead of cable news (45%) and national newspapers (45%). The network morning shows did not fare as well. Just 39% saw the morning shows as mostly offering the facts, not much more than the 33% who consider the morning shows mostly opinion. 3

News Organizations: Facts vs. Opinion



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Pew Research Center for People and the Press, "Public More Critical of Press, But Goodwill Persists," June 26, 2005

qu: "Do ...mostly report the facts about the news, or mostly give their opinions about the news?"

The data suggest that there are other things to be learned here. Why do Americans who have stopped watching network news say they have done so? How do the young, who generally are not watching, view the networks, and would they gravitate to the news divisions if they were offering their product in a bigger way online, on PDAs, on phones and other delivery systems? How do Americans feel about what is offered by the networks as opposed to cable news? Do they notice that the two products are quite different?

Those questions are missing from the knowledge we have now. And they are all questions that will become more pressing as the networks, newspapers, and cable increasingly compete in the converged digital battleground.

Footnotes

1. Pew Research Center for People and the Press, "Public More Critical of Press, But Goodwill Persists," pg. 7, June 26, 2005.
2. Ibid. Pg. 1.
3. Ibid. Pg. 2.

Charts & Tables

Charts & Tables

AUDIENCE

Evening News Ratings

Evening News Share

Evening News Viewership

Evening News Viewership, All Networks

Evening News Viewership, by Network

Median Age of Morning News Viewers

Median Age of Nightly News Viewers

Morning News Ratings

Morning News Share

Morning News Viewership, All Networks

Morning News Viewership, by Network

Network and Cable Viewership, by Age

Prime-Time News Magazine Viewership

ECONOMICS

Evening News Revenue, by Network

Morning News Revenue, by Network

News Magazine Revenue, Select Programs

NEWS INVESTMENT

Average Division of Time on Morning News

Average Network Newsroom Size and Reporter Workload

Average Time Devoted to News on Evening Newscasts

PUBLIC ATTITUDES

News Organizations: Facts vs. Opinion

Roundtable

Roundtable

Network news in the 21st century is a frustrating contradiction. Two decades after peaking in audience and arguably in prestige, roughly 20 million people still watch network news most weekday evenings, and another 10 million each morning. The evening and morning news programs are enormously profitable. But evening newscasts have lost half their audience in the last 20 years, and the average age of the evening viewer is 60.

Is the network news division a dinosaur on the verge of extinction? Or will the Internet free the medium, after years of decline, from the limits of an obsolete dinner hour timeslot and an 18 minute newshole and eliminate the competitive advantage cable news has enjoyed of being always on?

This is the first of nine virtual panel discussions of media leaders we will present this summer about different media sectors. For each, we posed a series of questions to leading experts from different industries, assembled their remarks into roundtable format, editing minimally for flow. We will post each virtual roundtable separately, once a week, over the next nine weeks. Click here for a more detailed description on how the roundtables were put together.

The panelists for this roundtable on Network News are :

Tom Bettag, former Executive Producer, Nightline; Executive Producer, Discovery Networks

Jeff Gralnick, 48-year veteran of broadcast news, has worked for all three networks

Andrew Tyndall, Publisher, The Tyndall Report

Neal Shapiro, former President, NBC News

1. How confident are you that in five years all three of the traditional broadcast networks will still produce a signature evening newscast, and if they do not, what would the impact be on that network and its brand?

Gralnick: Not confident at all. The reasons why are in a piece I wrote for CJR in 2002. I still have small bets outstanding with several "traditional [and] mainstream" friends who insist I am wrong. Their confidence notwithstanding, I remain convinced that the economics of declining broadcast audiences and the power of local stations and station groups are going to mandate at some point that "news at the dinner hour" disappear and be replaced by some other forms the networks will have to invent.

Tyndall: I am absolutely confident that the evening newscast will be produced. I am not so confident that such a newscast will be the network's "signature" in the sense of its defining news product. Broadcast is more likely to be one medium among many for the network news divisions to disseminate their journalism. In fact, if such a newscast were the network's "signature" five years from now, that would reflect as a major negative for its brand, since it would reveal that it had missed the importance of an interactive online presence.

Bettag: The death of the evening news was predicted with considerable certainty fifteen years ago. The three will live another five years. They still make a healthy profit, and they give the networks an identity that is essential. Almost all other programs last five years or less.

Shapiro: In five years, I think you will still see all three evening newscasts in existence although I think they will look a little different, perhaps a little less formal, with more clear pushes to the internet. I think the evening newscasts are less a signature than they used to be, especially with the growth of the morning news segment. At the end of the day, the newscast leverages the infrastructure of each news division and with or without an evening newscast, these huge organizations still need to cover the news.

2. Is the future of network television news on television or online, where audiences are younger and TV is not restricted by timeslot?

Bettag: I don't think this is an either/or. TV will merge with online, become TV on demand, subscription TV, customized TV. News can exist in that climate, but TV will stop being the national forum, the common denominator that it has been until now.

Shapiro: I think the future of TV news is online and on the phone and on the PDA and on any remote device.

Tyndall: In the future when people use the word "television" they will refer to that part of online content that is in an audio-visual format and is seen on a installed (rather than handheld) screen. The method of delivery of the signal (broadcast or cable or satellite or fiber-optic or whatnot) will not matter. No television will be restricted by timeslot as the signal will go through a DVR-style device. All age groups will watch television in this fashion, young and old.

Gralnick: Current research for the news websites suggests that the audiences are not younger and pretty much mirror traditional audiences. At one recent media symposium, an executive from NYTimes.com pointed out that the Times' web users were three years older, on average than the print readers. The younger Internet audience is consuming non-news sites. Attracting them will be the challenge.

3. How much confidence do you have that traditional mainstream media organizations will survive and thrive online? And what about the networks in particular. Are they prepared to make the investment that is required to succeed there?

Tyndall: The pitfall facing the networks as they switch to an online environment is not a lack of investment capital, on that attribute, belonging as they do to vast media conglomerates, they have an advantage over their competitors. The pitfalls are more likely to be a lack of nimbleness that comes with such size and the uncertainty about a business model and pricing power. In other words, the risk is foolish investment rather than the lack of it. The Internet, as a medium, demands radically new concepts of mass-vs-niche audiences, of user friendliness, of interactivity, of distributed production, of the demarcation between professional and volunteer work—the list is so long. The television networks, with their vast current audiences on broadcast, their brand identities, and their access to resources (financial, institutional and personal) should be better equipped than their competitors to make the transition.

Gralnick: If they adapt, their brands will survive. The merging of forms being made both possible and necessary by digital and wireless reach, mandates that all of the "traditional [and] mainstream" find ways to distribute themselves in non-traditional ways. Or they will die.

The smart networks will and will see the need to invest ahead of provable or visible Return On Investment. The rest will die.

Shapiro: In the long run, they will have to do that. In the short run, they may not have realized it yet. New media and old media will exist together for a while and the branding of the old media may make the difference about who survives and who doesn't.

Bettag: I trust that some mainstream media will thrive through the transition. The sense of authority they have built through the years becomes even more important in an age when the Internet is increasingly a source of misinformation. Many organizations will not pass this test. Those that do will become invaluable at times of national emergency when it is critical to be able to get accurate information. Ultimately, the networks will do what it takes to make money. Advertisers are moving to the web. There is money to be made and these organizations do not lack for business savvy.

4. In the long run, looking back, have the networks benefited or suffered from the requirement that each newscast be a profit center unto itself. Put another way, do you think a network is the sum of its parts or something more abstract than that?

Bettag: The networks might have hurt themselves by damaging the credibility of their news divisions. In fact, though, the onslaught of new technology has made this one of their lesser problems, a minor factor in their battle for survival.

Shapiro: Hard to say. Being a profit center has meant many more resources given to news divisions and that is why they have new equipment, high priced talent etc. Since news has made money, it is natural to expect networks to want to maximize it. In the long run, when news did not make money, the notion that a network had a public service to perform was perhaps more obvious but even then, networks have wanted to have important news programming and make money at the same time. That tension existed even before news became a profit center and it would have always been there.

Tyndall: I am not convinced of the premise of the question. A network news division clearly has value greater than the sum of its parts. Inspired management can easily find ways to allocate the cost of investments, celebrity salaries, affiliate relationships, bundled advertising income and so on so that each newscast appears on an accounting spreadsheet as a "profit center" while maintaining the overarching importance of keeping healthy the brand of the news division as a whole.

Gralnick: The flaw in the question is the word "all." For the networks, special events and breaking news coverage and programming has always been and will always be a loser. So network news divisions are the sum of their parts with the profitable broadcasts making possible the necessary and non-profitable.

The problem is this: Networks are the sum of all their parts so they are placing pressure on their news divisions to return "more to the corporate bottom line." The drive to meet the corporate mandate means there is less and less of the discretionary breaking news and documentary programming that can be done.

So if the question is, is profit motive a danger the answer is "yes" but without profit motive how does American business function? PBS is the model for the risks to survival associated with non-profit.

5. When conversation turns to the proliferation of new news outlets it seems that we are increasingly talking about politics: liberal vs. conservative. Liberal vs. conservative blogs, editorial pages, talk radio stations, cable networks and, depending on whom you are speaking to, network news programs. Is this something that you think may happen in network broadcast news? If so, why? If not, why not?

Bettag: I don't think this will happen in the near term. This is happening in peripheral media because they are trying a boutique approach. They make a profit off very small groups who can't find what they want in the mainstream. The mainstream will still be where the big money lies for broadcasters.

Gralnick: When there was a proliferation of newspapers, the split was clearly Liberal v Conservative. If you lived in New York City you knew which is which and bought and read based on "family values" so what's new now?

Will we see that in "network broadcast news?" I think the answer there depends on how you define "network broadcast news." With the proliferation of conservative talk on cable, if a network's cable arm "goes conservative" or "goes liberal" to meet perceived audience wants, has a shift happened? I'm not sure.

But if the question is will a Bill O'Reilly or a liberal counterpart anchor a network evening news broadcast, I would doubt it until we have reached the true last gasp for that programming form.

Shapiro: I think network news still has to appeal to the widest possible audience and the way to do that is to try to be as conclusive and report without any bias and to work damn hard to keep whatever biases exist out of the story. I don't think that will change at a network.

Tyndall: I see no impetus towards ideological self-identification at the network news divisions. Their brand depends on presenting themselves as the quintessential mainstream media, addressing the topics of broad interest to civil society in a language that incorporates as wide a spectrum of the body politic as possible.

6. Where are the young people? Jon Stewart—who has said very clearly, over and over again, that he's not a journalist—has become something of a symbol of how to get younger audiences to watch news. Beyond the sheer entertainment of it, are there lessons here for journalists? Does Jon Stewart have anything to teach the evening news?

Bettag: The young people will come to serious news when they start taking on responsibilities, something they are doing later because they have many more years to live. I love Jon Stewart. I dread the day people try to copy him. I think the lesson to be learned is that what succeeds is imagination, innovation, the willingness to be yourself and thus be authentic.

Shapiro: Jon Stewart has found a great, entertaining way of doing modern social satire and mixing it with very, very little actual reporting. Jon says he thinks his viewers need to get the real news elsewhere. He is right.

Gralnick: To be flip, the lesson Stewart and his network can teach the majors is to put your programming on at a time when it is accessible to the viewers you want. Those desired younger viewers are, "at the dinner hour," either working, on the way home from work or just home from work and dealing with dinner, children and spouses not seen since departure for the start of the work day. That is where they are.

Perhaps a larger and more difficult lesson is the simple one: Take ourselves less seriously and remember that as soon as we mentally or literally capitalize the first letter in journalism or journalist and react as though we have, we may have started down the path to our own demise.

Tyndall: Stewart's most explicit intervention into television news was not directed to the networks' nightly newscasts but to CNN's Crossfire. His criticism of that show's format was twofold: it treated message-of-the-day ideological talking

points respectfully rather than with the ridicule that hollow sloganeering rhetoric deserves; second, it cast every controversy as a binary Chinese-menu-style conflict between so-called liberals and so-called conservatives. The takeaway from these criticisms apply to journalists generally, not just the evening news, and to citizens generally, not just young ones. Coverage of talking points involves rhetorical decoding (“this formulation was used in order to frame the issue using this spin”) rather than stenography and repetition. Coverage of political coalitions is often more informative when discussing the contradictions and strains within them rather than their stated differences with a rival coalition (in the way that an old-fashioned primary season would often create better political debate than a general election). Stewart has discovered that these two tasks—dissecting rhetoric and exposing fissures underlying surface agreements—can be done neatly by a comedian. There is no reason a journalist cannot do the same thing without sacrificing seriousness or traditions of objectivity.

As for the bigger question of the quest for the young audience, I can only reiterate what the evening newscasts do wrong: air at 6:30pm (too early); sell advertising to pharmaceutical firms (sick wrinkly people whose bodies are falling apart); and, at the margins, engage in demographic targeting in story selection (too much Health & Medicine). The third point is only a nuance and is hardly a factor. The first and second problems can be solved by the looming online innovations—timeshifting, ad stripping, unbundling—discussed earlier.

7. One broad trend we sense in the media culture is the paradox of more outlets covering fewer stories. As the audiences for particular news outlets shrink, newsroom resources are then reduced, but these outlets still feel compelled to cover the big events of the day. The result is more outlets covering those same “big” events and fewer are covering much beyond that as much as they once did. How do you view this trend?

Bettag: As unimaginative as this is, I still think the viewer has more options, more chances to seek out a wider range of stories than he ever has. The explosion of outlets assures that.

Where this trend does damage is to the credibility of the mainstream media. It becomes obvious to the viewers that the news organizations are following some kind of research, that they are making decisions by watching the weathervane. In most cases it becomes quite clear that it is being driven by advertising demographics. Viewers detect the same lack of leadership, the same lack of vision that makes them so distrustful of politics by poll.

Tyndall: I do not see this trend as a problem for the network nightly newscasts, since their role, perhaps uniquely in American journalism, is to cover the “big events of the day” first and foremost. So it is nonsensical to worry about these newscasts devoting disproportionate resources to their core mission.

Gralnick: True, more outlets but once upon a time when it was just wire services and newspapers, when a major story broke, they all covered that major story. What we see today is the appearances of sameness because we have access to it all at once. News is news and the major stories will be covered by all.

Shapiro: I think this will continue but be balanced as news organizations try to find other ways to distinguish themselves...so they will try to find exclusive angles or better analysis on the big stories of the day.



Cable TV – Intro

Intro

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

In a difficult time for media in general, the situation in cable news is now firmly split.

Fox News, by our reckoning, is growing on nearly all fronts. CNN's situation is more complicated, though not as bleak as some might think. MSNBC remains on shaky ground.

At the same time, there are signs that the industry overall is beginning to mature, and that the kind of information cable offers may have trouble competing with what citizens can find online.

For the third straight year, our content analysis of cable suggests that it is thinly reported, suffers from a focus on the immediate, especially during the day, is prone to opinion mongering and is easily controlled by sources who want to filibuster. All of these raise questions about whether cable news will suffer if audiences begin to feel more comfortable with video and text on news websites as a substitute for getting instant news on television.

The audience picture for cable is complex. By the measures the cable channels use — simple averages — all the cable news audience was basically flat in 2005. By the method we prefer— looking at median audience — Fox News is still gaining, while CNN and MSNBC continue to lose audience. But when one looks at Cume — the number of unique or different viewers who tune in over the course of a month — CNN remains the cable news leader. That means its pool of viewers is larger, but they watch less often.

Financially, CNN remains the industry leader, thanks in part to a strong brand and more operations, but Fox News is catching up, and is likely to keep doing so. MSNBC, on the other hand, trails and the departure of Microsoft as part owner leaves the future further up in the air.

Fox News' strength is also evident in terms of who is building their channel. For the second year in a row, it will add to how much it spends on its programming by almost a quarter, while MSNBC is cutting, and CNN is building more modestly.

The bigger question may involve the migration of news consumers online. While all three channels have well-established web sites, and are trying to create a common experience between the two outlets, the question is whether they can convert their brands as places to go for news instantaneously as well as for depth. This is more so given that older media, including newspapers and the old networks, appear to be accelerating their efforts at offering news in real time.

Content Analysis

Content Analysis

Cable news thrives on the big, breaking news story. It has gravitated over its quarter-century of audience growth to major crises — wars, disasters, political scandals, big tabloid crime cases. It is the more typical news day, one where events are mostly momentary, alarms prove false, and the news is incremental, that represents cable's special challenge.

May 11, 2005, was one of those. Much of the news happened overnight and overseas as the nation slept. And the list of new and dramatic breaking news events occurring this day was limited.

There were still things happening — enough to fill the pages of the next day's newspapers. Yet cable, with its "see it now" approach, would focus this day primarily on just three events.

One was a trial of a celebrity, closed to cameras. Another was a bond hearing in an Illinois double murder, also off camera, where the killer, as planned, would formally confess to killing his child and her friend. The third was a scare, which would last for only 15 minutes, over a small plane's entering restricted airspace.

A close look at the coverage this day puts some of cable's tendencies in clear relief.

During much of the cable day, immediacy seems to be the criterion of significance above all others. That sometimes leads to an odd hyperbole in which anchors endeavor to create a sense of urgency about small things. In the hour before noon, the three channels on this day would air more than a dozen shots of an empty press room in Illinois and a doorway in front of the courthouse of the Michael Jackson child-molestation trial, where the former child actor Macaulay Culkin was expected to enter.

Another result of cable's weakness for the breaking story is the way cable journalists strain to make things seem compelling. Nine hours after the plane incident was over, CNN's Aaron Brown tried mightily to recreate a sense of panic that people felt when the White House and Capitol were evacuated for a few minutes around lunchtime. "When it was happening, nothing wasn't nothing," Brown intoned somberly. "It was very much something.... We didn't know what it was."  View CNN Video Clip (Get Quicktime® Plug-in)

Some other findings include:

- Cable puts remarkably little emphasis on summing up or offering what would amount to a definitive account of the day's events, even on the programs that air in the evening.
- To get whatever depth or range of views or sources cable offers in its continuous coverage, viewers need to pretty much do just that — get the news here continuously.
- Cable audiences are more likely than those for other media to hear reporters' opinions about the news.

- The close examination of one day highlights the stark differences between the three channels in style and also to some extent in story emphasis. There are greater differences here than on broadcast network TV.

In past years, our content analysis revealed some stark findings about cable news. The medium is largely unscripted — it eschews taped, edited packages in favor of live interviews, and reporters talking off the cuff or from hasty notes. Pictures and words often don't match. The reporting contains fewer sources and viewpoints than elsewhere on TV. And rather than being up to date, much of the reporting is repetitive. Over two years of study we found that roughly 7 in 10 of the stories on cable repeat, but less than 1 in 10 contains any substantive new information. ¹

The more detailed Day in the Life study deepened this impression and found other traits. Reporting on cable is highly focused around either the personality of the program hosts or sending a camera and correspondent to an event and having them pass along what they are seeing at that moment. The effect, more so than in other media, is that the audience's role is passive. There is less effort here to tell how these stories involve the viewers, what to do about them, how they relate to their lives, or how viewers can do or learn more.

Cable's Lack of Summarization

The viewers' role is passive except for one area — the extent to which it is up to the viewers to add up for themselves what the pieces on cable offer throughout the day. The diversity of sources and viewpoints on cable news is usually across two or three different stories rather than within one piece. Facts can vary from account to account. Sources in live interviews offer one view, and it may be a while before contrary or supplemental information is forthcoming. A viewer needs to see all the accounts to get any kind of depth of knowledge.

Take, for example, coverage of the D.C. plane scare. One cable story quoted the Capitol police chief. Another offered reactions of those involved in the evacuation. Still a third interviewed an Air Force colonel responsible for air defense in Washington. A fourth interviewed folks who knew the pilots. But those moments were spread across a multitude of stories over several hours and across the channels. To learn about all those different angles, viewers would need to catch most if not all of that coverage.

Yet they could have gotten virtually all of it by going online, where stories contained most of these elements in one piece, and users could access it whenever they wanted.

Why we found this trait in cable is hard to pin down but worth pondering. With so much time to fill, it is possible cable news managers are simply preoccupied with getting things on the air. Or that for the number of hours to fill, the reporters they have to draw on is too limited. The focus on the immediate may exacerbate the problem, making it virtually impossible to prepare. Whatever the causes, for much of the day, cable anchors function more like traffic cops than investigators.

Reporter Opinion

The study also confirmed another earlier finding, that reporters on cable news are more likely to offer their own opinions about events than other media. Over all, 47% of cable stories on May 11 include reportorial opinion, compared with 14% in the media as a whole. (It was 20% on network evening TV and 48% on network morning). And for the biggest story of the day — the plane scare in Washington — that number jumped to 83%. ²

Journalist Opinion in D.C. Plane Scare Coverage

% of all stories

Outlet	Stories w/ Opinion
Cable	83%
National Newspapers	0%
Network Evening News	30%
National Web sites	0%

The opinion on May 11 came in various forms. On the morning programs it came from journalists trying to be informal. After a piece about global warming on CNN's "American Morning," for instance, the anchor Soledad O'Brien offered, "So that videotape there, and really what's happening on the glacier, is definitive proof that there's global warming." The correspondent Miles O'Brien takes her one further. "Yes, but it's just one more little piece. There's a big stack of evidence now . . . The real question is, what are we going to do about it? Are we going to stop using SUVs?"

On Fox News, during the same hour, the co-anchor E.D. Hill was defending the Bush administration from criticisms by the former Homeland Security chief, Tom Ridge, that the administration often raised the terror alert over his objections. "If you don't raise it and something happens, everyone's gonna get blamed for not raising it, if you do raise it then people say, nothing happened, why'd you do it?" she said in response to Ridge's comments, reported in USA

Today that morning. "I don't think there is any way to win on that one."  [View Fox News Video Clip \(Get Quicktime® Plug-in\)](#)

Her co-anchor, Steve Doocy, made the case partisan. "And the other thing is how many times during the campaign did we hear Democrats say they are doing this for political reasons?" he asked. But Ridge, he said, "did not ever suggest they did anything like that."

On other cable programs, opinion is a signal part of the program's appeal. It is part of the core of "Imus in the Morning" on MSNBC. The views of Bill O'Reilly are similarly central to "The O'Reilly Factor" in prime time on Fox, as are the more liberal notions of Keith Olbermann on MSNBC.

The Range of News

Despite all the time it has to fill, the range of topics on cable was also more limited than some might expect. The four hours of this day studied on each channel offered little more than what one would have gotten from a 30-minute network evening newscast, and markedly less than one could learn from any print or online venue.

Among the other events that would be covered online and in the next morning's newspapers: The Army would decide not to file charges against officers implicated in the Abu Ghraib prison scandal; The Catholic Church would announce that it might cut priests' pensions in different U.S. cities; There was a scandal brewing about evangelical proselytizing at the Air Force Academy. A new report found that bias crimes against Muslims in the U.S. were up 50% since 9/11.

Most of those stories were about trends, though, not breaking news which is what cable tends to focus most of its energy and time on. On May 11, that would include four main events: the plane scare, the murders in Zion, Ill., the

surge in violence in Iraq and the Michael Jackson trial. Those made up a third of the time studied, and even that understates how much the plane scare dominated. The story did not break until mid-day, after two of the programs sampled had aired. Looking just at the afternoon coverage, it commanded even more of the air time. 3

Percent of Newshole Devoted to Top Four Stories

Percent of all Stories

Outlet	D.C. Plane	Zion Murders	Culkin Testimony	Iraq car bombs	Total to Top 4
Cable	13%	10	6	3	32
National Newspapers	4%	2	4	4	14
Network Evening News	18%	0	1	7	26
National Web sites (top stories)	14%	11	9	22	56

Depth of Reporting

In a media environment saturated with news outlets that all offer the basic facts, a growing question among journalists is the degree to which stories explore angles that connect or make events more relevant to the audience.

Cable news, with its hours to fill and variety of programming, does little to fill any such need. For this study, we created an index of 10 different elements a story could contain that might add to a citizen's understanding. Did a story put the event in historical context? Did it suggest where the audience could learn more? Did it suggest what might happen next? 4

More than half (58%) of all major stories on cable news contained none or only one of those elements. The largest number, 36%, did not offer any, and another 21% offered just one. That was a worse rating than any other national news platform except for the 30-minute nightly newscasts, which have much less time and whose stories tend to be much shorter (though even these networks newscasts had a greater percent of stories with three or more index elements. In online stories, for instance, just 4% offered no elements. Three quarters of the stories online (72%) contained two or more.

Story Index Scores 5, by Medium

Percent of all Stories

	0	1	2	3+
Cable	36%	21	21	21
Network Eve. News	41%	23	9	27
Network Morning News	29%	18	14	39
National Newspapers	0%	0	43	57
National Web sites	4%	17	28	51

Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

The News of the Day in Cable (and Differences Among the Channels)

The more we study, the more the cable channels begin to look distinct from one another. On May 11, indeed, they differed more in what they covered than the broadcast networks did. On CNN, the plane scare was dominant. Fox focused more on the grisly murder case in Illinois. MSNBC was the most interested of the channels in Macaulay Culkin's testimony at Michael Jackson's molestation trial, a story, interestingly, that its sister broadcast, the NBC Nightly News, didn't even mention.

Morning News on Cable

The feel of morning news on cable is different from the networks. While the tone is similarly informal and chatty, absent are the softer lifestyle subjects such as cooking tips or tools for the garden. Instead, cable focuses on topics geared more toward people interested in politics and getting a jump on current events of the day. And that chatty weatherman mixing with folks in the street is nowhere to be found. Rather than offer emotional reactions to stories, the reporters and anchors are more prone to offer political views.

CNN

Viewers starting their day with CNN's "American Morning" got a quick dose of hard news. The program, from 7 to 8 a.m., led with a taped package on the situation in Iraq, a story that the network morning shows would skip, followed by a story that resembled the network offerings — a taped package on the Zion murders. The story would even feature the same source as the network stories, the local prosecutor Michael Waller.

Next, viewers got a discussion of an unexploded grenade found where President Bush had given a speech in the former Soviet republic of Georgia. The story would be a minor item in newspapers, yet was a staple of morning shows on cable and network. As it turned out, what CNN offered here was identical to what the networks did. Bill Hemmer, a CNN anchor (who later moved to Fox) interviewed a former Secret Service agent, Joseph Petro — the same person interviewed on two of the three broadcast networks that morning.

For its fourth piece, however, CNN offered something more distinctive, a segment on a Swiss study of global warming reported by the correspondent Miles O'Brien in the studio. It was one of the few items on any morning cable program that was not about breaking news.

Finally, CNN's grumpy Everyman, Jack Cafferty, appeared to pose his question of the day: whether United Airlines should be allowed to default on its pensions. That was the one segment that allowed viewers to get involved in the news. And Cafferty was quick to offer his own view. He had no doubt that executives of large corporations normally get a "huge golden parachute" and "you can bet they're not going to suffer, not like the employees will."

Cable Morning Shows: Lead Stories and Type of Coverage

Placement	CNN		Fox		MSNBC	
1st	Iraq	<i>Package</i>	Grenade	<i>Anchor talk</i>	Brief Headlines	<i>Newswrap</i>
2nd	Zion	<i>Package</i>	Zion	<i>Package</i>	Tim Russert	<i>Host talk</i>
3rd	Grenade	<i>Interview</i>	Brief Headlines	<i>Newswrap</i>	Renee Zellweger	<i>Host Talk</i>
4th	Global warming	<i>Staff int.</i>	Terror Alerts	<i>Anchor Talk</i>	Rolling Stones	<i>Host Talk</i>

Fox

Over on Fox News's "Fox and Friends," viewers on May 11 got a program constructed quite differently. In the 7 a.m. hour there was just one on-scene report from a correspondent — a live report from the courthouse in Illinois, which broke to a packaged report, and one report (about the unexploded grenade) with the correspondent live from the Washington studio.

The bulk of the program involved the three anchors chatting or reading a teleprompter. With fewer reporters in the field than CNN, Fox relies more on the chemistry and banter of its hosts. At the same time, that may be one reason why its morning program seems more a distinct program than simply another part of the cable channel's day.

The story lineup was even more government focused than CNN's. There were multiple reports on the grenade near Bush in Georgia. There was a segment on a bill to require identification tags for illegal immigrants. The violence in Iraq was a brief "tell" story.

Another difference on Fox in the morning is that it has abandoned the more disinterested neutral voice of traditional broadcasting. It is a clearly American channel, with the U.S. government frequently referred to in the first person plural — "we" and "us." In Fox's lead story of the morning, the case of the grenade in Georgia, E.D. Hill, speaking not of herself or Fox News but of American officials, said, "Our people haven't been able to look at it. So they (Georgian officials) keep counseling us. We haven't been able to say it's a hand grenade. We don't know what it is exactly."

Viewers also got a sense of point of view in the choice of stories and in the way they were handled. That came through in a subject not found on CNN or MSNBC during the hour — an interview with Gary Aldrich, president of the Patrick Henry Center, a foundation to promote "individual liberty" and known for its conservative views. They discussed Steve Gardner, one of the Swift Boat Veterans who was critical of John Kerry in the 2004 Presidential election campaign. Steve Gardner, Aldrich said, was "the only Swift Boat veteran who served on the boat that John Kerry commanded. So he was in a unique position to observe John Kerry up close and personal." The Fox anchor Steve Doocy then added that Gardner was fired from his job after appearing in commercials. "We had him on our program. Right after he got on TV, and said all that stuff, he got fired." No other source offering a differing view was mentioned.

Fox fleshed out its morning coverage with a sports round-up from one of the hosts and a brief host discussion of the episode of "American Idol" coming up that night. The final segment was an interview between E.D. Hill and the executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, a think tank that studies the effects on immigration on the U.S., over a new administration program to cover some health costs of illegal immigrants. The director, Mark Krikorian, was clearly critical of the administration.

MSNBC

MSNBC's offering at this hour is not television per se at all, it's the radio program "Imus in the Morning," filmed. And it's all about opinions and views — those of the veteran DJ Don Imus.

The top of the hour offered a few news headlines read by Imus's sidekick Charles McCord — brief updates on Iraq , the congressional spending bill, the Zion murders, and another multiple murder, in New Mexico .

Mostly, the program was about the mind of Imus, especially his likes and dislikes. He was disgusted, for instance, over the Rolling Stones announcing another tour — "they've got to stop flopping around on the stage like a chicken on crack....it looks like your crazy grandparents for talent night at the old folks home, doesn't it?" And he loved NBC colleague Tim Russert, host of his sister channel's Sunday talk program "Meet the Press." The largest chunk of the hour was spent in a phone interview with Russert. He and Imus discussed Russert's new book, "Big Russ and Me," and then moved to Laura Bush's popularity and how the NBC family supports each other. Imus was unabashed about selling — books, TV shows, movies, and his own mail-order products. On this day it was Russert's book: "It's a great book. Not really difficult . . . great idea for Father's Day or Mother's Day. I heartily recommend it." He was also selling Russert, and closed with: "I want you to know: I love you and so does Charles."

Mid-Day

The 11-to-noon hour on cable — designated as the "Live" program on each channel — recapped the overnight news and was poised to bring breaking developments on two of the big stories of the day.

The murder suspect Jerry Hobbs was expected to appear for bond in Zion , Ill. , after which the prosecutor, Mike Waller, would hold a press conference. At the same time, Macaulay Culkin was expected to arrive at the courthouse in the Michael Jackson trial in California . Culkin's testimony was not to take place for several more hours, but his arrival at the courthouse was treated as news itself.

On Fox in particular, the key line that hour was "expecting." Unfortunately for its viewers the expected was long in coming. They were assured repeatedly that Fox "would be there live" and that "any moment now we're expecting news" on the Hobbs bond hearing and on the arrival of Culkin at the Jackson courthouse.

Throughout the hour, the cameras returned seven times to show the empty courthouse pressroom where Waller would be appearing. The only action during the shots was sound guys adjusting a mike or two. Over and over, "Any moment now . . . could be getting some new details . . . Again, much more to come . . ." Fox filled the waiting time with such things as an interview with a forensic scientist. Unfortunately for those on the edge of their seats, the bond hearing was delayed and the press conference didn't take place until the next hour.

The Jackson courthouse coverage was much the same. "As soon as it happens, we're on it." The "it," however, was merely the arrival of one of the two celebrities at the courthouse. The image shown three times was the security checkpoint at the courthouse entrance, empty but for the guards milling around. At one point, someone walked through. It "might have been him [Culkin] just passing through," the anchor speculated. We learned a little later it wasn't. And still later we learned that Culkin would be led into the courthouse through a back entrance. A pool camera did catch a picture of Culkin's back shortly after 11:30 a.m. Fox showed the image four times in the final 15 minutes of the hour.

Mid-Day Coverage of the Zion Murders

	CNN	FOX	MSNBC
# of empty podium shots	1	9	4
Sound from Mike Waller	1 tape	0	1 tape, 3 live

MSNBC's live hour with Randy Meier and Amy Robach also promised to bring viewers the "now" of the two stories, but the channel filled in the waiting time with a wider range of other news. As a consequence, MSNBC during the hour cut to the empty podium shot at the Illinois courthouse just four times and cut to the Jackson courthouse just twice. It "just missed" the pool shot of Culkin's arrival but did show it — just once — after the commercial break. MSNBC also added some humor to the mix — plugging its evening commentator Keith Olbermann's "Jackson Puppets," currently being auctioned on eBay. 

The show opened with a fairly comprehensive taped package on the Zion murder case. There was no package on the Jackson trial, but there was live talk with the reporter on the scene and an interview with Susan Filan, MSNBC's legal analyst. As they tried to fill the time waiting for something to happen, the anchors and guests on MSNBC vamped with what might be described as fairly obvious speculation: "Is (Culkin) going to fall victim to the prosecution's sword or will he carry the day? If he carries the day, it's going to be devastating for the prosecution."

The main distinction of MSNBC during this hour was that it aired packages on a wider variety of topics than its rivals, some of them using NBC News personnel, though the topics were mostly the same ones we heard about on the morning network and cable channels. There was a taped piece on the grenade in Georgia and another on the United Airlines pension situation. The most distinctive piece was an exclusive report with the NBC correspondent Lisa Meyers on a Middle Eastern bank whose New York City branch was under criminal investigation.

Mid-Day Coverage of Culkin Testimony

	CNN	FOX	MSNBC
# of court house entrance shots	1	10	2

The anchor Daryn Kagan brought viewers the 11-to-noon news on CNN. Its range of coverage that hour was more in line with MSNBC's. In addition to the three big stories, CNN offered viewers Congressional news about spending and gang-warfare bills, as well as a report on the nomination of Under Secretary of State John Bolton to be ambassador to the U.N. It also covered some entertainment news — the coming premier of the last "Star Wars" movie, the inspiration behind the reality show "CSI" and an interview with the author of a new book on presidential getaways.

CNN led with the Zion story, a package with clips from prosecutor Waller and members of the community. Then, rather than turning to a live report from the courthouse immediately, Kagan announced, "Once that bond hearing for Jerry Hobbs ends, Chris [Lawrence] will have an update for us with a live report." What viewers got in the meantime was an interview with Dominic Cappello, author of "Ten Talks Parents Must Have with Their Children about Violence." For the rest of the hour, CNN did not return to the courthouse — so it had just one empty podium shot.

The Jackson trial got even less coverage: one brief live report from the courthouse and one return at the end of the hour for the clip of Culkin's entrance.

Just after noon, though, CNN's measured focus on live and breaking news gave way, with the brief evacuation of the White House and the Capitol as a result of the Cessna's entering restricted Washington airspace. Once the plane incident occurred, CNN viewers got the sense that no other events that day came even close in significance.

From noon through 6 p.m. — from "CNN Live" through "Inside Politics" at 3:30 through "Crossfire" at 4:30 through "Wolf Blitzer Reports" at 5:00, CNN veered from the plane scare for only a few minutes, once to brief on Culin's testimony, and in the second half of "Inside Politics" to report on Congressional proceedings of the day. Then, after a brief departure from the story in the second half of the Lou Dobbs's business report, Anderson Cooper aired a special edition called "Security Watch: Defending the Skies." "NewsNight" was also focused almost solely on the story.

The only program on CNN from noon onward not to lead with and devote most or all its time to the plane scare was "Larry King Live." He had an exclusive interview with Condoleezza Rice, her first extended interview since taking office as secretary of state. But as the night went on, CNN was back to the plane scare.

Evening News

CNN

On CNN, the prime time evening newscast with Aaron Brown featured 10 different pieces on the Washington false alarm involving the Cessna. They included an opening piece by Brown that narrated events as they unfolded, pieces by CNN correspondents reliving those 15 minutes from their eyewitness vantage points on Capitol Hill and the White House, interviews with people from the airport where the flight originated, a close look at that type of plane and even a trip on a simulated patrol of a plane being hijacked — what could have happened if the event had not been the false alarm that it was.

For all the time devoted to the incident, however, and all the hours since it had happened, the reporting suffered from many of the tendencies we have identified elsewhere with cable news. There was a heavy reliance on government sources such as the White House spokesman Scott McClellan as well as on CNN's own correspondents as eyewitness sources. And the primary expert relied on throughout the coverage, the CNN "security analyst" Richard Falkenrath, a former deputy homeland security adviser, clearly identifies himself as a member of the extended homeland security family, whom he refers to as "we." "Now, that's not to say that we didn't make the right decision today to evacuate," he told Aaron Brown.

Though on the surface it might seem as if Brown's program amounted to an hour on the subject, the newscast did not have the feel of long-form or in-depth journalism. It was rather a series of short pieces, each with fairly limited reportage, as if the reporters who were on air all day were simply asked to file one more piece for the late show.

The few segments that tried to go beyond the basic play-by-play failed to go very far. A piece by Jeanne Meserve, for example, was introduced as a look at whether the new warning system for pilots could have prevented the incident. The segment never answered the question. Instead it mostly addressed the mechanics of the alarm. What's more, viewers were told nothing about the sources used, two pilots and someone from the Air Force — their backgrounds, any connections they had or the level of their expertise.

Cable Evening News: Lead Stories and Type of Coverage

Placement	CNN	Fox	MSNBC
1st	DC Plane Anchor Pkg	DC Plane Pkg w/live talk	DC Plane Anchor read
2nd	DC Plane Pkg. w/ live talk	Iraq Pkg	DC Plane Staff int.
3rd	DC Plane Pkg.	North Korea Pkg w/ live talk	DC Plane Expert int.
4th	DC Plane – Pkg.	Afghan riots Anchor read	Grenade Anchor read

Fox

As with Fox's morning show, "Special Report with Brit Hume" spoke largely to viewers interested in political events, but Hume's range of issues was actually wider. In addition to the plane scare and the Iraq bombings, viewers could also hear about North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons; voter fraud; the resignation of a church pastor over a politically motivated sermon, and a forthcoming vote in Canada. News of the Illinois double murders and the Jackson trial, which had dominated the mid-day, were absent.

The reports themselves were produced in a manner much closer to that of traditional broadcast news. As we found in last year's analysis of a month's worth of Hume programming, viewers heard from a variety of sources and correspondents.

The lead plane-scare story — a taped report from Brian Wilson — contained five different sources (though one was the correspondent Major Garrett, who was evacuated from the White House press room). The tone of the piece was more measured than the bulk of the CNN coverage, assuring viewers that all was well with the government. The first line from Hume let viewers know the scare was over: "The White House and the U.S. Capitol are back to normal tonight after a midday security scare. . ." The other piece on the plane story that hour, an interview with the NORAD spokesman Col. Keith Snyder, paints a calmer picture as well. Hume opens, "Well, as everyone knows, the threat turned out to be a little mosquito of an airplane that had no hostile intent and probably couldn't have done much damage even if it slammed into the Capitol. . ."  [View Hume Video Clip \(Get Quicktime® Plug-in\)](#)

The correspondent reports on Hume's program had a somewhat more balanced feel than other Fox programming — the plane-scare story suggested that the evacuation might have been disorganized, for instance — yet even on this program the reporter roundtable that made up the second half of the program as well as some other feature stories tipped toward a decidedly conservative viewpoint.

An item in Hume's "Political Grapevine," for instance, cited a new report from Milwaukee, WI that found hundreds of ineligible felons had voted in the last election, and then paired that finding with an unrelated study from Washington State showing that felons in that state had voted Democratic by 3-1.

MSNBC

Viewers of MSNBC's "Countdown with Keith Olbermann," the closest the network comes to a main evening newscast, heard about a greater number of news items that day than from any other program studied, much as was the case on MSNBC earlier in the day. Yet aside from the main stories of the day — the plane scare,

Iraq , Zion and Jackson — the items were mostly anchor reads of two or three sentences each by Olbermann, usually filtered through his own “take.” In some ways “Countdown” is a hybrid of a news program and a talk show — it is Olbermann on the news.

“ Spain has the annual running of the bulls at Pamplona . We now apparently have the annual running of the evacuees around the Capitol,” he quipped to MSNBC’s chief Washington correspondent, Norah O’Donnell.  View Olbermann Video Clip (Get Quicktime® Plug-in)

Olbermann was a little more sober-minded in the second segment, an interview about the plane scare with Roger Cressey, a former member of the National Security Council but now a “terrorism analyst” for MSNBC and NBC. Cressey, perhaps more than any other source quoted at length on cable this day, admired the administration’s response. And that is the only viewpoint offered to the audience. Indeed, no one we encountered identified as a cable news analyst offered anything but praise for his former agency.

Olbermann: Break the day down into its critical components from your perspective, and give each of these components a letter grade, if you’d be so kind.

Cressey: Well, I think Secret Service and the Capitol Police, they’d get high marks because they did the notification quickly, people moved quickly. I think NORAD and the air defense infrastructure worked well. I also give high marks to the Customs police and others around. I give low marks to the pilot, of course.”

Olbermann offers three separate pieces on the Culkun testimony that day — a straight news account in a package by the NBC correspondent Karen Brown, a discussion with Jim Moret of “Inside Edition” about the defense’s portrayal of Jackson as “a 10-year-old child star trapped in a 46-year-old man’s body,” and a sarcastic segment in which Olbermann is auctioning off a “Michael Jackson Puppet” on eBay. Some of the material on Olbermann’s show has aired before. The segment on the Iraq bombings, for instance, is a replay of the report by Richard Engel from NBC Nightly News.

Cable Talk Shows

The nightly personality talk programs on each of the cable channels are distinctly different from each other. On CNN, Larry King’s long-interview format puts most of the focus on his guests rather than his own personality or viewpoints; Fox’s O’Reilly show is mostly about O’Reilly; and MSNBC’s “Hardball with Chris Matthews” is somewhere in between — the guests are more than furniture, but Matthews often is talking more than listening.

On the night of May 11, the topics varied as much as the styles. Larry King devoted the entire hour to his exclusive interview with Secretary of State Rice. While conversational, the discussion was the most serious of those on the talk programs.

O’Reilly offered his views on a gamut of items and with the hardest of edge of any of the talk-show hosts. On the immigration bill: “Well, that’s true and dumb. Nobody thinks all illegals are here to commit crimes, but all illegals have something in common: they are illegal. Unfortunately, many in the press, and politics, and on the bench refuse to confront that.” On the Jackson trial: “OK, why should I care?” On the murder case in Zion , he offered his own theory of the crime in an interview with Tom Rybarczyk of the Chicago Tribune, who “has been studying the life of Jerry Hobbs.”

O'REILLY: Now my theory — and this is just a theory, but I'm going to throw it out there — it's based on, you know, information that we've been able to come up with — is that it wasn't going well with Hollabaugh. [Laura Hobbs, one of the murdered children, was the daughter of Hobbs and Sheila Hollabaugh.] Hobbs and Hollabaugh, you know, he wanted more than she was able to deliver. And he got angry. And when he gets angry — and this is shown by your reporting — when he gets angry, he turns violent.

Now, what would you do to a mother you wanted to punish? What's the worst thing you could do to her?

RYBARCZYK: It sounds like a sound theory, but I don't know.

O'REILLY: I am not asking to you comment on. I'm just saying this is what — I'm an analyst. I'm able to put this stuff together. This is what we're learning. . . .

And O'Reilly's "most ridiculous item of the day"? The plane scare: "So anyway, there was a little plane, a little plane went into the air space. All the people were evacuated. It was just a little plane. And that was it."

MSNBC's "Hardball with Chris Matthews" gave audiences even more of the self-promotion within NBC established earlier in the day. Just as viewers of Imus began the day with a promotional interview on Tim Russert's book about his father, they could get more of it in the evening on Hardball. Matthews was even more gushing than Imus had been. "Most of the time when I have to read a book for the show, you know, I do a couple of chapters . . . [but here] I'm crying." And later, "Perfect book. You can get it now."

The rest of "Hardball" was devoted to coverage of a dinner that night honoring Nancy Reagan. The discussion, this one with another NBC correspondent, Andrea Mitchell, had the self-conscious feel of talk one might imagine hearing at a celebrity Washington cocktail party. Matthews asserted that Nancy Reagan "is going to be back in circulation after tonight. . . . She is going to be around town . . . coming to events. The grieving, I guess, is getting close to over. She'll be up in New York , I'm sure."

Footnotes

1. In our 2004 study of five days of cable over 12 hours of programming, only 5% of stories were updates that contained new information. In our 2005 study, the number was 10%.
2. In a month of cable news studied in 2004, about 28% included reporter opinion (see 2005 Report), again more than in any other medium studied.
3. The only media that offered a greater percent of its newshole to those four stories was the national online Web sites, but all we studied here were the lead stories on the site (usually the top 4). Among those sites, CNN.com, in particular, tended to reflect the narrow focus of its cable channel. About six stories get substantial treatment. The rest of the news agenda is handled with AP wire copy. For newspapers, the content studied was the entire A section and the section-front stories of the metro and business.
4. The ten elements were presence of: background information, future implications, the impact of the story on citizens, a human face to the story, some separation of fact and conjecture, potential action someone could take as a citizen, potential action to take as a consumer, contact information for the journalist or news outlet, the underlying principles at play, where to go for additional information.

5. The index measured the presence of ten different elements that a story might contain. They were the presence of: background information, future implications, the impact of the story on citizens, a human face to the story, some separation of fact and conjecture, potential action someone could take as a citizen, potential action to take as a consumer, contact information for the journalist or news outlet, the underlying principles at play, where to go for additional information.

Audience

Audience

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

When it comes to the audience for cable news, four questions stand out:

Is the cable audience still growing?

How dominant is Fox News?

Can CNN still claim, ratings aside, that more people look at it over the course of a month?

Is MSNBC making any headway?

The answers heading into 2006 looked like this:

- The audience for cable news was still growing, but not by much and not across the board.
- One channel, Fox News, continued to drive the growth, while its principal rivals, MSNBC and CNN, continued to suffer ratings declines.
- CNN still leads in the number of different people who watch it over the course of the month, allowing it to maintain its claim to be a rival to Fox News.
- CNN's Headline News emerged as a new contender in the cable news landscape. It managed to surpass MSNBC to become the third most watched channel in 2005.

Underlying all these developments is the realization that cable news's natural growth may be reaching a point of saturation. Most people now have access to all three cable news channels (Fox News, MSNBC and CNN). That makes significant growth of new subscribers unlikely. And as easier broadband access makes the Internet a more attractive medium for audio-visual news, each channel will have to work harder to hold on to current audiences, let alone attract new ones.

Cable Audiences Grew, Gradually

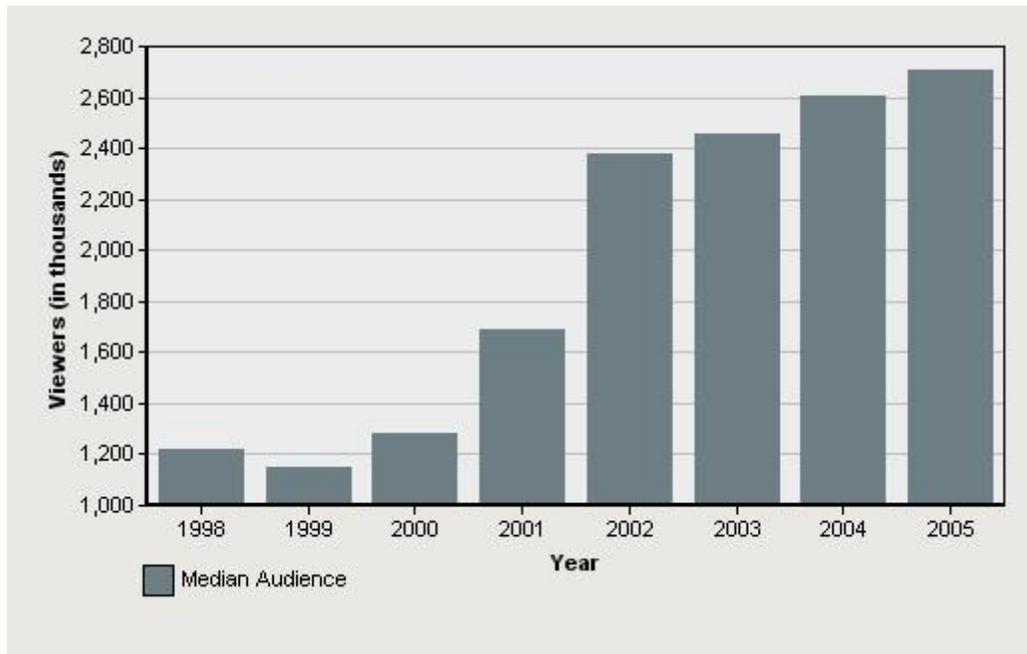
Overall viewership of cable news grew 2.8% in 2005 over 2004. That figure, new in this report, refers to the total number of people watching cable news, i.e., the sum of all viewers watching either daytime news or prime time news — or both — through the year. ¹

When viewership is divided into the two important segments of the day, prime time and daytime, the numbers reveal more significant growth in the evening, when the channels are oriented to producing “programs” rather than tracking the news of the day.

In prime time (7 p.m. to 11 p.m.), there was a 4% growth in median audience of the three main cable news channels. The number of viewers watching cable news during prime time was 2.7 million, up from 2.6 million in 2004. This builds on the 3% improvement in 2003, but falls short of the 6% growth seen in 2004. And it is a long way off from the dramatic surge in prime time median audiences in 2001 and 2002.

Cable News Prime Time Median Audience

1998 – 2005, Channels Combined



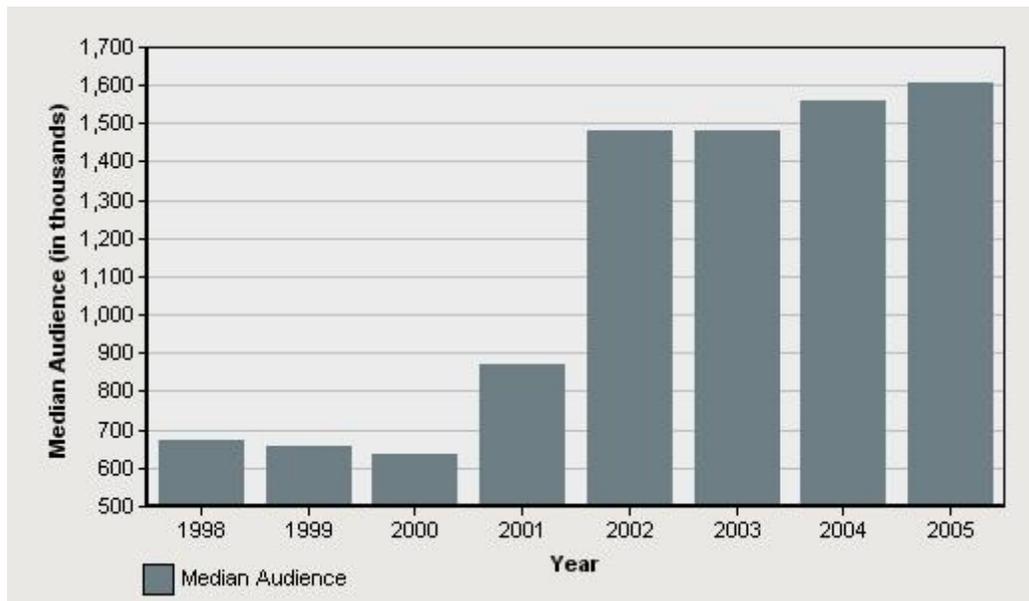
Design Your Own Chart

Source: Project for Excellence in Journalism analysis of Nielsen Media Research data, used under license

The overall growth of daytime viewership (6 a.m. to 6 p.m.) was similarly modest. In 2005, daytime median audience grew by three percent, from 1.56 million to 1.60 million viewers. That was down from the 5% growth rate in 2004 (from 1.48 million to 1.56 million).

Cable News Daytime Median Audience

1998 – 2005, Channels Combined



Design Your Own Chart

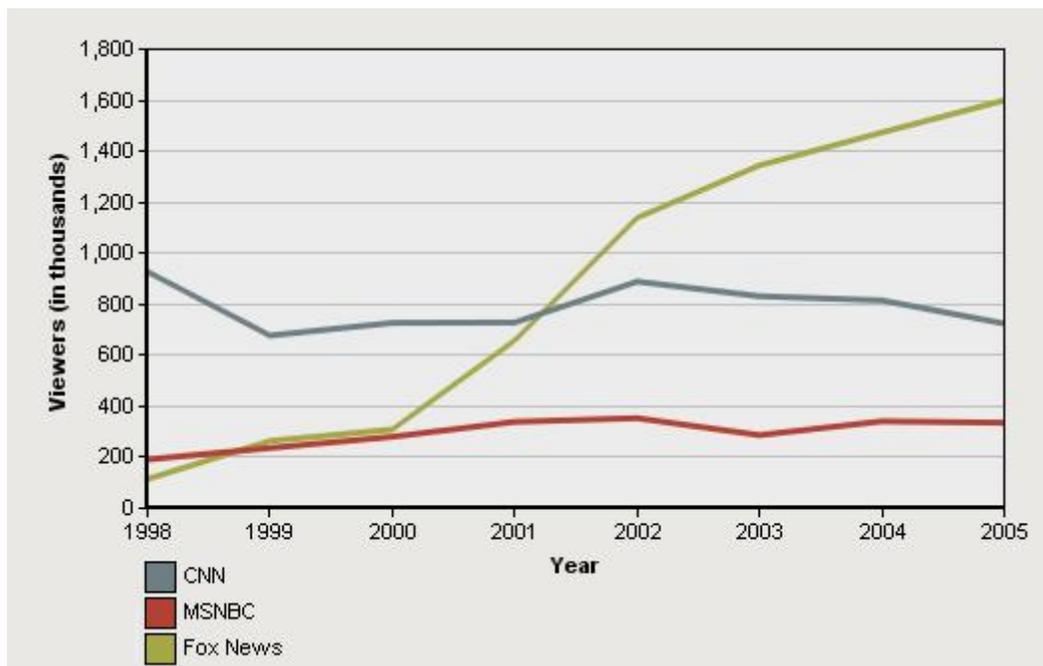
Source: Project for Excellence in Journalism analysis of Nielsen Media Research data, used under license

Only Fox News Is Growing

The overall prime time and daytime numbers, however, are deceiving, since all of the growth in viewership at the three main cable news operations was due to Fox News channel. The other channels actually saw declines in their median audience.

In prime time, Fox News's median viewership rose by 9%. CNN and MSNBC had losses of 11% and 2% respectively.

Cable News Prime Time Median Audience by Channel 1998 – 2005



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Project for Excellence in Journalism analysis of Nielsen Media Research data, used under license

In daytime, too, Fox News was responsible for most of the growth in cable; its viewership rose by 5%, while CNN recorded a loss of 7%. MSNBC also had good daytime performance, ending the year with a gain of 3%.

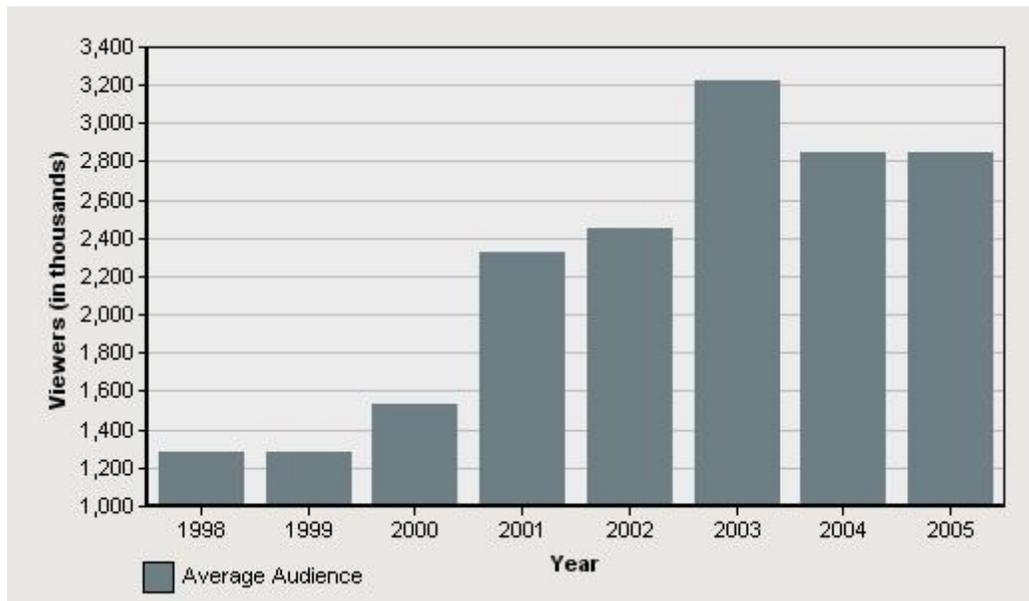
Introduced as a rival to CNN in 1996, Fox News barely competed with the cable news giant in its initial years. Between late 2000 and 2003, however, Fox News made dramatic gains to overtake not just MSNBC, but CNN as well. It emerged as the leader in the ratings race in April 2003. Since then, Fox News's ratings success shows little sign of wearing off (see Previous Reports).

Measuring the Audience

This report calculates cable ratings as median averages. Our research team believes that the median is the fairest way to try to understand the core audience for cable, given the volatility of ratings spikes during unusual news events. The cable channels themselves usually calculate their year-to-year ratings as simple averages, which are disproportionately inflated by ratings driven by major news events and exaggerate the declines in cable audiences when those spikes don't happen (See 2005 Report for fuller explanation).

If one calculates the cable ratings in 2005 by a simple average, or mean, as the cable channels do, the picture is much flatter, except for CNN. The average prime time audience over all rose less than a percent (0.2%). While CNN saw a gain of one percent, Fox News grew less than that (0.2%) and MSNBC's viewership fell by 1%.

Cable News Prime Time Audience
Average Audience, 1998 – 2005, Channels Combined



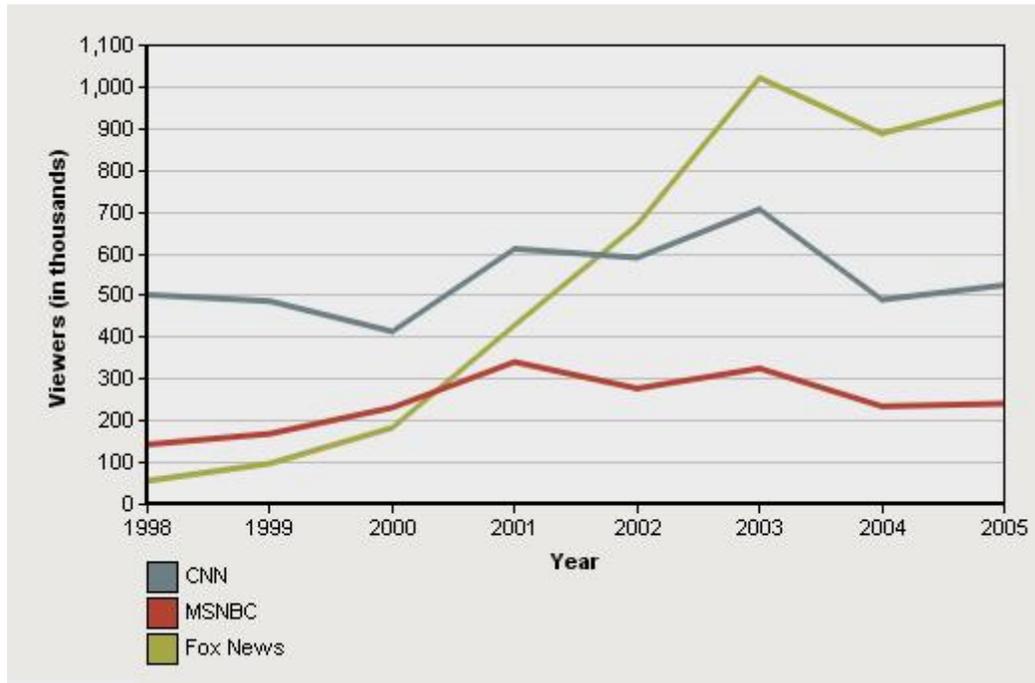
Design Your Own Chart

Source: Nielsen Media Research, used under license

In daytime, using the mean, the growth was more than that of the median audience figure and a stark turnaround from 2004. Daytime viewership grew seven percent, compared with a 21% drop in 2004. According to Nielsen Media Research, the average daytime audience for 2005 grew from 1.6 million to 1.7 million.

What's more, using the mean average, this calculation indicates that all three channels experienced growth in daytime viewers, though Fox News still gained the most. It had an increase of 9% in viewership, followed by CNN (7%) and MSNBC (3%) respectively.

Cable News Daytime Average Audience
1998 – 2005, by Channel



Design Your Own Chart

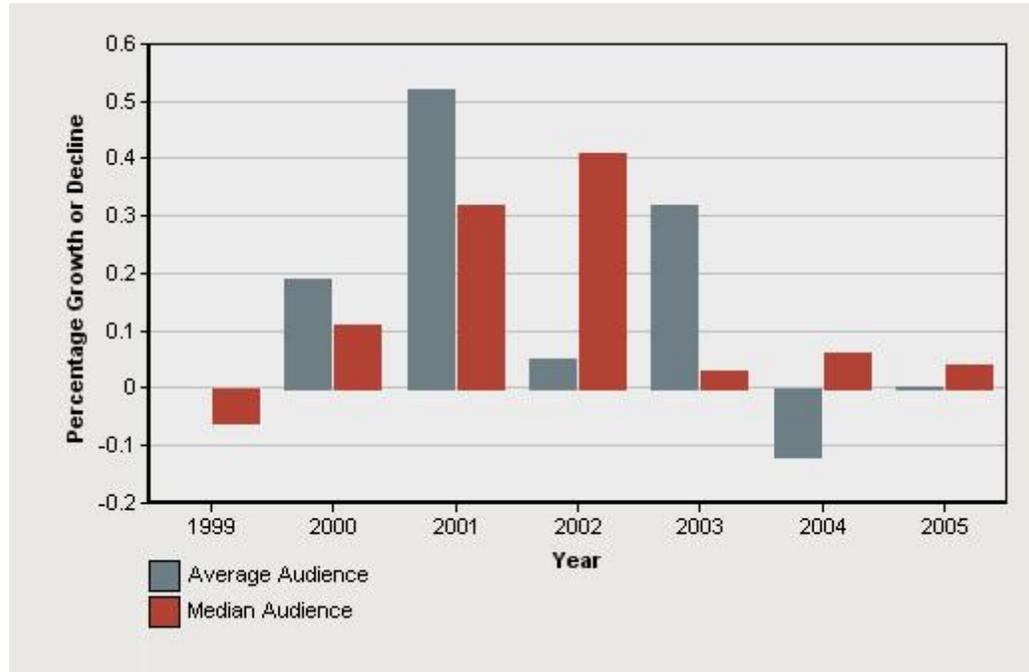
Source: Nielsen Media Research, used under license

This is a clear example of how a major news event — Katrina in this case — can alter the figures considerably. Before Katrina (looking at cable ratings from January through August), cable viewership by average measurement showed no growth in daytime audience and only moderate growth during prime time. Just adding the month of September, when Katrina occurred, sent daytime average growth soaring. Prime time also grew, though not to the same extent. By the end of the year, the audience numbers had again leveled out. But the effect of this one big story was enough to improve numbers for the year. 2

Indeed, if one uses mean, the measure that cable channels use with advertisers, the picture for CNN, whose audience fluctuates more with breaking news events, changes considerably. It changes from losing in both time periods to gaining at the same rate as Fox News — a phenomenon that in fact occurred only in one month of the year.

How do the two measures, mean versus median, fit together? One way to consider them is to look at the two over time — how much the figures for each changed year-to-year. Both prime time median audience and average audience grew rapidly in 2000 and 2001, but their paths diverged in 2002 and have remained inconsistent with each other since. The two daytime audience figures have been even more disparate over time.

Cable News Prime Time Audience Growth Annual Growth Rate, 1999 – 2005, Channels Combined



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Project for Excellence in Journalism analysis of Nielsen Media Research data, used under license

Growth in comparison with previous year

The last three years have been peppered with momentary big news events such as the start of the war in Iraq, Saddam Hussein's capture, and Hurricane Katrina, illustrating the statistical phenomenon that simple averages are skewed by a few massive spikes. It also highlights the tendency of cable audiences to tune in heavily during big breaking-news moments.

Fox Leads the Ratings Pack

By either measurement, one thing is clear: Fox News channel was the ratings leader in 2005. Wherever one looks, more than half the cable news audience was watching Fox News.

In the evenings, or prime time, an average of 1.59 million people watched Fox News in 2005, up from 1.47 million in 2004. That is more than double the 725,000 watching CNN, whose median prime time viewership dropped by 90,000, from 815,000 in 2004. MSNBC had a median prime time audience in 2005 of 335,000 viewers, slightly less than the 341,000 viewers a year earlier.

During the day, 901,500 people watched Fox News at any given moment. The median audience of CNN was less than half that number, at 448,500. Roughly half that number again watched MSNBC— 229,500 (an increase for the channel from 224,000 a year earlier).

Where did Fox News's growth come from? The evidence suggests two places.

First, Fox News has eaten into its competition's audience. Over the past four years, its share has been growing at a faster rate than the cable audience has, indicating that it is taking viewers away from the other channels.

Yet Fox's increases are greater than the losses suffered by CNN and MSNBC. So some of its growth also came from new viewers, people who were not watching cable news at all. That growth appears to derive mostly from new distribution as Fox News was added to cable systems that previously did not have access to the channel, rather than from people who chose to stop watching non-news alternatives. ³

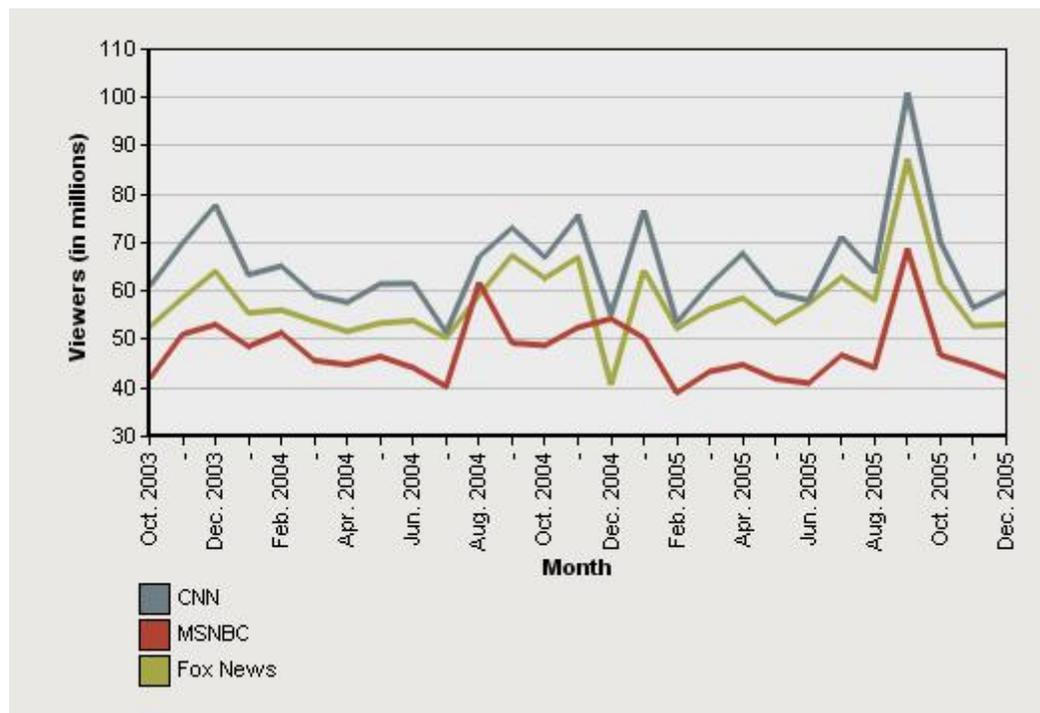
Ratings vs. Cume: CNN Still 'Unique'

Despite the ratings data, CNN has always made the argument that it is more popular over all than Fox News because more people, or unique viewers, watch it. This remained true in 2005 as well, though the gap was narrowing.

This number, called "cumulative audience" or "Cume," is different from the ratings numbers discussed above. Ratings measure how many people in total watched a channel at any given moment. Cume refers to how many different people watch the channel over time — equivalent to the online industry's "unique visitors." Viewers are counted as part of a TV channel's Cume measurement if they tune in for six minutes or longer (they are averaged over the course of a month).

CNN argues that Cume figures are better indicators of overall popularity for cable news.

Cable News Cumulative Audience
 Number of Unique Viewers, October 2003 to December 2005



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Nielsen Media Research, data provided by CNN

This problem of ratings vs. Cume was not an issue in the old days of broadcast television. In the 1960s and 1970s, most households watching TV at the news hours were watching one of the three networks, rather than myriad other channels as well. Thus, ratings and share data told us what most Americans were watching.

The argument is that in a niche landscape of hundreds of channels, when the majority of viewers are elsewhere, Cume is a measurement of the popularity of a news channel's overall brand instead of its specific programs.

Even on this measurement, 2005 gave CNN reason to be concerned. While it continued to attract more unique viewers than Fox News, the gap has narrowed slightly.

In 2005, the pattern of cumulative audience showed that on an average, CNN got about 7 million more unique viewers a month than Fox News. Comparing this to 2004, CNN's lead over Fox News has been cut in half. 4

A pair of stories illustrates CNN's unique appeal when major international news breaks. The 2005 gap between the two was very high in January after the Tsunami hit Asia. In that month, 76.8 million different people watched CNN, 12 million more than Fox News. The gap

narrowed substantially in February (a difference of a million viewers) and then peaked again in April at the time of the Pope's death and succession (a difference of nine million viewers). 5

In other words, Fox has a more loyal audience that watches for longer periods of time — what advertisers want. Yet CNN commands a larger pool of casual viewers who tune in for key news moments.

The best example of that was Hurricane Katrina. During September, when people tuned in to get news of the disaster, decidedly more people chose to get it from CNN — 100 million unique viewers, the highest viewership among all the cable channels. 6

Not only that, CNN's prime time audience more than doubled in that month (an increase of 168%) and its daytime audience more than tripled (210%) from what it was in August. Fox News's audience, on the other hand, saw only 35% growth in prime time from its August figure, and 106% growth in daytime. During September, indeed, CNN's ratings — not just cumulative audience — actually exceeded those for Fox News. 7

Prime Time Audience Growth in September 2005 Viewers in Thousands

Month	CNN	MSNBC	Fox News
August 2005	743	350	2080
September 2005	1994	816	2814
Growth	168%	133%	35%

Daytime Audience Growth in September 2005 Viewers in Thousands

Month	CNN	MSNBC	Fox News
August 2005	415	196	918
September 2005	1286	483	1894
Growth	210%	146%	106%

Source: Nielsen Media Research, used under license

Beyond Katrina, survey results also reinforce the idea that over time more unique viewers still turn to CNN, though the gap has narrowed considerably. A poll by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press in June 2005 found that 24% of Americans said they get "most of their news about national and international issues" from CNN, compared with 22% from Fox (and 7% from MSNBC).

Fox News's overall ratings success suggests that it has a deep appeal to its core audience. For CNN, the numbers suggest that it still has brand appeal, though smaller than it once had. But CNN continues to have the same problem it has had for more than a decade. People tend to view it as a utilitarian channel, something to get headlines from, rather than something that offers them distinct programs they want to watch regularly. There also may be a caution here for CNN. Might the extra people who tune in during major events also turn elsewhere if they think they can get the information faster or better from another source, especially if the Internet grows as a rival medium?

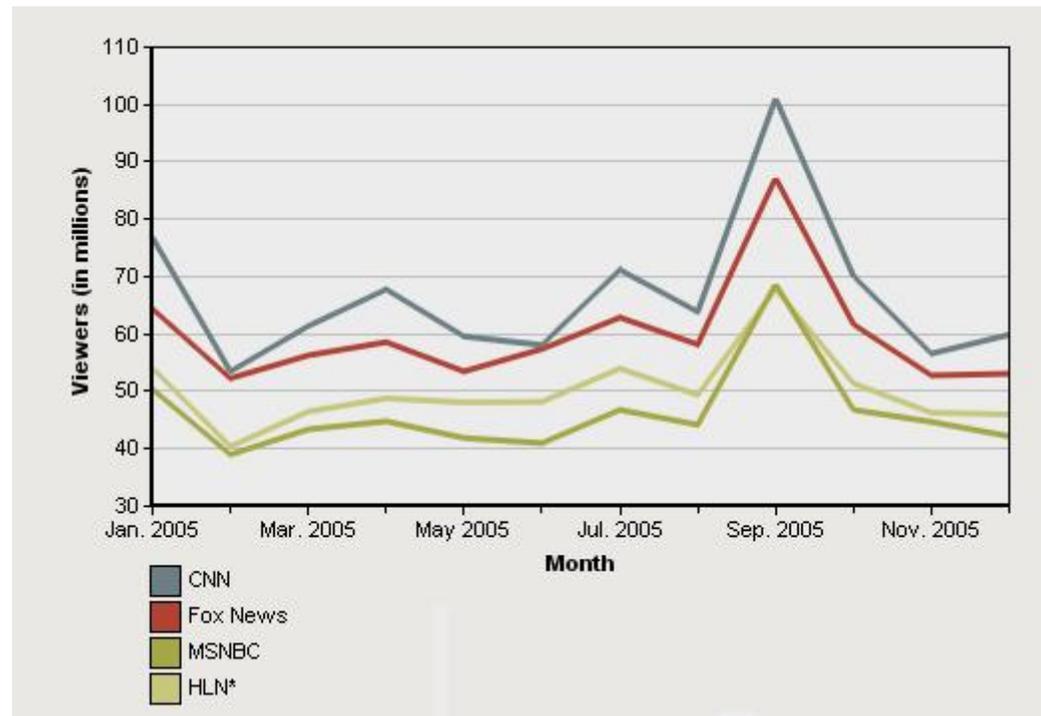
CNN Headline News

If CNN's main channel headed into 2006 concerned over its standing, its sister channel, CNN Headline News, had reason to cheer.

In 2005, Headline News overtook MSNBC in ratings and has become, for all intents and purposes, the third channel out of four rather than an afterthought. In February 2005, it replaced its typical headlines-only "wheel" format with prime time programs such as "Showbiz Tonight," an entertainment show; Nancy Grace's justice-themed interview/debate show, and "Prime News Tonight," an hour-long program that looks at the day's headlines at 9 p.m. on weeknights. By the end of that month, Headline News had passed MSNBC in ratings for both prime time and daytime viewership. It kept up the pace throughout the year, with its strongest rated shows being Nancy Grace and "Prime News Tonight." ⁸

Headline News also out-performed MSNBC in cumulative audience. According to data received from CNN, it averaged 50.1 million unique viewers per month versus MSNBC's 46.2 million in 2005. ⁹

Cable News Cumulative Audience, 2005
Number of Unique Viewers, including CNN Headline News



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Nielsen Media Research, data provided by CNN

* CNN Headline News

If the trend continues, the relationship between Headline News and CNN will be one to watch. Early statements from corporate executives suggest the channel is trying to create its own distinct identity, different from CNN and competing with Fox News. Indeed, Ken Jautz, President of CNN Headline News, was quoted as saying that "Headline News wants to look and feel very different from CNN" and that "there are no plans to use Headline News to incubate programs for CNN." 10

The Issue of Cable Saturation

In a May 2005 interview with USA Today, the media analyst Tom Wolzien suggested that the cable networks were "cannibalizing" from each other rather than winning viewers from broadcast. 11 He predicted that for cable in general, barring better programming and more investment, the size of the audience would peak in 2009. While it is too early to see if Wolzien's predictions are true, the case for a diminishing growth in new audience appears valid. Even Fox News's ability to attract new viewers may diminish as cable systems reach their distribution limits.

According to Nielsen Media Research-NTI, which releases this trend for each January, the total number of cable households in the U.S. as a percentage of all TV-owning households has barely increased in the last five years. The percentage has fluctuated between 67.5% and 69.8% since 2001, barely a 2% difference. ¹²

Cable Households in the U.S.

Wired Cable Households in Thousands, January of each year

Year	Cable Households	Percentage of TV Owning Households
2001	69,490	68.0
2002	73,230	69.4
2003	74,430	69.8
2004	73,860	68.1
2005	73,930	67.5

Source: Nielsen Media Research-NTI, accessed from www.tvb.org

CONCLUSION

CNN Headline News's success in 2005 is worth considering. It represents the first audience gains CNN has enjoyed after several years of decline. It raises a series of related questions.

Will the network follow through on its vision of two distinct personalities? If so, how different will they be? How close to the edge do CNN managers feel they can go with a particular show in prime time to get ratings? Would they go as far toward political opinion as Bill O'Reilly? Would they go as far toward tabloid as Nancy Grace?

Critics on the left and many in the mainstream dismiss or at least criticize Fox News as being one-sided. As the Atlanta Journal Constitution put it, "Detractors boil down Fox's rise to a perceived pandering to a disaffected segment of society — read: white middle class — weary of U.S.-bashing here and abroad. They are eager to pin the scarlet letter C, for conservative, on the lapels of on-air personalities, beneath the tiny American flags that a few wear." ¹³

Our content analysis in past years suggested that Fox News's allure was much more complicated than that. First, the style of its anchors and correspondents is more informal than those of other newscasts. Their language is more conversational. Fox News also has a faster pace and uses sound and graphics differently. Those are all stylistic differences that do not have to do with political ideology.

Other differences in style are more political. Fox's on-air staff people refer to themselves as clearly American. U.S. troops are often "our troops," and America is "we." That is certainly not a traditional style for news reporting, and it is beyond debate that Fox News is an American channel. Correspondents and anchors on Fox News are also more prone, than those

elsewhere, to offer opinions, but often on non-controversial issues. For instance, we found in our content analysis last year that anchors might say a higher percentage of Iraqi-led soldiers in military actions is “a good thing”.¹⁴ That, indeed, is the stated policy of the U.S. and is not an issue in dispute in American policy circles.

CNN, on the other hand, has tried to position itself as an international network, and has always avoided the kind of language Fox News uses. Its success in attaining a non-American image, though, is more questionable. There is little doubt, for instance, that the BBC is a British broadcast. Similarly, foreign journalists say that people think of CNN as clearly American.

Those are not the only differences between Fox News and its rivals. We found in our content analysis last year, for instance, that Fox was more likely to air stories that were positive in tone about the Iraq war than either MSNBC or CNN.¹⁵

Whatever the mix, however, Fox’s appeal is most likely attributable to a number of factors, and a key one is that it has had more success in developing distinct programs built around distinct anchors. Here, CNN and MSNBC are trying to play catch-up. The topic agenda among the three cable news channels is roughly identical.¹⁶

Footnotes

1. Adding up viewers of all three networks in 2004 for both prime time and daytime gave us 5.35 million viewers. The same calculation in 2005 resulted in 5.50 million viewers (Nielsen Media Research data for January to December 2004 and January to December 2005).
2. Annual figures until August 2005 showed a .3% decline in daytime audience and 6% growth in prime time. In September, however, daytime audiences shot up by 12%, while prime time rose by 8%. By December 2005, the daytime average leveled out to 7%, while prime time fell to .2%. Thus, Katrina led to a sharp increase in averages for September, and when the story died down, the averages dipped back down. The dip was especially steep for prime time averages. (Source: Nielsen Media Research)
3. Between 2000 and 2004, Fox News extended its reach on cable systems by almost 40 million subscribers. CNN, which had reached its distribution potential (already carried on most cable systems), gained only 10 million more potential subscribers over those four years.
4. In 2004, CNN averaged 15 million more unique viewers per month than Fox News. Cume is based on mean average, not median, but the fact that CNN leads each month does suggest that its advantage here is not based just on big stories. (Source: Nielsen Media Research, data provided by CNN)
5. CNN posted steep viewer losses during the month of February 2005, slipping 21% in prime time and 16% in daytime. It even lost in the key 25-54 demographic to third-place MSNBC during the speech. That, however, could be accounted for by the fact that the audience watching the State of the Union address is heavily Republican and inclined toward Fox News.

The pattern was repeated during the State of the Union Address in 2006 — Fox News had the highest viewership among all the cable channels. See Michael Learmonth, “CNN Flops in February as Fox News Surges,” *Daily Variety*, March 2, 2005. Also see Michael Learmonth, “Fox Nets Record Aud for Prexy Speech: State of the Union address draws in 6.46 million viewers,” *Daily Variety*, February 1, 2006.

6. Fox News recorded 87 million unique visitors that month while MSNBC had 69 million. (Source: Nielsen Media Research, data provided by CNN)

7. Survey data about Katrina reinforce the Cume data. A Pew poll in September found that 31% of Americans said they were “getting most” of their “news about the disaster” from CNN, while 22% cited Fox, 9% MSNBC. CNN, then, alone commanded nearly the same percentage as all the three broadcast networks, ABC, CBS and NBC, combined (network news got 34% while local news got 19%). Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, “Two in three critical of Bush’s relief efforts,” Pew Research Center , September 8, 2005 . (Respondents could cite more than one news source) Online at: <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=255>

8. Toni Fitzgerald, “CNN Headline News topples MSNBC,” *Media Life Magazine*, March 31, 2005.

9. This report separates the two CNN channels in audience analysis because Nielsen Media Research, which aggregates data on audience figures, provides figures for each channel individually.

10. Toni Fitzgerald, “CNN Headline News topples MSNBC,” *Media Life Magazine*, March 31, 2005.

11. “Desperate No More? Networks See a Rebound in Viewers,” *The Wall Street Journal*, May 25, 2005 . Wolzien has since left the investment firm Sanford C. Bernstein & Company Inc., to semi-retire and start a consulting practice, Wolzien LLC. John Eggerton, “Wolzien Exiting Sanford Bernstein”, *Broadcasting & Cable*, July 15, 2005 .

12. “Cable and VCR Households,” *TV Basics: Online Brochure*, Media Trends Track, Research Central, Television Bureau of Advertising (TVB) Web site.

13. Mike Tierney, “Fox now the big dog in cable news — and growing,” *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, September 9, 2005 .

14. See 2005 Annual Report: Cable TV, Content Analysis (‘Differences among cable channels’).

15. *Ibid.*

16. See 2004 and 2005 Annual Reports.

Economics

Economics

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

The financial picture of cable news continued to show Fox News gaining ground on CNN, with MSNBC not performing as well as analysts had projected. Among the major trends of 2005:

- CNN remained cable news's financial leader in profits, revenues and expenses, but Fox News continued to narrow the gap.
- Fox News's profits, revenues and expenses rose significantly. The increase in expenses was a new development this year that suggested that the channel was building its infrastructure.
- CNN also saw both revenues and expenses rise, though neither to the degree of Fox News.
- The full economic benefit of the audience successes for Fox News will be truly gauged only after 2006, when the channel renegotiates and presumably increases many of its license-fee and advertising contracts.
- MSNBC continued to lag behind the other channels. Contrary to financial predictions, it made very little profit in 2004 and was expected to barely break even in 2005.

Over all, the cable news channels were projected to have a healthy 2005. ¹ They began the year with profits and were projected to earn higher incomes through a combination of cost-cutting and growth in revenues.

Profits

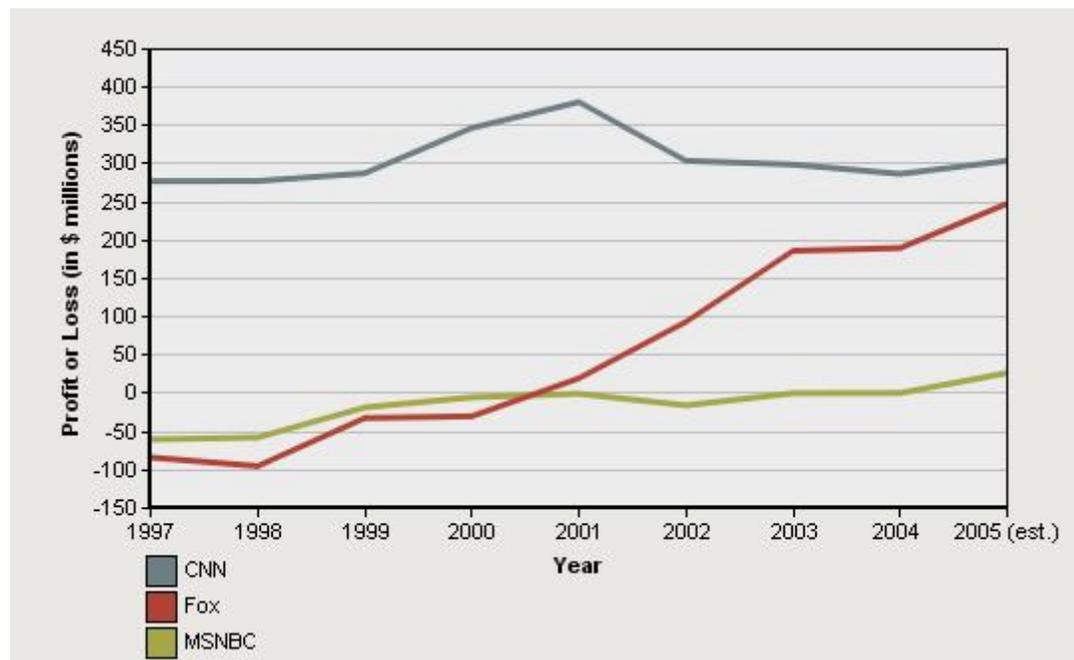
The cable news business continues to be a profitable one. Taken together, the three cable news channels were projected to earn \$579 million in pre-tax profits. That was a jump of 21% from 2004, when they generated \$478 million. ²

CNN was projected to remain the most profitable channel in 2005, but Fox News continued to close the gap.

According to Kagan Research, the market research firm, CNN was projected to generate operating profits of \$304 million in 2005, up 6% from the \$287 million it earned in 2004. The number includes CNN and CNN Headline News, but none of the other CNN affiliated outlets. ³

Fox News, on the other hand, was expected to jump 31% in 2005, to \$248 million from \$190 million in 2004.

Cable News Profitability 1997 – 2005, by Channel



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Kagan Research, "Economics of Basic Cable Networks 2006", June 2005

If those estimates hold true, CNN's profits would be \$56 million more than those of Fox News in 2005. A year earlier, CNN had a lead of \$97 million. Fox News would have narrowed the gap by 42% in a single year.

From losing \$30 million in 2000, Fox News was now expected to make more than \$200 million in pre-tax profits for News Corp. As it approaches its tenth anniversary, Fox News appears well positioned for an extended run, and bigger gains are expected in 2006 as it finally renegotiates those disadvantageous licensing contracts.

MSNBC, in turn, was projected to turn a profit of \$26.8 million in 2005, its first meaningful profit in its history. Yet past projections for MSNBC have proven overly optimistic. In 2004, Kagan Research projected that the network would earn \$32 million in profit; it earned only \$600,000. It will be important to keep an account of how it actually performs in 2005 vis-à-vis expectations.

Revenues and Expenses

To understand those profit estimates more clearly, it is necessary to take a closer look at revenues and expenses of each of the news channel operations. When we do so, one can see more fully the nature of Fox News's growth.

For 2005, analysts were predicting that Fox News's revenues would grow at four times the rate of CNN. At the same time, expenses were also expected to grow at four times CNN's. Putting revenue dollars back into the product normally

points to a long-term interest in building the business. Some of that is visible in Fox News's 2005 spending (see Cable News Investment).

Kagan Research projected in July that Fox News's revenues would grow 21% in 2005, to \$614.8 million, from the \$507 million they earned in 2004. The picture for total expenses (or investment) is similar. Fox News's expenses, which were less than half of CNN's previously, were projected to increase almost 16% in 2005, to \$366.6 million, from \$316.5 million in 2004.

CNN's totals are still higher than Fox News, but its increases in 2005 were projected to be smaller. Kagan projected that CNN would bring in \$878.2 million in total revenue in 2005, an increase of less than 5% over 2004 (\$839.2 million). 4

CNN's lead in sheer dollars at least partly reflects the fact that it draws on a larger infrastructure than both Fox News and MSNBC. Its resources include the news bureaus it owns and operates around the world and its sibling channel, Headline News (see Cable Ownership). Kagan Research's data for CNN include both CNN and CNN Headline News because the two channels are sold to advertisers and distributors as a package. 5

Such a scale of operations also has implications for costs. Kagan Research projected that CNN would have \$574 million in total expenses in 2005, a 4% increase over the \$552 million it spent in 2004.

CNN spends a slightly larger share of its revenue, 65%, to cover expenses than does Fox News, at 60%. Thus not only was CNN's percentage growth in revenue less than the growth for Fox, but it has a bigger cost structure to support — one of the biggest costs being its overseas bureaus, something that Fox News has kept to a minimum.

MSNBC — an Afterthought?

MSNBC remained the perennial also-ran of cable news in 2005. Not only were its revenues comparatively small, but whatever profit it was expected to make would come largely from cost-cutting.

According to Kagan Research, MSNBC would take in \$261 million in total revenues in 2005, an increase of 13.6 million. Expenses were projected to be \$234.6 million, down \$12.5 million from \$247 million in 2004.

If accurate, those projections would leave MSNBC with a \$26.8 million profit, largely from cutting costs.

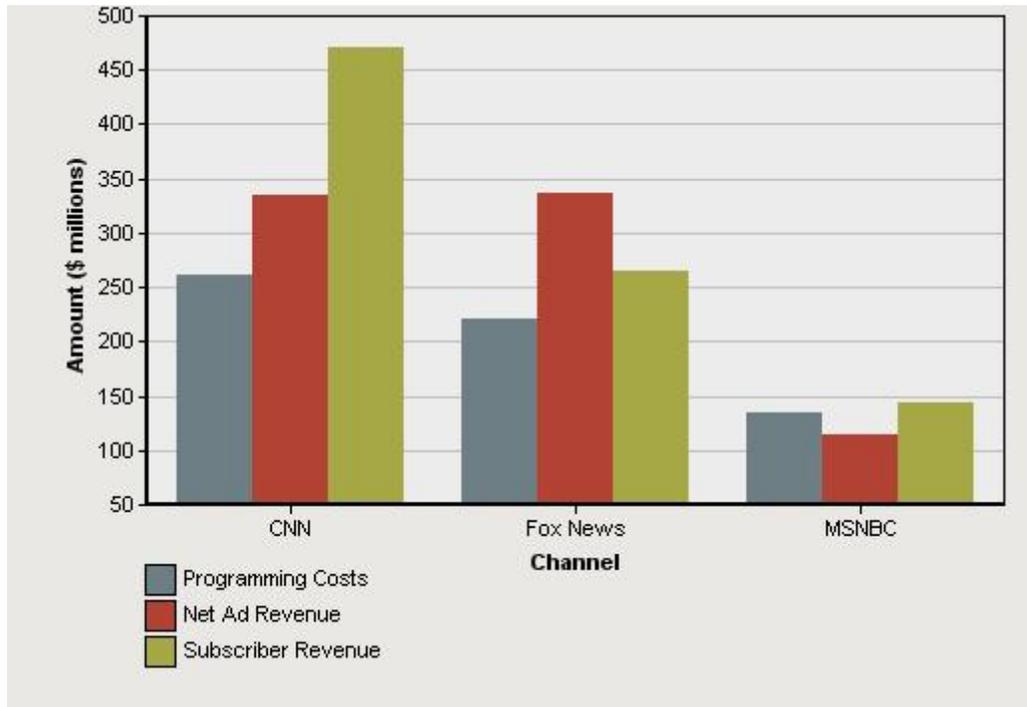
A year earlier, though, Kagan Research had estimated that MSNBC would earn a profit of \$32 million on revenues of \$286 million. The projection proved too optimistic. The news channel instead turned a profit of \$600,000 on revenues of \$248 million.

Revenue Streams

To fund operations, cable networks depend on two revenue streams: advertising and license fees, money paid by the cable systems that carry the channel. The fees are negotiated on a per-subscriber basis irrespective of how many subscribers happen to watch the channel. Most cable channels market toward specific niches, and cable news's sales pitch to potential advertisers has been that news appeals to just such a specific population demographic — well-educated and affluent people. This niche positioning largely determines advertising rates. The sales pitch to cable channels has been the indispensable nature of the content: no subscriber would seriously consider not having a 24-hour news option.

Historically, cable news channels fall between general-interest cable channels and broadcast networks in how much they can charge advertisers. On one hand, their rates can't be as high as those of the broadcast networks because cable channels have such a narrow target demographic. On the other hand, they do compete with general-interest cable channels (with much larger audiences) because news consumers are seen as a hard audience to reach through television.

Cable News Revenues & Expenses, 2005



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Kagan Research, "Economics of Basic Cable Networks 2006", June 2005

CNN figures include CNN Headline News, except subscriber revenue

Advertising Revenues

Even with overall audience growth slowing, market researchers continue to be bullish about cable's financial prospects. Kagan Research predicted that cable networks as a whole had rebounded from their advertising market downturn following the 2001 recession and were poised for "double-digit growth as far as the eye can see." 6

CNN, the first cable news channel, has always received the most advertising revenues, 7 but 2005 was expected to see the first shift in the balance of power: Estimates were that Fox News's advertising revenues would surpass CNN's. Indeed, in June 2005, media reports on the "spring upfront" season (the annual springtime period when advertisers buy commercials for the rest of the year) said news channels were able to increase their ad revenue commitments, with Fox News at the higher end of the scale. 8

The report was supported by the projections released by Kagan Research. They estimated that Fox News would make \$336.1 million in advertising revenue, a leap of 31% from \$257 million in 2004. CNN was projected to make less — \$334.9 million, up just under 6% from 2004 (\$317 million).

Net Ad Revenue of Cable Channels
2000 – 2005, in \$ Millions

Channel	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005 (est.)
CNN	412.8	445.9	359.8	399.2	317.4	334.9
Fox News	51.2	59.9	109.8	208.6	257	336.1
MSNBC	138.8	115.7	98.4	113.1	111	114.7

Source: Kagan Research, "Economics of Basic Cable Networks 2006," Kagan Research, LLC, June 2005 (Net Ad Revenue refers to revenue generated by a network after discounting the commission that goes to ad agencies)

Thus, Fox News's ad revenue growth was projected to be more than four times that of CNN. While both channels were expected to increase ad revenues, Fox News was expected to see an increase of \$79 million, versus a much smaller \$17.5 million increase for CNN.

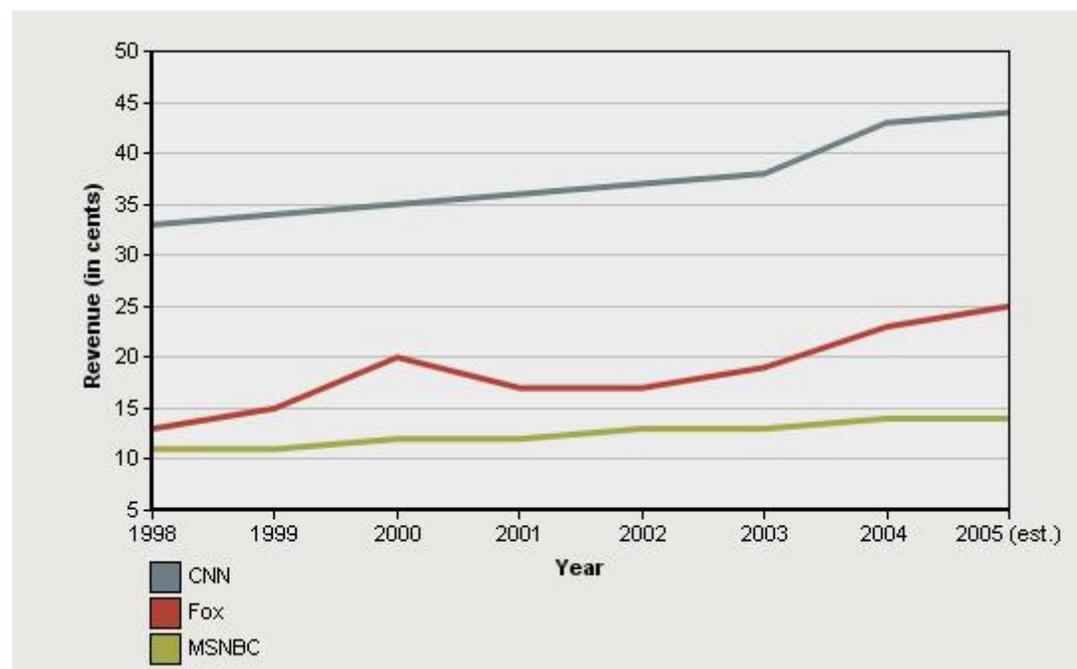
Also, for the first time ever, Fox News was expected to bring in more total advertising dollars than CNN. While the lead is small (just \$2 million), it may mark an important shift in industry dynamics. CNN's historical position of being the most lucrative news channel for advertisers may quickly erode as they become attracted to Fox News's growing audience numbers.

License Fees

CNN is losing the lead position it traditionally occupied in license fees, too.

License fee contracts are usually long-term — even up to ten years, as in the case of Fox News. In 2005, that meant Fox News was still locked into contracts it signed when it launched in 1996. Consequently, the revenue per subscriber it received was far less than CNN's. In 2005, CNN was expected to receive an average of 44 cents and Fox News 25 cents per subscriber per month — a marginal difference of one cent more per subscriber for CNN from the previous year and two cents more for Fox News. Based on those rates, Kagan Research projected a total increase for the year in license fee revenues of \$16.4 million for CNN and \$27.8 million for Fox News. 9

Cable News Monthly Revenue per Subscriber 1997 – 2005, by Channel



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Kagan Research, "Economics of Basic Cable Networks 2006", June 2005

Negotiations with cable distributors for the 2006 contracts are certainly in Fox News's favor. Industry sources told the trade publication *Multichannel News* that the licensing fee of 23 to 25 cents per subscriber as of October 2005 could quadruple to \$1 a month — a potentially astonishing increase in the current climate. The thinking is that in the face of competition from News Corp.'s own satellite TV provider DirecTV and potential new entrants like SBC and Verizon, cable operators are not likely to want to drop Fox News, even at four times the price. ¹⁰

News Corp.'s purchase of DirecTV in 2004 has proved a boon for Fox News. It is no longer dependent on the cable system of Time-Warner, CNN's sister company, for distribution in key markets. The purchase also gives the news channel leverage over cable operators in general. ¹¹

At MSNBC, \$114.7 million in 2005 would come from advertising, an increase of \$3.6 million. That is a better picture than in 2004, when its advertising revenue of \$111 million reflected a loss of about \$12 million over 2003.

The rest of the revenue increases would come from license fees. MSNBC's license fee revenues have been generally stable. In 2005, the channel was expected to generate \$9.7 million more in subscriber revenues, making a total of \$144.2 million, up from \$134.5 million in 2004.

MSNBC has always argued that its revenue figures must also be seen in the context of advertisers who are buying time on both MSNBC and NBC News programs under package deals. The news channel has the advantage of drawing on parent NBC's extensive news operations, which helps the news division as a whole amortize expenses. In reality,

though, that has done little to paint a solid financial picture for the channel standing alone. The NBC news division as a whole is profitable.

There is no denying that MSNBC must improve its finances if it is to remain a viable player in the cable news market. It will be worth keeping an eye out for what impact the changes in management will have on the channel in 2006.

Footnotes

1. Financial data for 2005 are estimates or projections, since actual annual figures for a year are only available in the next year. Accurate 2005 data will be released in mid-2006.
2. Figures from Kagan Research, "Economics of Basic Cable Networks 2006," Kagan Research, LLC, June 2005, www.kagan.com
3. CNN has more than a dozen affiliated channels (including CNN international and CNN airport network; see list in Cable TV News Investment section). Kagan figures presented in this chapter do not include any of those. They include economic data for CNN/U.S. and CNN Headline News only.
4. In its January 9, 2006 issue, the trade publication Broadcasting & Cable released its analysis of the top revenue earners. Its numbers were much lower than those estimated by Kagan. It reported that in 2005, CNN earned revenue of \$794 million (it wasn't stated whether that included CNN Headline News) and that Fox News earned \$574 million.
5. This report separates the two CNN channels in audience analysis because Nielsen Media Research, which aggregates data on audience figures, provides figures for each one individually.
6. News Brief, "Kagan: cable has recovered, will grow at double-digit rates," October 3, 2005 , Media Post Web site. Online at: <http://publications.mediapost.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=Articles.san&s=34735&Nid=15794&p=327979>
7. In January 2002, when Fox News first matched CNN in viewership, its ad rates were roughly half of CNN's. See James L. Levre "The Fox News channel tops CNN's audience, and casts its eyes toward its advertising rates", the New York Times, January 30, 2002.
8. "The latest upfront news is, well, news," Media Daily News, June 14, 2005.
9. CNN was projected to make \$470.8 million, up from \$454.4 million in 2004. Fox news was projected to make \$264.2 million, increasing from \$236.4 million in 2004. (Source: Kagan Research, "Economics of Basic Cable Networks 2006," Kagan Research, LLC, June 2005)
10. R. Thomas Umstead, "Large Rate Hikes by Fox , USA ," Multichannel News, October 31, 2005 .
11. John Dempsey, "The Fox ripple effect," Variety, March 13, 2005 .

Ownership

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

The three cable news channels are all owned by media conglomerates, and all have corporate siblings heavily involved in other media sectors, from broadcast networks and local TV stations (all three), to newspapers (News Corp.), to magazines (Time Warner) and movie studios (all three). Yet each plays a very different role inside its corporate structure.

Time Warner Company & CNN

The Time Warner Company is CNN's umbrella corporation. ¹ It classifies its business operations into five reportable segments: AOL, Cable, Filmed Entertainment, Publishing, and Networks. Within the networks, there are three main groups — the Warner Bros. television network (WB), Home Box Office (HBO), and Turner Broadcasting System Inc. (Turner Networks). The CNN brand is in the last group, Turner Networks. CNN has a number of siblings or subsidiaries that profit from the CNN brand built by the news channel. ²

Over the years, some critics have argued that the brand identity is losing value, and commented on what one described as “CNN's endless struggle to come up with a single, durable style of presenting the news.” ³ In 2005, recognizing that significant changes were necessary to retain viewers and win over new ones in the face of stiff competition, CNN seemed to be trying to re-establish the brand. The year saw changes in management, programming and on-air talent.

In management, Jim Walton, head of the CNN news group since 2003, brought in Jonathan Klein, a former CBS executive and then head of the Internet news venture FeedRoom Inc., to take over as CEO of CNN in December 2004. Among his changes, Klein introduced new shows, focused on on-air talent and made changes to programming (see Cable TV News Investment). It is too soon to evaluate how much headway has been made, but many critics saw Klein's actions in 2005 as confusing and were not very optimistic about 2006. As one critic put it, “CNN keeps changing people, programs and news executives these days in moves that confuse its audience and aren't making much headway in helping the network catch up with the Fox News Channel.” ⁴

News Corp. & the Fox News Channel

News Corp. calls itself a diversified entertainment company, and reports its operations under eight major businesses — Filmed Entertainment, Television, Cable Network Programming, Direct Broadcast Satellite Television, Magazines & Inserts, Newspapers, Book Publishing, and Other Services. It has a strong presence in the U.S. local television market (Fox Broadcasting and 35 local stations), broadcast satellite television (DirecTV), and cable programming (Fox News channel, Fox Cable networks).

Within the cable network division of News Corp., Fox News plays a much larger role than either CNN or MSNBC are playing in their parent groups. Not only has it become the most watched cable news channel in the U.S., it is also the most successful of News Corp.'s American cable channels, which include FX, Fox regional sports networks, and the Fox Movie channel.

The year also saw News Corp. undergo its own internal political drama. Rupert Murdoch's eldest son, Lachlan, quit his executive posts in late July 2005. Published reports indicated that clashes between father and son, over Rupert Murdoch's hands-on involvement and Lachlan's role in the company, contributed to the resignation. ⁵ But the business's immediate finances were not depressed by the departure. In August 2005, the company reported that revenues had risen 12 percent and net income 67 percent for the quarter at the Fox movie and cable network divisions.

Net income was reported to be 22 cents a share, compared to 15 cents a share in the previous year, and well ahead of analysts' expectations. 6

Roger E. Ailes, chairman of Fox News Channel since its inception, was given the additional title of chairman of Fox Television Stations. His deputy at Fox News, Jack Abernathy, had been made CEO a year earlier, in 2004. Those changes at the management level reflected the growing influence that Ailes, commonly acknowledged to be the reason for Fox News channel's successes, has in News Corp. He now reports directly to Peter Chernin, CEO and president of Fox Television. Indeed, according to a New York Times article in August 2005, his influence in the organization almost parallels Chernin's. 7

In October 2005, Sharri Berg, considered a close Ailes loyalist, was promoted to a newly created job of senior vice president of news operations for Fox television stations. She also kept her job as vice president of news operations at Fox News. In her dual role, she is expected to ensure collaboration and operational synergy between the cable news channel, the local news stations, and the larger Twentieth Century Television.

The management changes also emphasize the focus News Corp. has on its U.S. news business, where it hopes to emulate the success of the cable channel in the local television market. As Media Week magazine put it, "Just as Fox shook up cable news, Fox's TV stations group is looking to reinvent local television" (see Local TV Ownership). 8 Ailes's appointment and those of his team indicate that News Corp. considers Fox News a centerpiece and hopes to leverage its resources and strengths for its local programming strategy.

Unlike its competitors, Fox News does not have an international service. 9 It offers only its domestic channel, which is distributed in some form in 71 countries. Its news distribution service is called Fox NewsEdge. 10 In 2005, the executives at Fox News got more aggressive about distribution in other countries, branding theirs as the only "American" news network with worldwide distribution. That was in contrast to CNN International, which bases a significant portion of its foreign news operations in the regions where they are aired.

According to News Corp.'s annual report, released in June 2005, it had had some success in its global effort. Fox News, the report indicated, had secured new international distribution deals with cable systems in Germany, Iceland, Colombia, El Salvador, Japan, Mongolia, and Singapore. The Canadian government had also approved the distribution of Fox News.

MSNBC

NBC and Microsoft caught the industry by surprise when, at the end of December 2005, they quietly announced that NBC was in fact taking over a controlling interest in MSNBC. Microsoft divested itself of its stake in the cable network, but continued to keep its interest in the news Web site. 11

The Microsoft-NBC deal was a 99-year arrangement that began in 1996. Since the network's launch, both companies had been equal financial partners in the venture. Now, NBC will have 82% stake, with the option to acquire the remaining stake after two years.

The split had been anticipated for some time and spotlights both the strained partnership between the two companies and the dismal performance of the cable channel against its competition. Media reports have contemplated that NBC might take the opportunity now to change the network, possibly giving it a new name (removing the 'MS' that stands for

Microsoft). Steve Capus, President of NBC News, announced in a statement that he hoped to “fully integrate MSNBC into the NBC News family.”¹²

MSNBC is distinct from the other two cable news channels in that it develops programming simultaneously for both television (MSNBC-TV) and the Internet (MSNBC.com). Having premiered the same year as Fox News, 1996, MSNBC began with a bang — 22 million subscribers, the biggest subscriber base ever for a new cable service. In the years since, however, it has not made much headway.¹³

MSNBC uses the newsgathering resources of NBC News and its huge network of affiliate stations, which have the option of providing their own local news and information inserts. In terms of management, NBC News maintains editorial control over the content of both MSNBC-TV and MSNBC.com. It manages the TV channel on its own, while the Web site is jointly managed by both Microsoft and NBC.

NBC itself is a subsidiary of General Electric, which acquired it in 1985. The step was viewed as a way for GE to diversify, and a safety valve of sorts during times when the company’s typical industrially oriented operations struggled. In 2003, GE and Vivendi Universal signed a deal to create NBC Universal. That division owns the NBC Network, the Universal movie studios and the cable channels MSNBC, CNBC, USA, Sci-Fi, and Bravo. In 2005, NBC Universal accounted for about 9% of GE’s sales and 13 percent of its profits. But its performance has suffered in recent years, and profits for 2005 were expected to be flat — though unlikely to hamper GE’s overall results significantly.

CNBC, the niche business news channel run by NBC Universal, was launched in 1989. CNBC and its international versions cover business headlines and financial markets. In the U.S. CNBC provides business news programming from 4 a.m. to 8 p.m. (ET), with the evening and early morning hours (when the markets are closed) populated with talk shows (such as “Squawk Box” and the Chris Matthews show), investigative reports, infomercials and other programs.

CNBC has operated international versions of its channel since 1995, when CNBC Asia launched. CNBC Europe followed in 1996. Altogether, CNBC reaches about 230 million households in more than 100 countries. (The Dow Jones Company sold its 50% stake in CNBC Europe and CNBC Asia to NBC in January 2006.)¹⁴

At the parent division, NBC and MSNBC have had internal turmoil as well. Neal Shapiro, president of NBC News, resigned in September 2005 and was replaced by Steve Capus that November. Rick Kaplan, a former ABC and CNN executive, had been in charge of MSNBC since early 2004. Kaplan named Bill Wolff, who was largely responsible for the Tucker Carlson Show, vice president for prime time programming in September 2005 as well.

MSNBC launched an intensive marketing campaign in December 2005. It was one of its most expensive (reported to cost just under \$1 million) and concentrated campaigns based solely on the Internet. The channel bought up all the advertising slots on one day at three major Internet news sites — Newsweek, Washington Post and Slate — in addition to buying up keywords on Google and space on more than 800 blogs.¹⁵

From a financial standpoint, MSNBC is a useful outlet for NBC expenses, especially given the range of its news operations. For example, during the national political conventions and coverage of the Athens Olympics in 2004, MSNBC served as an extra channel for coverage. Thus, NBC News makes the most of its resources by producing material for not only NBC network news and MSNBC simultaneously, but also for its owned-and-operated NBC and Telemundo stations as well.

In an interview in November 2005, Steve Capus noted that while management was happy about the gains MSNBC made in 2005 it was “not satisfied,” and that there remained “some questions about the overall definition of the channel.”¹⁶

The BBC Factor

In 2004, there was much speculation that BBC, the other English-speaking news operation that already operates a cable network in the U.S., wanted to start an American cable news channel. BBC America, its foray into the overall American cable market, whose programming includes half-hour BBC World news programs, doubled its viewership in the first seven years it was on the air, 1998 to 2004. It was that reception that led to the expectation of a wholehearted BBC move into the U.S. cable news market.¹⁷

In 2005, BBC World secured a three-hour block on BBC America, replacing the half-hour reports. As Jeff Hazell, BBC World’s director of distribution and business development put it, “The U.S. is a major focus for us, and this new agreement with BBC America demonstrates BBC World News’s commitment to... audiences in the U.S. We also hope this... will help us further increase the U.S. audience’s demand for the BBC World News channel 24/7.”¹⁸

BBC would have many advantages as a new American channel. First, none of the others could compete with it in sheer newsgathering muscle. It has 41 bureaus outside the British Isles (including six in the U.S.), while CNN has 26 non-U.S. bureaus; Fox News and MSNBC have fewer than 10 apiece.¹⁹ In addition, its news style is not built on show hosts and anchors but rather on content — which would potentially distinguish it for American viewers. It uses a wheel of half-hour newscasts with traditional reported packages interwoven with half-hour feature programming rather than a continuously updated live news format. In other words, BBC could position itself as a high-end-demographic cable alternative (adding even more pressure on CNN, which has tried hard to convince advertisers that it is the elite cable news brand of choice).²⁰

The main obstacle in BBC’s way remains getting clearances in the face of fierce competition for spots on cable system lineups, particularly from Time Warner Cable (CNN’s corporate sibling) and DirecTV (Fox News’ sibling). The process could prove daunting even despite its existing partnership with Discovery Networks. Discovery, which arranges distribution of BBC America in the U.S. , is in turn partially owned by Cox, the fourth-largest American cable provider.²¹

Footnotes

1. Time Warner was created in 1990 by the merger of Time Inc. and Warner Communications. That company acquired Ted Turner’s Turner Broadcasting System in 1996. It merged with AOL in 2000, making it one of the world’s biggest media conglomerates.
2. These include, apart from CNN US, CNN Headline News, CNN International, CNN en Espanol, CNN Radio, CNN en Espanol Radio, CNN NewsSource, CNN.com, CNN Money.com, CNN Studentnews.com, CNN Airport Network, CNN to go, and CNN Mobile. (Time Warner Annual Report, 2004)
3. See Jon Freidman, “Happy Birthday CNN. Now form an identity,” Market Watch, June 10, 2005 . See also J. Max Robins, “Singin’ the News Blues,” Broadcasting & Cable, July 25, 2005 .
4. Tom Dorsey, “CNN’s fidgeting isn’t helping in race to catch Fox News,” The Courier-Journal, July 23, 2005.

5. See Jacques Steinberg, "News Corp. starts to fill shoes of departed Murdoch," New York Times, August 16, 2005. See also Aline Van Duyn, "Ailes takes chair at Fox TV, News Corp.," Financial Times, August 16, 2005
6. Agence France Presse, "Murdoch's NewsCorp sees earnings jump," August 10, 2005.
7. Jacques Steinberg, "News Corp. starts to fill shoes of departed Murdoch," New York Times, August 16, 2005.
8. Katy Bachman, "Fox TV stations buff up local news," Media Week Web site, October 10, 2005.
9. Although the parent company, News Corp., has a substantial international presence, including Sky News in Great Britain and STAR News in South Asia.
10. Paul Gough, TV News Section, Hollywood Reporter, June 22, 2005 .
11. Allison Romano, "NBC U Takes Control of MSNBC," Broadcasting & Cable, December 23, 2005 . See also Wayne Friedman, "NBC Buys up More of MSNBC from Microsoft," Media Post Magazine, December 27, 2005 .
12. "NBC Quietly Marks End of an Era," Broadcasting & Cable, January 1, 2005 .
13. MSNBC Profile on the NBC Universal Web site (Company Overview, Television Networks).
14. Paul R. La Monica, "Should GE cancel NBC Universal?" Media Biz on CNN Money, January 19, 2006. See also GE Profile on the Columbia Journalism Review's "Who Owns What" Web site , and NBC Universal and CNBC Company Profiles on the Yahoo Finance website.
15. Stuart Elliot, "To promote a cable network, a plan to inundate the Internet," New York Times, December 12, 2005.
16. Stephen Battaglio, "New boss in town," TV Guide, November 30, 2005.
17. Don Melvin, "More Americans turn to BBC for news," Cox News Service, August 26, 2004.
18. Sam Matthews, "BBC hints at launch of 24-hour US news station," Brand Republic , October 11, 2005 .
19. Adrian Van Klaveren, "Newsgathering," BBC News, November 4, 2004.
20. Sam Matthews, "BBC hints at launch of 24-hour US news station," Brand Republic, October 11, 2005.
21. BBC is in year three of its ten-year contract with Discovery Networks. With Cox's backing, it might be easier for a BBC news channel to get distribution because Time Warner and News Corp. both have an interest in making sure their channels get distribution to Cox cable households.

News Investment

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

With each year, the boundaries between one media platform and another become more blurred. Each of the three main cable channels or brands, accordingly, has also become a multimedia outlet interconnected with other partners, complicating the question of news investment.

Thus, we look at news investment in two parts: first, investments in the cable television channel and second, synergy that has developed between the cable operation and other platforms such as radio or the Internet.

Over all, in 2005, industry analysts expected Fox News to invest the most heavily of any cable channel, while MSNBC was to cut down expenses.

Fox News was projected to increase expenses by 16%, a follow-up to the 28% increase of 2004, and in stride with its growth in revenues.

MSNBC was estimated to reduce its expenses in 2005 by 5%, much as it had the previous year.

CNN was somewhere in between. Analysts projected it would increase expenses by 4% — something closer to the cost of living rather than a major new investment. But the projected increases for CNN and Headline News reversed the drop of 1% recorded for 2004. ¹

Investment in Cable TV Channels

CNN

CNN has the largest news operation among the three cable news channels.

Having shut down their business channel, CNNfn, in 2004 and with no new developments in the news distribution service, NewsSource, ² Turner executives spent 2005 focusing on two other areas: their efforts to beef up CNN's sister channel CNN Headline News and trying to find the right strategy for CNN to take on Fox News.

In overall size and breadth of operations, CNN continued to have the largest infrastructure, with 36 bureaus worldwide, 10 of which were in the U.S. The latest bureau was added in September 2005 in New Orleans, in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina. ³

Changes in programming were visible throughout the year after Jonathan Klein took over as CEO. Klein's main agenda, he told Market Watch, was to rejuvenate CNN's falling numbers and differentiate it from Fox News, which had built a big lead in the ratings race and made strong inroads with advertisers. ⁴ As one television reporter put it, "the new CNN wants to be a lot more like the old CNN in hopes of enticing hard news loyalists." ⁵

As one part of its strategy to revive the brand, in early 2005 the network began counter-programming CNN's prime time schedule with a more entertainment-oriented lineup on its sister channel, CNN Headline News. While revenue figures are not available for Headline News separate from CNN, audience ratings indicate that the focus on Headline News has paid off. It surpassed MSNBC in 2005 to become the third most watched cable news channel (see Cable TV Audience.)

At the main channel, many long-running programs were cancelled and there were changes in format and scheduling of some key shows.

In the afternoon and early evening, talk show staples like “Crossfire” and “Inside Politics,” once signatures of the channel, were killed. They were replaced with “The Situation Room,” a three-hour, back-to-basics news analysis program hosted by the former White House correspondent Wolf Blitzer.

During the weekend in prime time, “The Capital Gang” was also cancelled and replaced by “On the Story with Christiane Amanpour,” a program featuring its well-known but sporadically used globe-trotting correspondent, who would discuss world affairs on a weekly basis.

In the mornings, “American Morning” was retooled with Miles O’Brien joining the incumbent Soledad O’Brien, and expanded to four hours.

And in prime time, the closest CNN came to a signature evening newscast, “NewsNight with Aaron Brown,” was junked in favor of a new program with a younger host, Anderson Cooper, after he won praise for his on-scene reporting from New Orleans, during Katrina, and elsewhere. ⁶ “We’re building our prime time strategy around two tent poles, Anderson and The Situation Room,” several publications quoted Klein as saying. ⁷ The same media reports suggested that Klein hoped Cooper’s appeal to the advertiser-coveted demographics, people aged 25 to 54, would translate into higher ratings and more advertising dollars.

The cancellation of the older shows also led to the departure of many of CNN’s best-known faces. The host and commentator Robert Novak (“Crossfire,” “Capital Gang,” “The Novak Zone”) left CNN after a 25-year stint for Fox News, amid questions over his role in the outing of the CIA operative Valerie Plame. Along with Aaron Brown, Judy Woodruff (“Inside Politics,” “Crossfire”) stepped down from the channel in 2005.

Some new faces arrived, on air and off. In September 2005, Klein named Delia Gallagher CNN’s first full-time faith and values correspondent. ⁸ Klein also hired the veteran broadcast news producers Victor Neufeld, formerly of ABC’s “20/20,” and David Doss from “NBC Nightly News” to work on prime-time programs anchored by Paula Zahn and Anderson Cooper.

In February 2006, the CBS correspondent John Roberts also joined CNN as a senior national correspondent, saying that his options at CBS had narrowed. ⁹ He followed close on the heels of the onetime Fox commentator Bill Bennett, who became a contributing commentator on CNN in January 2006. Bennett was said to fill the seat vacated by Bob Novak. ¹⁰

Fox News

Though the scale of its operations isn’t as large as CNN’s, Fox News’s rate of growth and spending was projected to be much higher than any other cable channel’s in 2005. Indicating a heavy investment in its star performer, Fox News’s total expenses have been rapidly increasing over the past few years. (Fox News has eleven bureaus in the U.S. and three abroad). ¹¹

The only significant programming change in 2005 was the addition of Geraldo Rivera’s syndicated daily show, “Geraldo at Large,” which began in November. But 2006 looks to be a more active year for new programming. In January, the company began broadcasting “The Journal Editorial Report,” a current-affairs program produced by the Wall Street Journal. The half-hour show, featuring the Journal’s editorial board, had appeared on PBS stations since 2004 but shifted to Fox after a series of controversies. ¹²

Also in early 2006, there were reports that News Corp. planned to launch its own business news channel. It would be available on DirecTV, although Murdoch reportedly indicated a desire to complete an agreement with Time Warner Cable before the launch. ¹³

Fox News seems unperturbed by the fate of other business channels or by the fact that people tend to watch business news programming during the day and in offices, where Nielsen Media does not have a ratings measurement system in place. ¹⁴ This would mean that advertisers will not have a firm measuring stick for comparing the performance of business channels against other cable channels, and might balk at moving money into a new network. On the other hand, the demographic in those offices is hard-to-reach affluent, an attraction that may well outweigh measuring problems.

Indeed, analysts believe that given Fox News's success against CNN, it can afford to risk the business news venture. As one observer put it, "When Fox unveils its own cable network at some point and begins to challenge CNBC... it [will be] sobering enough for CNBC to remember that Fox has already passed CNN in the widely followed cable news ratings." ¹⁵

News Corp.'s bigger potential move would be to launch its own broadcast national evening newscast. At the launch of his daily news show, Geraldo Rivera confirmed rumors when he told TV Week that the show was "the beginning of a process" leading to a national newscast produced by Fox News. ¹⁶ The daily newscast had been, until now, the domain and signature of the other three main broadcast networks. Fox News's interest in such a newscast — in essence competing beyond cable news — will be worth keeping an eye on.

The strategy of Fox News has been at odds with those of other cable news channels. By promoting itself as the extensive "American" news channel Fox News capitalized on its smaller, less expensive cost structure and then made an affirmative case for this being not just a financial but a substantive advantage (see Cable TV Economics and Ownership).

MSNBC

The level of investment in MSNBC in 2005 was difficult to gauge. While market researchers were projecting that it would cut costs, it was not clear where those cuts would be. The new developments at the channel — NBC taking controlling interest over it — are bound to have even more of an impact in 2006.

According to Kagan estimates, the channel was projected to reduce its expenses in 2005 by 5%, while programming expenses, in particular, were expected to decline at an even higher rate of 10%.

MSNBC also made programming changes in 2005. It moved "The Situation with Tucker Carlson" from 9 p.m. to 11 p.m. , replacing it with Rita Cosby's new program. Cosby, who moved from Fox News to MSNBC in May 2005, and is acknowledged for her interviewing skills, took over the 9 p.m. slot on weeknights with her single-subject interview show. MSNBC also began a new weekly news review with the "celebrity couple" Connie Chung and Maury Povich. Chung is a veteran news anchor with past stints at CNN, CBS, NBC and ABC, and Povich is a popular talk-show host syndicated by NBC. The real-life couple teamed up for a half-hour weekend news program that premiered in January 2006. ¹⁷

NBC News's Steve Capus seemed cautiously confident of the channel's future. He was quoted in December 2005, just before the spilt with Microsoft, as saying that there had been some "quiet growth in prime time" and that MSNBC was making some "traction, targeting CNN and... doing very well" (though any growth may involve just the 25-54

demographic). Channel executives also said it was a mistake to look at MSNBC without seeing it as part of the NBC news organization, and in that respect, it had been operating well. 18

Newsroom Expenses

As noted in the section on Economics, for 2005 Fox News was expected to markedly increase its investment in its news operations, by 16%, CNN to grow only moderately, 4%, and MSNBC to cut expenses 5%, even further than in 2004.

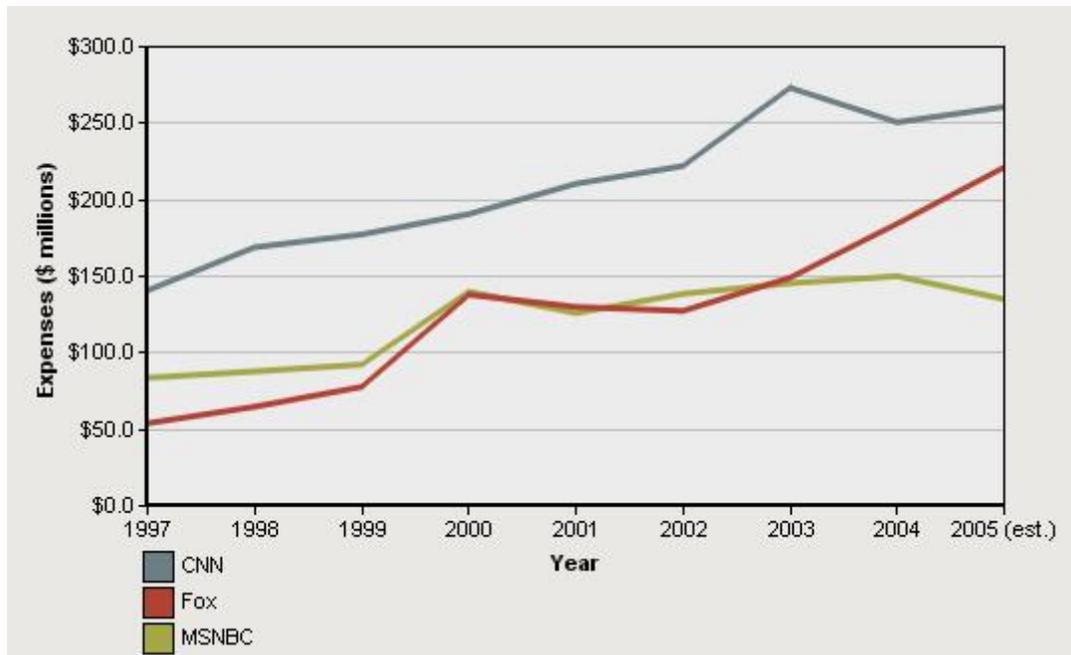
Expenses involve two components. Total expenses include salaries, capital expenditures on technology and machinery, and the specific costs attributed to different programs. The latter are termed programming expenses. 19 Roughly the same pattern that was expected for overall expenses at the three networks was anticipated for programming costs as well.

In 2005, Fox News was expected to increase its programming expenses by 20%, a follow-up to the 24% increase of 2004. MSNBC was estimated to reduce its programming expenses in 2005 by 10%, much as it had the previous year, when they declined by 9%. A major question now is whether the shift of control of the network to NBC in December 2005 brings further changes, as some reports have suggested. 20

CNN was expected to show a 4% growth in programming expenses in 2005, unlike the drop of 8% recorded for 2004. The figure could be a reflection of the investment being put into CNN Headline news (the number includes both CNN and CNN Headline News).

Cable News Programming Expenses

1997 – 2005, by Channel



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Kagan Research, "Economics of Basic Cable Networks 2006", June 2005

CNN figures include CNN Headline News

Partnerships

While Kagan Research data do not distinguish between spending on personnel and spending on technology or infrastructure (studios, equipment, and so on), other reports suggest that the channels have been emphasizing synergy and cross-promotion with other platforms.

CNN.com has been one of the popular online news Web sites for some time (See Online Audience). In 2005, Time Warner took additional steps to link its cable and online entities. In August, in a trial run in San Diego, it broadcast 75 cable channels — including CNN, MTV and ESPN — over the Internet. Subscribers were able to download the CNN signal (along with other channels) through Real Media players. Results of the exercise have not been disclosed, but Time Warner, with help from RealNetworks, the creator of the online media players, was reported to be looking into offering digital video recording for the computer, as well as multicasting. ²¹

CNN's head of sales and marketing, Greg D'Alba, emphasized the channel's adaptability to new platforms — essentially the Internet, but also video-on-demand and cell-phone TVs. He is quoted as saying “advertisers... believe in, and pay for, CNN's ability to reach consumers in a number of ways with the same content.” ²²

Another milestone in the network's move into new media was the launch of “CNN Pipeline” in December 2005. This online news channel provided both live streaming video content and access to recent video-on-demand clips and deeper video archives. It was launched as a commercial-free subscription service (costing up to \$25 annually) and could be accessed through the main CNN.com site. ²³

But Time Warner wasn't the only media conglomerate expanding its news platforms. News Corp., hoping to extend its brand, launched a new unit in July 2005 that grouped together the Internet properties owned by its Fox Entertainment, News, and Sports businesses. The new division was named “Fox Interactive Media” and was headed by Ross Levinsohn, formerly chief of Fox's online sports business. The division hoped to make it easier for browsers to move from one Fox-owned site to another, to personalize what they see and to get better access to video. In December 2005, Levinsohn forecast revenues for Fox Interactive for the fiscal year 2006, ending in June 2006, would be \$300 million (but that was largely from non-news-related properties like myspace.com and the gaming provider IGN). ²⁴

Meanwhile, Fox News has also developed a new model of synergy via radio. ²⁵ Fox News Radio offers a format combining hourly news updates with talk shows hosted by Fox personalities, including Alan Colmes and Tony Snow. In June 2005, it became the primary national news service for more than 100 of Clear Channel's news/talk stations under a five-year deal. By mid-2005, it had reached 360 stations across the U.S. It planned to expand its newsgathering resources and have 500 affiliates by the end of 2005. ²⁶

In addition, content from the Fox News Channel and Fox News Radio, newly packaged under one brand name, was expected to become part of XM Satellite Radio's programming in early 2006. The Fox Talk News Channel would feature most of the cable channel's noted pundits, including Greta Van Susteren, Tony Snow, Sean Hannity, John

Gibson, Alan Colmes, and Bill O'Reilly. According to one business analyst, "Fox News Channel will continue to make News Corp. shareholders smile with this XM marketing scheme. The channel's radio exposure should lead to higher TV ratings and more lucrative advertising rates over time."²⁷

It's interesting that while MSNBC lags far behind the other two as a cable channel, its presence online is just the opposite. Among all the three cable channels, MSNBC has had the most success in online synergy. The channel's partner Web site, MSNBC.com, has been the most popular news Web site since its inception in 1996, thanks in part to its ties to Microsoft.

In August 2005, MSNBC.com drew the most visitors of any news Web site, receiving 26.6 million unique hits, according to Nielsen/NetRatings. "They have a much savvier Web news staff than their competitors have," an online news consultant told the New York Times in September 2005.²⁸ As recognition of the Web site's success, that month the company created the post of president of MSNBC.com to be employed directly by the joint venture company. Charles Tillinghast, who was previously general manager and publisher of the site, was named to the post.

MSNBC on the Web synthesizes elements from both NBC and MSNBC-TV. It continues to run feature stories from the NBC News staff and Newsweek magazine, and in 2004 began to showcase MSNBC cable's talk shows and personalities as well. MSNBC has also been a way for Microsoft to publicize its own Internet services. In November 2005, it increased its efforts to woo news viewers by posting the entire "NBC Nightly News" broadcast on the site for on-demand viewing. While ads shown on the TV station weren't transferred, MSNBC was reported to be looking into the possibility of selling ad space on both the TV broadcast and the webcast.²⁹

In other words, beyond what it contributes to the bottom line on its own, MSNBC (the TV channel) has become useful as an effective platform for promoting its two parent companies and their products and helping amortize NBC's news costs.

Footnotes

1. See also Cable Economics. Fox News was estimated to increase expenses from \$316 million to \$366 million; MSNBC was expected to drop them from \$247 million to \$235 million. CNN's estimate for 2005 was \$574 million, up from \$552 million in 2004 (all figures approximate). Source: Kagan Research, "Economics of Basic Cable Networks 2006," Kagan Research, LLC, June 2005, www.kagan.com

2. NewsSource works on a subscription model: local TV stations around the country pay a fee to have access to the system, and they can both contribute their own video to the NewsSource system and download clips and packages from other stations for stories. NewsSource handles the technical aspects of gathering, labeling, and distributing the video over satellite feed systems; it has some 700 clients, the vast majority of them television stations (see 2004 Report for a fuller explanation).

3. Scott Leith, "CNN sets up permanent New Orleans bureau to cover Katrina recovery," Atlanta Journal and Constitution, September 16, 2005. List of Bureaus from Turner Asia, "CNN Worldwide Corporate Profile – CNN bureaus," May 2005.

4. Asked what it will take for ratings to climb again, Klein was quoted in a MarketWatch article as saying, "We have to first consistently deliver on one identity. Then we have to market it on the air." Jon Freidman, "Happy Birthday CNN. Now form an identity," Market Watch Web site, June 10, 2005 .

5. Ed Bark, "Alert the media: CNN back to hard news", Dallas Morning News, June 25, 2005 .
6. Because of his Hurricane Katrina coverage in September 2005, Cooper became a media darling (even landing a profile in New York magazine and scoring \$1 million book deal). He became a permanent part of "NewsNight" after Katrina hit, when CNN expanded the program from 10 p.m. to midnight , first co-anchoring it with the veteran CNN anchor Aaron Brown and then taking over when Brown was dropped altogether from CNN News. The show was renamed "Anderson Cooper 360."
7. See Abbey Klaasen, "CNN's Aaron Brown out; Anderson Cooper moved to 10 p.m.," Ad Age, November 3, 2005. See also Joanna Weiss, "Cooper's celebrity is part of the story in new CNN role," Boston Globe, November 8, 2005 , and Scott Leith, "CNN enshrines fire and ice team of Cooper, Brown," Atlanta Journal-Constitution, September 30, 2005.
8. Anthony Crupi, "CNN Names Gallagher Faith and Values Corr," Media Week, September 7, 2005.
9. See Anthony Crupi, "CBS White House Correspondent Roberts Joins CNN," Media Week, February 1, 2006 , and Marisa Guthrie, "CBS' Roberts jumps to CNN," New York Daily news, February 2, 2006. The move also kindles speculation that CNN and CBS are inching toward a merger of their respective newsgathering resources.
10. John Eggerton, "Bill Bennett Joins CNN," Broadcasting & Cable, January 25, 2006 .
11. E-mail response from Fox News Channel received December 22, 2005 . The international bureaus are in London, Paris and Jerusalem. The U.S bureaus are in New York, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle, Miami, Denver, Atlanta, Dallas, and Boston.
12. Joel Meyer, "Journal Editorial Report Jumps to Fox News," Broadcasting & Cable, November 30, 2005.
13. Julia Angwin, "Fox quietly gears up its business channel to challenge CNBC," Wall Street Journal, June 20, 2005.
14. CNBC was limping along in the ratings at 150,000 viewers, on average, in 2004, down from 317,000 in 1999. Bloomberg TV is struggling for distribution; the channel currently reaches roughly 25 million homes, or less than a third of all homes with cable; and CNNfn has been shut down.
15. "CNBC girds for Fox Business Threat," Investors Web site, September 21, 2005 .
16. Michele Greppi, "Geraldo Prepping New Daily Show," Television Week, October 3, 2005.
17. Povich, who runs the popular syndicated show "Maury" on NBC Universal, has signed a multiyear contract with NBC. The network is hoping, just like CNN, to use the celebrity appeal of anchors to attract viewers back to the channel.
18. Allison Romano, "Nightly News Boss Sounds Off," Broadcasting & Cable, December 5, 2005 .
19. They include cost involved in either licensing programs or producing them in-house. According to Kagan Research, the average station or network will typically spend as much as 40% to 50% of its revenues on programming. In 2005, CNN was expected to spend 45.4% of total expenses on programming, and MSNBC 57.6%. Fox News was to invest

the most among the three, at 60.4%. (Source: Kagan Research, "Economics of Basic Cable Networks 2006," Kagan Research, LLC, June 2005)

20. Wayne Friedman, "NBC Buys Up More of MSNBC from Microsoft," Media Post, December 27, 2005.

21. Ken Kerschbaumer, "TV on the PC gets real: Time Warner launches trial in San Diego ," Broadcasting & Cable, August 8, 2005.

22. John M. Higgins, "D'Alba keeps fighting for CNN", Broadcasting & Cable, October 17, 2005.

23. Scott Leith, "CNN starts live net video service," Atlanta Journal-Constitution, December 3, 2005 . See also Ken Kerschbaumer, "CNN opens up pipeline," Broadcasting & Cable, December 5, 2005 .

24. Georg Szalai, "Fox Interactive in Growth Spurt," Hollywood Reporter, December 7, 2005 .

25. It has long had connections to radio, both in personality and in personnel. The TV hosts Sean Hannity, Bill O'Reilly, and Tony Snow all have their own talk-radio shows.

26. News Corp. Annual Report 2005, Released June 2005, p. 27

27. Steven Mallas, "XM's Foxy Deal," The Motley Fool.com, October 21, 2005.

28. Alex Mindlin, "Browsing the Site, Not Watching the Show," New York Times, September 19, 2005.

29. Gavin O'Malley, "MSNBC.com to post entire 'NBC Nightly News'," Media Post, November 1, 2005 .

30. Museum of Broadcast Communications , "U.S. POLICY: TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT OF 1996," Museum of Broadcast Communications Web site. Online at: <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/U/htmlU/uspolicyt/uspolicyt.htm>

31. Definition of Multicasting compiled from KAET, Arizona State University 's public television station Web site. See also Neil Hickey, "TV on Steroids," Columbia Journalism Review, March/April, 2004 and Center for Digital Democracy, "Broadcast Lobby's Indecent Posture: Asking for Big Public Hand-out," Market Watch, April 26, 2004.

Public Attitudes

Public Attitudes
By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

What do they think?

While Americans certainly rely on cable news, how do they feel about what they see there? Is it cable's convenience that draws them? Or do they prefer its content and style, which involves more talk and live reports, over network broadcast and local TV news? Do they like the news agenda of cable, which focuses on a handful of stories each day and relies largely on wires for the rest? Or is it the hosts and personalities that motivate them to watch?

The answers will reveal something about how vulnerable cable will be to competition from new technologies such as the Internet to be the news medium of choice for major breaking news or daily headlines.

To begin with, the majority of Americans (67%) view cable news favorably, while just 18% have an unfavorable view. A Pew Research survey in June 2005 found that among those viewing it favorably, 23% held a "very favorable" view of cable news, while 44% were "mostly favorable." ¹

Do Americans notice the ways in which what's on cable news differs from what's on broadcast news? More could be known about this, but there is some evidence to sort through.

For some people, a perceived difference may be cable's appeal, but it's hard to discern. What we do know is that heading into 2005, the public considered cable news about as credible as the broadcast network news divisions, though that is largely due to network news's losing ground rather than cable's gaining. ²

Of the three channels, Americans rate CNN as the most believable, according to the 2004 data. But CNN's scores were falling while Fox News's were steadier. Just over a quarter of Americans (29%) gave CNN the highest ratings for

believability, according to data from the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. That was a drop of 12 points from CNN's historic high in 1993. Fox, meanwhile, got the highest marks for believability from 21% of those polled, its highest ever. MSNBC's believability also was dropping, to 18%.

Those numbers, however, are from June 2004. New data are expected in 2006, and the landscape may well have changed, reflecting the growth of Fox News in ratings and even Cume.

CNN's appeal seems to be based on different elements than that of Fox News. CNN's big spikes during major breaking news events such as Katrina, followed by the loss of that audience during less intense news periods, suggest that its appeal may lie in its bureaus and reporters around the world who can cover breaking news. Fox News's higher ratings throughout its broadcast day suggest that it has succeeded far better in creating distinct programs and personalities that audiences want to watch. Moreover, the fact that its prime time lineup is built around talk, debate and analysis (in such programs as "The O'Reilly Factor," "On the Record with Greta" and "Hannity & Colmes") may imply that people are drawn to Fox News to help them put the news in order, to interpret it. By contrast, CNN's move away from talk toward the on-scene reporting of Anderson Cooper and the rapid-fire coverage of "The Situation Room" with Wolf Blitzer may suggest a continuation of its headline-oriented or news-driven approach. CNN has historically boasted only one program that has had significant, enduring and distinct program loyalty, "The Larry King Show," which has an interview format and not that of a hard newscast.

Some of these questions and others would require more data to flesh out. For what reasons do some people choose cable over broadcast? If given the choice, head to head, on breaking news, which one would they choose? What are the reasons people say they gravitate to Fox News versus CNN? What do they think of MSNBC? Does a Web site matter to audiences as part of a cable brand? If people could imagine getting cable TV online and have the added power of choosing what stories to watch, would they prefer that more active approach? Or would they rather the cable channel do the choosing for them? This may shape where the three cable channels head and whether we will look back on cable as a transitional medium between broadcast and online, or whether it remains its own distinct form of TV journalism.

Footnotes

1. Survey by Pew Research Center conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International, June 8- June 12, 2005 , and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,464. The survey was conducted in association with The Project for Excellence in Journalism.
2. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, "News Audiences Increasingly Politicized," June 8, 2004. Online at: <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=215>
3. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, Part 1 – The 2005 Political Typology: Beyond Red vs. Blue in "Mapping the Political Landscape, 2005," Pew Research Center. Online at: <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=242>
4. But the report also notes that liberals "and young, well-educated people generally" are turning away from TV news in favor of the Internet. Among those groups, the number relying on the Internet far exceeds any individual TV news source (network, cable, or local). Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, Part 1 – The 2005 Political Typology: Beyond Red vs. Blue in "Mapping the Political Landscape, 2005," Pew Research Center, p.19

5. The numbers in the Pew data don't add up to 100% because respondents could cite more than one news source. The total sample was 2,000 people, polled in December 2004.

6. Another interesting study released in 2005 was "The Fox News Effect: Media Bias and Voting," conducted by Profs. Stefano DellaVigna and Ethan Kaplan of the University of California at Berkeley . Using comprehensive data on voting, cable programming, and town-level demographics for 8,630 towns, they took the growing concerns about Fox News's partisan coverage and sought to check whether such seeming media bias actually translated into changes in voter behavior. Keeping in mind the channel's "fast expansion, geographical differentiation and widely perceived conservative slant," they concluded that Fox News did not affect voting behavior: neither the vote share for Republicans nor turnout at the polls. In their own words, "one of the most dramatic shifts in media orientation... has had little or no effect on political outcomes." Their results, they claim, are instead consistent with "rational filtering," that is that the audience interprets media coverage rationally and is not swayed on average by media bias. The results were also said to support a form of "confirmatory bias," i.e. in their consumption of news media, Republicans and Democrats reinforce their prior beliefs, as do the non-voters. Another explanation consistent with the study's empirical results was the fact that Fox News influenced people's beliefs but not their voting decisions. The actual decision was said to be a function of many other factors such as social identity, background, etc. Stefano DellaVigna & Ethan Kaplan, "Fox News Effect: Media Bias and Voting," U.C. Berkeley, August 15, 2005. Retrieved from <http://emlab.berkeley.edu/users/sdellavi/>

Charts & Tables

Charts & Tables

AUDIENCE

- Cable News Cumulative Audience
- Cable News Cumulative Audience, 2005
- Cable News Daytime Average Audience
- Cable News Daytime Median Audience
- Cable News Daytime Viewership
- Cable News Prime Time Audience
- Cable News Prime Time Audience Growth
- Cable News Prime Time Median Audience
- Cable News Prime Time Median Audience by Channel
- Cable News Prime Time Median Audience Growth
- Cable News Prime Time Viewership
- Cable News Subscribers by Channel
- Cable News vs. Network News Viewership
- Where People Go for National/International News, by Channel
- Where People Go for National/International News, by Medium

ECONOMICS

- Cable News Revenue and Expenses, 2005
- CNN Costs and Revenues

Cable News Profitability
Cable News Monthly Revenue per Subscriber
Fox News Costs and Revenues
MSNBC Costs and Revenues

NEWS INVESTMENT

Cable News Programming Expenses

PUBLIC ATTITUDES

Cable News Believability

Roundtable

Roundtable

Later in 2006, the Project will conduct online discussions with industry leaders about each media sector. If you would like to receive an email alert when they are completed, [click here](#).

THE STATE OF THE NEWS MEDIA 2006

AN ANNUAL REPORT ON AMERICAN JOURNALISM

Local TV – Intro

Intro

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

Local TV news continues to face a complex future.

The situation with audiences is hardly ideal. Ratings for the key early evening newscasts appear in most markets to be continuing their decline, and there may be trouble now in the early morning. But there are some indications that late local news, the programs that air after prime time, may be improving their audience appeal.

The industry is still enormously profitable. Pre-tax profit margins of 40% and even 50% are not uncommon. Revenues were down in 2005 from the year before, but that is typical following a presidential election year.

The more fundamental question is whether local stations are risking their future by continuing to insist on such huge profit margins and year-to-year growth in earnings when the audience is stagnant. Is the industry repeating the mistake many critics believe newspapers have made, of failing to invest in the product to maintain the public's loyalty at the very moment when there was intensifying competition?

That question may have been all the more relevant for the last three years, when an uncertain regulatory environment meant that media companies were less likely to grow by buying up new properties. Contrary to what was expected when the Bush Administration took power in 2001 with promises of more deregulation, the ownership of local television had changed relatively little.

The more worrisome picture, experts believe, is in the newsroom. Though the data are harder and harder to pin down, the best evidence suggests that TV journalists continue to be stretched thin, required to produce more programs and making the conversion to the Web — usually without a commensurate increase in their budget. Money is also being diverted to make the transition to digital. And it is not only the on air-product that's suffering; the effort in these new areas, especially online, is probably not what it should be.

Our content analysis, this year as in the past, seems to reinforce those worries. In our Day in the Life of the News study, local TV news stories emerged as the most thinly sourced and shallowly reported of any medium studied other than local radio (DITL Local News). What's more, some of the stereotypes about local news seemed to be borne out in the data. Roughly half of all the newshole on local TV news that was not given over to weather, traffic and sports was devoted to crime and accidents. Stories about local institutions, government, infrastructure, education and more were generally relegated to brief anchor reads in the middle of the newscast.

Yet despite the problems, people like local news, partly for the simple reason that it is local. And it is increasingly formatted to help people with their lives, particularly in the early morning, when it offers a snapshot of headlines and late-breaking stories, and can help people figure out how best to get to work and tell them what the weather will be like. Indeed, in the entire media landscape, probably no source offers coverage of the weather outlook with the depth and sophistication of this industry.

Content Analysis

Content Analysis

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

Local TV news remains American journalism's beloved but disrespected middle child.

The medium is at the same time among the most trusted sources of news for Americans and the most caricatured. 1

The first view holds that local TV news is down to earth, deals with topics that are community-based and is aimed at what regular people care about.

The other view is that local TV news is the same everywhere and that it is all mayhem and emotion — that all one gets is crime news punctuated by traffic and weather.

Is one of these views more accurate than the other?

On May 11, looking at 24 newscasts across 8 stations in 3 cities (Houston , Milwaukee and Bend, Ore.) 2, we found that neither stereotype completely hits or misses the mark. There is just enough truth in both that the two sides keep on arguing.

Instead four traits stand out:

Viewers got a lot of local weather, traffic and crime. As for other news of the day — local or national — usually just three or four items received anything more than a brief anchor report with taped sound. That was true across markets.

On the other hand, local TV news is more likely than other media we studied to try to portray regular people from the community and how they feel about things, rather than just officials.

The reporting was straightforward and mostly strictly factual, with little of the journalist's opinion thrown in.

As local newsrooms are stretched thinner by producing more hours, anchor people increasingly are these newscasts. Most stories were anchor "voice-overs" supplemented with taped sound and visuals, but without correspondents. There was surprisingly little in the way of live or packaged reports from correspondents — far less than on the networks.

Morning news is the newest form and the one still evolving, but as a rule, traffic and weather dominate it.

In other words, viewers got straight news from their local TV stations and it was certainly about the community, but the topics covered were somewhat limited. Whatever tendency already exists in local TV toward stories that are emotional and visual — such as crime — has probably been accentuated with the growing reliance on anchors. The few reporters

are saved for those stories that are believed to be audience grabbers. It is left to the anchors to briefly handle the bulk of stories about such matters as budgets, government, infrastructure and civic institutions. The brevity of the coverage, in turn, creates a cycle in which viewers are less and less likely to look to local news as an authority on those subjects.

News of the Day: It's Crimes and Accidents

Topics in Local TV, Percent of all time

	Morning	Evening	Late	All
Gov't/Elections	8%	12%	13%	11%
Crime	38	46	44	42
Accidents	9	6	6	8
Business	8	5	*	5
Domes. Issues	6	13	23	14
Science	1	2	4	2
Foreign Rel.	5	2	3	4
Defense/Military	2	5	1	2
Celebrity/Entertainment	7	2	2	4
Lifestyle	16	8	3	10
Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.				

For viewers looking for news that day about crime and accidents in the community, local TV was the way to go. More than 40% of the news time was spent on crime — most of it local incidents (although the double murder in Zion, Ill. — a national crime story that day — was covered as well). If we add in accidents (there was a metro rail crash in Houston the night before), the figure rises to 50%. That was close to double the percentage on local radio (24% crime, 3% accidents) or metro newspapers (26% crime and 2% accidents).

Crime and accidents also dominated all three time slots this day: 47% of morning news time, 52% of evening and 50% of late night.

KTRK, Houston 6 p.m. News Packages

Police officer rapist
Metro rail crash and death
Girlfriend assault
Nicaragua visit
Girl Boxer w/ Olympic dreams

In Houston , for instance, three of the five packages on KTRK's May 11 evening newscast were crime-related. First came a KTRK "exclusive" about new DNA evidence that linked a local police officer to several rape incidents. Another

package included the full-screen graphic lead-in “DEADLY ACCIDENT” and focused on a driver who ran a red light and was killed by a metro rail car the previous night. That was followed by a package about a girl who was held hostage and physically assaulted by her boyfriend, which was introduced with the full-screen graphic “GIRL TORTURED.” The two non-crime packages were a commentary on helping Nicaragua to help kids get back on their feet and a piece about a girl boxer with Olympic aspirations.

Milwaukee ’s local news was largely about crime and accidents as well, with a heavy focus this day on the local retrial of the convicted killer Ted Oswald as well as the murders in Zion , Ill. (close enough for Milwaukee stations to cover live with local reporters).  View WDJT Evening News Video Clip (Get Quicktime® Plug-in)

In Bend , Ore. , though, with a population of 70,000, crime coverage was not as dominant. The station had stories on a “missing student” and a “methamphetamine bust,” but local shootings and car accidents were largely absent.

Beyond crime, what other kinds of local news would viewers hear about on May 11? Local issues such as a firefighters’ pay raise and plans for a new casino or a new police station made the air in the cities we examined, but were generally found in the middle of the newscast. They accounted for 14% of the news time, usually as anchor reads. Just 9% of all the news time was devoted to government, either local or national.

And just 4% of time was given to foreign affairs on May 11, such as a deadly day in Iraq , the worst anti-American protests in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban, or the move by North Korea to extract fuel from its nuclear plants that could be used to make weapons.

Weather and Traffic

Up-to-the-minute reports on weather and traffic were a unifying component to the local television we saw on May 11. It was a rather typical day for weather patterns and traffic delays in each of the cities, and nearly a quarter of all the news time studied (22%) was spent there. That was more than double any other broadcast medium, including the other main draw for traffic and weather news, local news radio (where it accounted for only 9% of the news time).

The morning local-TV news hour, as people are choosing their dress for the day and their allotted minutes for commutes, devoted a full 30% of the time to weather and traffic. The two topics usually led the hour at 6:00 a.m. and were revisited four or five times in the hour. They were less prominent in the early evening and late news, but still consumed more than any other subject (17% evening and 13% late).

While local TV has always been a trusted place for such information, the degree to which it even outpaced the quantity on local news radio was notable. One reason may be that stations can now visualize both weather and traffic. Weather has maps, Doppler radar, and sophisticated graphics and traffic cams now provide current, live (if unstimulating) images of the streets we drive on. On radio, the weather reports are much briefer.

The Missing Reporter

For three years now the Project has reported on the declining role of the local TV reporter, often as a result of expanding workload but diminishing resources. Over five years of study, from 1998 to 2002, the percentage of stories presented by reporters dropped by almost a third, from 62% to 43%, while anchor coverage and feed stories (those coming from the parent network) increased.

The Day in the Life study reinforces those findings and shows how they play out. If the newscasts we saw on May 11 were any indicator, the reporter may have come even closer to vanishing. Only about a third (36%) of the stories came from reporters while 60% were anchor-tell stories (with no video at all) or anchor reads with some video or sound on tape. And that is not including sports, traffic or weather which also usually comes from an anchor or desk correspondent. In most 30-minute segments, there were just two or three packaged pieces and perhaps one live, on scene report.

Story Types in Local TV
Percent of all news

	Morning	Evening	Late	All
Packages	26%	49%	45%	35%
Staff Live	2	0	0	1
Interviews	2	0	0	1
Other News Outlet	1	0	2	1
Anchor Voice Overs	54	37	42	47
Anchor Reads	15	14	11	15

Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.
*Does not include sports wraps, traffic or weather which is usually anchor work as well.

What viewers learned about beyond headlines ran the gamut on May 11 — anything from the murders in Illinois, which got heavy play, to a Milwaukee boy who wore a male prom dress to his big high school dance. Consider the 10 p.m. news on Milwaukee's WISN. There were three reporter packages: a story on a pregnant woman ordered by a judge to be hospitalized for her drug addiction, a piece on the confession of Jerry Hobbs in the murders of his daughter and her friend in Zion, Ill., and a story about a newly discovered germ that eats the flesh of its victims. None of those stories, incidentally, were section-front news in the local newspaper the next day. The rest of WISN's 10 p.m. broadcast was all anchor voiceovers, and all but one were under a minute.

It's Not About Me

With much of the news coming from quick anchor reads, the news broadcasts on May 11 tended to be fact-oriented, with little evidence of journalist opinion. That stood out notably from cable news, and to a lesser extent from morning network news. On the local stations studied, just 1% of the stories (3 in all) contained opinion from the reporter.

That highlights what seems to be a fundamental difference in the three television platforms, and it has to do with their inherent appeal to viewers. Cable mostly centers on host or anchor personalities and views. Network news creates more connection to the news itself and the decision-makers. In local TV, the stories are written to emphasize an emotional attachment to everyday folks.

That sense is created in two ways. First, through the sound bites, which are often from local residents rather than decision-makers. And second, through the subject matter covered, which again often looks at everyday folks — the woman with 12 cats, neighbors' reactions to a new homeless shelter in the neighborhood, the local track star who is

also a singer. Another likely factor is the lack of reportage mentioned above. As stories are more and more frequently anchor reads, there is simply less time for analysis and opinion. In a sense, as resources become thinner, and stations program more hours of news, some of which are designed to be watched for just a few minutes (as in the morning), local TV is evolving toward more of a town crier approach, with little need or room for opinion but also with little depth.

Time Slot Differences

The three time slots for local news — morning, evening and late night — differ in what they offer viewers. The morning news segments stand out in particular as quite different from the other two. Here is a look at the day in local TV news, starting with morning shows.

Morning News: It's Not the 'Today Show' ³

In the morning news hour on May 11, viewers in Houston and Milwaukee heard about a lot of different goings-on. In all, there were 275 different news items — an average of 39 for each hour segment — and that excludes traffic, weather, teases, promos, banter among the anchors and commercial time. For the vast majority of those items, what was heard was a quick anchor read with some video and perhaps sound on tape (which unlike packaged reports do not require anyone to actually leave the station but pulled from news services.)

Most of the “news” was crime or accidents from the night before. The hour devoted a little less of the total time to crime and accidents than the half-hour programs later in the day, but here they were perhaps even more prominent. Crime or accident news was the lead story following traffic and weather in every single newscast in the two cities.

On the 6:00 a.m. news on Houston's KHOU, for example, the entire first news segment, sandwiched between two traffic and weather reports, was eight crime or accident reports. The list:

Headline tease

Banter

Weather

Banter

Traffic

Metrorail accident

Train accident follow-up

Man and baby in stolen car

Charges against Texas criminal

Apartment shooting

Man killed in stolen car

Teenager found dead Pastor's car bursts into flames

Weather

Traffic

All that came in the first 13 minutes of the program.

The lead live breaking-news item across all three Houston stations that morning (and even into the evening) was about the car that ran a red light the night before and crashed into a metro rail train. The scene had been completely cleared by morning, with no impact on the morning commute. All three stations, however, led with a reporter live at the site

where the crash had occurred. Viewers mostly saw the same images of the crash that aired the night before —flashing lights, injured people on stretchers — and heard from the same transit official.

 [View KPRC TV Video Clip \(Get Quicktime® Plug-in\)](#)

 [View KHOU TV Video Clip \(Get Quicktime® Plug-in\)](#)

 [View KTRK TV Video Clip \(Get Quicktime® Plug-in\)](#)

Interestingly, information concerning the topic with the widest public impact — the overall safety of the metro rail system — differed on each station. According to KTRK, metro rail had been “plagued” with so many wrecks that it “claims the worst first-year safety record of any rail service in the country.” But KPRC distinguished between accidents and fatal accidents: “This is the 80 th accident involving the light rail . . . but this is the first accident in which someone was killed.” KHOU’s live reporter offered perhaps the most nuanced picture: “Metro rail has been involved in 70 or so accidents since it opened. And we’re told that actually recently that number of incidents had dropped when it comes to trains and cars. In fact, it has been cut in half compared to this time last year.”

Milwaukee stations did not have the same kind of dramatic overnight news to offer, but found several overnight crime stories to lead their coverage. A double homicide, a daughter stabbed, the ongoing search for a missing man, a teen killed, and the murders in Zion , IL all topped the news this morning.

News of local government of civic issues, were mentioned only later in the program if at all. Viewers of Milwaukee ’s WDJT that hour would have heard briefly about a handful of items that related at all to local civic issues: election fraud discovered in Wisconsin , renter’s insurance, local jobs for youth and new housing for local inmates, new approval figures for the governor, and the renaming of the Marquette ’s sports teams. But all of these were anchor tell stories, sandwiched in the middle of the newscast and with less than three minutes of total airtime. WTMJ did stand out on this day, though, for a two-minute piece on the new bankruptcy law, complete with an interview (though even this appeared 27 minutes into the hour).

In Houston , the tax bill passed overnight by the Texas legislature, on the other hand, which would lead the Houston Chronicle the next morning and change residents’ property, education and other tax rates, was relegated to a 13-second anchor voice-over 30 minutes into the hour on KHOU and got similar treatment on KTRK. On KPRC, the tax overhaul still ran in the form of an anchor voice-over, but appeared earlier — eight and a half minutes in. Most of Houston ’s morning radio news programs, by comparison, reported the tax story at the top of the hour, and some made it their talk and call-in segments that day.

The few “packages” that did appear in the morning were normally softer, lifestyle pieces and were different from station to station. In Houston , besides the lead report on the metro rail crash, none of the packages were the same. KPRC ran two — work involved in the upkeep of a local Marriot hotel, sex offenders living in group homes — and two separate live reports on a teenager who stabbed his mother’s best friend. KHOU devoted packages to the strained relations between President Bush and Congress over Iraq , the winners of Survivor’s “Amazing Race,” and consumer advice on protecting against identity theft. KTRK ran just one package, on insects invading a city in Arizona .

Houston

Metro rail crash & death
Bush & Congress relations
“Survivor” race winners
Identity Theft
An invasion of bugs
A local weather segment award
Sex offender group homes

Milwaukee

Search for a missing man
2 local homicides
Wendy’s Frosty’s CHECK
United Airlines Pension Plans
Zion Murders
17 year-old shot
Neighborhood mourns recent death
Green Bay Packer arrest
3 people stabbed
Travel advice
Bush and Grenade
New flesh eating germ

Evening and Late Night News

The evening and late night newscasts in each city were thoroughly different from the morning. 4 But they were nevertheless alike. Both half-hours tended to have more packaged reports and were even more locally focused than the morning.

Two patterns emerged. The first is that most of these newscasts demonstrated what we have come to call the “hook and hold” approach to local TV news. The phrase refers to the habit of opening the newscast with visuals that are meant to be alarming and eye-grabbing— flashing lights and yellow police tape — to get to the broadcast’s lead story, then repeatedly teasing viewers with the promise of another report, held till the end to try and keep people from changing channels. In the middle, stations carry the brief anchor-read stories that they apparently feel need to be covered but that aren’t “good TV” — legislative activities, budget news, etc. The item at the end, teased throughout the broadcast, is usually a funny or unusual piece of video, such as a married couple who say it was Elvis that brought them together. (For a more detailed discussion of this approach please see the 2005 Annual Report). On May 11, “hook and hold” was evident in both the evening and late newscasts, except that the middle of the newscast didn’t cover much in the way of government and other local issues. It was more crime and some national wire stories.

KPRC’s 6 p.m. newscast in Houston, for instance, hooked viewers in with the live, breaking news that the Houston Crime Lab had been re-accredited, followed by a live report from the scene of the metro rail crash that occurred 20 hours earlier (with the same eye-grabbing visuals as in the morning newscasts), and a then bike accident. The middle of the newscast included voice-overs about child murder, teacher alcoholics, the evacuation in D.C., the Iraq car bombs and local crimes. Teased throughout was the final package—a girl boxer with dreams of going to the Olympics.

Not every station followed the pattern exactly, however. KTVZ’s 6 p.m. newscast in Houston used the “hook and hold” but offered more serious news in between. It drew viewers in with a graphically displayed “Missing Student” story in the middle aired correspondent packages about two local pieces of legislation — an education bill and a gun bill — with some of the most in-depth reporting we saw that day.

In Milwaukee, WITI's 10:00 p.m. newscast represented still another variation on the theme—the traditional “hold” but a much more serious lead story than the normal “hook.” It was a new state law that would restrict the purchase of some over-the-counter cold medicines. Even here, though, the anchor still tried to give viewers some sense of alarm in the lead in: “If the governor signs this bill you’ll need an ID to buy some over-the-counter drugs,” the anchor began. “Meaning, it will be easier to vote than to cure your cold.”

As for the “hold” teased throughout this newscast? There were actually two: An outer-space elevator and a new game — Robodog soccer.

A second finding for May 11 was that most the stations packaged different stories in the evening than they did on the late news following prime time. While cable news stands out for repeating its news items and even its packages across the day, local TV seems more concerned with giving viewers something different each newscast. Commonly, something that was an anchor read on one of the newscasts was a package on the other, and vice versa. Consider the 6 and 10 p.m. broadcasts on WISN in Milwaukee . At 6 p.m. the Zion murder case, the local Oswald trial, the Marquette nickname, and a boy’s prom dress were packaged reports. At 10, all of those except for the Zion murders were anchor reads with sound, while a pregnant drug addict and a flesh-eating germ became packages.

WISN Milwaukee: Story Rundown May 11, 2005

6 P.M.		10 P.M.	
Zion Murders	Pkg	Pregnant woman’s Drug addition	Pkg
DC Plane Scare	A. Tell	DC Plane Scare	A. Tell
Oswald Trial	Pkg	Former Nazi Guard citizenship	A. Tell
G.B.Packer Arrest	A. Tell	Overnight Shooting	A. Tell
Marquette Nickname	Pkg	Killer Ted Oswald Trial	A Tell
Boy’s prom Dress	Pkg	Packer Arrest	A. Tell
Jerry Taft Retirement	Pkg	Marquette Nickname	A. Tell
		Flesh-Eating Germ	Pkg
		Boy’s Prom Dress	A Tell
		Culkin Testimony in Jackson Trial	A. Tell
		Sports	

Finally, the late-night newscasts, with an extra five minutes in their newshole compared with the evening programs, didn’t devote that time to hard news coverage. They were more apt to close the newscast with a soft feature piece. In the final segments of the eight newscasts, viewers got reports on fortune cookies, a feature on an ice cream customer, a couple who believes their marriage centered around Elvis, local White House aides, King Tut, Robodog soccer and sports scores.

Market by Market

And what about the stereotype that local news is the same in every city — that in a consultant-driven medium there is no longer any sense of place?

The Day in the Life study suggests there is something to that complaint, but we found some small differences. Across the three cities, the look and feel of all the newscasts were strikingly similar. From the images themselves — the news desks and anchors as well as the video clips — it would be hard to discern which of the three cities you were watching. All the newscasts had a two-person anchor team, almost always a man and a woman, one black, the other white, and almost always seated side by side. Only one station, WITI in Milwaukee, veered from having the anchors perched at the news table throughout. On that station they moved around, sometimes standing, sometimes sitting.

The video clips of sirens, frenzied gunshot scenes and even many of the softer feature pieces had little to identify them with a particular city. Nor did the graphic tags like “The Big Story,” “Deadly Accident,” “Breaking News,” and “Local First.”

What about traffic and weather? The names of the cities finally give the location away, but the other images, from the live traffic cams to the five-day forecast graphic, were universal in their look.

The biggest stylistic difference in the three cities was in the availability and use of live reporters. Houston, the biggest market in the mix, clearly had more correspondents available to report live. The newscasts there tended to have two or three stories with reporters live on the scene, with a cut to a package each had prepared earlier.

In Milwaukee, two of the newscasts had a reporter live in Zion, Ill., reporting on the double murders, but the other “live” comments were all in-studio. In Bend, the lone evening news program had one reporter live on scene for a story, while the other evening packages were from the anchors themselves, suggesting the effects of an even slimmer staff on a smaller market. And at 11 p.m., three of the four packages came from the station’s NBC parent.

Among the stories themselves, however, the choice was not so strictly homogenized from station to station. In Houston, for instance, viewers at 6 p.m. were met with the same lead story on each station — breaking news on the Houston Crime Lab’s re-accreditation, which had been announced “moments” before — but after that the three stations diverged.

Houston, TX Evening Newscasts: Packaged Reports May 11, by station

KHOU	KPRC	KTRK
HPC Crime Lab—w/ live stand-up	HPD crime—w/ live stand-up	HPR crime lab-w/ live stand-up
Army Recruiting abuses	Metro—w/ live stand-up	News DNA evidence of police officer rapist in area—Exclusive
Author/musician Kinky for Gov.	West Nile local incident	Metro accident-response
Weight lifter Mom	Bill Boards on teen abstinence	Girlfriend torture
	Artist/musician Kinky for Gov.	Nicaragua help
	Girl Boxer Olympic Dream	Girl Boxer OL. Dreams

In Milwaukee, the channels were more similar in their top news picks at 6 p.m. All four stations aired packages on Zion, the renaming of the Marquette sports team and the Oswald trial. The one station that led with something different was WITI, which ran a package on an announcement by the state commerce department that it would step up inspections of gas stations for possible fraud in the octane levels they claimed. The correspondent treated the development as a rather critical consumer matter, but in the end, viewers were left wondering why it was all that important. After interviewing the state commerce secretary and explaining policies in other states, the reporter closed by noting that the Wisconsin official “says so far they haven’t found any incidents of gasoline fraud.”

Milwaukee 6 P.M. Packages, May 11, by Station

WTMJ	WDJT	WISN	WITI
Zion Murders	Marquette nickname	Zion murders	Gasoline Fraud (Madison)
Marquette Nickname	Zion murders	Oswald Trial	Zion murders
Military unit call-up	Oswald Court	Marquette nickname	Identity Theft
		Boy Prom Dress	
		Jerry Taft Retirement	

In Bend , there is just one local news station, KTVZ, an NBC affiliate. The morning news show did not air that day because of local power outages, but the evening and late night shows give us a sense of the small cities’ resources and news offerings on the 11th. There were four packages in the 6 p.m. newscast — two on local legislative issues (education and gun control), a package on internet pornography and one about a singing track star.

In a sign of the small size of the station’s staff, two of the four packages at 6 were reported by the anchors. And as noted, three of the four 11 p.m. packages were feeds from NBC. The other package was a rerun of the one at 6 p.m. on a local gun bill.

KTVZ, Bend, OR 6 P.M. Packages, May 11, 2005

Child Education Bill
Local Gun Bill
Internet Pornography
Singing Track Star

Footnotes

1. Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, “Public More critical of Press but Goodwill Persists: Online Newspaper Readership Countering Print Losses,” June 26, 2005. The survey found that 79% of Americans said they had a favorable view of local TV news, higher than for nearly any other medium surveyed.

2. For the local sample we selected three markets, one large, one medium and one small. To select the markets, the list of 210 markets was first divided into thirds based on population. (Each group representing roughly one-third of the population according to Nielsen Media Research). While ensuring geographical diversity, one market was then randomly selected from each group. The markets selected were Houston, TX (large), Milwaukee, WI (medium) and Bend, OR (small). For radio news, we selected, if they existed, 1 all-news station, 1 news talk station (looking for a diversity of affiliation and ownership), 1 local NPR station if it airs local news programming beyond top-of-the hour wrap-ups. If there was no all-news station, we selected a second news-talk station, that is either Clear Channel or unaffiliated. In some instances, it is hard to determine the exact nature of a station from Arbitron or BIA listings as the category types do not always clearly reflect programming. We tried to be as thorough as possible in examining the multitude of radio stations within each market. For a full list of stations and hours captured, please see the Methodology.

3. In bend Ore. , KTVZ's 6 a.m. news program did not air that day because of a power outage. In Houston and Milwaukee , the morning news programs studied were the 6 to 7 a.m. broadcasts.

4. For every station except WDJT, Milwaukee, the evening newscast studied was 6:00 to 6:30 p.m. On WDJT, the 5:00 to 5:30 program was captured. The late night newscast in all cases except KTVZ in Bend was the 10:00 to 10:35 newscast. In Bend, the only late local newscast aired from 11:00 to 11:30.

[Click here to view content data tables.](#)

Audience

Audience

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

Heading into 2006, the outlook for local TV news audiences was mixed, but not altogether bad. The decline in early evening news audiences, which seemed to abate in 2004, resumed in 2005. And in a cause for concern, morning news, the perceived growth area of local TV, declined as well. But the data also suggest that late news saw marked increases and could now be a place of promise.

The Yardstick

Analyzing local news is not as clear-cut as with other news media. No overall measurement of the local news market exists. Audiences are measured station-by-station, market-by-market, which makes it difficult to make get a broad sense of the industry. There is enough information, however, to arrive at some general conclusions. ¹

To gauge audience, the TV industry uses two metrics — share and ratings. Share indicates the percentage of the television sets in use that are tuned to a program at a given time — or something akin to market share. If 500 television sets are turned on in Orlando and 250 are tuned to the 7 p.m. news hour on WKCF-TV, then the station gets a 50 share for that slot. Ratings, on the other hand, step back a level and indicate the percentage of households tuned

to a program out of all households with television sets — not just those in use but also those that are turned off. In the same example, if Orlando had 1,000 television sets in total, with 250 tuned to WKCF-TV, then WKCF-TV would get a rating of 25. The amount of share it occupies allows a station to see how it is performing versus the other stations in the local area. Ratings give a sense of the total audience and are used by advertisers to determine what price they are willing to pay for an ad on the particular program. ²

To get a sense of overall trends, we gathered audience data for 529 network-affiliated stations collected by BIAfn for both early evening and late newscasts. ³ We then calculate averages for each time slot, combining them into a national average. The data, going back to 1997, also allow us to make comparisons year to year. ⁴

Early Evening News

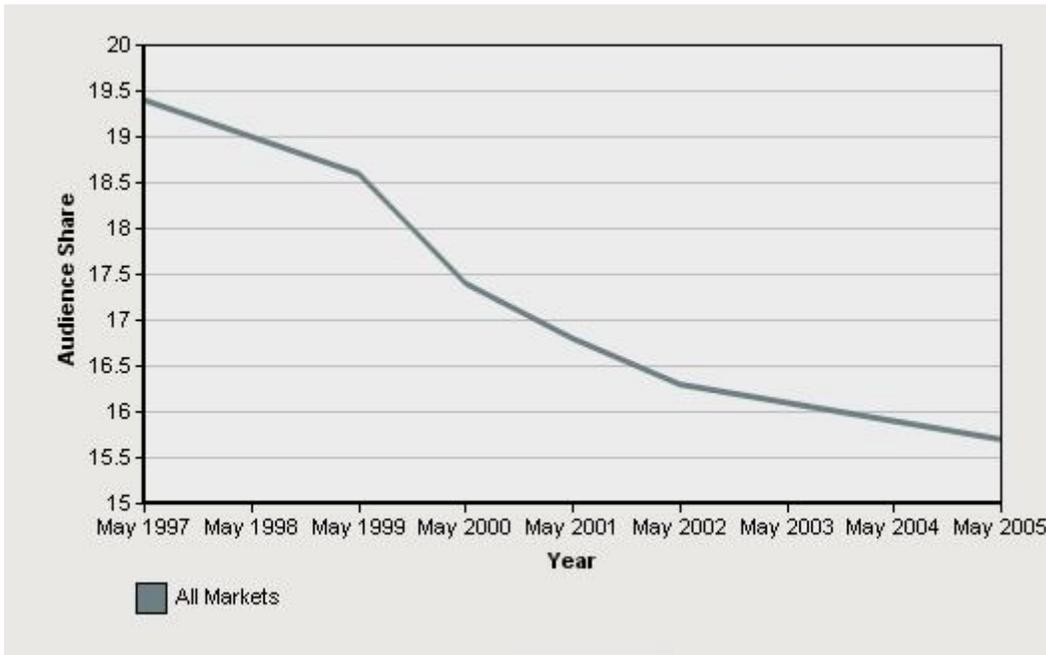
The early evening news time slot, traditionally the newscast of record in the Eastern Time zone, has seen increasing pressure from changing lifestyles, longer commutes, and greater competition for people's time from everything from homework to iPods to more channels on the TV dial.

In 2005, early-evening news share continued to decline. The drop, however, came at a slower rate than we had seen from 1997 through 2003.

The average share of the viewing audience tuned to network affiliate local news programs fell to 15.6, down from 15.9 in 2004. That decline of 1.9% was slightly greater than the 1.2% fall a year earlier but remained a smaller rate of decline than early evening news had been seeing.

Between 1997 and 2003, early-evening local news programs lost 16% of their share of the available audience — or an average drop of more than 3% a year. That steady decline slowed down in 2004, but hopes that the slowdown would lead to a halt in the decline proved overly optimistic. Of those watching TV between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. in 2005, fewer and fewer were turning to the traditional local news shows.

Average Early Evening News Share May 1997 to May 2005



Design Your Own Chart

Source: BIAfn Media Access Pro

The picture for early-evening newscasts gets even gloomier when one looks at ratings, the measure of the total number of households, as opposed to merely the share of those sets that are turned on.

The average ratings for early-evening news dropped by a startling 13% in 2005 across the stations studied. The average station had a 7.2 rating, down from 8.3 the year before. That drop is more than five times the 2004 figure of 1.7%.

Taken together, the ratings and share data offer a deeper sense of what is going on with local early-evening news. Of the people home and watching TV, somewhat fewer chose to watch local news than did a year earlier. But the most serious decline is in those who were watching TV at all. 5

That could be the result of many factors, including changes in lifestyles. Fewer people are home this early anymore, but instead are still at the office, or facing longer commutes. As a result, TV stations now have a smaller potential audience at this time. The local late news may offer a better fit with people's schedules today, which also speaks to the better numbers for late news.

Late News

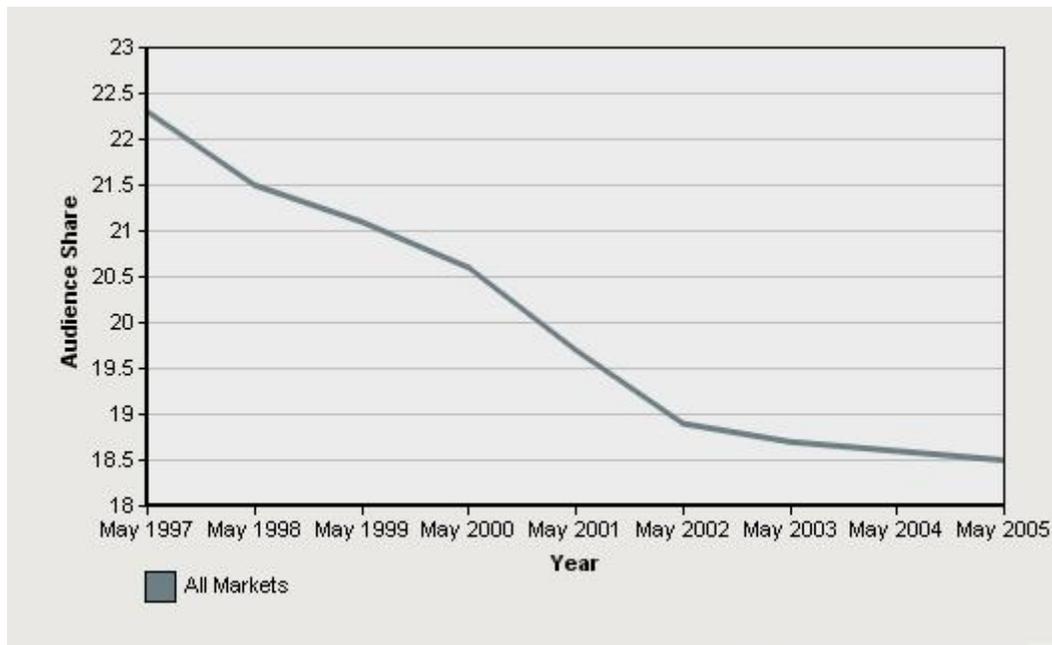
For late news, the share of TV sets in use fell a little in 2005, but ratings — or total audience — actually rose.

The average share for late news, the half-hour newscasts that follow prime time programming, dropped by 1.6% in 2005 (to 18.3 from 18.6 in 2004). Again, this was significantly worse than the year before, when the late news share fell a mere 0.5%, from 18.7 to 18.6. It was much better, though, than the average drops of about three percent a year between 1997 and 2003.

As opposed to share, ratings for the late news improved slightly in 2005, increasing to 7.9, up from 7.4 in 2004, or nearly 7%. What's more, the increase comes after late-news ratings had dropped for eight years, most recently with a 4% decline in 2004. That is especially important because the late local news has traditionally had the best demographics (younger viewers) and, thus, the highest advertising rates.

Average Late News Share

May 1997 to May 2005



Design Your Own Chart

Source: BIAfn Media Access Pro

Local News in the Morning

If weather warnings have been posted for the early-evening news and the skies over late broadcasts are clearing, the forecast for the morning news — before 7 a.m. — is cloudy. The

available data offer somewhat conflicting evidence of the climate. In the end, it may be that more people are watching news in the morning hours but are tuning in to the network shows rather than local ones. 6

First, Nielsen Media's data for the last year show smaller audiences in both ratings and share for local morning news programs. November figures in 2005 show a 6.7% decline in ratings and a 15% decline in share from 2004. If that is more than a one-year blip, it may represent a serious blow to the industry. Local morning news has been the growth area for most local TV news stations. 7

Growth/ Decline in Ratings & Share
November 2004 to November 2005

	Morning News	Evening News	Late News
Ratings	– 6.7%	– 7.9%	6.3%
Share	– 15%	0%	0%

Source: Nielsen Media Research, used under license

Personal-observation data collected in 2005 by the Center for Media Design at Ball State University suggests that the overall morning news audience — from 6 a.m. local news through the network morning shows that air from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. (in the case of NBC) — is now quite substantial. 8

The data derived from Nielsen Media diaries, however, suggest that local morning news that is on from 6 a.m. to 7 a.m. has a long way to go before it catches up with the ratings that local evening or late news generate. The morning news is still about half the size of those two time slots. In our previous report, BIAfn data (based on Nielsen Media diaries) from May 2004 indicated nationwide, the average morning news program earned 4.6 ratings points. That was just more than half (55%) of the ratings of the average evening news audience (8.3 ratings points) and 62% of the late news audience (7.4 ratings points).

Sorting out the situation in the morning may be critical, for morning news has been a particular focus of local news directors for a variety of reasons.

First, managers believe they have a clear sense of what viewers are looking for in the morning — namely weather and traffic and overnight headlines — and believe tailored news segments are meeting viewers' needs. As one local station manager was quoted as saying, "It's the radio of the new millennium with pictures. You can watch and get dressed, get your day going." 9 Unlike later newscasts, morning news is presented quickly and succinctly, and repeated often so viewers can dip in and leave.

At least some news directors also believe they enjoy more viewer loyalty in the morning. As one local station manager told the Orlando Sentinel, "It's the only spot [where] you have a chance

of reaching an audience you can count on. People are going to watch morning news [at least] three or four times a week.” 10

The 5-to-7 a.m. time slot before the networks go on the air is also a large chunk of time controlled entirely by the local stations. So, while ad rates in these hours are still much lower than for evening programs, there are financial incentives. “Mornings are absolutely a critical time period,” said the general manager of WESH-TV in Orlando, Fla. “I’m not sharing any of [the] inventory with a network or a syndicator. It is two hours of local programming. I can make a lot of money in the mornings if I’m successful there.”

And stations can make that money without a huge investment. Certainly, they must pay the salaries of the anchors, weathercasters and perhaps a reporter or two, as well as a few behind-the-scenes people such as producers, directors and technicians. But the studios, the weather radar, the graphics and switching equipment, the cameras, the satellite and microwave trucks and the transmitter are capital items stations have already purchased and would probably need to buy whether they offered a local morning news show or not. A morning news broadcast allows a station to amortize those investments over two more hours of the local broadcast day with the flip of a few switches.

Measuring Audiences

The debate surrounding television audience research at the local level was again center stage in 2005. At the heart of matters is Nielsen Media Research’s Local People Meters (LPMs). 11

How Nielsen Media Measures Viewers in the 210 U.S. Television Markets

Type of Market	Method Used	Number of Markets Covered	Percent of TV Households Covered
Local People Meter Markets	Local People Meters measure total viewership and viewer demographics on a daily basis	9 (to be 10 by July 2006)	19.2%
Combined Meter/Diary Markets	Electronic Meters measure total viewership on a day-by-day basis; Handwritten Diaries track viewer demographics four times a year	46 (45 by July 2006)	50.2%
Diary Markets	Handwritten Diaries track total viewership and viewer demographics four times a year	155	30.4%

Source: Nielsen Media Research, 2005

As predicted, after some initial protest most station groups have signed contracts with Nielsen Media for audience data based on LPMs. That includes the Spanish-language group Univision, which had resisted the change from diaries because of concerns that Hispanics might be undercounted.

LPMs were rolled out by 2005 in Boston, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, Philadelphia and Washington D.C. Detroit & Dallas-Fort Worth got meters in January 2006 and Atlanta is scheduled to get the LPMs by July 2006. Those are the top 10 television markets in the U.S. ¹² The larger Nielsen Media local TV universe is made up of 210 local markets, which are still measured in the more traditional method of either electronic meters (“combined markets”) and/or handwritten diaries (“diary markets”).

Several of the largest TV groups, however, are still fighting the LPM method because of concerns over the accuracy of the devices and the representativeness of the demographic samples. Groups such as Fox Television (News Corp.), Tribune Broadcasting, Gannett Broadcasting and Allbritton Communications have publicly opposed the meters. After Nielsen Media began introducing the meters, the audience of many of those big broadcasters, including News Corp.’s Fox stations, as measured by LPMs was much less than the audience previously found by other means.

As a part of the battle, a group of broadcasters were able to get a bill introduced in the Senate in July 2005 that would require Nielsen Media Research to have all its new measuring devices certified by the Media Ratings Council Inc. (MRC), a consortium of broadcasters, cable operators, advertisers and others. The bill’s opponents, including Nielsen Media Research, said that it would stifle and delay any development of new technologies. Heading into 2006, the bill had gone nowhere.

Arbitron: New Player in the Research Game

Arbitron, the leading radio ratings company in the U.S. , re-entered the field of television research in 2005 and added a new dimension to the ratings debate. The company used its Portable People Meters (PPMs), which can encode and log any type of audio, in Houston in September 2005 to measure TV ratings for the first time. The test and market demonstration had a sample of roughly 2,000 people from about 800 households. Some 40 to 50 cable networks and 15 TV stations participated by specially encoding their programming.

Nielsen Media Research gave Arbitron access to its meter/diary television audience estimates in Houston so the industry could compare the Nielsen ratings to audience estimates produced by the Portable People Meter system. The results showed that the PPM ratings patterns from Houston were similar to the ratings trends seen in Nielsen Media’s local people meter markets with one major exception: ratings were higher with the PPM, in part because it could track out-of-home viewing. ¹³ That is a critical measurement advantage for Arbitron, given that people are watching or being exposed to TV in work or leisure places more than ever before. In the preliminary findings from Houston, Arbitron data suggested that out-of home audience is about 14% of the total audience. ¹⁴

The new developments were received enthusiastically by a number of TV groups, especially those who object to Nielsen Media's LPM. But whether Arbitron will expand rapidly in TV markets is still a question mark. Arbitron is involved in a more detailed examination of the audio detection capabilities of the PPM and of the research, business and financial implications of a potential joint venture with Nielsen Media Research. Such a step could enable the PPM to serve as a central local market ratings service for radio and television.

The fate of this service will depend on Nielsen Media Research, which hasn't made a decision yet, and would potentially imply a single ratings currency for radio, TV and cable.¹⁵ Nielsen Media Research has a considerable stake in the decision, aside from the rivalry and ego issues between the two companies. The company has spent years developing its own (costly and controversial) Local People Meter, which is now in nine markets. If it suddenly threw its weight behind the PPM, it would amount to an admission that its LPM is the inferior of the two measurement tools.¹⁶ That accounts for the time it is taking in reviewing the possible partnership. A decision was expected around the first quarter of 2006.

Footnotes

1. The Project uses data from BIA Financial Network (BIAfn) to deduce audience figures (as well as economic ones; next section). BIAfn collates data originally gathered by Nielsen Media Research. Time slots are based on BIA categorization.
2. Webster, J., Phalen, P., & Lichty, L., (2000) *Ratings Analysis: The Theory and Practice of Audience Research*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, New Jersey. Also, BIAfn does not report ratings figures directly. Since ratings are the percentage of all households with television tuned to a specific program, if we know the percentage of households using television that are tuned to a specific program (share), and what percentage of households in the market are using their televisions at that time (HUT), it is possible to calculate ratings. BIAfn provides both these figures.
3. For early evening news, we took newscasts between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. in the Central/Mountain Time zones and 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the Eastern/Pacific Time zones. For late news, we took 10 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. the Central/Mountain Time zones and 11 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. in Eastern/Pacific.
4. These stations were originally chosen based on their being affiliated with one of the three major networks — ABC, CBS or NBC — and having a news director on their staff. Stations affiliated with other networks were not included either because they did not carry news or, as in the case of Fox Network, they aired news in non-traditional timeslots. We have remained consistent with this approach year-to-year for the purposes of a trend over time. It is worth noting, though, that in 2005 Fox began to produce some news that competed with the traditional three networks. Of all local stations with news directors, according to BIA data from August of 2005, NBC has a 16% share, both ABC and CBS have 15%, and 10% are affiliated with Fox.

5. It should be noted that the sample analyzed might not include the newer entrants into local news. If all those stations that have not run news in the past were included, the picture might be different.
6. Most local morning broadcasts run from 5 a.m. to 7 a.m. Then the network takes over until 10 a.m. The local audience can also get local updates on the network morning shows, through local news cut-ins on important information like weather or traffic.
7. Again, it is worth noting that Nielsen Media Research numbers do not include the Fox-affiliated stations since they traditionally aired news at different times than the other networks. Recently, though, Fox has been making a big push in local news programming, particularly against the network morning shows.
8. The data refers to that collected by the first round of the 'Middletown Media Studies'. These media use studies were conducted by the Center for Media Design, Ball State University . According to the Center, they are an attempt to understand how consumers interact with major media and the roles media play in their lives. They have over 5000 hours of observed time of 15 principal media captured in 15 second increments. For more information, visit <http://www.bsu.edu/cmd/insightresearch/>
9. Robin Smythe, general manager of Central Florida News 13 (a non-affiliated local station) quoted in Hal Bodeker, "Solar power: Local stations and networks are tapping into the energy of the morning-news hours," Orlando Sentinel, September 7, 2005.
10. Stan Knott, general manager, WOFL-Channel 35 quoted in Hal Bodeker, "Solar power: Local stations and networks are tapping into the energy of the morning-news hours," Orlando Sentinel, September 7, 2005.
11. Used for years to measure national viewing trends, Nielsen Media Research introduced the Local People Meters (LPM) locally in 2002 as a way of more accurately measuring viewing habits. The LPMs continuously measure viewing and transmit data electronically every night.
12. Nielsen Media Research Web site, Local People Meter Roll-Out Schedule. Online at http://www.nielsenmedia.com/lpm/rollout_sched.htm
13. Katy Bachman, "Mixed News for Houston PPM," Media Week Web site, September 20, 2005.
14. Ibid. Also Prof. Bob Papper of Ball State University , personal interview, February 5, 2006 , "The Middletown Media Studies put the out of home TV audience at around 10%."
15. Katy Bachman, "Mixed News for Houston PPM," Media Week Web site, September 20, 2005.
16. Kevin Downey, "For Nielsen, a Most Delicate Dilemma," Media Life, November 18, 2005 .

Economics

Economics

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

Analysts were divided over what direction TV stations' revenues would take in 2005. Coming off a presidential election and Olympics the year before, a flat or slightly down year would be typical for the industry. That could be even more pronounced given that the 2004 election-year revenues had exceeded expectations, hitting record levels.

But there was something more ominous in the numbers as well. The data also show that news contributed less than before to station revenues — and that newsroom profitability in 2004 hit an all-time low. ¹

2005 Projections

Over all, the forecasts for 2005 were modest for what remains an enormously profitable industry, with its pre-tax margins of 40% and even 50%.

Veronis Suhler Stevenson, a market research firm that analyzes media, projected that total advertising revenue for local TV stations would rise just slightly, to approximately \$26 billion, in 2005, up 1.6% from \$25.6 billion the year before. Local advertising would make up \$14.8 billion of the total, while national spot advertising would be approximately \$11 billion. That would represent a 1.8% growth year to year for such national advertising, and slightly less, 1.4%, for local. ²

TV Station Advertising Revenues

2003 – 2005, All Figures in Billions of Dollars

Year	National Spot	Local Spot	Total
2003	\$9.9	\$13.5	\$23.4
2004	\$10.9	\$14.6	\$25.6
2005 (est.)	\$11.1	\$14.8	\$26.0

Source: Veronis Suhler Stevenson 2005-2009 Industry Forecast, p.232

Projections by the other major market research source for the industry, the Television Bureau of Advertising (TVB), however, were for a downturn. As of June 2005, TVB's analysis of TNS Media Intelligence/CMR's estimates for the top 100 markets indicated that local broadcast TV's revenues were down 4.3% for the first quarter compared to the year before. By January 2006, TVB indicated that 2005 third-quarter local revenues were down by 11.7% compared to 2004. The drop was attributed to the fact that the core business growth that was supposed to counteract the lack of political advertising did not materialize. The biggest drop in advertising was in political spending, down by more than half from 2004. ³

Still, the local TV business continued to be a lucrative one. To get a clearer sense of that, it is useful to break down the revenue sources of local television by looking at the last year for which complete data are available, 2004.

Revenue in 2004

The campaign and Olympic year of 2004 was a good one for local TV station revenue.

It grew by more than 9%, according to data from BIAfn of 756 local TV stations across the country, from approximately \$23.5 million to \$25.6 million. That was a big improvement over 2003, when station revenue declined year to year (by 1.7%) from \$23.9 million to \$23.5 million. ⁴

Financially, big markets dominated. According to the BIA figures, the top 25 markets earned 60% of the total revenue of all markets. ⁵

Advertising Revenues

The bulk of revenues that local stations generate come from advertising sales, so much so that this figure alone offers a good indicator of a station's economic health. (Other components of station revenue include trade and barter, production and promotional revenues). ⁶

The long-standing rule of thumb is that even-numbered years are better for the local TV business. This is known as the even-year feast, odd-year famine cycle. The rule is tied to the fact that inevitably, more spending occurs during the Olympics, political campaigns and (most lucrative of all) presidential election campaigns. ⁷

Advertising revenue comes from two major sources for local TV stations: national and local spot advertising.

National spot advertising accounts for approximately 45% of local television revenues. Companies that want to advertise in many parts of the country, but not all, purchase such ads. Companies that want to reach, say, the New England and Gulf Coast regions need multiple-market advertising, but don't need advertising on national networks. National spot advertising, then, helps advertisers reach the specific areas they want to reach, and is a cheaper option than the broadcast networks.

Local spot advertising is placed by companies that are in the same market as the station. As an example, local car-dealers or service professionals buy local spots targeted to their specific clientele (this could be as specific as one county). Local spots bring in about 55% of station revenues.

According to the latest figures, 2004 proved the even-year adage by bringing in a bounty of revenue for local stations. ⁸ Advertising revenues (the sum of national and local spots) increased over all by 9% to \$25.6 billion. Unprecedented political advertising, particularly in the congressional races, fueled the spike. The national spot market benefited most, growing 10% to \$10.9 billion in 2004. The local spot market wasn't far behind, boosted by automotive, financial and real estate advertising. It grew 8.5% to \$14.6 billion. ⁹ Veronis Suhler Stevenson had forecast (in 2004) national spot and local spot growth of 8.5% and 6.8%, respectively. ¹⁰

Other market research agencies confirmed the pattern of growth and ebb in revenues. According to the Television Bureau of Advertising (TVB), local TV ad revenue grew by 12% in the top 100 markets in 2004. It put the figure at \$18.3 billion (1% better than the bureau's 10-11% forecast). Further, the bureau noted that all of the top 10 advertisers in local broadcast, nine of which were the major automotive companies, posted increases in 2004. ¹¹

TVB also released its forecast for the television industry's next two years at its annual Forecast Conference in September 2005. According to its projections, total spot revenues would grow between 6.1% and 7.9% in 2006. Local spot was projected to grow between 2.9% and 5.1% and national spot by 10.5% to 11.7%. ¹² If growth matches the

projections, it would be in line with the odd-even-year cycle of local advertising. But the fact that the projections are more modest than those for previous even years may be a cause of concern for the local market — especially with the added threat of local cable.

Local Cable Advertising

Traditionally, cable systems were confined to national advertising, but that has changed over the last few years. Factors such as consolidation of markets and new technology have enabled cable systems to carry the same advertisement on a group of systems at once.

And local cable advertising has been flourishing. According to the latest Veronis Suhler report, it grew at an annual compound rate of 10% from 1999 to 2004. For 2004 to 2009, it is projected to grow at a rate of almost 15%. By comparison, local spot ad revenue for local broadcast stations grew at a rate of 3% annually from 1999 to 2004 and is expected have an annual compound rate of growth of just 3.8% until 2009. ¹

Growth of Local Spot Advertising vs. Local Cable Advertising 2000 – 2008, Percentage Growth

Year	Local Spot	Local Cable
2000	6.8%	15.9%
2004	8.5%	19.6%
2008 (est.)	6.8%	14.4%

Source: Veronis Suhler Stevenson 2005-2009 Industry Forecast

One reason for the increased profitability of local cable is the growing number of “interconnects.” The term refers to linkages that multiple cable systems have formed to allow advertisers to air ads simultaneously across all participating systems in a TV market. Interconnects represent a challenge to local broadcast station revenue in part because they can offer rates that are a fraction of what individual stations charge; the cable systems make money by aggregating their revenues from ads on some 30 or 40 different channels.

The impact that the interconnects will have on local station economics will become clearer in 2006, but it is bound to become a more important consideration for local TV economics in the years to come.

Newsroom economics

While local stations made money in 2004, how much was the newsroom contributing to the growth? According to data, not as much as it used to. The latest results, such as those of the Radio-Television News Directors Association (RTNDA/BSU) survey, presented a cautious economic picture for local news in 2004. ¹³

The survey found that the amount newsrooms contribute to total revenue saw roughly a three percentage-point decline in 2004. For the year, news accounted for 42.8% of station revenue, down from 46.1% the year before. ¹⁴

Percentage of Station Revenue Produced by News
2002 – 2004, All Stations

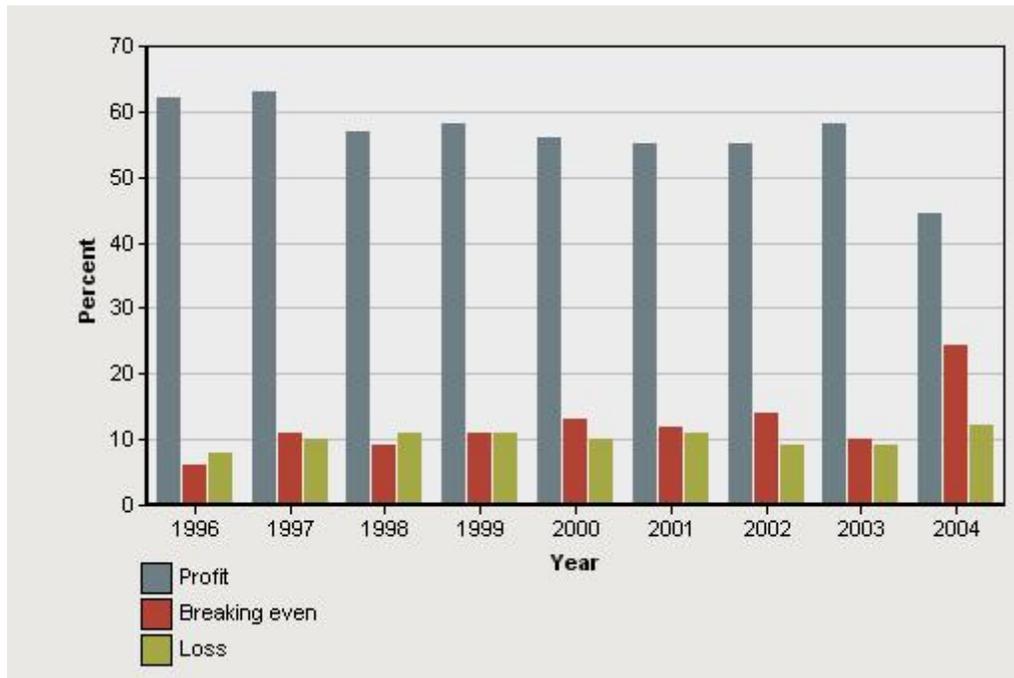
Year	Average Percentage
2004	42.8%
2003	46.1%
2002	39.7%

Source: RTNDA/Ball State University Surveys. Based on survey responses of news directors

According to the survey, news divisions in the top 25 markets contribute less of total revenue than those in smaller markets. That is slightly deceiving, however. Most of the difference might be coming from the independent stations in the top 25 markets that produce news, including Spanish-language stations. While there are no hard data to support that, it is worth considering that their contribution would be much smaller than that of the stations affiliated with the four top networks.

The most striking finding of the survey was that “news profitability” (i.e., newscasts that were making a profit) hit an all-time low in 2004. The report showed that the number of news directors reporting a profit fell by almost 14 percentage points from the previous year. Of the 1,223 stations that participated in the survey, only 44.5% of the news directors reported that they earned a profit. This was down from 58.4% from the year before.

Local TV News Profitability All Stations, 1996 – 2004



Design Your Own Chart
 Source: RTNDA/Ball State University Surveys
 Based on survey responses of news directors

The percentage of profitable newsrooms began to decline after 1997, when two thirds of news directors said they were showing a profit. By 2001 and 2002, just over half were doing so. On the other hand, comparing 2004 with the last eight years, there's been a jump of approximately 21% in the number of stations that say they are losing money. Indeed, the number of news directors reporting a loss in 2004 was the highest the survey has ever recorded, at 12.1% (the previous high was 11.2% in 2002).¹⁵

The differences in profitability between the network affiliates are striking. Over the last two years, the highest percentage of stations reporting a profit were those affiliated to the Fox Network. The percentage rose from 63% in 2003 to 67% in 2004. ABC affiliates, on the other hand, were the least likely to show a profit, down to 44.1% from 64.9% in 2003. ABC's numbers seem to be a reflection of its poor performance during prime time (link to Network TV Audience). But the past two years have been a difficult time for local news in general, with a number of local newscasts being canceled because they failed to build a sufficient audience.¹⁶ The Sinclair Group, one of the largest TV station groups in the U.S., seemed to be getting out of the news business in 2005. It shut down news operations in Birmingham, Pittsburgh and Milwaukee, and there were reports that it might do the same in other cities.¹⁷

If we look at profitability by market size, the largest and the smallest markets seem to perform similarly, with a third of each reporting profits. The markets in the middle were more profitable. But again, independent stations and/or Spanish-language stations tend to be concentrated in the large populations centers. Separating their results from those

of the four big networks' affiliates would dramatically change the numbers. It could also account for the anomalous fact that the top 25 markets show a profit rate lower than the smaller markets.

Newsroom Profitability by Market Size
2003 vs. 2004, All Percentages

	Reporting Profit		Breaking Even		Reporting Loss	
	2003	2004	2003	2004	2003	2004
Mkt 1-25	47.2	37.8	16.7	35.1	19.4	16.2
Mkt 26-50	60.6	48.9	6.1	19.1	12.1	12.8
Mkt 51-100	63.1	51.4	12.3	23.6	6.2	11.1
Mkt 101-150	64.1	45.9	7.7	19.7	6.4	9.8
Mkt 151+	47.4	33.3	10.5	27.1	7.9	12.5

Source: RTNDA/Ball State University Surveys. Based on survey responses of news directors

Conclusion

In the universe of newsroom profitability, the data show three worlds: The rich generally are those in the top 25 markets. The poor, although that term may be a relative one, are the bottom 151. And a lot of stations are in between. While the majority of news directors recorded profits, the middle-tier stations — markets 51-100 — were also showing greater losses than the previous year (6% to 11%), and those are numbers that emerged during the robust year of 2004.

The message here may be that newscasts that are on the fringes of viewership — the sixth, seventh or eighth-ranked local news stations in the largest markets and the fourth, fifth or sixth-ranked stations in medium markets — are in jeopardy.

Footnotes

1. Research data for this section were gathered from BIA Financial Network, the Television Bureau of Advertising and the Veronis Suhler Stevenson Communication Industry Forecast 2005-2009.
2. Veronis Suhler Stevenson, "Growth of TV advertising expenditures," Veronis Suhler Stevenson Communication Industry Forecast 2005-2009, p. 234.
3. Television Bureau of Advertising, "Broadcast TV's Ad Revenues Up 1.0% in 1st Quarter," TVB Web site, June 10, 2005 . Also see Television Bureau of Advertising, "Minus Political Dollars, Local Broadcast TV Revenues Down 11.7% in 3rd Quarter," TVB Web site, January 6, 2006.
4. The Project uses the BIAfn data to calculate estimated station revenue. Since there are hundreds of local TV stations in the U.S. , the report (like all previous annual reports) short-lists only those that actually have news directors (to see if they produce local news), are commercial and viable. Spanish-language stations are not included. Further, the exact tally of stations cannot be the same every year. Stations constantly change ownership and/or are shutting down,

and news directors are not permanent features of local stations — they may be added or removed from the staff. This year, our analysis included 756 local stations.

5. BIAfn Media Access Pro Database, Station Revenues for 2004.

6. BIAfn TV industry Overview, 2005.

7. Indeed, election ad spending for 2004, estimated at \$1.6 billion, accounted for 80% of the revenue increase in local TV stations. See the 2005 State of the News Media Annual Report for more information.

8. 2004 figures and 2005 estimates from the Veronis Suhler Stevenson Communication Industry Forecast, 2005-2009

9. Veronis Suhler Stevenson, "Growth of TV advertising expenditures," Veronis Suhler Stevenson Communication Industry Forecast 2005-2009, p. 234.

10. Veronis Suhler Stevenson, "2004 industry forecast compared with actual growth," Veronis Suhler Stevenson Communication Industry Forecast 2005-2009, p. 233.

11. Katy Bachman, "TVB: TV ad revenues grew by 12 percent in 2004", Media Week Web site, March 17, 2005. Also see "TVB Forecasts Spot TV to Grow 6.1-7.9% in 2006," TVB Web site, September 8, 2005.

12. Veronis Suhler Stevenson, "Growth of Television Advertising Expenditure," Veronis Suhler Stevenson Communication Industry Forecast, 2005-2009, p. 234.

13. Every year the RTNDA, in conjunction with Ball State University (BSU), publishes a survey of news directors that looks at the economic trends at local stations. Conducted by Bob Papper, the survey is a good tool to analyze economic and investment trends in local newsrooms. It is released in RTNDA's monthly magazine, Communicator.

14. Bob Papper, Ball State University, Personal Interview, February 5, 2006. According to Papper, this trend differs by network affiliation. Fox affiliates get a smaller percentage of their revenues from news than ABC, CBS and NBC affiliates; and all other commercial stations get a fraction of their revenue from news compared to the network affiliates.

15. Bob Papper, "News Staffing and Probability Survey," RTNDA Communicator, October 2005. Of the remaining news directors, 24.2% said they were breaking even while 19.2% did not answer/ did not know.

16. Stations like KVTM in Laredo, Tex., and KGWC in Casper, Wyo. shut down their news operations in 2005 citing poor ratings. It was the second time that both the news operations had been canceled. Both had been reinstated in 2004, but didn't get enough viewers to sustain themselves. Associated Press, "Laredo TV Station drops newscast, staff," Fort Worth Star Telegram, January 4, 2006; and Associated Press, "Casper Television Stations cancels evening news broadcast," Billings (Mont.) Gazette, January 5, 2006.

17. Tim Cuprisin, "Channel 18's 9 p.m. News Might Sign Off," Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, January 16, 2006. Online: <http://www.jsonline.com/enter/tvradio/jan06/385473.asp>

18. Jonathon Berr, "Ad spending growth slows; web, cable, Spanish media doing best," Orlando Sun-Sentinel, September 5, 2005.

19. BIA Financial Network, "BIA Financial Network Reports that Hispanic Television Stations Continue to Grow in Numbers and in Shares", Press Release, June 16, 2005.
20. Allison Romano, "Special Report: Hispanic Television Summit ," Multichannel News, October 17, 2005 . According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the national Hispanic population has grown from 35.6 million in 2000 to 41.3 million in 2005. That is five times faster than for non-Hispanics, and it is projected that by 2010, Hispanics will make up 15% of the total U.S. population.
21. Allison Romano, "Special Report: Hispanic Television Summit ," Multichannel News, October 17, 2005.
22. Ibid. In 1992, 38% of Hispanics watched Spanish TV while 62% watched English-language networks. By mid-2005, however, the numbers watching Spanish TV grew to 55% and those watching English-language TV fell to 45%. Also, see "Media Consumption Study," Hoy & TNS Market Development, October 11, 2005. Study showed that among Hispanics, Spanish remains the preferred language across media for obtaining news information.
23. Jay Sherman, "NBCU Puts up Four Stations for Sale ," Television Week, January 9, 2006.
24. Ibid.
25. Spanish newscasts were introduced in cities like Orlando , Charlotte , N.C. , Salt Lake City , San Antonio , Phoenix , and Atlanta.
26. "Demand for Spanish language news content rising rapidly; Hispanic journalists and news stations registered on the NewsMarket jumps 250%," PR News Wire, August 25, 2005.
27. John Eggerton, "DTV Bill Signed into Law," Broadcasting & Cable, February 8, 2006 . HD Update, "Shut-Off Date Is (Finally) Official", Broadcasting & Cable, February 9, 2006 .

Ownership

Ownership

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

Changes in Ownership

The ownership landscape for local TV news was stable in 2005 and is expected to remain so until the regulatory environment in Washington is clarified.

At the risk of restating the familiar, the Bush Administration took power in 2001 declaring its intention to relax the rules limiting how many stations a company could own, and perhaps eliminating the cross-ownership rules that prohibited companies from buying radio, TV and newspaper properties in the same city. But legal challenges and a political backlash against some of the actions of the former FCC chairman, Michael Powell, effectively froze the rules as they were. The TV industry, though, still appears poised for quick action if the rules change.

As a report by the market research firm BIAfn on the revenue for the top 10 station groups from 2000 to 2004 noted, "In order to grow revenues, many television groups have had to continue to expand into new markets or add stations in existing markets." 1

Who are the big names at the local television level? The biggest parent companies by revenue, in order, are Rupert Murdoch's News Corp., NBC Universal, Viacom International Inc, Tribune Company and the ABC/Disney group.

Top Companies

Top Local Television Companies, in order of Parent Revenue

Rank	Name
1	News Corporation
2	NBC Universal
3	Viacom International Inc.
4	Tribune Co.
5	ABC/ Disney
6	Gannett Co. Inc.
7	Hearst-Argyle TV Inc.
8	Belo Corp.
9	Sinclair Broadcast Group Inc.
10	Raycom Media Inc.
11	Univision Communications Inc.
12	Cox Enterprises Inc.
13	LIN Television Corporation
14	Washington Post Company
15	EW Scripps Co.
16	Meredith Corp.
17	Clear Channel Communications
18	Gray Television Inc.
19	Media General Inc.
20	Young Broadcasting Inc.

Source: BIA Media Access Pro, August 2005

Some prominent names shook up the local television scene in 2005 and early 2006, as some companies split apart or left the business while others consolidated their assets.

One of the biggest names in U.S. television, CBS, saw the completion of its split with Viacom in 2005 and in early 2006 caught the industry by surprise by announcing a new network in partnership with Time Warner.

CBS/Viacom, an offshoot of Viacom International Inc., was the largest U.S. television network in terms of revenue. ² In June 2005, Viacom split its cable and broadcast divisions into two separate companies. Its broadcast networks retained the name CBS Corporation, while the cable operations were placed under the banner Viacom Inc. It now consists of CBS Television and UPN (broadcast television), the CBS Television Stations Group at the local level, and Showtime (cable television). It also has varied operations in other media businesses, including radio (CBS Radio), digital media (CBS Digital Media Group and CSTV) and theme parks (Paramount Parks). (See also Network Ownership).

The local television group consists of 39 stations, reaching 15 of the top 20 American television markets. The total comprises 21 owned-and-operated CBS stations, 15 UPN-affiliated stations, 1 WB station and 2 stations not affiliated with the major networks. ³

The split cleared the way for Viacom to separate its high-growth assets, namely its cable networks and movie studio, from its more mature businesses, its broadcast-TV and radio stations. In other words, Viacom was seen to be splitting its booming business (cable entertainment) from the not-so-profitable (local and broadcast TV). Richard Greenfield, an analyst with the Wall Street firm Fulcrum Global Partners, believed that while “the split wasn’t a ‘cure-all’ for the malaise affecting Viacom and the broader media sector” outside the Internet it would increase the company’s lagging stock value. ⁴

With the split a reality, the CBS leadership was under pressure to show results from the broadcast portions — especially UPN, which has struggled not just to make money but was also to attract top talent. Time Warner’s WB network, although doing better than UPN, has also been struggling to find a niche for itself. In January 2006, CBS and Time Warner’s Warner Bros. Entertainment announced that they would be merging and dissolving the two networks to replace them with a new network called the “CW.”

The CW Television Network was announced as a fifty-fifty partnership between the two parents (Tribune Co., which owned a 22 percent stake in the WB, gave up its interest and would not have any stake in the new channel) to be launched in September 2006. Operations at the WB and UPN will shut down, with the new network relying on existing programming from both. The two companies will share equally in profits and costs of all future programming on the new network. They are hoping that a stronger program lineup and removal of a competitor will make the CW a more effective player in the local TV market.

The contraction of the two networks will likely shake up the local television scene. The biggest impact might be on Fox, which faces the prospect of losing valuable programming. It owns UPN affiliates in six of the top 10 markets, and in each the CW affiliation will go to the Tribune-owned WB stations. Fox reacted to the news by announcing the launch of its own broadcast network, “My Network TV” in late February 2006. ⁵

In the mid-size markets, the CW is still determining which owner the stations will affiliate with. ⁶ While it’s too early to decide what impact the shift in affiliations will have on news operations, the new network will undoubtedly be an important factor in the local TV scenario of 2006.

On another front, Emmis Communications, a smaller local television company in the news, sold 13 of its 16 television channels by January 2006. ⁷ Why did it leave the local TV business? Emmis had entered the field seven years ago, anticipating that cable operators would begin paying broadcast companies for the rights to local station signals, and that it would be able to pull together new content and sell it to digital subscribers as a low-cost alternative to cable TV. Neither event came to pass. Others attributed the sales to the company’s investors, who viewed its traditional radio

businesses as a more attractive proposition than its television entities. Nevertheless, the revenue from the sales left analysts feeling good about the local television market as a whole. The company sold the first nine of its stations for \$481 million over their book value. ⁸

The sell-off wasn't all good news for local news, however. The group sold the stations to the private equity firm Blackstone Group and, as part of the deal, stations were immediately notified about the employee cuts. On- and off-air employee layoffs and cutbacks were announced at stations in Oregon (KOIN 6), Kansas (KSNW TV) and Hawaii (KHON 2).

The FCC Regulations

The local television industry continued experience regulatory uncertainty in 2005. The media ownership issue was so divisive that the FCC shelved the issue for a long time; its members couldn't even agree on a process to consider it (please see the 2005 Annual Report for a history of the ownership rules). In October 2005, it kicked off a much-delayed nationwide round of town hall meetings or with the general public on possible solutions to the issue, which it planned to follow up with the court-ordered review of its rules in early 2006.

Some of the delay can be attributed to the FCC. The FCC is governed by five commissioners, three from the president's party and two from the opposition party. They are confirmed by the Senate for 5-year terms, and the president appoints one of them as the chairperson. Nowadays that means that on any bill, the Republicans have the advantage of a 3-2 vote. However, this majority has been missing for some time at the FCC.

Republican Kevin Martin, commissioner since 2001, moved up to succeed Michael Powell as chairman when Powell left the FCC in March 2005. ⁹ The resulting vacancy left the FCC one member short — and thus split for most of the year with Martin and Kathleen Abernathy on the Republican side facing the Democrats Michael Copps and John Adelstein. The vacant Republican spot was not filled until November 2005, when Deborah Tate was nominated by the President. But Abernathy's term expired the same month, perpetuating the split. In February 2006, attorney Robert McDowell was nominated to fill the GOP seat left vacant by Abernathy.

All the shuffling suggested that new ownership rules were to emerge before the 2006 ended, but it was also possible that Martin's staff was already working on a plan behind the scenes that would be presented as a *fait accompli* as soon as all three Republican commissioners were aboard. The FCC is also expected to take up several hot-button issues, including indecency on broadcast television and advanced communications services.

The Sinclair Broadcast Group, which created a lot of publicity during the 2004 presidential campaign for its plan to air an anti-John Kerry documentary on its stations, became much less of a story in 2005. The group, among the 10 largest in local television, announced in October 2004 that it would show the documentary "Stolen Honor," widely considered so controversial that advertisers were pulling ads and investors were complaining. Sinclair modified its plan, broadcasting instead a program about the documentary's allegations. Activists had said they would challenge Sinclair's station licenses as they come up for renewal before the FCC, but in 2005 at least, there were no media reports of any new developments. Sinclair made news in 2005 and early 2006 when it closed down three local news operations (with plans for more).

Fox Network: Expanding locally

Fox saw some significant developments at the local television level in 2005. At the end of the year, News Corp. owned 35 local stations in 26 markets across the U.S., reaching approximately 45% of the country. It owned both FOX and UPN affiliates in the top three media markets (New York, Los Angeles and Chicago) and other duopolies in six more of the top 20 markets.

In August 2005, Roger E. Ailes, chairman of the cable channel Fox News since its inception, was given the additional title of chairman of Fox Television Stations. His deputy at Fox News, Jack Abernathy, was earlier made CEO. Further, Shari Berg, a high-ranking Fox News executive, was promoted to a newly created job, senior vice president of news operations for Fox television stations. Berg also remained the head of news operations at the Fox News channel. In her dual role, she was expected to ensure collaboration and operational synergy between the cable news channel, the local news stations, and the larger Twentieth Century Television.

Those changes emphasize the focus News Corp. has on its U.S. news business, where it hopes to emulate the success of the cable channel in the local television market as well. Variety magazine noted that Ailes was grafting the Fox News cable channel's style of operations onto the network of 35 local stations. More significantly, it was noted that "the centerpiece of Fox-under-Ailes will be expanded local news."¹⁰ Abernathy was heard saying that he had plans to incorporate production values that are the hallmark of Fox News into the local news operations as well. He also hinted that talent deals could lead to the sharing of local and national personalities between the Fox News Channel and local stations. The first evidence of the policy emerged in January 2006, when two Fox News channel anchors shifted to the weekday local evening newscast on Fox-owned WNYW-TV, Channel 5. The station had been struggling to get an audience for its 6 p.m. newscast for a number of years, and the new team was designed to boost attention to the lineup.¹¹

"We think the future of local stations is in news and information," Abernathy explained. "We want to program the stations more like channels, which means having blocks of [compatible] programming that can supplement local news." He pointed to the new syndicated *Geraldo at Large* with the Fox News Channel reporter Geraldo Rivera as a prime example of the kind of show that would provide strong lead-ins and bookends to local station news.¹²

The Fox News channel was also in the process of making itself into a network-style engine, and there were strong rumors that Fox News planned a daily national evening newscast (see *Cable TV News Investment*). Until now, the standard Fox model was network and local morning shows, similar to the big three networks, and a one-hour late newscast at 9 p.m. (central) and 10 p.m. (East and West Coast). The late Fox newscast did not compete with the 11 p.m. newscasts of the big three networks. That may change if Fox adopts the more traditional network model. Some press accounts speculated that Berg was put in a dual role in anticipation of her taking charge of the evening newscast. The idea of a Fox-branded national newscast has some appeal for local stations that have been looking at higher programming costs and the scarcity of new sitcoms to hit the syndication market.¹³

In December 2005, Fox launched its first local 11 p.m. newscast, in Tampa on WTVT, Channel 13. Local media noted that the show was stylistically very much like the cable channel, with slick production values and striking visuals. It is too early to assess the move, but it will bear watching to see how many local newscasts emerge and how audiences respond. The St. Petersburg Times TV critic Chase Squires differentiated the newscast from the main Fox cable channel's as more "straightforward... even though it employs similar patriotic looking visuals."¹⁴

Another area where Fox News may try to help their local stations gain share in their markets would be to improve its morning newscasts, which take on the more established "Today," "Good Morning America" and "The Early Show."

So while it is still early in the new Fox regime, one thing seems certain: given the impact Fox had on the cable scene, its interest in local stations is bound to change the landscape of local television news. 15

Footnotes

1. BIAfn Press Release, "BIA Financial Network reports on revenue growth of top television station owners over the past four years," BIA Web site, May 12, 2005 .
2. John Higgins, "CBS: In the Money," *Broadcasting & Cable*, January 9, 2005. CBS topped the 'Broadcasting & Cable' annual ranking of 25 largest TV networks.
3. CBS Corporation Company Profile, online at: http://www.cbcorporation.com/our_company/index.php
4. Linda Moss, "Viacom Split Becomes a Reality: Unwinding of Assets Targeted for Early '06," *Multichannel News*, June 20, 2005.
5. John M. Higgins, "The Battle for Fifth Place," *Broadcasting & Cable*, February 27, 2006.
6. January 30, 2005 edition of *Television Week*; January 30, 2005 edition of *Broadcasting & Cable*; BIA Subscription News Commentary, "Upheaval in the Lineup of Local Television Stations," BIAfn, January 25, 2006; See also Andrew Wallenstein & Kimberly Speight, "Syndie Biz Could Pop as Prime Slots Open," *Hollywood Reporter*, January 25, 2006.
7. Emmis Communications Press Release, "Emmis Completes Sale of Four Additional Television stations," Yahoo Finance Web site, January 27, 2006.
8. Geoff Dougherty, "Emmis Communications sells 9 TV stations for \$ 681M," *The Chicago Tribune*, August 23, 2005.
9. Paul Davidson, "Martin Known as Consensus Builder," *USA Today*, October 30, 2005. In an agency that was sharply polarized under its previous chairman, Michael Powell, Martin managed to win a string of bipartisan 4-0 votes in 2005.
10. Michael Learmonth, "Jolly Roger's Grand Plan," *Variety*, October 16, 2005 .
11. "To Stop Drag, New Anchors," *New York Daily News*, January 13, 2006 .
12. Katy Bachman, "Fox Buffs Up Local News," *Media Week*, October 10, 2005 .
13. Ibid.
14. Chase Squires, "News at the Speed of Light," *St. Petersburg Times*, December 14, 2005 .
15. Michael Learmonth, "Jolly Roger's Grand Plan," *Variety*, October 16, 2005 .

News Investment

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

News continued to be an important element of programming at the local television level, and while news directors erred on the side of caution in planning for 2005, the year began with healthy newsrooms, in both size and money.

Among the notable developments,

- The amount of news on local TV showed no signs of declining, after reaching record levels in 2004.
- Stations continued to increase news budgets, though the growth was essentially led by the network affiliates and was only slightly above the rate of inflation.
- Network-affiliated stations continued to have the biggest staffs, and all growth in staffing occurred among them as well.
- Over the past decade, the news director emerged as the CEO of the newsroom, not only commanding a high salary but also seeing the most substantial increase in median salary over time.

Amount of News on Local TV

One of the major issues in local TV news in recent years has been the trend toward stations' producing more news without increasing their staff to do it. That amounted to a kind of stretching of resources that translated into a thinning of the product. Stations did fewer reporter packages and less original reporting and enterprise, relying more on second-hand material. (See Annual Report 2004 and 2005). What is happening now, according to the latest data (from 2004)?

The most important source of data on newsroom investment is the annual survey conducted for the Radio-Television News Directors Association (RTNDA) by Bob Papper of Ball State University, in which news directors report and comment on the state of the local newsrooms.

The amount of news on local TV stayed the same as the year before, and the evidence suggests that that will continue. Perhaps stations have come to fill all the time they can.

When asked how much news they planned to air in 2005, about two thirds of news directors said they would keep the same level. A quarter of stations said they planned to increase their programming. About 1 in 10 of the news directors planned to reduce the amount of news on air. ¹

The average amount of local TV news each day in 2004 remained about the same as the year before — 3.6 hours. The stations affiliated with the four top networks averaged 3.8 hours, with the most at CBS stations (4.2 hours) and the least at Fox affiliates (3.1 hours). ² Independent stations weren't far behind, with an average 3.5 hours.

TV News Budgets

With the amount of news on local TV relatively stable, what about the news budgets used to produce it?

Looking at all stations — affiliate and independent combined — most, 44%, had increased their budgets, as opposed to 51% in 2003. Another 26% percent said budgets remained the same.

Here, though, network affiliation made a difference. Among network affiliates, 49% of news directors increased their news budgets, with more than a fourth saying the budget had not changed (27.5%).

At independent stations, however, over a third (37%) reported cutting their news budgets from the year before, and nearly as many (34%) said they couldn't comment on or did not know whether budgets had gone up or down. ³

The data suggest that if there are winners and losers coming in local news, independents, which had been a growth area in an earlier era, are facing trouble ahead.

Staff Size

Like news budgets overall, newsroom staffing seems to differ depending on whether the stations are affiliated with one of the four major networks.

When asked their plans for 2005, more than half (53.5%) of the news directors at network affiliates said they would keep newsrooms staff sizes the same as 2004. News directors of independent stations, on the other hand, were pessimistic about 2005. Most of them (54.3%) said they didn't know what changes they would see in the newsroom staff, and more than 20% said they would decrease employees.

A worrisome figure, though, may be the disparity between the predictions in late 2003 for staff cuts over the next year and the percent actually reporting cuts in the most recent survey. Heading into 2004, just under 4% of news directors had predicted that they would cut their staffs in 2004, but almost five times that many reported doing so at the close of the year.

With that in mind, the 9% that predicted cutting staff in 2005 could prove to be a much greater percentage in the end. ⁴

Changes in Staff Size: 'Big 4' Affiliates 2003 – 2005

	Increase	Same	Decrease
Staff Size Changes in 2003	34%	51%	14.9%
Staff Size Changes Expected in 2004	31.6%	57.7%	3.8%
Staff Size Changes in 2004	33.2%	41.2%	18.8%
Staff Size Changes Expected in 2005	23.5%	53.5%	8.9%

Source: RTNDA/Ball State University Surveys

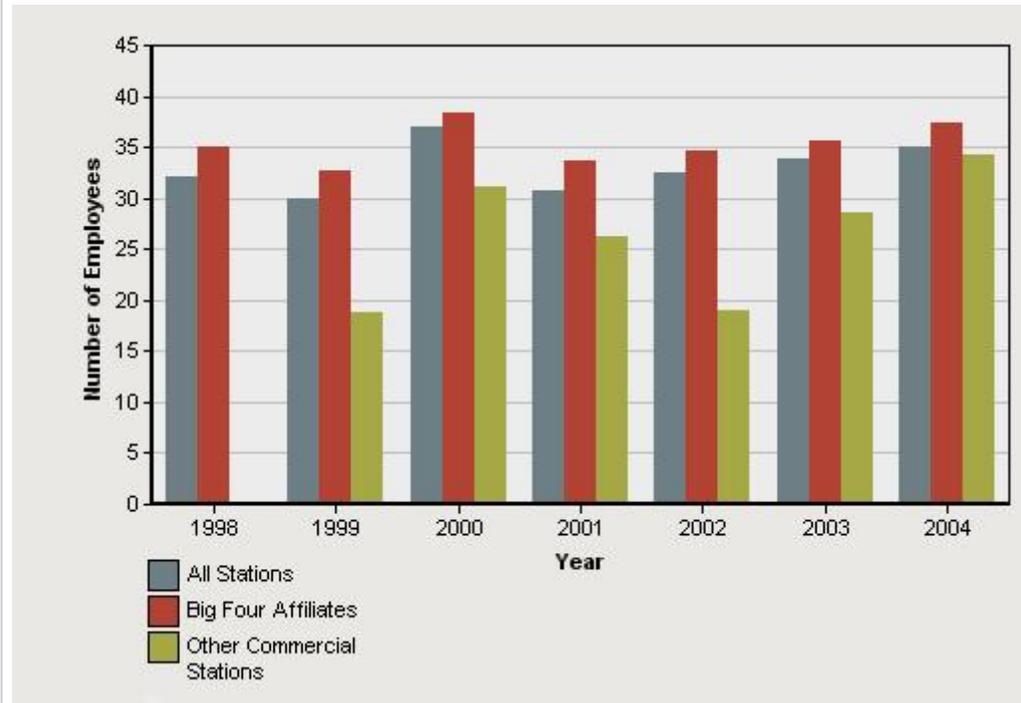
The number of people employed in the average newsroom (including both full-time and part-time employees) has been steadily increasing.

At the network affiliates, the average number of full-time staff people was 37, up from approximately 36 in 2003 and 35 in 2002. For both the network affiliates and other commercial stations together, the pattern is similar — full-time staffs

have grown to an average of 35 from 34 in 2003 and 33 in 2002. On the other hand, part-time staff has shown a decline. 5

Local TV Newsroom Staff Levels

1998 – 2004, Average Number of Full Time Employees



Design Your Own Chart

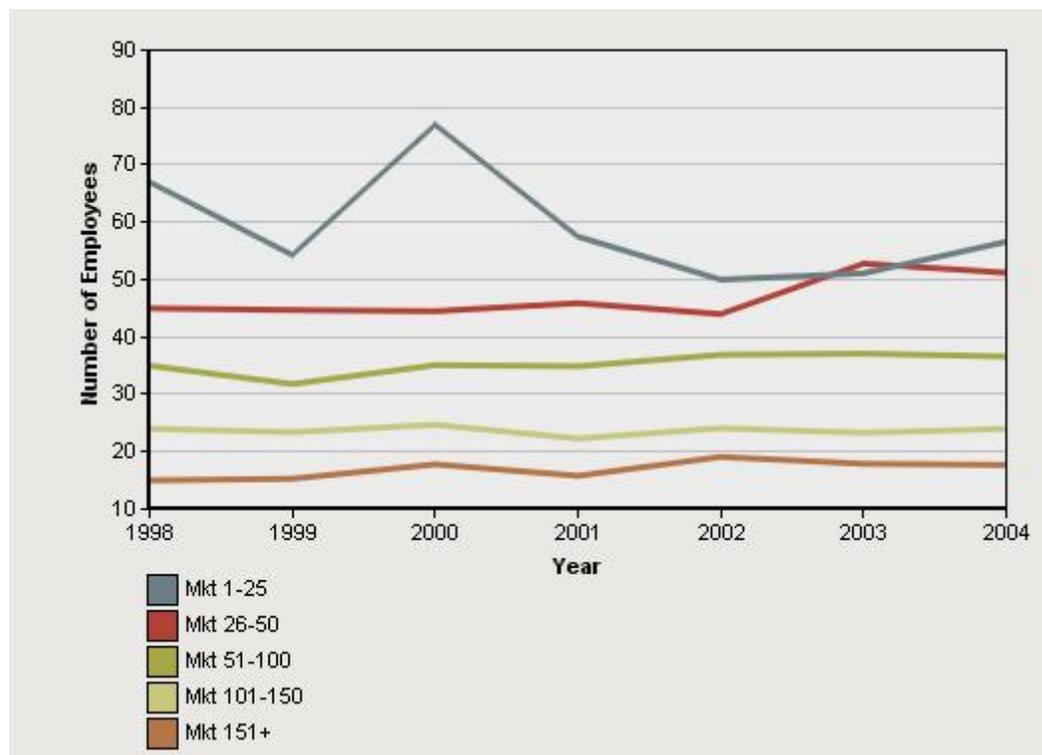
Source: RTNDA/Ball State University Surveys

Based on survey responses of news directors

But the averages may mask what is really going on. It is possible that most of the growth is occurring in a few newsrooms, and that their expansion is skewing the averages.

If we look at growth in 2004 in terms of market size, it occurred mainly in the largest markets. Graphing the full-time staff over time shows that it's the largest markets that have seen the most fluctuation in the newsroom, as well. The average newsroom in the top 25 markets was particularly large in 2000, but the number of employees went down sharply in the next few years. In 2004, it seems, those stations were re-staffing their newsrooms again, though whether that is a trend is uncertain.

Local TV Newsroom Staff Levels, by Market Size 1998 – 2004, Average Number of Full Time Employees



Design Your Own Chart

Source: RTNDA/Ball State University Surveys

Based on survey responses of news directors

Salaries

Over all, salaries rose across the board, although not everyone shared equally in the increases. The news director emerged as the CEO of the newsroom not only in influence but also of pay.

Newsroom salaries in 2004 increased 3.6% over 2003. That was a smaller increase than the previous year (10%), but represented a second straight year of increases. In 2004, for example, news managers saw their salaries rise 4.8% while other off-air positions received pay increases of 6.6%.

Over time, however, TV news managers (News Producers, Executive Producers, Managing Editors and Assistant News Directors) have seen a much greater increase in real wages than anyone else in their shops. Using the RTNDA data to compare median salaries, the average on-air positions have seen an increase of about 26% in salaries over the past 10 years (1994 to 2004). That group includes news anchors, weathercasters and sports anchors. On the other hand, the increase among management positions was nearly double that, at about 45%.⁶

Among News Directors, the difference is even more pronounced. They have seen a median salary jump of 60% in the past 10 years, the most substantial increase of all. That clearly reflects the premium that managers now command. News directors now earn on average 30% more than the average anchor. In the age of multiple newscasts, though, there are now many more anchors than just the main evening anchor. The term “anchor” no longer refers to just that marquee figure, who may still have a higher salary than the news director.

Median TV News Salary Comparisons Over Time
1994 – 2004

	2004	1999	1994	10 Year Percentage Change
News Director	\$73,000	\$59,000	\$45,600	34%
Assistant News Director	60,000	54,000	45,600	47.8
Managing Editor	55,000	50,000	37,500	46.7
Executive Producer	50,000	49,000	34,800	43.7
News Producer	30,000	25,000	21,200	41.5
News Anchor	55,500	45,000	43,600	27.3
Weathercaster	50,000	40,000	37,500	33.3
Sports Anchor	40,000	35,000	33,750	18.7
Internet Specialist	37,500	30,000	NA	NA

Source: RTNDA/BSU Salary Survey, June 2005

To a lesser extent, what has happened to the salaries of news directors is also happening to other behind-the-scenes people. Over the past decade, the percentage of wage increases for off-air jobs was significantly higher for every newsroom job category surveyed.

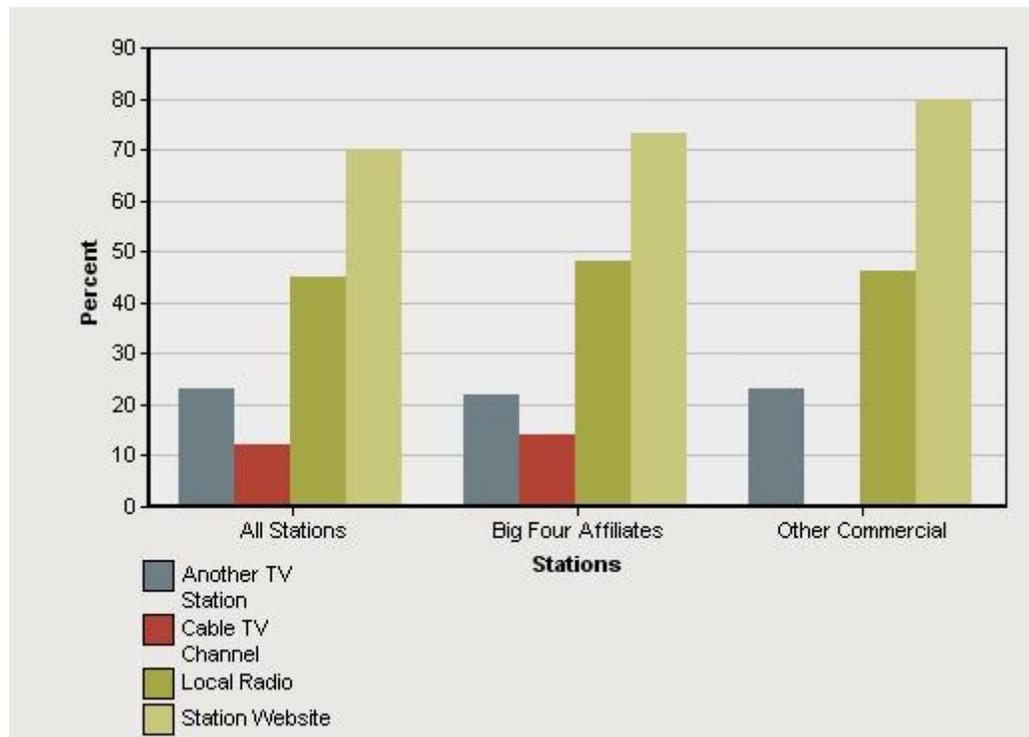
Another interesting point is the rise in the position of the internet specialist. The job was nonexistent or negligible enough not to be measured 10 years ago, but now earns a salary almost as high as an average sports anchor. One reason may be that these positions are more likely to exist in larger markets.

Cross Pollination

As reported last year, stations are increasingly spreading their content across a wide variety of outlets. The most popular type of sharing continued to be the providing of content to station Web sites, followed by local radio outlets. That was followed by the sharing of content with another broadcast station, and lastly, with a local cable channel.

The percentage of content shared with all four kinds of outlets rose by a small amount from the year before.

Other Outlets for Local TV News Content by Affiliation 2004



Design Your Own Chart

Source: RTNDA/Ball State University Surveys

Based on survey responses of news directors

Conclusion

Investment in the local news market was more or less steady in 2005. Strong stations got slightly stronger. Weak stations appeared to become even weaker. And the largest group of middle-market operations essentially held the line. Changes, if any, were most visible in markets 26 to 50. Those, in contrast to the others, projected some amount of growth for 2005 in the amount of news on the air, in news budgets, and to some extent in newsroom staff.

Another area that bears watching is the smaller independents and Hispanic stations in the top markets. While the market group looked steady overall, there was significant growth in the station types, perhaps masking what's happening at the top of the food chain.

Footnotes

1. Bob Papper, "News, Staffing and Profitability Survey," Supplementary Charts, RTNDA Communicator, October 2005. The survey found that 60.8% of news directors of all television stations (top-four affiliates and other commercial) said they planned to keep the same amount of news in 2005; 24.9% said they would increase the amount, and 8.8% said they would decrease.
2. Bob Papper, "News, Staffing and Profitability Survey," Supplementary Charts, RTNDA Communicator, October 2005. In terms of size, markets 26 to 50 aired the most news, 4.3 hours on an average on weekdays. One other interesting note is that the amount of news on the weekends, once the backwaters of local news, increased more than the weekday average in 2004; the Sunday average went up by six minutes. That may be a sign that stations are looking for yet more places to increase news revenues.
3. Bob Papper, "News, Staffing and Profitability Survey," RTNDA Communicator, October 2005.
4. Ibid.
5. Bob Papper, "News, Staffing and Profitability Survey," RTNDA Communicator, October 2005. Part-time staff was down to an average of 3 for all television stations, from 4.8 in 2003. The drop was seen in both affiliated networks, where the average went down from 4.5 to 3, and among other commercial stations, which saw a drop from 3.7 to 3.5.
6. Bob Papper, "Salary Survey", Median TV News Salary Comparisons Over Time, RTNDA Communicator, June 2005. Management Positions refer to Assistant News Director, Managing Editor, Executive Producer and News Producer.

Public Attitudes

Public Attitudes

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

For years, local TV had a special place in the public heart.

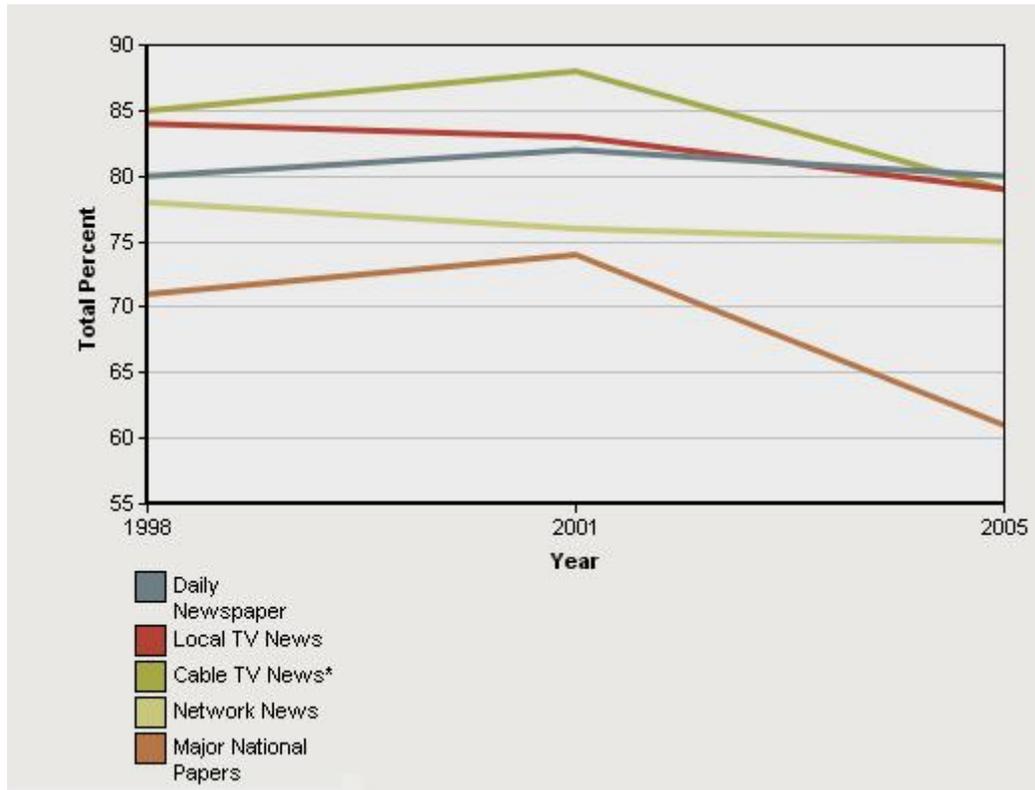
In 2004, we found signs of chinks in that armor. Local news's credibility fell and was now equal with network TV news.

In 2005, there were others signs of general favorability for local TV news organizations, though they didn't necessarily didn't stand out above other news media.

A survey by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press found that 79% of Americans said they had a favorable view of local TV news, which put it ahead of most other news media and on a par with cable news. Only local newspapers ranked higher (80%).¹

Favorability of News Media Outlets

Percentage of People who have a Favorable Opinion of the News Media



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, "Public More critical of Press but Goodwill Persists: Online Newspaper Readership Countering Print Losses", June 26, 2005

*In 2001, Cable News only listed CNN and MSNBC as examples. In 2005, Fox News was added to the question. Percentages are based on those who could rate each media

But that was four points lower than the percentage of Americans who had a favorable view of local TV news four years earlier.

Cable news and national newspapers fell more, but network news and local newspapers had both retained more of their support over the last four years.

Still, when matched with the declines in "believability" found in 2004, the trend lines for local news were down.

The same survey had some better news for local TV news. Over all, Americans thought local news was the most factual of all the media. A full 61% of Americans found that it "mostly reports the facts about news events." 2 That compares favorably to the 53% who considered network news mostly factual, and 45% who thought so about cable.

And what is it people like about local news? People who were interviewed after answering the same survey tended to say they liked that it was “local,” that it kept them “connected to the community” and that it was “current, up to date.”³ Thus, the fact that local TV news is on so often, making it more convenient and presumably late breaking, is something viewers respond to.

What is missing in this picture relates to the future. With local TV news audiences dropping, can we learn anything from survey data about why? Is it simply that people have more choices, or is there something about what local TV news offers? Would more people watch if local TV news had lower profit expectations, spent more on news gathering, did more enterprise, leaned less heavily on crime news, or made other changes?

Since those questions are hypothetical, we may never have the answers.

Footnotes

1. Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, “Public More critical of Press but Goodwill Persists: Online Newspaper Readership Countering Print Losses,” June 26, 2005. Online at: <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=248>
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

Charts & Tables

Charts & Tables

AUDIENCE

Average Early Evening News Share by Market Size
Average Early Evening News Share by Network
Average Late News Share by Market Size
Average Late News Share by Network
Early Evening News Share, Big Three Affiliates
Evening News and Late News Audience Share
Late News Share, Big Three Affiliates

ECONOMICS

Average TV Station Revenue by Market Size
Average TV Station Revenue Growth by Market Size
Average TV Station Revenue Produced by News
Local TV News Profitability
Local TV News Profitability by Market Size
Local TV News Profitability by Network Affiliation
Local TV Station Revenue
Local TV Station Revenue: Growth Year to Year

OWNERSHIP

Average Station Revenue of Top Companies

Number of Stations Held by Top Companies

Total Parent Revenue of Top Companies

NEWS INVESTMENT

Local TV News Budgets by Market Size

Local TV News Budgets by Network Affiliation

Local TV News Hours per Day

Local TV News Hours per Day by Market Size

Local TV Newsroom Staff Levels

Local TV Newsroom Staff Levels by Market Size

Other Outlets for Local TV News Content by Affiliation

Other Outlets for Local TV News Content by Market Size

PUBLIC ATTITUDES

Favorability of News Media Outlets

Roundtable

Roundtable

Later in 2006, the Project will conduct online discussions with industry leaders about each media sector. If you would like to receive an email alert when they are completed, [click here](#).

THE STATE OF THE NEWS MEDIA 2006

AN ANNUAL REPORT ON AMERICAN JOURNALISM

Magazines – Intro

Intro

Serious questions for the magazine industry come out of 2005.

It was a troubling year for advertising. Despite a relatively strong economy, ad pages were up only .5% for the year. Large-scale layoffs hit some major publishers, with Time Inc. cutting 105 people, Business Week cutting 60 and U.S. News and World Report laying off senior writers and announcing it would be turning more to Web publishing in coming years. One publisher, Gruner and Jahr, sold its properties and left the U.S. market.

And the bad news showed no signs of abating. In January of 2006, Time announced the layoff of 100 more employees and, like U.S. News, the company said one of its goals was “freeing up more resources for the Web producers at Time.com.”

For news people there is more bad news. Time, Newsweek and U.S. News continued to lose circulation in 2005. Time and Newsweek both saw double-digit drops in ad pages, in part because of the slump in the auto industry.

Still, there were bright spots. The celebrity magazine field, which seemed so full it had no room to grow, grew again at a rapid rate in 2005. Advertising and circulation figures stood in stark contrast to the industry as a whole, with some titles seeing double-digit growth in both areas.

And even the news field had some positives to report. The Economist and the New Yorker continued to increase circulation. And The Week, a weekly summary of news in other publications that was launched in 2001, took off. Its circulation is growing dramatically, and the growth in its ad-page and revenue numbers is not just far above other news titles, but far above the industry averages as well.

For news titles in particular, the questions coming out of 2005 have to do with what is next. The Week’s growth presents an interesting dilemma for the mainstream magazines. Its format, which relies on accounts from other publications, is inherently cheaper to produce than a format based on bureaus and correspondents. Can the mainstream titles compete in that market? And as circulation grows at the Economist and the New Yorker, is it possible that the mass, broad-topic news magazine simply isn’t going to be dominant in the future on the news side? Is the news market itself segmenting and, if so, where does that leave the Big Three news titles?

Content Analysis

News magazines have long been an anomaly in the media world. In a changing news environment, their contours have remained largely stable. The content of the major magazines evolved, but the titles remained the same, and so did the basic format. A question kept being asked: Would someone come up with a new idea that would challenge the format and formula of Time and Newsweek, which have long dominated the field? In 2005, there suddenly appeared a possible contender in the form of The Week.

The Week was founded in 2001, but its sudden rise in ad dollars (see Economics) and circulation (see Audience) in 2005 has become news in the past year. Business Week did a piece on the rise of The Week, and media writers have noted how the magazine, once thought of as an experiment, is beginning to be taken seriously. ¹

The Week brings a different approach to news magazine content. Rather than having reporters go out to gather news, its editors cull the week's coverage from foreign and domestic publications and condense it into a summary. The magazine is not trying to set an agenda. It doesn't make any original decisions about what to cover, and it doesn't replay anyone else's coverage at much length. Instead, its attitude may be summed up best in its slogan: "All you need to know about everything that matters."

In some ways the magazine is loosely following the path laid out by blogs, with less slant in any political direction. In a world inundated with reporting and information, and with a population that has less spare time to keep up with the news, The Week's approach of providing a kind of weekly briefing paper has obvious appeal.

We noted in past years that the news magazines — at least the mass titles — were on a clear migration away from serious longer reporting about hard-news topics. But now it seems an alternative path may have emerged. The Week does not focus on celebrity gossip or trend news. It is serious in tone and choice of topics, but it does not provide heavy in-depth reportage. It melds significant topics with short space and a fairly balanced presentation that offers a sample of opinions from the left and right. Data indicate that this approach may be catching fire.

Other trends of note in 2005:

- The slow drift toward lighter fare at Time and Newsweek showed no signs of abating.
- U.S. News and World Report maintained its practice of providing more hard, Washington-based coverage than Time or Newsweek.
- Following the presidential election, the New Yorker appeared to lean away from hard-news coverage in 2005 and return to more "culture" reporting.
- In the magazine industry over all, entertainment titles grew after having seemed to plateau.

Will the success of The Week and its second-hand summary approach — or the continued success of other nontraditional books like the Economist and the New Yorker — stir the interest of other publishers? Or lead Time and Newsweek, the two dominant weeklies, to reconsider their formats?

The Week's success also raises a concern. If its content model continues to succeed, and even inspire imitators, the net effect is likely to be fewer reporters gathering information as it peels readers away from those doing the original reporting. Quality outside reportage, then, will grow increasingly important, and the sway over the news that a few publications and companies enjoy could grow.

A Week in the Life of the News Weeklies

Every media outlet has its own way of reporting news and makes its own choices about what to cover. But news magazines have a particularly varied array of options. Because they have a longer time than most other outlets (particularly the other outlets we examine) there are more possibilities for them to consider. Inevitably, a week's worth of news from the entire world, even news that was covered by other outlets, will not fit between two covers. Traditional magazine editors decide what is and isn't worth their pages, and because magazines are less time-sensitive the editors are granted a wider latitude in that regard than editors and producers in other media.

In the past, we looked at the topics covered annually to provide a measure of the world the news titles offered. Looking at those topics over 25 years, we found a decline in reporting on national and foreign news and a rise in entertainment and celebrity stories, especially in Time and Newsweek. This year we wanted to look at how that shift away from traditional hard news plays out, by doing a closer examination of one week's worth of coverage in each magazine. We picked a week that corresponded with the "Day in the life of the media" that we examine in the other chapters of this report.

What do we see? A complicated landscape. If you paused at a newsstand or magazine rack the week of May 16, the first conclusion you would probably have drawn about the week was that nothing epic had happened. The first thing you might notice is that many of the titles are actually dated May 23 – a week after the day they actually appear on the newsstands – in order to appear "fresh" for a longer period of time. The covers of the major news magazines were devoted to a hodgepodge of issues, topics and even products. Time was heralding a look at the new Microsoft Xbox video game console. Newsweek had a president on its cover, but it was one from two centuries ago — George Washington, publicizing an excerpt from the historian David McCullough's new book on the great man. U.S. News featured a picture of a slot machine and wrote of "Secrets of the Casinos." The Week, with a sketch of Charles Darwin, turned its attention to the debate on "intelligent design" and evolution. The Economist fronted a discussion about the "axis of evil." And the New Yorker offered a sketch of Sigmund Freud driving a cab with a fare/patient lying down on the back seat.

Such is the nature of the news magazine world in a week when there is no dominant news event. Magazines have the freedom to promote on their covers a "good read" or an "evergreen" or a piece that for one reason or another was contracted to receive cover play.

Look inside and the differences run deeper still. If you picked up a magazine to get an idea of what happened the week of May 8-14, the reality you found depended greatly on the title you picked. 2



Time: The world presented in Time's May 23 issue includes news from the week past, but it isn't what many might think of as the news of the week. The 82-page magazine functions more as a supplement to a broader news diet, with a mix of topics and a mix of seriousness.

There is some national affairs coverage, a smattering of international news and an increasingly large area for pop culture in "the back of the book." Today, that term may refer only to where something appears in the magazine; it may say little or nothing about what magazine editors consider the material's significance. In the May 23 issue, the cover story (Microsoft's new game console) and the other piece teased on the cover (an interview with the comedian Dave Chappelle) reside in the "back of the book." There is actually, by page count, more soft news than hard news.

The issue has three big interview subjects: Bill Gates, Chappelle and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel . Of those, it is Sharon who doesn't make the cover, even though the interview with him is an exclusive.

What we found to be the main stories in our study of a Day in the Life of the News got little space in Time. King Tut got a two-page spread of photos and captions. The United Airlines story got about a quarter of a page and got the most space out of any of our big stories in the magazine by far. The plane that violated airspace got about 10 lines. And the Michael Jackson trial was handled in a quote from Macaulay Culkin.

Cover — The main cover topic is Microsoft's new Xbox game console, and the dominant picture is Gates staring at the reader, Terminator-esque, the glowing "on" button of the new game box serving as his right eye. "Inside Bill's new X-Box," the text reads.

The cover-story package is 14 pages long, though the amount of text is considerably less than that. Graphics and large pictures (the hallmarks of the news weeklies nowadays) make for considerably less actual type. There are, for instance, only 16 lines of type on the first two pages of the piece, which carry a large picture of Gates playing with a controller. The piece itself is a trip inside "Xbox Headquarters," where the machine was built, and a look at the thinking behind it.

Along with the main piece, Time includes a three-page spread full of pictures of video game “innovators” — or “visionaries,” as they are also called.

The package tries mightily to invest what many might consider an essentially light topic with extra heft. It isn't just about the new video game system, the cover story says, but rather “about a sea change in American culture, which has embraced video games, formerly a despised hobby, as a vital force in pop culture.” Whether that is true is one question. Whether that is news because of the latest Xbox is another. The story offers some discussion of changing American culture, but is largely a commercial for the newest endeavor of Bill Gates, one of the people Time would eventually name a Man of the Year for his philanthropic activities.

The other piece teased on the cover, about Dave Chappelle, is the second largest package in Time, a six-page piece including a Q&A interview. Chappelle, who went AWOL early in 2005, has a new program on Comedy Central called “Chappelle’s Show.”

The piece doesn't wade too far into any “larger significance” of the comedian or his hiatus, perhaps because it's not clear what that would be. Pictures make up two of the six pages of the package.

Other stories — The third biggest story in the issue is the interview with Sharon . The lack of any reference to the piece on the cover suggests that the magazine now clearly sees itself less as a news magazine than a general-interest magazine with news included; Time's current editors apparently are willing to forgo such items on the cover. That is also reflected in the division of space between the covers. The “front of the book,” the part of the magazine devoted to covering hard news, ends on page 42 with the end of the Sharon interview. The lighter “back of the book” takes up 38 more pages. Subtract the 15 pages for the table of contents, letters from readers and other items, and the back of the book accounts for more than half of the issue. Based on the topic page counts from Hall's Magazine Reports in recent years, that appears to be fairly typical.

The names and images on the cover — Chappelle and Xbox — also probably have more relevance to younger readers than Ariel Sharon.

Elsewhere in the issue, Time devotes eight pages to national affairs. The pieces include one on President Bush's ban on funds for stem cell research, the religious leaders behind a filibuster fight that was going on in the Senate, and the ousted anti-gay mayor of Spokane, Wash. In World, the Sharon package also included a short piece about the relatively unknown ad man who helped soften the prime minister's image and win him the election in Israel.

The magazine also features a three-page “Your Time” section in the back (a combination of news you can use, random facts and short interviews), a page of shorts on “People” and a closing essay.

The news of the week, the stories that pass through the public consciousness day-to-day, appear in the Notebook section in the front of the issue, a series of quick short items. It was here that the United Airlines story, the one about the plane that violated D.C. air space, and the Macaulay Culkin quote appeared, along with shorts on Arianna Huffington's blog, military base closings, the successor in Pope Benedict's old job, a book called “French Women Don't Get Fat,” a contraption that vaporizes alcohol for quicker consumption, and plans to change the president's daily intelligence brief.

Time is a magazine that seems caught in between genres. It feels compelled to pay attention to the news of the week, but only in passing, and to try and cover serious issues like the Middle East , but it isn't clear if its audience really

wants to pay attention. And Time looks as if it isn't sure how much its audience wants to read.

Newsweek: Like Time, Newsweek is not really a summary of the past seven days but instead a complement designed to keep its readers apprised of news topics and trends that the magazine's editors see as important. The world presented in the May 23 issue in many ways resembles the one offered by Time.

The current-events section, or the "front of the book," is particularly short. There are just five hard-news stories, which go up to page 36, and a later two-column piece on the Illinois slayings. The rest of the magazine's 84 pages are devoted to lighter trend stories. Removing the letters, cartoons and table of contents, the hard-news hole in the issue is 13-plus pages — including ads.

Three of the stories we saw in our Day in the Life study turn up in Newsweek. The plane violating D.C. airspace gets about two-thirds of a page in the Periscope section. North Korea's nuclear ambitions are covered in a one-page column. And the slaying of two girls in Illinois is covered in a short two-column piece near the back of the issue's hard-news section.

Cover — Newsweek's May 23 cover isn't news, it's about a book excerpt. The cover face is more than 200 years old — a picture of George Washington looking defiant astride a white horse. The cover, "The Real George Washington" is based on an excerpt of David McCullough's book "1776." Also teased on the cover are a special section on "Design 2005: What's Hot" and "The Filibuster Fight" in the Senate.

Inside, the four-page piece leading into the excerpt calls "1776" "powerful" and "vivid" and calls McCullough "America's best-loved historian." That kind of prose isn't unusual for book excerpts. If Newsweek didn't like the book or believe others would, presumably it wouldn't have put it on the cover. The lead-in piece is mostly an essay on the author, his book and the nation. "For the country, the path ahead is never entirely smooth, but, as Washington's story shows, faith and patience can see us through the longest nights," it says near its end. The piece is followed by a five-page passage from "1776."

The cover-teased "Design 2005" package looks at a variety of new product designs, from homes to video games to prescription bottles, in ways that range from multi-page stories to short items no longer than 15 lines. Design — in everything from Target products to iPods — has recently gained increased attention from the news media.

Rather than a searching exploration of design, however, the section, particularly near its close, turns largely into an advertising layout. A "Design Dozen" resembles a shopping guide — readers learn about the Mario Batali Basting Brush, Krups Espresso Maker and the hot colors for the year in paint. The subhead on this section: "Our pick of the names to know, stuff to covet, ideas to ponder. Wearables, listenables — even affordables."

Also getting a cover mention is the filibuster showdown that threatened to erupt in the Senate. A large illustration of Senators Harry Reid and Bill Frist with dynamite around the Capitol dominates the opening spread, taking up five of the six available columns. The actual room for text is about four columns out of a 12-column spread.

The article delves less into the filibuster threat and more into the waning influence of moderate voices on Capitol Hill, in the Senate particularly. Much of the piece focuses on the moderate Republican Sen. Arlen Specter, whom it calls "a relic of a bygone era." It notes that Specter and a fellow GOP moderate, Sen. Susan Collins, stopped their weekly meetings among moderate Republican senators because they were the only two people there. Almost lost in the

shuffle are the judges who prompted the GOP to consider the “nuclear option” in the first place. They are restricted to a graphic.

Other pieces — Next comes a three-page story about Newsweek’s disputed account of the reported desecrating of the Koran at the prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba (an article that ran on May 9) — what the magazine got right and wrong and the violence that broke out in the Arab world after the story ran. The piece acknowledges possible inaccuracies in the earlier story, but adds that its source still recalls reports about Koran mishandling, including a toilet incident, but cannot recall where. There is also a one-page piece about the Defense Department’s base closure plans and a one-page column from International Editor Fareed Zakaria about the administration’s policy regarding North Korea .

Then comes a two-page report on Burger King’s plan to reach Americans by selling extremely caloric and fatty foods, including a new Enormous Omelet Sandwich. A one-page story explores how the runners-up on the TV show *The Apprentice* often did better than the winners. Another page and a third carries a piece on the rising star of the Miami Heat point guard Dwayne Wade, next to a two-column story about the slaying of the two young girls in Illinois.

The front and back of the issue are filled with briefs. The magazine’s four-page Periscope section contains its usual mix of short supposed insider pieces (an item about President Bush visiting battleground states after the election), short news-of-the-week pieces that don’t merit big play (the aircraft that entered D.C. airspace) and other news nuggets (the mayor of Las Vegas pursuing a reality TV deal). In the back, the magazine offers its “news you can use” section called *The Tip Sheet*, which covers everything from television season finales to safe cars of the future. Then there is the *Newsmaker* section, a place for gossip and entertainment shorts — an item on Dave Chappelle and one on Renee Zellweger’s engagement to the country singer Kenny Chesney.

By and large, Newsweek in this edition follows the same pattern as *Time*, though generally with a lighter and (it seems to hope) a hipper touch. Some of the editorial content hints of advertorials.

U.S. News and World Report: The world presented in *U.S. News*’s May 23 issue is heavier than the one in *Time* and *Newsweek*. Dave Chappelle doesn’t appear. Neither do the runners-up from *The Apprentice*. There are more stories, and more weightier topics, than in the other traditional news weeklies. The magazine is also written in a more direct, “hard news” style; anecdotal leads appear, but not as often. Still, even here there is no attempt to recap the week, but simply to focus on issues editors believe important. *U.S. News*’s editors seem more interested in a hard-news agenda — from stories on shipping terrorists overseas for interrogation to an article on the dangers of life in the commercial fishing business.

Of the three traditional news weeklies in this week, *U.S. News* covers the greatest number of the “big stories” from May 11 in its 96 pages. Most get short treatment. A large piece about the spike in violence in Iraq includes information about the security forces being attacked. The United Airlines strike winds up a brief, as do North Korea’s nuclear aspirations, fused with information about Iran’s nuclear gambit. King Tut gets a very brief four-line photo caption under what was basically a mug shot of the boy king. It is a no-nonsense issue of a no-nonsense magazine.

Cover — The image is a large picture of a slot machine and the words “You Lose” in between two sevens. The story? “Secrets of the Casinos, How new tricks and technology give the house a winning edge.” In the top left corner of the cover a stern secretary of defense looks down to tease a story about “Rumsfeld’s Lean, Meaner Military.”

The eight-page cover package is markedly different from recent examinations, in other news weeklies, of Vegas as racy cultural phenomenon. The stories here look at the unsexy side of gambling. In fact, one could make the argument that the report fits in with the magazine's "news you can use" focus. It is decidedly negative and something of a warning about the dangers of gambling. The opening photo is not of showgirls or fountains, but a four-column close-up of a pair of hands pushing the buttons on a slot machine — the gambler's "courtesy card" tethering her to the machine. The stories reveal that while gambling has become a hot pastime, with poker becoming particularly popular, the odds against winning are getting longer. The package explains how casinos use reward cards to gather data on gamblers in microscopic detail, and includes a piece on gambling addiction. Pictures play a role in the presentation, but they are not of the same emotive quality as the shots in Time and Newsweek.

The article teased on the cover is a five-page story about Donald Rumsfeld's restructuring of the military and impending base closures. It is a straightforward roundup look at Rumsfeld's efforts to make the military "nimble" and how base realignment fits with those plans. The conclusion? "It is easy to talk about making the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines work together more closely. It is more difficult to make it happen."

Other pieces — U.S. News groups its national and international sections together as "Nation & World." As a result, readers bounce around a bit. Following Rumsfeld is a one-page piece on the spike in suicide attacks in Iraq, followed by a two-page piece on the U.S. practice of shipping terrorist suspects overseas for interrogation, followed by a "Letter from New York" on efforts to rebuild Ground Zero. Finally, Gloria Borger has a one-page "On Politics" column that looks at the perils of one party's controlling the executive and legislative branches at the same time — there's a lot of blame that can be heaped on the party.

The issue wanders into areas untethered to news of the week, but they are not necessarily light. A 24-page "Executive Edition" insert includes content tailored to the socio-economics of the magazine's readers. There is medical news (about a hospital company that specializes in heart disease), along with some business news (a story about online stock trading companies) and some lifestyle news (a piece about buying wine) among others. And the issue offers a special four-page report on the dangers of commercial fishing: fishermen have the most dangerous jobs in America after loggers.

Many short items appear in the front and the back of the magazine. The opening pages feature Washington Whispers, a two-page section with lighter briefs on politics, on John McCain's book "Faith of My Fathers" being made into a movie, and an item about Egg McMuffins being passed out a White House meeting to celebrate Chief of Staff Andy Card's birthday. Next comes the White House Week page, which walks readers through some of the week's more standard Washington fare: The state of the highway bill, the potential for departures of justices from the Supreme Court and how the new director of national intelligence, John Negroponte, is planning to reform the nation's intelligence apparatus. After that the magazine still has a three-page section of briefs from the week featuring, among other things, a piece on the Newsweek Koran flap, John Bolton's nomination to be U.N. ambassador, North Korean nuclear tensions, and the filibuster showdown in the Senate.

In the back of the magazine, following the gambling cover story, comes a series of short money and health items along with pieces on a range of topics — two pages on St. Augustine's legacy, two pages on inner-city youngsters at elite colleges, two pages on animal hibernation — and columns from Lou Dobbs, John Leo and David Gergen.

In all there are 22 stories of a page or more in the May 23 issue, which means even with a shorter page count, it has, by far, the most long pieces (Time had 13 and Newsweek about 17).

In short, U.S. News seems the most serious, sober-minded of three main news weeklies. But it also seems bound by tradition. There is more news here, and less attitude, but also not much innovation of the kind found in some of the more serious alternatives that follow.



The Economist: The world represented in the pages of the Economist is big and sprawling. Different regions — the United States, Asia, Europe and others — are given their own sections and treated with roughly equal weight, suggesting to readers that the magazine looks at the news differently. There are no “national” or “foreign” sections in the Economist’s pages, there is just the world. Topics in Bhutan are given the same weight as those in Seattle . This absence of the “us and them” perspective leads to a decidedly different and perhaps more holistic view of the news.

The magazine is not just a recap of the week. Stories are joined together to try to make connections and create a larger context, even if they fall in different regional sections in the magazine. So a story in the “United States” section on terrorism might refer readers to pieces in the “Middle East” or “Europe” sections. There is also agenda-setting — stories on matters readers might know little about such as Hugo Chavez’s Venezuela , and biofuels. Lighter trend pieces, meanwhile, barely get space.

Beyond the personality differences, the magazine explicitly has a point of view; its editorials by themselves separate the Economist from its U.S. rivals. In American news weeklies it is what the writer thinks, not the magazine institutionally, that matters. The writers in American news weeklies, moreover, tend to have what journalists call a “take” on issues, but not clear positions. The Economist, by contrast, often urges actions and specific policies and makes endorsements. None of the pieces in the Economist even carry bylines. On its Web site, the Economist Group says the magazine “has no bylines, believing that what is written is more important than who writes it.”

From its text-driven nature to its U.K. headquarters, the Economist differs substantially from the other news weeklies, which may partly explain why it has made substantial inroads in audience here in recent years, while the U.S.

magazines have struggled. Even the matter of how issues are dated is different in the Economist. It hits the newsstands three days before the Big Three.

Three of the “big stories” from May 11 make it into the May 20 Economist, though none is a stand-alone story. Instead, they are bits of information in larger stories about larger issues. For instance, there is a piece on Iraqi security forces that mentions the spike in violence in the country, and a short 10-line item in “The World This Week” in the front of the magazine touches the same topic. The news about North Korea bolstering its nuclear arsenal is part of the cover piece on the “Axis of Evil” as well as a nine-line item in “World this Week.” And the story about the obstacles to CAFTA is a 3-line brief and part of the larger article that opens “The Americas” section of the issue.

Cover — The Economist in this issue uses a week without a central headline to basically build one itself, based on two different events — North Korea’s announcement that it is preparing a nuclear test and Iran’s announcement that it is about to resume enriching nuclear materials. The cover line, “Return of the Axis of Evil,” and picture, a Muslim figure holding a mushroom cloud in his hands, are unlike the approach taken by the other titles. It is a contextualizing of different, not obviously related, events to create one story. And the four stories teased on the cover represent a diverse range of topics — “From Goldwater to Bush,” “Venezuela’s oil-rich troublemaker,” “A future for biofuels” and “Detroit and the Unions.” All appear in different sections of the magazine.

The cover package is made up of two stories. A one-page editorial on the “Return of the Axis of Evil” outlines the stakes and urges action by the U.S. government. The Economist’s format also means that, technically, another part of the cover package is the lead story in the Middle East and Africa section later on that lays out specifically “Iran’s nuclear ambitions” — which frees up room for editorial commentary up front.

Other pieces — Listing all the articles in this issue would take up a lot of space. There are 71 — more than four times the U.S. average for this week — and the range of topics is vast, everything from the Los Angeles mayoral race to mining in China to French corporate governance.

In the May 20 issue the stories are, as always, short; three pages is a treatise here. The leads are taut and to the point, with lots of facts and figures. There are not a lot of scene-setting anecdotes or florid prose.

At the start of the book, the briefs are really brief, many less than 10 lines, and all are hard-news driven. The May 20 issue has no celebrity briefs, and international matters lead. Topics range from President Bush’s Russian trip to a summit of Arab and South American countries and the Senate’s passage of a resolution asking Nigeria to extradite the former Liberian leader Charles Taylor.

The Leaders section, where the magazine’s opening opinion essays appear, begins with the one-page “Axis of Evil” piece, then goes on to essays about India’s reformist prime minister, Venezuela’s Hugo Chavez, General Motors’ need to reduce labor costs, German shareholder activism and the Tories’ role in British politics. Following that is a three-page special section on Chavez, looking at the social gains his nation has made and the heavy hits democracy and economic development have taken. The nation has one foot in democracy and the other in autocracy, the article declares, adding that “Venezuelans must decide which foot they prefer to amputate.”

Even the United States section offers a different definition of news than U.S. weeklies. The first article is a one-page look at Antonio Villaraigosa, the new mayor of Los Angeles . It’s followed by a short piece on Jim West, the publicly anti-gay legislator in Washington State who was found to have engaged in homosexual activity, and a one-page piece

on Paul Volcker's investigation of the U.N. oil-for-food scandal. There also is a one-page report on the decline of American unions, a short piece on how poor Americans have never saved money, a two-column story on faulty DNA testing in Virginia and a story on Chinese businessmen who are making inroads in the Midwest. The one-page Lexington column, which comes at the end of the United States section, talks about Republicans abandoning a small-government approach to management. The Jim West story was the only one the U.S. weeklies also covered.

It is not until page 62, that the magazine digs into business news – and that content diverges dramatically from what would have been found in American news weeklies. Among business's eight pages is a one-and-half-page article on Intel and its new head, a two-column story on how American businesses are starting to take global warming seriously, a one-column item on the battle over the mobile e-mail business and a short item on how Kodak is struggling in the digital picture age.

There follows a three-page special report on the rise of biofuels that suggests it is time to take them more seriously as oil prices increase, a five-page Finance and Economics section and a three-page Science and Technology section. One needs to get all the way to page 85 (already longer than the entire issues of Time and Newsweek from May 23) before arriving at a three-page "Books and the Arts" section. Even here there are no celebrity interviews or film reviews. There are four one-and-a-half-column book reviews, a two-column article on new Asian cinema and a short item about a gallery exhibit of previously unseen Marilyn Monroe photos.

The issue still has room for a one-page obituary of Bob Hunter, the man who founded Greenpeace, and the Economist's usual three pages of numbers, charts and tables that look at financial and economic indicators — something one would never find in any of the traditional American news weeklies. Again, some of that has to do with the magazine's mission. It is a hybrid business/news title. But even taking that into account, the Economist simply treats news and the world it covers differently.

The Economist's slogan is "First published in 1843 to take part in 'a severe contest between intelligence, which presses forward, and an unworthy, timid ignorance obstructing our progress.'" That insistent attitude, aided by arch prose, sums up what the magazine aspires to.

The New Yorker: The outlier in this group of titles is the New Yorker, which isn't really a news magazine but, as we've pointed out previously, has wandered further into the events of the week in recent years. The world as represented in the May 23 issue is both broader and deeper than the one examined in the traditional news weeklies. The articles may not be immediately topical (in a week where there was no dominant story) but the issues they deal with — AIDS, a young sports star, espionage during a war, and art and an artist are familiar in a larger sense. The magazine clearly isn't aimed at filling in the reader on what's happened in the last seven days, and the length of its pieces means that inevitably, fewer stories are covered. Still, the depth of the reportage and the broad topics serve to illuminate larger issues. None of the 11 Big Stories we saw on May 11 turned up in this issue of the May 23 New Yorker.

Cover — The cover, a break as always from photo journalism, was a drawing of a New York City cab with Sigmund Freud sitting stoically at the wheel while a passenger lay on the back seat, presumably baring his soul. (The magazine in recent years has used flaps to highlight pieces inside.)

Stories in the issue — Talk of the Town opens with a lengthy Comment article on the victory of Tony Blair and the Labor Party in Britain's recent Parliamentary elections and on Blair's close relationship with President Bush. The piece

features the magazine's usual left-of-center take on the elections and the drag Bush may have caused Blair. Beyond that, Talk of the Town is a usual mix of short pieces on scenes from New York and the world of the arts — a look at the United Nations Building renovation, at writer's "habitats," a count of trees in New York City, and Robert Goulet.

Following "Talk," the magazine heads into matters at greater length. The news stories are less about the news of the week than issues and people of familiar gravity, but with an apparent emphasis on telling readers something they don't know. First there is a seven-page piece on the rising H.I.V. rates in the United States and what's behind the trend, foremost a return of casual sex among gay men. A seven-page piece on the 15-year-old Major League Soccer player Freddie Adu reports his struggles adjusting to the life of a professional athlete. Following that is an 11-page story on Pham Xuan An, a Time magazine employee in Vietnam during the war there who was also a double agent, and a 10-page profile of the artist Robert Rauschenberg.

The pieces all offer depth not seen elsewhere. The HIV piece opens with a long scene lead that lays the ground for a discussion of the relationship between crystal methamphetamine and unprotected sex, but still has plenty of room to step back and offer a broad picture of the AIDS epidemic in the U.S. It explains how crystal meth works on the brain — what neurotransmitters are affected — and still comes back to talk about sex clubs. The New Yorker gives writers enough space to delve into topics at several levels and draw connections between different points.

The piece on Adu wanders through topics like soccer's place in America and Adu's "mental conditioning coach" while discussing the difficulties the boy has had developing as a player. The long article on Pham Xuan An isn't just a profile of the man, but a history of the war and of how he played both sides. The piece paints a complicated picture. In 1997, it says, An was denied permission to attend a conference in New York. An says it's because his government wanted to keep him silenced, but the reporter adds, "This is one possible explanation, but as always with An, there could be another figure in the carpet. All we know is that, for at least 27 years after the end of the war, An was still an active member of Vietnam's military intelligence service."

Photos do appear. Almost all are black and white and artistic in style. The three-photo montage that ran in the HIV story is pure art — of no one in particular, with images stacked atop one another to suggest the effect of a motion picture. And, of course, there is a certain amount of space devoted to the cartoons that appear every few pages. Over all, though, text dominates the New Yorker in the front of the magazine and the back.

The New Yorker's editors might chafe at its being considered a news magazine, but today categorizing the magazine is difficult. Describing its approach, whatever the topic, as deeply reported and writer-driven is not.

The Week: The world presented in the May 27 issue of The Week is a broad but condensed picture of the world as seen through the eyes of others (the title is dated ahead the same way Time and Newsweek are, but is on a slightly different news schedule). The magazine doesn't dispatch reporters to cover events or use them to work the phones; it culls through pages and pages of newsprint, magazines and Web sites to produce a summary of what others have offered as the week's news.

The magazine, founded by Jolyon Connell, a onetime White House reporter, is modeled after the briefing created daily for the Oval Office. And The Week throws its net wide to get its content. The New York Times is heavily represented in its pages, but the May 27 issue carries excerpts and ideas from the Glasgow Herald, Turin's La Stampa, Mexico City's La Jornada, even Cigar Aficionado. The excerpts are generally short, sometimes a few paragraphs and sometimes only a few sentences. But they offer a quick summary of what the main piece was about, and the brevity of the pieces

allows for a broad look at the news of the previous seven days. Of all the titles we examined, the Week comes closest to offering a recap of the week's news, and that is what it strives to do.

The Week features more of the Big Stories from May 11 than any magazine studied, more even than U.S. News. The May 23 issue has articles about, or at least mentions, five of the stories — Iraq, United Airlines, King Tut, the Blockbuster board and CAFTA. It also deals with the North Korea story in the previous week's issue, since the magazine comes out on a different schedule from the traditional weeklies.

Cover — The main image is a sketch of a befuddled Charles Darwin sitting in a classroom holding up a paper entitled "The Origin of Species" graded with a large: F. The cover line: "Doubting Darwin, Should schools teach 'intelligent design?'" The sketch shows the usual approach the magazine takes to its cover art, a cheeky take on what it considers the week's biggest story. Down the left side of the cover are four teases: "Did Bush nominate extremists?" "When cousins fall in love," "Has the Force run its course?" and "The return of the nasty boss." The teases are notable for their variety — everything from court appointments to the movie "Star Wars Episode III" — and for their sheer number. Like the Economist, The Week likes to get as many subjects as it can on its cover.

The "cover story" is not much different or much longer than any of the other stories in the issue. It is a half-page discussion of the intelligent design debate consisting of three long quotations from other publications — a column by the Boston Globe's Ellen Goodman, a post from Brian McNicoll of Townhall.com and a post from Slate's William Saletan. The piece itself takes no position. Goodman is against intelligent design, McNicoll is for it and Saletan says the theory is an admission of defeat from biblical literalists because they have at least had to accept the basic premise behind evolution, change over time.

The article on Bush's judicial nominees has the same format and is the same size — a half-page of quotations, this time from six different writers in publications spanning the political continuum from the Los Angeles Times and the Washington Post to the Wall Street Journal and National Review Online. Those critical of the federal appeals court nominees in question (Janice Rogers Brown, William Pryor and Priscilla Owen, all now confirmed to federal courts) find them too radical; quotes from the supporting publications emphasize their qualifications for the bench.

The pieces on "cousins in love" and "the nasty boss" are straight excerpts from other publications — in the former case a column by the Chicago Tribune's Steve Chapman about cousins who want to marry but can't in Pennsylvania, the latter a business story from USA Today.

The piece about "Star Wars" rounds up reviews by A.O. Scott of the New York Times, Roger Ebert of the Chicago Sun-Times, Anthony Lane of the New Yorker, Kenneth Turan of the Los Angeles Times and the Chicago Tribune's Michael Wilmington.

Other pieces — Everything else is brief, but the list of topics is long. A quick glance shows the breadth — military base closings, the fight over John Bolton, fighting in Iraq, Los Angeles's new mayor, Lance Armstrong saving sperm to have children later, the formerly credentialed White House "reporter" Jeff Gannon and a one-page "Briefing" on the right to die inspired by the Terri Schiavo case.

That's all in the front of the magazine's news section, along with three pages called "The world at a glance..." which feature maps of the continents marked with dots and lines that connect to one-paragraph reports. The items consist of everything from a severed fingertip supposedly found in a bowl of Wendy's chili to the launching of a television network

backed by President Hugo Chavez in Venezuela to the push in Rome to make Pope John Paul II a saint and the killing of hundreds of civilians in Uzbekistan by government troops.

After all that there are three pages devoted to the “Best columns” in the United States , Europe and elsewhere. Along with columns from the New York Times and Chicago Tribune, there are selections from Italy , the Netherlands , Iraq and Russia . There is also a short item called “It must be true... I read it in the tabloids.”

Then there are two more pages of “Talking points” where the big topics of the week, some heavy and some lighter, are boiled down to what people have written for and against them. This is where the Darwin piece appears, along with items about Yalta , Pope Benedict and the Rolling Stones. Then come two pages of editorial cartoons from the past week. At this point, not even half-way through the issue, the biggest stories of the last seven days have largely been addressed.

That still leaves the rest of the issue for a vast assortment of topics. The Week has sections for health and science, reviews of books, film, music and the stage, plus food and drink (recipes for lobster rolls and blueberry cobbler as well as an excerpt of a review on a new Chicago restaurant). A one-page travel section runs excerpts from stories on areas ranging from Uruguay to Bethesda , Md. and Madison , Wis.

The Week is Reader’s Digest meets the blogosphere — an inclusive shorthand summary of the week’s events as seen through the eyes of others.

Topic Coverage Over All in the Traditional News Weeklies

The in-depth look at one issue allows us to make close comparisons of the nature and editorial choices of the various magazines. A broader look at the breakdown of topics year-to-year provides a sense of the shifts in coverage over time.

Through the first eight months of 2005 the data from Hall’s Magazine Reports show a big change from a year earlier in the topics covered. Looking at the three traditional news magazines combined, national affairs, while still the largest topic in the weeklies, fell off dramatically — down to 21% of all pages — and if the trend continued that would be a 9% drop from 2004. ³ While it’s true that 2004 was a presidential election year, there were some notable national news headlines in 2005, from Tom DeLay’s court troubles to the retirement of Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor to the investigation of the White House adviser Karl Rove. (It should be noted, however, that the page tally took place before Hurricane Katrina, which was bound to increase the national affairs coverage.)

What filled the pages left open by the drop in coverage of national affairs? For the most part, it seemed to be cultural news, which increased 4%, from 11% to 15%. But it was not alone in seeing gains. Health and medical science, and global and international affairs, were both up 2%, to 10% and 17% of all pages, respectively. And business pages and entertainment and celebrity pages both grew slightly to 9% each. ⁴

Title by Title

Amid those broad shifts, there were also some differences among the Big Three magazines, particularly in the light-news areas. Reflecting some of the same differences found in the May 23 issues we examined closely, Time and Newsweek devoted far more of their pages to entertainment/celebrity topics than did U.S. News (14% for Time, 10% for Newsweek and 1% for U.S. News). U.S. News’s “news you can use” predilections also showed up in page counts.

The magazine was by far the leader in health and medical science stories, which made up 14% of the pages in the first eight months of 2005. The topic accounted for 8% of Newsweek's pages and 9% of Time's. ⁵

U.S. News also led the pack in national affairs coverage (24%, versus 18% for Newsweek and 22% for Time) and global/international coverage (19%, versus 15% for Newsweek and 16% for Time. ⁶

Those patterns bear watching, however. The page counts were done before the big announcements at U.S. News of layoffs and its plan to shift to more Web-based publication. What that will mean for the news content is uncertain. It's possible that U.S. News could become even more hard-news based, focusing in on its core product in a leaner publication.

In 2004

The traditional news weeklies were a little different in 2004. National affairs, where the presidential election coverage normally appears, saw an increase of 5% in total magazine pages from 2003 to 30%, according to figures from Hall's Magazine Reports. That is a large increase for one year, but still below the high figure of 35% in 1995, when there was no national election under way. ⁷

Just as interesting is where the increase in national pages came from. Mostly they were taken from global/international coverage, which fell 4% in 2004, to 15% of all pages. That happened even though 2004 was a big year for international news, particularly the war in Iraq , where insurgent attacks increased and casualties grew. Also taking small hits in percentage of pages allotted was business coverage, which dropped from 9% of pages in 2003 to 8% in 2004, and personal finance coverage, from 3% to 2%. ⁸

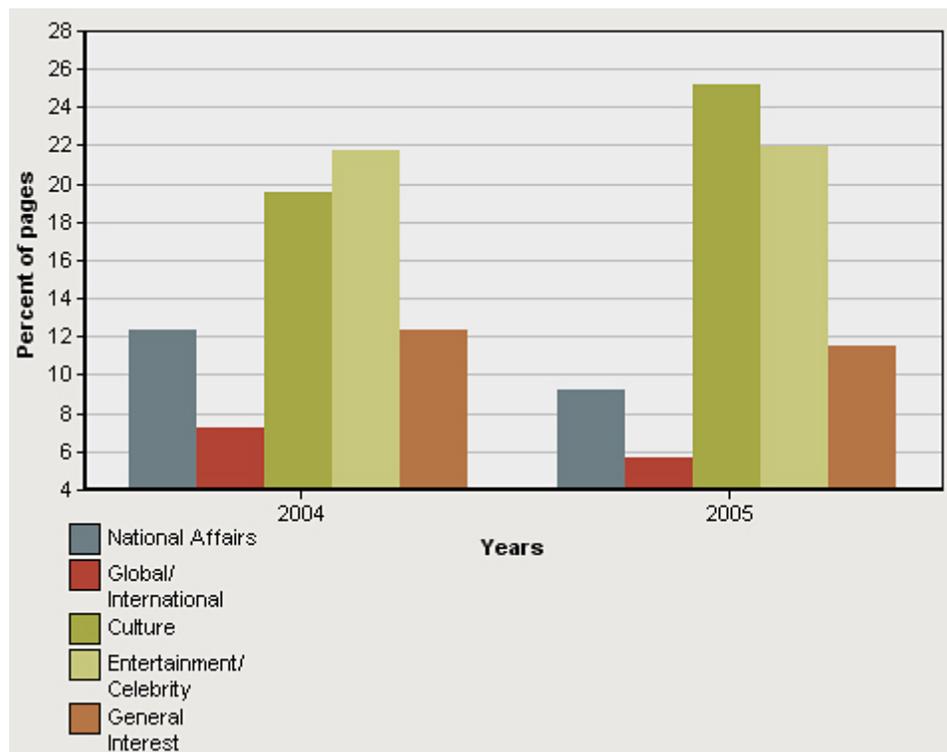
The New Yorker

While the New Yorker has become more "newsie" and political in the past 20 years, the general mix more recently has remained largely unchanged, according to Hall's Magazine Reports.

Cultural affairs and entertainment issues remain the linchpin of the New Yorker, accounting for close to half of all pages. But as we saw above (LINK BACK), the magazine's approach to culture and entertainment is deeper, with an emphasis on issue-based pieces or profiles. And the prominence given to "general interest" coverage demonstrates the latitude the magazine takes in covering more off-beat issues. Where the traditional news weeklies purport to cover the week's news across many areas — politics, culture, business — the New Yorker does not.

The small shifts that did occur in 2004 and 2005 were likely tied to the 2004 election. Political coverage (as a part of national affairs) rose 12% during the election year, but fell back down again in the beginning of '05 to less than 10% of coverage overall. ⁹

New Yorker Topics 2004 vs. 2005



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Halls Media Research unpublished data

The election-year shifts suggest that even though the magazine isn't a "news magazine" per se, its editors feel its content is at least tied to the news in some way, particularly where politics is concerned.

Summary

After a long stable period, the traditional titles may be facing serious challenges from two different models.

The Economist and the New Yorker, thick magazines that belie the suggestion that consumers want news more quickly, have been seen as models for smaller niche audiences. The question is whether the approach of The Week, a magazine with no first-hand reportage built as a kind of print-blog, can resonate with a bigger mass audience.

The Week counters many of the prevailing trends in the news media today. It has no bylines and is developing no "personalities" for TV or radio consumption. It has no reporters trying to get "exclusives" to trumpet on its cover. It does not rely heavily on opinion or its own point of view to win readers. But its style and approach seem tailor-made for an audience looking for easily digestible, even pre-digested, news.

Footnotes

1. Lowry, Tom, "Mighty Week," Business Week, March 21, 2005
2. Though the dates on the covers of these issues vary because of editorial decisions designed to make the issues look fresh on the newsstand, the news inside them is from as parallel a time as possible.
3. Hall's Reports research. Unpublished data. www.hallsreports.com
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid
8. Ibid
9. Ibid. It should be remembered, however, that the magazine's overall figures include fiction and reviews, which always make up a large share of the pages.

[Click here to view content data tables.](#)

Audience

Audience

It is difficult to point to any one audience trend for news magazines in 2005. Instead there are competing ones. The outlook for the smaller nontraditional titles is quite sunny as circulations continue to rise. The picture for traditional titles, however, is gloomier, with the numbers continuing to fall.

The continuing growth of the nontraditional titles in our informal survey (the New Yorker, the Economist and The Week) along with the continuing growth of the Nation, is impressive in that it is occurring in a time when other print media, like newspapers, are losing subscribers. The success of these nontraditional titles, which are text-heavy, suggests there may indeed be a future for print publications.

The biggest trend, moreover, may be occurring outside of the news. Entertainment titles are growing again, and growing fast. New titles are jumping into a market that was once thought to be saturated, some coming from Europe .

Winners and Losers in News Magazine Circulation

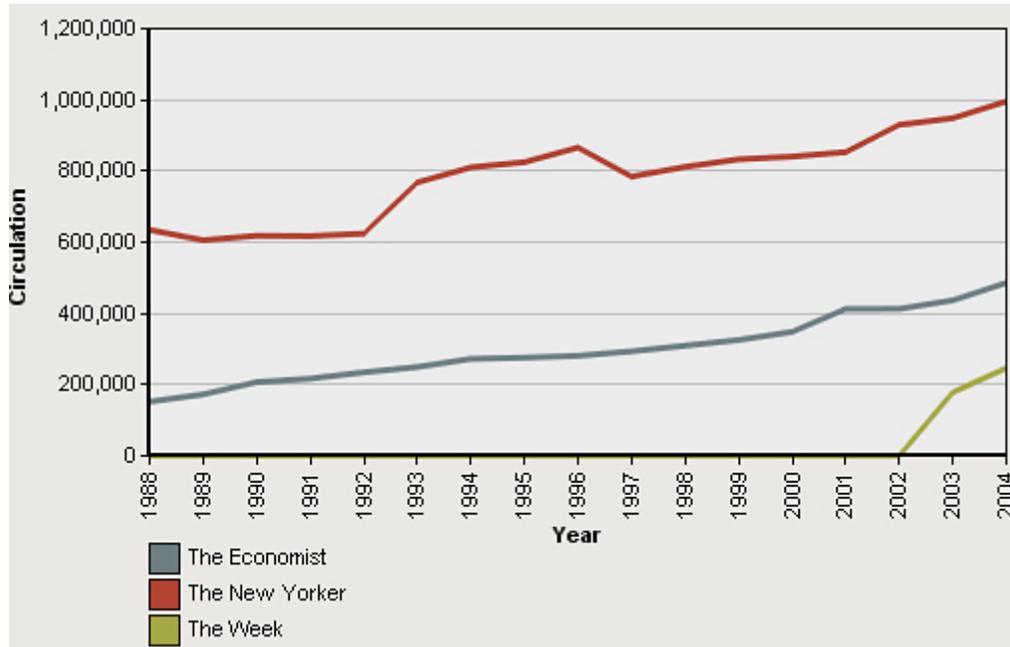
Among news magazines, the headline is the success of The Week. With its aggregation approach to the news weekly, it added more than 65,000 subscribers in one year. In total numbers, it is still relatively small potatoes in the news weekly world — 246,000 circulation as of June 2004 — but its rate of growth is impressive. In fact, if 2005 publisher's numbers are correct, the magazine has since added another 100,000 in circulation. ¹

Other nontraditional news titles, the Economist and the New Yorker, continued to grow as well, but more slowly, according to June 2004 audit reports. ²

The other steady story line in magazine circulation, the decline in audience numbers at the three traditional titles — Time, Newsweek and U.S. News — continued as well in 2004, according to audit reports and publisher's statements. 3

Circulation of Non-Traditional News Magazines

1988 – 2004



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Audit Bureau of Circulations, annual audit reports & publisher's statements

*The Atlantic is a monthly magazine

The growth among the new, smaller and different approaches to news gives fuel to the theory that Americans aren't necessarily rejecting a weekly publication of news, they may simply want a different format. If one compares the paid circulation gains at the New Yorker, the Economist and the Week (164,000) with the losses at Time, Newsweek and U.S. News (150,000), there is a net circulation gain of 14,000. 4

But if it is a different format they want, Americans don't seem sure what it is. The magazines growing in circulation bear little resemblance to each other in content. It may be that no news magazine today will be able to command the kind of audience once garnered by the traditional titles. People read magazines for different reasons than 30 or 40 years ago, and people are awash in choices and information. So the dominating news weeklies may be a thing of the past, and the news weekly model may become more of a niche product. If so, expensive world-wide reporting staffs may be unsustainable.

The Nontraditional Titles

The Week, perhaps the most different of the three growing titles has seen its circulation skyrocket — up more 38% in 2004 from 2003. ⁵ If the growth continues at that pace, the effects on the entire news magazine field could be significant. For now, the growing numbers are slightly more heavily based on subscriptions than those for the traditional titles. Time and Newsweek get 4% or 5% of their circulation from newsstand sales, U.S. News around 2%. The Week's newsstand sales are less than 1% of its total circulation. ⁶

The Economist continues its impressive growth as well, seemingly unburdened by its high subscription price, which is more than twice those of Time or Newsweek. And its growth seems to belie the oft-heard theory that consumers aren't interested in international news. There is no real "home country" in the magazine. Countries and continents are treated more equally in terms of space than in any other major title. If foreign news doesn't sell in other U.S. publications, perhaps the Economist has found a niche with the audience that enthusiastically embraces global news. Over all, the Economist's circulation was up 49,000 in 2004, or 11%, over 2003. ⁷

The New Yorker, with its literate, long-form approach to news, also continues to see circulation growth. At 996,000 in 2004, it was just shy of the 1 million mark according to audit reports. ⁸ That was an increase of 47,000 over the year before. That growth may not be as explosive as the growth of The Week, but considering the age of the New Yorker, it is in some ways even more impressive. People aren't just learning about the magazine, they know what is in it and they are seeking it out. Again, while critics will note (rightly) that the New Yorker does not fit the traditional mold of a news magazine, its growth has come during a stretch when the title became more news-focused, particularly around politics.

The other titles we track were mixed in their numbers.

The up-again, down-again circulation bounces of Jet continued in 2004, with the upside winning again. The magazine was back to just over 900,000 after a dip in 2002 and 2003. ⁹ It still isn't where it was before the 2001 recession, but the gains of 44,000 in the last publisher's statement suggest it may be in line to get there.

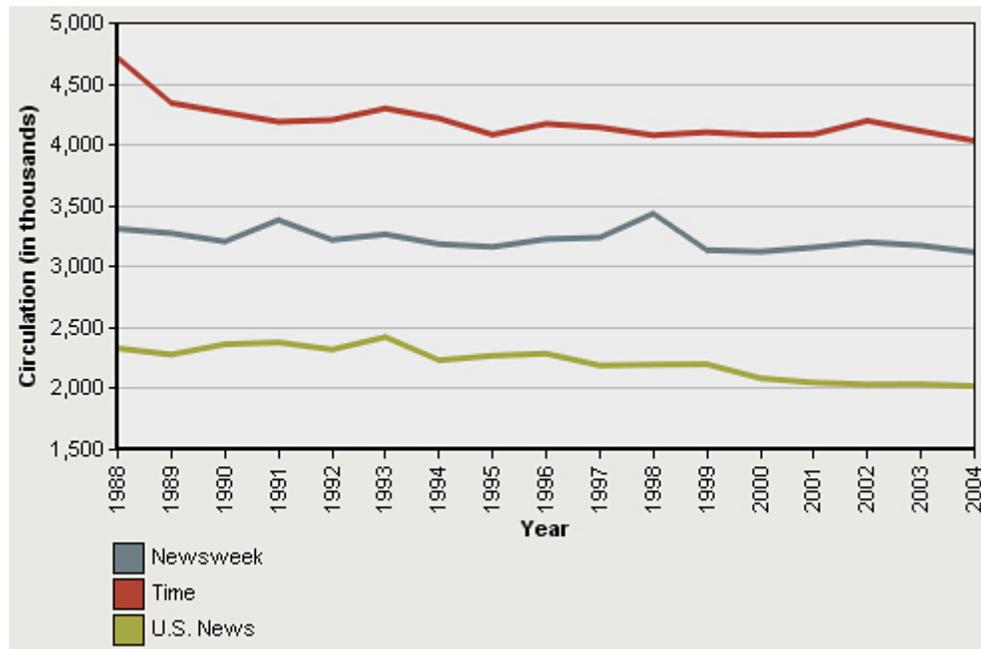
The Atlantic Monthly, meanwhile, continued its slide. Its 2004 circulation of 439,137 is the lowest we have seen since 1988. ¹⁰ What's driving the drop? That is not immediately clear. Publisher David Bradley says his goal is to change the magazine's audience base, shrinking circulation while increasing subscription costs, aiming for a more exclusive niche. Even with such a strategy, though, the drops are fairly steep. The last decline of 55,000 represented an 11% drop; over two years the decrease has been 17%. Some analysts believe that the New Yorker, which offers similar longer pieces about topical subjects, is drawing readers away from the Atlantic. The magazine is in the process of moving its headquarters from Boston to Washington, D.C. , and will be removing short stories from its content mix. It will be interesting to whether those changes help circulation, and if so, how.

The Traditional Weeklies

The most worrisome drops, however, were in the three traditional news weeklies. Taken together they lost 126,000 readers in 2004. ¹¹ With a total subscriber base for the three of nearly 9.5 million, that is only a 1.3% drop. Similar losses, however, have been occurring for several years now. All three magazines have fallen below their 1988 figures, and Time and U.S. News are sitting at new lows for that period. (Incidentally, unaudited Publisher's Statements for 2005 show further declines among these titles. Time was down .2% to 4,026,000. Newsweek was off .3% to 3,118,000. U.S. News reported a 1% increase to 2,035,000.)

Circulation Among the Big Three News Magazines

1988 – 2004



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Audit Bureau of Circulations, annual audit reports and publisher's statements

And this year there are finally signs that the long, slow erosion of readership among them is taking a toll. U.S. News announced major staff cuts along with a plan to reposition itself in the market. The goal is to spend less time and money on the print edition of the magazine and more of both on its Web presence, which is also expected to mean spending less on newsgathering and features. "We're trying to be a more fluid, responsive news organization because that's what the times demand," Editor Brian Duffy said.¹² Some staff members joked about the magazine's becoming little more than a newsletter with ties to a Web site, people close to the magazine told the Project.

The problems at U.S. News make it timely to consider what, in fairness, is merely speculation. What would happen to the news weekly market if U.S. News suddenly became a completely different animal or stopped publishing altogether? The short-term result presumably would be a bump in subscriptions for Time and Newsweek — a substitution effect. But it's unlikely the total circulation of the two magazines would reach the numbers the three currently do. Some readers might gravitate to the nontraditional titles. Or some could just stop getting a news magazine altogether.

We noted last year that the number of people who say they regularly read news magazines had declined over the previous 10 years.

If the overall downward trend continues for the traditional news weeklies, however slowly, it is hard to see a sunny scenario for them in the long term. The problems for U.S. News may help Time and Newsweek some now, but could

be a harbinger of things to come for those two, as well.

Entertainment Grows ... Again

Unlike the news magazines, the entertainment kind aren't just seeing growth, but staggering growth. It seemed to many a few years ago that this field was fully mature and had no more room for growth in titles or audience. But the last few years have seen the rise of not just one but two new titles: *In Touch* and *OK!* As with the news magazines, the emerging star here brings a new approach to the content. But the success of the new and different titles has not (as yet) hurt the mainstays.

OK! is the newest entry in a field already crowded with the likes of *People*, *Us* and *The Star*. The jury is still out on its fall 2005 debut, but the magazine, which has sister publications of the same name in the United Kingdom and Canada, has a format that has been successful elsewhere and a publisher, Northern and Shell, with deep pockets. *OK!* brings a different approach to celebrity journalism: much of the content has been openly bought — from the celebrities themselves. The tactic, which the magazine calls “relationship journalism,” has in the past granted the title exclusive access to stories such as the wedding of Michael Douglas and Catherine Zeta-Jones — to which American magazines have later bought the rights. There have long been suspicions that a certain amount of this checkbook journalism goes on in the entertainment world. The editors of the magazine maintain, however, that they actually pay only a fraction of the title's content — about 5%, according to editor Sarah Ivens.¹³ Ivens says the magazine is “pro-celebrity,” not interested in gossip or hearsay, and that is why it gets the interviews and exclusives it does. One celebrity's positive story, of course, can be another's gossip, particularly where breakups are concerned.

Whatever one calls it, in some ways *OK!*'s pay-for-access approach is a merging of the tabloid and entertainment forms of journalism. That merging has been growing in recent years in the launching of *In Touch* and the relaunching of the tabloid *Star* as a glossy magazine.

In Touch is already a huge success, with much less of a “pro-celebrity” approach. It often carries cover stories about whether celebrity rumors are true or not. The magazine, which began publishing in late 2002, grew to boast a regular circulation of 887,000 by the end of 2004.¹⁴

Meanwhile the former tabloid *Star*, which remade itself as a glossy in 2004, has a circulation of about 1.3 million.¹⁵ Despite its re-launch, the magazine isn't that different from what it was when it sat next to the *National Enquirer* at the supermarket cash register — who's dating whom remains a hot topic.

And all of that has not crippled the rest of the celebrity market.

Consider, for example, *People* magazine, the godfather of the celebrity genre. In 1999, *People* had an average circulation of 3.59 million. By 2004, even with all the increased competition, it had grown slightly, to 3.7 million.¹⁶ Other titles have fared even better. Since 2000, *Us Weekly* has gone from 837,000 on average to about 1.4 million.¹⁷

Why do these magazines continue to do so well, seemingly immune from the pressure of the Web? Photos may be a key part of the answer. Reading about celebrity weddings on a computer screen is one thing, glossy pictures another, and many readers would rather hold them in their hands. It's also worth noting that these titles' scoops and exclusives (which often come from the celebrities themselves) are part of a larger public relations plan that has an interest in keeping exclusives exclusive. That is to say, if you are a celebrity with a deal with *Us* regarding your wedding pictures

(big events have often operated by checkbook journalism rules), you are not likely to leak them elsewhere. The immediacy the Web provides can't do anything about such deals — at least without risking lawsuits.

But the primary reason these titles thrive, particularly the new ones that blend a tabloid approach with the old celebrity magazine, may be that they tap a different audience. Two key elements, price and point of purchase, suggest that the new magazines have different readerships than old-line titles like *People*. *People* and *Us Weekly* have a newsstand price of \$3.49.¹⁸ *In Touch* rings in at \$1.99.¹⁹ And while about 39% of *People's* circulation comes from the newsstand — not bad in an era of declining newsstand sales — that figure is low when compared with the *Star's* 71% and *In Touch's* astronomical 97%.²⁰ Those numbers seem to indicate that the new titles are impulse buys made at the cash register. And many of those purchases are from younger readers. Marc Pasetky, general manager of *Life & Style Weekly*, still another celebrity title, says the average age of his magazine's readers is 30, while the average age of tabloid readers is 50.²¹

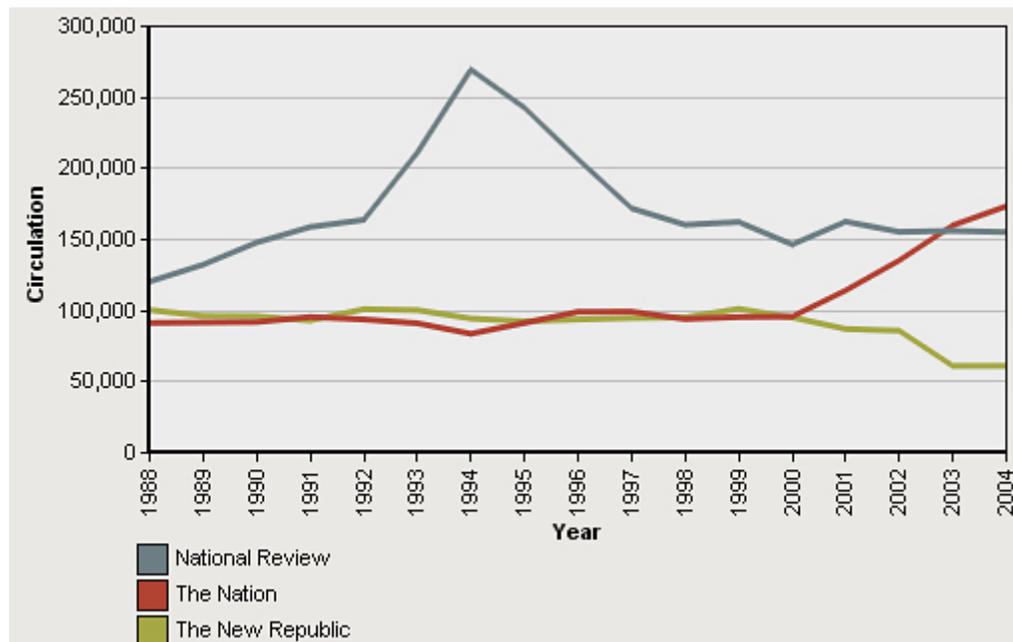
Is there a limit to how many titles this field can support? Presumably the answer is yes — it may even be reached soon — but the time is decidedly not here yet.

The Opinion Titles Settle Down

In the simplest terms, the 2004 presidential race was good for the opinion journals. After a few years of big changes, drops and rises in circulation, the world of the opinion magazines, things seem to have stabilized and are even looking up. After years of decline, including a precipitous decline in 2003, the *New Republic* has seen a small climb, from 61,124 to 61,129, according to publisher's statements — its audit report for 2004 was not available at the time of this report's writing.

Whether this marks a turnaround for the title, which had seen declines since 1999 (when its circulation was over 100,000), remains to be seen. In an arena that thrives on taking a side, the *New Republic* has moved back toward the left in the past few years, becoming more critical of the Republican administration. This content change may have helped.

Circulation of Leading Opinion Magazines 1988 – 2004



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Audit Bureau of Circulation, annual audit reports and publisher's statements

Two of magazines experiencing growth suggest that in the current climate a hard-line voice carries appeal.

The Nation with its strong leftward tilt grew again in 2004, climbing from 160,029 to 173,473, keeping it the No. 1 opinion journal in circulation, according to audit reports. The title has come a long way since 2000, when it had about 96,000 subscribers, and is now reportedly profitable. Its top editor, Victor Navaksy, who had been with the magazine since 1978, moved on this year to focus more on other work, including his job as chairman of the Columbia Journalism Review. (Navasky, now publisher emeritus at The Nation, also volunteers as a reader for this study).

National Review's reliable rightward slant hasn't hurt it over time, either. But its circulation dropped slightly in 2004, going from 156,157 to 155,271, according to audit reports. The magazine's circulation is still down from its high in 1996, during the heart of the Clinton presidency, when it was over 200,000. ²²

The biggest trend in the numbers may not be about any single title, however, but about the numbers of the left-leaning publications. As we have noted in past years, the journals supporting the political party or point of view that is out of power often do better than the ones supporting those in power. This norm may be re-establishing itself.

But early publisher statements from 2005 indicate that all the titles we examine were seeing growing circulation at that point. If those figures turn out to be verified in audit reports, they may suggest that the country is entering a more political phase again, one where at least part of the public is engaged in the national policy debate. The Nation and National Review seem to be seeing the biggest growth, so the ideological battle may be joined with ready fervor from

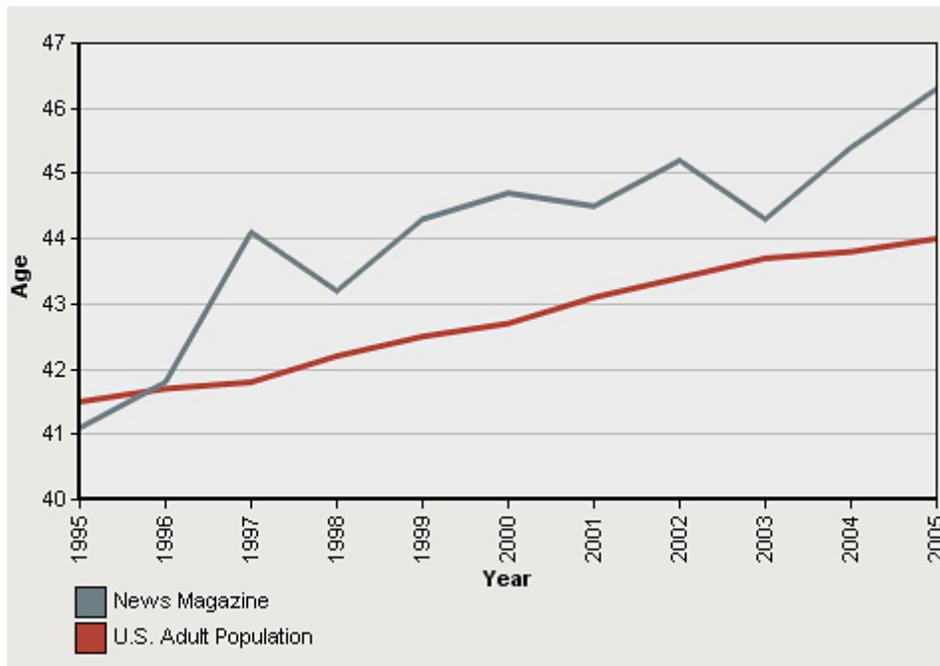
both sides. In an age of information overload, perhaps well-reasoned opinion magazines that help citizens put news in some order have an enduring appeal. In a sense, it is the oldest kind of journalism enduring — literate, text-heavy interpretation and debate.

Grayer and Greener, *Over All, Again*

The aging of the U.S. population is reflected in the ages of the magazine readers, as well. And the slight and steady increase in the U.S. incomes also comes through in the magazine readership data (a sampling of some 27,000 households by the marketing firm MRI).²³ Some small moves in the audiences of individual magazines seemed to counter those trends, but such changes might be caused by differences in the sample taken — particularly as regards smaller readerships, where even a small difference in sample can mean big changes.

Every title we examined had a higher average-age readership in 2005 than it did in our baseline year of 1995, except the Atlantic. That wasn't profiled by MRI until 1997 and had a baseline-year age of 51.5 years.²⁴ In 2005 the average age of all the news titles we look at was 46.3 years, up from 45.4 in 2004.²⁵ This marks the first time the average age has climbed over 46, and it is now more than two years above the average age of the adult U.S. population, which sits at 44.²⁶

Average Age of News Magazine Readers Compared to U.S. population, 1995 – 2005



Design Your Own Chart

Source: MediaMark Research, "Magazine Audience Estimates"

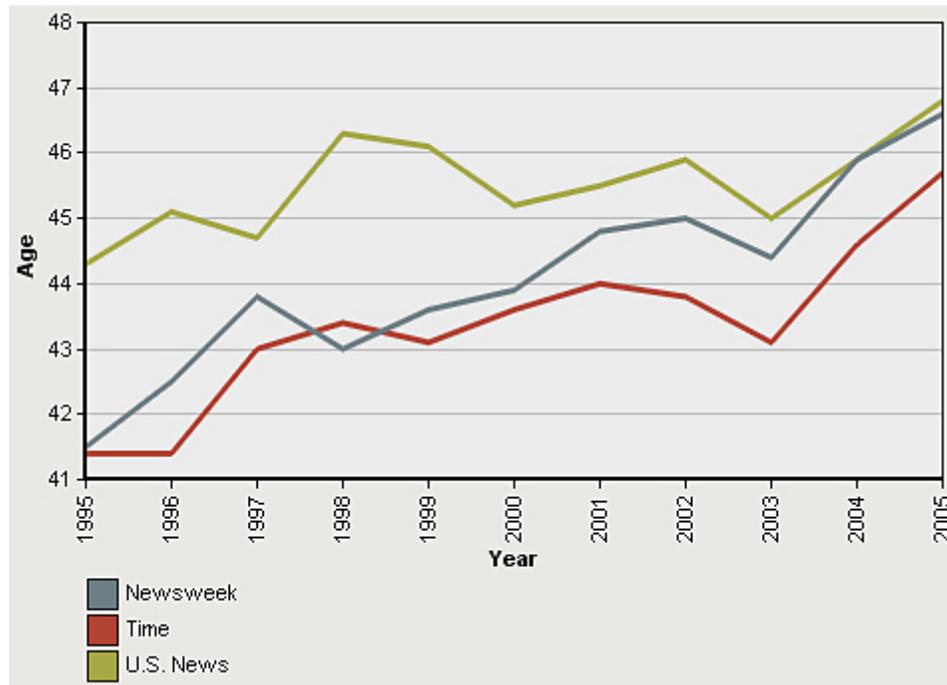
Among the more peculiar findings is the average-age decline for the Atlantic . It still has the oldest readership among the news titles we look at, but its average reader went from 50.9 years old in 2004 to 49.7 in 2005. ²⁷ Again, such fluctuations aren't uncommon with the MRI data, and further years would need to point in the same direction to be a real trend. Still, the Atlantic was the only news title that saw a declining readership age.

Jet's readership age has changed the most over time, from an average of 33.6 years in 1995 to over 40 this year. ²⁸

Looking at other titles, the New Yorker's average age rose from 46.8 in 2004 to 48.4 in 2005, Newsweek went from 45.9 to 46.6, Time climbed from 44.6 to 45.7, and U.S. News grew from 45.9 to 46.8. ²⁹

Average Age of Readership by Magazine

1995 – 2005



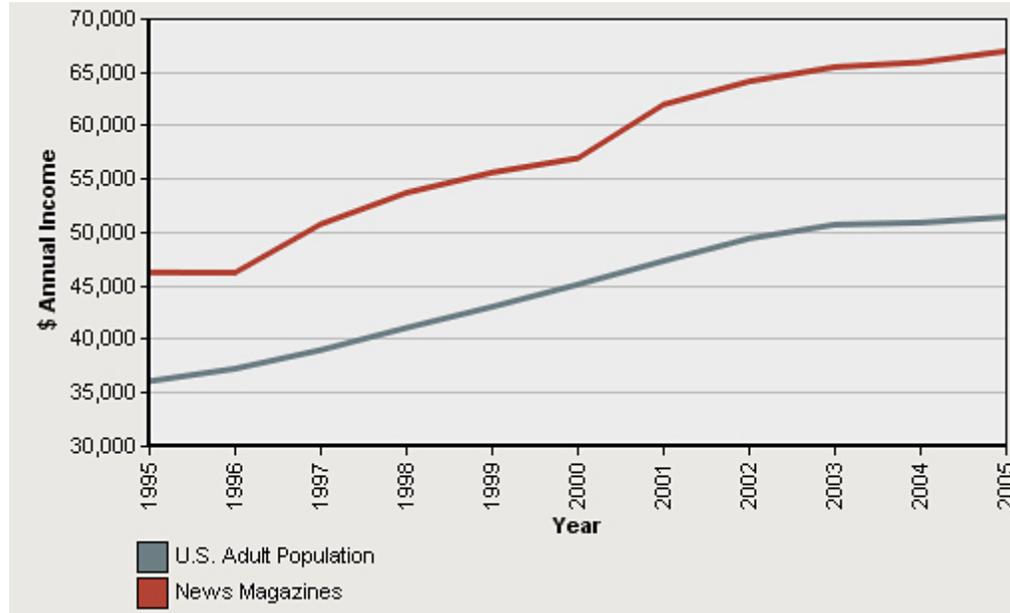
Design Your Own Chart

Source: MediaMark Research, "Magazine Audience Estimates"

Taken together the readers of the news magazines continue to be a wealthy segment of society — and growing wealthier as they separate from the average American. The average household income for the news titles MRI gathers data on was \$67,003 in 2005, up from \$65,958 in 2004. ³⁰ Comparing 1997, the first year MRI gathered information on all six of the titles we study, with 2005 makes the trend pretty clear. The gap between news magazine readers and the general U.S. population is as high as it has ever been — about \$15,000. ³¹ Ten years ago it was only about \$10,000.

Average Income of News Magazines Readers

Compared to U.S. population, 1995 – 2005



Design Your Own Chart

Source: MediaMark Research, "Magazine Audience Estimates"

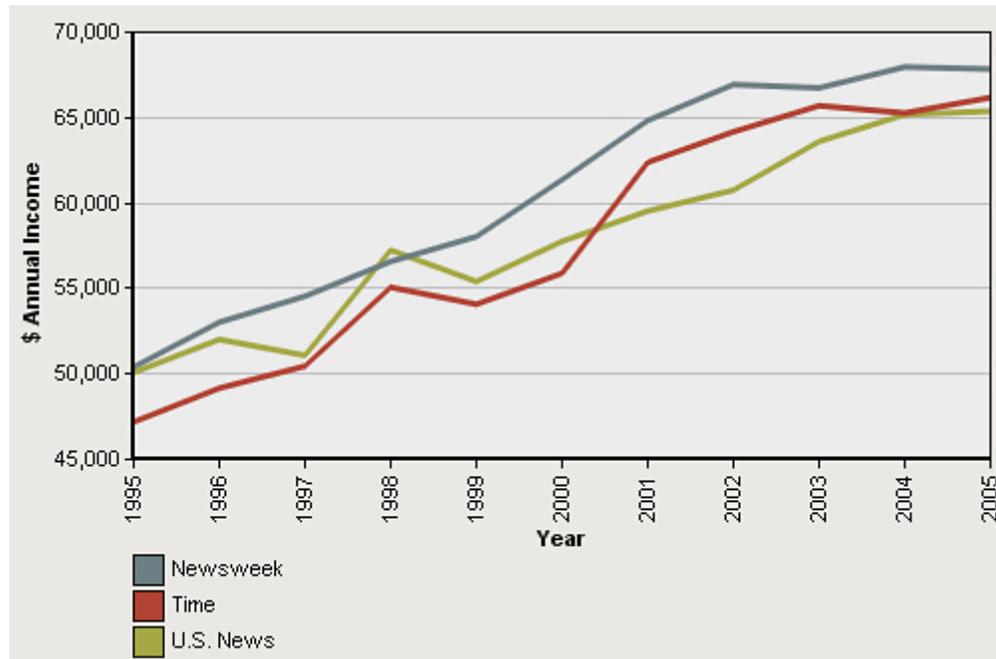
In 1997 the average income of news magazine readers was \$50,807, while the U.S. Adult population had an average household income of \$39,025 — a difference of \$11,782. ³² In 2005 the difference between those two groups was \$15,537 in household income — \$67,003 for news magazine households compared to the U.S. average of \$51,466. ³³

When it comes to the individual titles, The Atlantic had good year according to the MRI survey. Not only did its readership get younger, it got richer — quite a bit richer actually. The household income of the average Atlantic reader climbed \$4,000 in one year from \$81,571 in 2004 to 85,572 in 2005. ³⁴

Jet, on the other hand, had double-barreled bad demographic news. Its readers not only got older, they got poorer. The readership saw a \$600-plus drop in household income, from \$36,755 in 2004 to \$36,093 in 2005. But Jet wasn't alone. Newsweek also saw a small dip, from \$67,964 in 2004 to \$67,842 in 2005. ³⁵

The other three titles we look at saw small bumps. The New Yorker's readership went from \$79,005 in household income in 2004 to \$80,957 in 2005. Time saw an increase from \$65,269 to \$66,176. And U.S. News went from \$65,181 to \$65,379. ³⁶

Average Income of Readership by Magazine 1995 – 2005



Design Your Own Chart

Source: MediaMark Research, "Magazine Audience Estimates"

This trend showing news magazine readers coming increasingly from wealthier households reflects what may be a long-term problem for the nation in a larger sense.

News magazines have traditionally occupied a special place among American news media. Time magazine was created by Henry Luce so that people living in areas where national and world news coverage was scarce could keep up with the events of the day. It made for a better, more knowledgeable electorate. If economic stratification of news magazine readership signals a broader economic stratification in news awareness, the implications for a democratic society could be stark. It could leave larger parts of the electorate uninformed, under-informed or misinformed.

Add into this dilemma the growing age gap — not only in news magazine readership but throughout much of the news media— and there are even more troubling signs.

But there are hopeful signs as well. Though there are no hard, audited figures, The Week, as it gains in circulation, reports it is doing particularly well with younger audiences. And its lower newsstand price could theoretically attract more lower-income readers.

Footnotes

1. Audit Bureau of Circulations publisher's statements for The Week.
2. Audit Bureau of Circulations audit reports for the New Yorker and the Economist. Audit reports were used where possible — the Economist, the New Yorker and Newsweek had final reports as this was written — but for other publications publisher's statements were the best available data.
3. Audit Bureau of Circulations audit reports for Newsweek, publisher's statements for Time and U.S. News.
4. Audit Bureau of Circulations data.
5. Audit Bureau of Circulations publisher's statement for The Week.
6. Audit Bureau of Circulations publisher's statement for The Week, Time and U.S. News. ABC audit report for Newsweek.
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18. Davies, Jennifer, Gluttons for Gossip, San Diego Union-Tribune, September 3, 2005.
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Economics

Economics

The uncertainty that continues to linger over the nation's economy left its mark on the magazine industry in 2005. While some titles still saw gains — People and Us Weekly, for example, had increases in advertising pages and dollars — others suffered through a hard year. For all of 2005, ad pages were up a mere .5% and dollars 7% for all titles (not including the Sunday newspaper magazines) according to the Publisher's Information Bureau, which tracks ads throughout the year. ¹

The bad news for magazine ads for yet another year may raise questions about the economic health of the industry in the long run. Economic times may be uncertain, but they are by no means bad, with growth in gross domestic product somewhere around 4%. Those kinds of numbers, combined with a relatively robust stock market, have meant good news for magazine ads in the past. It may be that the structural changes in the media environment — the growth of online outlets, readership and ads — are beginning to have a bigger impact on magazines. Indeed magazines, with niche readerships that allow targeted ads buys, are perhaps more directly in competition with the hyper-targeted world of online ads. The ad trend will bear watching in coming years, particularly if the economy grows stronger.

Over all, newsstand sales numbers were poor in 2005. By mid-November they were down 3.4% for the industry as a whole. But again, celebrity titles seemed an exception to the trend; their sales grew by nearly 9%. In Touch Weekly saw its newsstand sales climb 49%, while Us Weekly was up 33%. ²

If there were doubts about the depth of the struggles traditional news magazines are facing, they may have been clarified in December when Time Inc. announced it was laying off 105 people, including some high-ranking executives. ³ One of the biggest casualties was Eileen Naughton, the president of Time magazine. The Time cuts followed on the heels of a reorganization at Business Week that sliced off 60 jobs. ⁴ And a month later, as January 2006 came to a close, Time announced the layoff of another 100 employees. ⁵

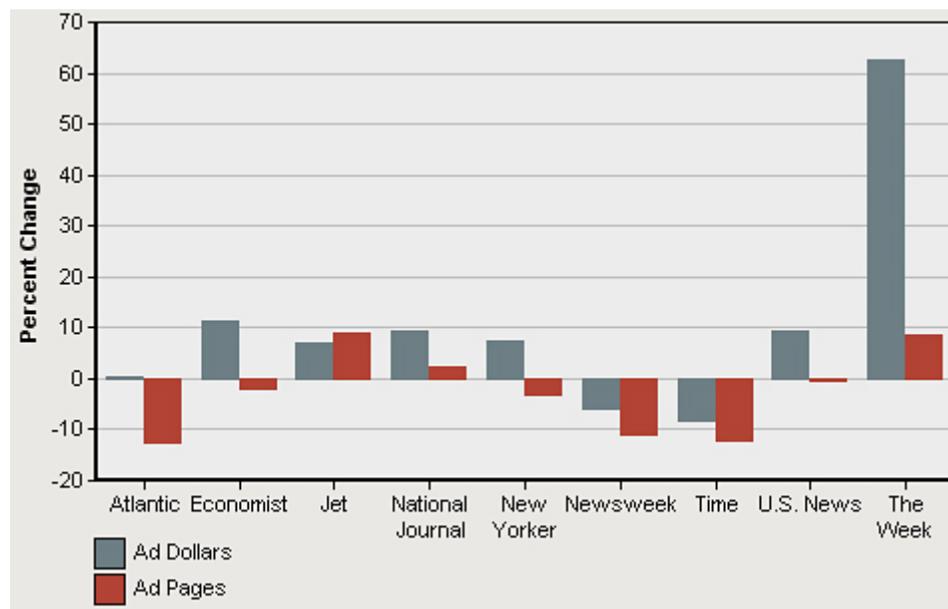
Even in a relatively gloomy year for ads in magazines, the biggest news magazines were particularly down. Time and Newsweek both saw double-digit dips in ad pages in 2005 and revenue figures were down almost as much. Many of the other titles saw a split year, with pages down and dollars up or vice versa. The exception was, again, the Week, where the numbers were all positive.

Inside the News Group

Positive indeed — while all the other news titles we examine saw a drop in either ad pages or dollars or both in 2005, The Week, now five years old, enjoyed significant growth. Ad pages were up 9% in 2005 and ad dollars were up a dramatic 63%. In absolute numbers, The Week still lags far behind its competitors. Its 568 ad pages are only a fraction of Time magazine's 2,293 and not even equal to David Bradley's National Journal, with 820 pages — a title where ads are an afterthought and subscriptions pay most of the bills. And in ad revenue The Week's \$17.8 million does not compare to Time's \$632 million. ⁶

Still, the speed at which The Week is growing is impressive, and because of the low-cost, low-overhead, manner in which the magazine is put together — compiled from publications around the country and world — even relatively small increases in revenue can have a big impact on the bottom line. The magazine is not making money yet, but its staff reports it is on track to break even in 2006. ⁷

Change in Ad Dollars and Pages, Select Magazines 2004 vs. 2005



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Publisher's Information Bureau

Other nontraditional news titles had more mixed results in 2005. Jet had a 7% increase, or about \$2 million, in ad dollars and a 9% increase in ad pages. A smaller increase in ad dollars than in ad pages (the reverse of what most magazines experience or, at least, announce) may suggest that the magazine will not be able to command the rates it would like. ⁸

Four other titles saw the reverse advertising picture — pages down but dollars up, a little more favorable position once the economy improves.

The Atlantic's ad pages were down 13%, while dollars were up a small 0.3%. In actual dollars the Atlantic experienced a \$73,000 increase in revenues. ⁹

The New Yorker and the Economist suffered through small reductions in ad pages — 3% for the New Yorker and 2% for the Economist — but both also witnessed good-sized increases in ad revenues — 7% and 11%, respectively, in 2005. In dollar terms, the Economist had a revenues increase of about \$7.5 million in 2005 to \$72.5 million, while the New Yorker had an increase of about \$15 million to \$215 million. That number puts the New Yorker in the same ballpark as U.S. News and World Report (\$256 million), the struggling bottom player among the big traditional news weeklies. ¹⁰

It is not unusual for ad revenues to rise while pages decline; ad rates can increase even as pages fall. The ad revenue figures collected by the Publisher's Information Bureau and cited here are determined by multiplying pages by each magazine's stated ad rates. The rates advertisers actually pay are closely held secrets and are often not uniform. Actual rates can depend on anything from the advertiser and to the length of contract. Some industry insiders say the revenue figures are so inflated that the actual numbers could be only around half the amount the PIB figures indicate.

U.S. News, also, saw pages down and revenues up in 2005. The revenue increases, though, were more in line with the Atlantic 's, just 9%, to about \$257 million. Ad pages dropped 0.6% following a year when they were up substantially. 11 The question for the magazine now is what will happen as it embraces its new mission and becomes more of a Web-based publication? And how soon and how quickly will those changes occur? Some of the ads in the magazine may migrate to the Web, but it is unclear what the net change in revenue will be. If newspapers are any example, U.S. News is likely to be limited to much lower rates for online ads than for print ads.

Both Time and Newsweek fared much worse in 2005 than in 2004. Ad pages and dollars both fell at both titles. Time had a particularly down year with a drop of 12% in ad pages and 8% in ad revenues — more than 300 ad pages and \$55 million. Newsweek witnessed a 11% decline in ad pages and a 6% drop in ad dollars, or 247 ad pages and \$30 million. 12

News Magazines Ad Pages, by Title

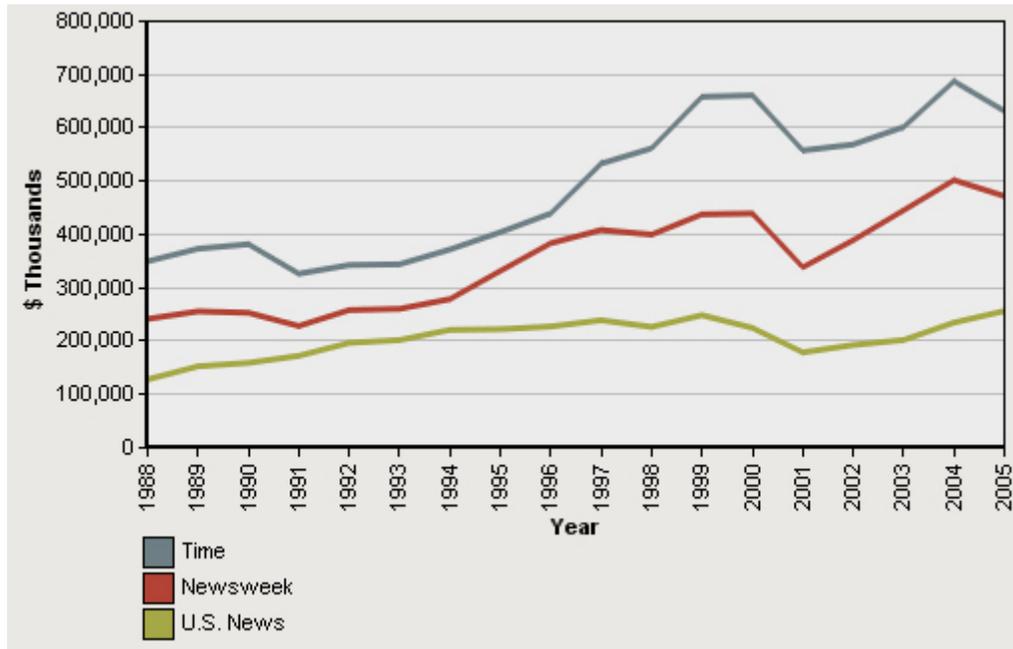
1988 – 2005



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Publisher's Information Bureau annual reports

News Magazine Ad Dollars, by Title 1988 – 2005



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Publisher's Information Bureau annual reports

What might explain the declines? Could they be attributed to a post-election year drop-off — numbers simply looking low in comparison to 2004?

If you compare 2005 to 1997 — the year following the most recent presidential re-election — that theory doesn't hold up. Time, Newsweek and U.S. News all saw increases in ad pages and ad dollars in 1997. ¹³ All magazines, news and otherwise, saw a drop in 2001 (after the 2000 election); the industry suffered through a one-year decline in advertising pages of more than 10%. ¹⁴

It may be that the ups and downs of the news titles have more to do with the nation's overall economic situation than the news environment. From 1994 to 1999, when economic times were good, ad pages were rising at the traditional weeklies. From there they dropped, and not even the 2000 election could save them. But are times so hard in 2005 that pages should be falling the way they are? And why are the drops so much more dramatic at the big news weeklies? The nature of the 2005 economic situation may suggest at least part of the answer. Car ads make up a lot of the pages in the big titles, and the U.S. auto industry is in a slump. The question may not be fully resolved until the economy improves. If the advertising picture does not rise then, it will signal bigger problems for general-interest print magazines.

A Look at the Ads in the News Titles

Another way to understand the advertising appeal of a magazine is to look at the kinds of ads it carries. They reveal something about the nature of the audience, and the breadth of the ads may predict the ability of a magazine to weather difficult times.

A look at the ads in one issue each of Time, the Economist, the New Yorker and The Week suggests that the magazines are aimed at different audiences and that some have a deeper pool of potential advertisers than others.

The May 23 Time relies heavily on cars (9 pages of ads), banks and financial companies (6 pages) and computers and technology (4 and 2/3 pages). And the companies in the 28 total ad pages are names familiar to most consumers: Honda, Citi, Microsoft and General Electric. 15 There are a few exceptions. GE, for example, specially sponsors a section in the back of the magazine called “innovators” with an ad that is more about what a good clean company GE is. But most of the ads are like the one inside the back cover for the Toyota Sequoia, the three-page spread on Citi’s Thank You program, or the one-pager for the prescription drug Nexium. They are ads to spur sales.

The Economist’s May 14-20 selection of advertisers is broader. Its biggest advertisers are banks and financial companies (7 pages), followed by automakers (5 pages) and computer and technology companies (5 pages). 16 But other advertisers suggest a different audience from Time’s — consulting companies, petroleum companies and a government (Puerto Rico to be precise). Even the magazine’s car ads are different. Toyota’s ad in the Economist isn’t about a car, it’s about an assembly line and its engine plants in the United States. Hyundai’s focuses on the company’s engineering plant in Michigan. The ads aren’t about the sleek products as much as they are about the companies themselves. (But the back cover which features a silver Jaguar on the inside and a Patek Phillipe watch on the outside.)

The Economist, which still calls itself a “newspaper,” also features 10 pages of “classified” advertisements for things like conferences, symposiums and jobs, including chief executive and chief economist positions. Altogether, the Economist carries 46 pages of advertisements. 17

The New Yorker’s May 23 edition features an even broader set of ads. Not many magazines offer a huge four-page BMW advertisement in the same issue with a little box ad — 1/18 of a page — for www.replacements.com, a Web site to help you find china, crystal and silver collectibles. The biggest ad buyers are still banks and financial companies (6 pages), followed by automakers (5 and 1/3 pages) and computer and technology companies (4 pages, all of which are for Microsoft products). But books and book companies have nearly three pages of ads. General travel ads — everything from Frommer’s guides to a cruise to Antarctica — get 2 and 1/6 pages. And the tiny boxes of miscellaneous ads, selling everything from commemorative crystal bowls to subscriptions to a literary magazine by children, take up a total of about 2 and 1/3 pages. 18 If one were to try to get an understanding of who The New Yorker’s reader’s are by looking at these ads, one could only say the advertisers seem to see the magazine’s readers as literate, with a lot of disposable income to spend on “unique” items.

The Week’s May 27 issue follows the title’s strict rules on advertising. The magazine limits advertising to only 30% of its pages — the industry average is about 48% — and all The Week’s ads are full-page. 19 This issue carries 10 pages of ads, half of them for banks and financial institutions. 20 Everything else gets one page each — cars, petroleum, technology, alcohol and food. Some of the ads, like the one for Chevrolet’s SSR vehicle, are clearly consumer purchase ads, but others, like those for Exxon and the Altria Group, are focused on corporate image. The mix may say something about the readers of the magazine, who reportedly include well-known newsmakers. Indeed, nearly every issue features a quote on the cover from a well-known person — from Salman Rushdie to Barry Diller to Bob Kerrey — saying why they like about the magazine.

Industry-wide changes

Overall in the industry, ad sales have staggered since the recession of 2001. But 2005 represented at least a partial rebound, buoyed in large part by the rise of the celebrity genre. Two titles in particular grew dramatically, The Star and In Touch. In 2005, In Touch saw its pages rise 38% and its dollars increase 197%. At The Star, pages rose 30% and dollars 84%. 21

And those two magazines have been joined by a third, the European import OK!, whose figures were not yet available at this writing. All those titles share a common approach to the celebrity world. Writing takes a back seat to photos — often “exclusive” photos — and reporting scoops on celebrities’ personal lives. They are also less expensive than the established celebrity titles, like People and Us, and are printed on lower-quality paper. Their layout is evocative of checkout-line tabloids, and in truth they have more in common with those tabs than titles on the magazine stand.

They are the titles experiencing the biggest growth, however. The more traditional celebrity and pop culture titles are suffering. People is relatively flat — no change in pages and a 3.9% climb in dollars — and Teen People is taking a hit — pages down almost 50% and dollars down 28%. 22

As mentioned in the audience section, the lower prices and fresh approach of these new titles are scoring particularly well with younger readers. That seems to be particularly hurting Teen People, which has an average reader age of 28, according to MRI’s reader survey. That would put Teen People in direct competition with these new titles for young readers.

There is good and bad news here. If publishers were worried that young people were turning away from magazines, they have reason to feel upbeat. On the other hand, they seem to be gravitating toward the bottom of the market. People magazine may be a pop culture title, but it is not celebrity-driven in the same way these new titles are, and the magazine does actually deal with heavier news, though in a light way. People carries stories about celebrity dates, but Sen. Barack Obama has also appeared as a subject, as have tragedy and crime stories. The newer celebrity titles do not veer far, if at all, from the celebrity world — a world that seems to hold great appeal for readers.

Footnotes

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Ownership

Ownership

The top of the magazine ownership pyramid remained unchanged in 2004. Time Warner, Advance and Hearst, held onto the top three slots. They own most of the biggest mainstream titles, with Time Warner remaining the largest of the big publishers by far. ¹

After those three, however, there was movement. Meredith Corporation climbed from No. 6 in revenues to No. 4 and could climb higher in the 2005 rankings after buying some of the better-known women's titles on the magazine rack, including "Parents," "Child," "Fitness" and "Family Circle" from Gruner + Jahr as well as "Ser Padres." ²

Gruner + Jahr, the newspaper and magazine publishing arm of the German media company Bertelsmann, looks to be moving out of the American magazine business. The former seventh-largest magazine owner is no longer in the top 25. And in 2005 (not reflected in the figures above) Gruner + Jahr went further. The company sold Fast Company and Inc. for \$35 million. It had bought the two titles for \$550 million five years before, at the height of the tech boom on Wall Street. ³ The loss was just another sign of the declining economic fortunes of business titles, some of which simply folded when the market nosedived in 2001.

Among the rest of the top magazine companies, Primedia, once the fourth-largest, was bumped down to fifth. Reader's Digest, formerly fifth, fell to sixth, and so on. ⁴

For those biggest publishers 2004 was a good year. Revenues at Time Warner and Hearst rose 8%, those at Advance Publications 10%. The rest of the top 10 companies had more mixed 2004 revenues — four were up and three were slightly down. ⁵

Along with Gruner + Jahr's exodus, news reports in 2005 about Primedia showed a hard year (though that is not reflected in the chart above, which is based on 2004 figures). Its stock price plunged in 2005 when the company announced plans to spin off some of its assets. ⁶ Do the decisions of Gruner + Jahr and Primedia suggest something about the future of the industry? That it may be becoming an industry only for the biggest of the big companies, or only for the biggest and much smaller companies? One test may come in the next few years if the gap between the largest three or four companies and the rest of the list grows.

For the first two years of this report we noted that the magazine industry had stood out from other media in that the biggest of the big media companies had mostly ignored the sector. As of 2004, that was still true. Of the top 10 media companies over all, only Time Warner had invested seriously in the business, and that investment can be linked to its history. Time Inc. was started in 1923 as a magazine company, and much later expanded into cable with HBO. Even so, magazines have a much smaller role at Time Warner today than they once did, accounting for only 12% of the company's media revenue. And other media heavyweights such as Viacom and News Corp. don't even come close to making the top 25 magazine companies by revenue. ⁷

Of course, that also means Time Inc. is one of the hardest hit of the magazine companies when times are bad, as became clear with the company's layoff of more than 100 employees in December of 2005. ⁸ More layoffs are expected as the industry struggles.

Ownership of News Magazines

Other than Time Warner the biggest magazine companies have shied away from news titles for years, in good economic times or bad. That reluctance was particularly apparent this past year when Condé Nast, looking to expand its number of titles, chose the slumping business magazine market over news.

What is new now is that some of the smaller owners have made a push into the arena.

Case and point is "The Week" owned by Dennis Publishing, the 18th largest company, according to Ad Age Magazine. ⁹ Dennis, owned by the Briton Felix Dennis, is in many ways an odd entry into the news magazine world. Other than "The Week", Dennis is primarily known for its "lad" titles — Maxim and Stuff, whose main selling point is pictures of starlets in bikinis. And it may be the size of the company and its lack of history in the news arena that led it to experiment as it has. Some may like The Week's "print blog" approach to news and some may not. Some may think it is only an attempt to do news on the cheap, but it is a different approach that other larger companies probably wouldn't have tried.

Meanwhile, David Bradley is reportedly still weighing the possibility of launching another news weekly and in the meantime has taken steps toward reworking and consolidating his titles. Bradley moved the Atlantic from Boston to Washington, with some staff coming along and some not, freeing him to remake the magazine. Bradley also may have put another piece into place this year for a new title — luring the Economist's deputy editor, Clive Crook, to Atlantic Media where he serves as Bradley's senior editorial adviser. Since rumors about a Bradley-backed news weekly began, the Economist has been cited as the likely model. In a memo announcing Crook's hiring Bradley told the Atlantic staff

that Crook would “help think through and execute our larger editorial ambitions: creating a great journalism destination, recruiting and advancing exceptional talent, thinking through new publications, vetting the possibilities for acquisition.”¹⁰

Online

The magazine medium does not as yet seem to have cohesive strategy for content on the Internet. The varied nature of the companies that dominate magazines may be a factor.

The biggest force, Time Warner, clearly has a prominent online face in CNN.com, and it uses content from Time.com there. But it doesn't seem compelled to have a prominent Web site just for the magazine. Content on Time's website is largely stories from the magazine, and while there is new content on the site daily, it has a different feel and is not as polished as what appears in the print pages. Some of this, however, may change. Time Inc. is reportedly aiming to use layoffs to free up “more resources for the Web producers at Time.com,” according to Jim Kelly, Time's managing editor.¹¹

Meanwhile, U.S. News, as we note in the audience section, looks as though it is going to focus more heavily on the Web in coming years. There is a lot of shorter content available on its site, but the publication's franchise, its rankings and guides, are not free. Some of the opinion journals have dived more heavily into online. National Review has adopted more of a blogging approach to its site, with daily pieces that are generally more casual and personal in tone that one would find in its hard copy.

The most interesting development among the big-news title owners in 2005 may have been how the Washington Post Company, which owns Newsweek, handled its acquisition of the online magazine Slate: as a separate entity. The online magazine kept its headquarters in Redmond, Wash. , and its homepage has hardly any indication of who the owner is. Cross-marketing, such as it is, is relegated to the bottom left-hand column, where there may be links to stories in the Post or Newsweek. In fact, perhaps as a nod to the site's audience, the most obvious partner seems to be National Public Radio, which the radio company produces in collaboration with Slate. “Slate on NPR” is a heading on the contents bar running down the left side of the page. In December Slate even ran a piece on anorexia (a recent cover topic for Newsweek) that specifically raised questions about Newsweek's story.

It would seem that Slate would offer links to the online homes of the Post and particularly Newsweek, which doesn't have the same prominent Web presence as the newspaper. Of course, the Post and Newsweek have a content agreement with MSNBC, which may have something to do with the lack of Newsweek links on the Slate site (and MSNBC's co-owner, Microsoft, is the former owner of Slate). There are opportunities for cross-promotion, of course. In December of 2005, the Web sites of the Post, Slate and MSNBC all carried advertisements for MSNBC-TV's primetime programs all day.¹² But the larger issue may be the Washington Post company's general Web strategy. The company is careful when it comes to sharing content between outlets. There are, after all, no Newsweek stories on Washingtonpost.com and no Washington Post stories on Newsweek's site.

The Future

Even with the troubles the traditional news weeklies are experiencing, an ownership shake-up among them is probably unlikely. Despite the downsizing and the plans to move U.S. News to more of an online presence, for example, there has been little talk of Zuckerman Media Properties' selling the struggling title, though the company did dump the

political/pop culture title Radar last year. And even as Time Warner struggles and lays off personnel, no one has suggested that the company has even thought about selling Time, its namesake and the leading news magazine. Still, if the magazine industry continues to flounder, changes in ownership in the long-stable news field in terms of the titles' form, layout and staffing wouldn't be a surprise.

Footnotes

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News Investment

News Investment

The number of staff members working at news weeklies has been declining for some time. Magazines like Time and Newsweek have cut staff significantly over the past few decades. There have been occasional upward blips — Newsweek, for instance, added four people in 2005 — but the trend has been clearly downward.

The year 2005, however, saw some dramatic drops, suggesting that major changes may be under way and that the pace of decline may quicken. In October, U.S. News and World Report underwent cuts that affected the magazine at the highest levels, including chief political correspondent Roger Simon, and more cuts were rumored to be on the way. The cuts left the title with only about 160 people on its editorial staff. ¹ That is much lower than Time or Newsweek.

In December, after an extremely lackluster year in ad sales. Time Inc. announced it was laying off 105 people from throughout the organization, from the chief of sales to bureau chiefs in Moscow , Beijing , Seoul and Tokyo . The move was portrayed as cutting fat from a bloated hierarchy, but considering Time's dislike for such upper-level cuts in the past, it suggests a change in attitude at the company. ²

The same week that Time announced its cuts, Business Week let go 60 people in areas from editorial to circulation. Part of the restructuring was the elimination of the magazine's European and Asian editions. ³ Exactly who had been fired and where they worked was not announced, but insiders told the Project that some of the magazine's most senior correspondents were not immune.

And a month later Time Inc. announced it was planning to lay off another 100 staff members. The biggest hits were at Time and Money, but other titles would be hit as well — even Real Simple, where ad page sales were rising. The cuts were designed to “save as much money as you can now and smartly deploy that money in new launches and an even stronger Web strategy so that you emerge stronger a year or two from now,” said Jim Kelly, Time's managing editor. ⁴

Those kinds of reductions, spread out over the industry and compounded by bad ad news, may indicate a larger shift. And there don't appear to be any signs of growing staffs on the horizon. Even among the newer competitors, the future of the news field seems to be one of smaller staffing.

Staffing in News Titles

The Week, which has enjoyed large circulation growth and explosive ad page and revenue increases, employs no writers per se. Rather, it relies on a team of 20 or so editors to parse through the news of the week from various sources and compress them into bite-sized nuggets. ⁵ It is largely parasitic.

How does this effect staffing? If you open a copy of The Week and count everyone in the staff box — from editor in chief through circulation manager and on to UK founding editor — you would come up with a grand total of about 40 people. ⁶ If you count just the people on the editorial side of Time you get about 240, and at Newsweek about 185. ⁷ That difference has potentially enormous implications for the future of news weeklies.

Perhaps because it is a new model, The Week is in some ways designed to thrive in the current media culture. As other titles cut staffs to get costs in line, The Week with its success would seem to be on the road to adding people. The question is, would more staff actually improve the magazine considering how it's put together or is the magazine's small staff adequate? Would the quality investment instead be in newsgathering technology, as we see in Google News?

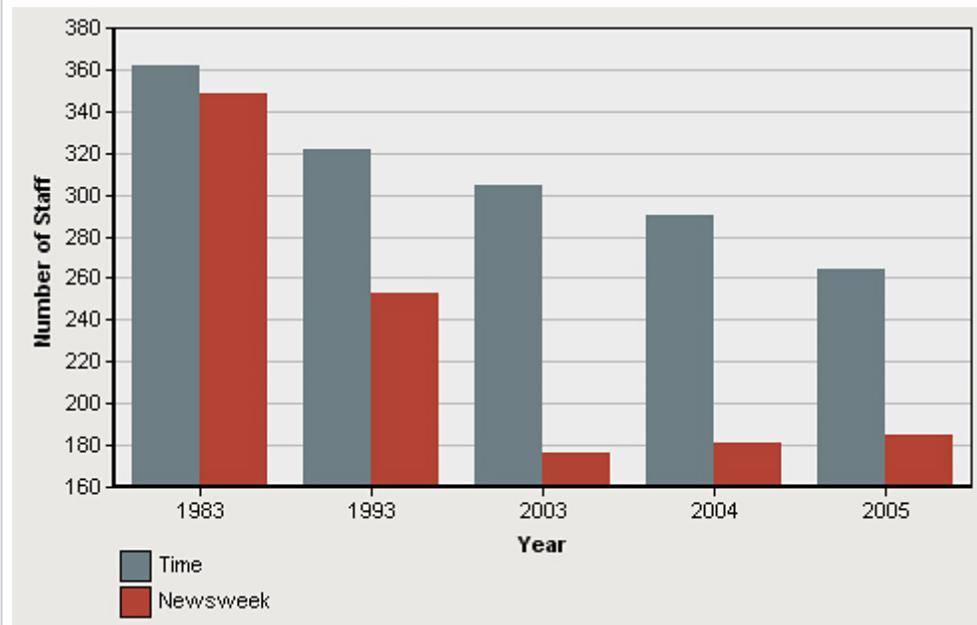
What it comes down to is what each staff provides the reader. There is clearly more original reporting in Time or Newsweek than there is in The Week. The stories in Time and Newsweek are longer and have a lead at the beginning, a nut graph up high and a short kicker at the end. But in terms of providing readers with a summary of the news of the last seven days, The Week arguably offers more. In some ways The Week is a post-Internet print news creation. It operates as something like a weekly print Web log, minus the attitude. It takes advantage of the media that exist and simply serves as a filter for the reader — here's half a page on the Iraqi Constitution, complete with left and right opinion; here's a paragraph on the FBI easing drug restrictions on applicants. It is a news source for busy people in a world that's getting busier, and it can do what it does cheaply.

One large question hangs over the approach of The Week, however. If its staffing model were to become the one that other titles to follow, which organizations would gather the news and provide the original content?

Heading into 2006, at least, most news weeklies continued to report, and largely held the line on staffing and bureaus in 2005. Again, though, that assessment was made before the cuts at Time, which was in the low double digits.

News Magazine Staff Size Over Time

Time and Newsweek select years 1983 – 2005



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Project for Excellence in Journalism from magazine staff boxes

To get these staff measurements, we take the mastheads the magazines themselves provide.

It might seem at first as if Time's staff took a big drop in 2005, from 290 to 264, but much of that can be attributed to this report's re-evaluating how it counts the staff in Time's box. Some of the employees of Time's side projects like Time for Kids and Time.com were removed from the count to make it more comparable to the way Newsweek counts its staff. By this measure, Time's staff count is really down 14, with several of the cuts coming in a reorganized photo department. ⁸

Newsweek added four members to its staff — two more reporters each in its London and Jerusalem bureaus. This marks the second consecutive year that Newsweek added staff to its editorial team. This increase, though small, may indicate that the magazine is devoting more resources to reporting rather than just rewriting or offering "takes" on current events. ⁹

Overall, both Time and Newsweek added staff in their various bureaus in 2005 — before the Time cuts. The way they did so, however, suggests different priorities, or at least different ideas of where their needs lie. Even before its December layoffs, Time decreased its foreign bureau staff by two, while increasing its domestic bureau population by three. Newsweek went in the other direction, cutting its domestic bureau staff by one, increasing its foreign bureau numbers by four.

At the same time, both of the biggest news weeklies cut the number of bureaus they have in the field. Time closed its bureaus in Sydney and South Africa, though the South Africa Bureau was arguably redundant given that the magazine had and still has a bureau in Johannesburg. The closures bring the total number of bureaus Time has to 25, from 27.¹⁰

Newsweek's bureau count went from 21 in 2004 to 20 in 2005. The magazine shuttered its bureau in Dallas and its "foreign" bureau in Miami (the magazine also has a domestic bureau in Miami with a different reporter assigned, and that bureau remained open), but opened a bureau in Hong Kong.¹¹

Contributors

As the news magazines have cut staff, they have often added names to the "contributor" category of part-time or regular freelance writers under their mastheads. The use of contributors allows the magazine to hold on to some people who have walked away to pursue different options or those that have been let go as a cost-saving measure. The contributor list can also be a place to highlight the involvement of big-name journalists.

In one of the more interesting notes, the number of contributors at Time fell dramatically in the past year, from 40 to 24, as some of its better-known names left the box, including the former Reagan speechwriter Peggy Noonan and the author/essayist Roger Rosenblatt. Some new names were added, though, including those of the New Republic writer Michelle Cottle and the former Time staff writer Joel Stein, both of whom are younger than the people they replaced. Cottle has become a part of the Washington punditocracy. Stein has developed into something of a personality outside of Time and has pursued options elsewhere. Having him as a contributor is a way for the magazine to hold onto him in some way.¹²

Newsweek's contributors fell as well, though by just one, from 19 to 18. And there was much less coming and going on the list. Lorraine Ali went from contributing editor to senior writer in the masthead, but otherwise the list was unchanged.¹³

Conclusion

It may be that the days of big cuts are over at Time and Newsweek, at least for the time being. But the real question that hangs over the news magazine field is what the role of the news titles will be.

Time, Newsweek and the struggling U.S. News have not truly focused on providing a weekly summary of the week's news for some time. They recap some news, but they concentrate primarily on fresh reporting on topics they elect to cover and a lot of "takes" on current news. Even though the topics they cover have changed — growing lighter in the case of Time and Newsweek — the format has not. And their staffs have been built to suit those goals, with reporters feeding writers who generate copy in each title's voice.

If The Week continues to be successful with its news summary approach, however, it will likely be copied, and that means staffs could again take a hit. That's not to say The Week's approach will come to dominate the field. There are

other staffing models available. The Economist, which uses stringers as well as staff, continues to thrive. So does the New Yorker with its contracted writers.

In the past the big news weeklies, particularly Time and Newsweek, have morphed as times have changed, gravitating toward the trends in the magazine business to help stem falling circulation. They have added business coverage, more entertainment news, even more opinion. If they look elsewhere in the news arena for clues about how to remake themselves, they will probably pick a little bit of several approaches. But those approaches, whatever pieces they take, will likely point to smaller staffs.

Footnotes

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2. Smith, Stephanie, "Time Inc. Axes 105 Staffers," Mediaweek.com, December 13, 2005
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4. Seelye, Katharine, "Time Inc. to Cut 100 More Jobs as It Focuses on Web Business," New York Times, January 31, 2006
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8. Time staff box, September 12, 2005
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13. Newsweek staff box, July 18, 2005

Public Attitudes

Public Attitudes

How does the public view magazines? What role will they play in journalism's future?

New data on public attitudes toward the medium is thin. While newspapers and television are often monitored by research groups, magazines in general and the news weeklies in particular tend to be overlooked. In the past year, no new major polls looked deeply into the field.

The long-term trend, however, has not been positive. Data going back some 20 years on the credibility of the traditional weeklies show a general decline. In that time the number of people saying they can believe all or most of what Time reports has dropped by a third — from 27% in 1985 to 18% in 2004. Over the same period Newsweek had an even more pronounced decline — from 23% to 14%. U.S. News, which has data going back only to 2002, actually saw a 1% increase on that credibility score, from 18% to 19%. (See last year's report for more.)¹

In the past year, though, nothing suggested that the declines might be reversed. The two largest weeklies suffered through incidents that probably did little to help ease reader concerns. In May, Newsweek had to retract a piece in its Periscope section reporting that copies of the Koran had been put in toilets at Guantanamo to upset detainees. For its part, Time found not one, but two of its reporters embroiled in the CIA/Valerie Plame leak investigation. U.S. News, meanwhile, the weekly with the highest credibility rating, suffered through hard economic times and faced questions about whether it was becoming largely a Web-based product.

The credibility figures aren't good, but the struggles of U.S. News may be the most illuminating in regard to the critical issue for the magazines in coming years. What are news magazines for? With news available 24 hours a day on the Web from a variety of outlets — including newspaper sites and TV sites — and on cable news channels, what is it people want to read at the end of the week? The question is not a new one. People have been predicting the end of news weeklies nearly since they began.

Yet the economic trends clearly suggest that the question has to be faced now more squarely than ever before.

Looking at the changes in the content of the news weeklies over past 20 years — and longer — it's clear their editors have been pondering this question themselves. Their original mission, giving readers a recap of the news of the week, was abandoned long ago. And while they still occasionally serve as media "agenda setters," with big stories that call attention to big issues, that is not the dominant approach to content anymore (see our analysis of content). The oldest joke about news magazines is that their putting a trend on their covers was the surest sign that a trend had ended. Yet there is also some sign that the older news weeklies, particularly Time and Newsweek, now see their role more as cultural trend watchers than strictly news watchers.

Is this what their readers want? It's difficult to say for certain. Surveys show that readers turn less to magazines during major breaking news events than they do to faster media. In 2005 a study by the Pew Research Center found that magazines ranked below all other types of media for where people get "news about national and international issues."

News magazines were essentially unchanged on the question when compared with data from 1999. But in the same time the numbers for the Internet spiked.²

On a more regular basis, people still rely on the news magazines for some things, according to other surveys. In a 2004 Pew Research Center survey, 13% of those surveyed said they got news from magazines "such as Time, News and U.S. News" regularly.

But that figure is down since 1990, when 20% or more of those surveyed said they turned to the news magazine regularly, and 1993, when the number peaked at 24%. And the current 13% for news weeklies is far below other mass outlets, such as daily newspapers (54%), network news (34%) and cable news (38%).³

The weeklies' 13% is equaled by those who say they regularly go online to the news pages of providers like AOL and Yahoo (13%). An important difference between the magazine figures and those for the various online entities is that

online use is still emerging — it is on the rise — while the figures for magazines are stagnant. 4

One question, of course, is what does the public still go to magazines for? Another is why has the public turned away? Answers here might help the weeklies figure out a plan for the future. But the answers, unfortunately, are not completely clear.

Footnotes

1. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, “News Audiences Increasingly Politicized.” Question 23
2. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, “Public More Critical of the Press, but Goodwill Persists.” Question 3
3. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, “News Audiences Increasingly Politicized.” Question 22
4. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, “News Audiences Increasingly Politicized.” Question 22

Conclusion

Conclusion

At the beginning of 2006 it seems clear that Americans no longer rely on news magazines for the content they traditionally provided — national and international news. In areas of the country where this kind of news was once difficult to find, it is now available online from national media organizations.

But availability of news is not likely the only issue for the big news weeklies. Some of the readers who once went to the weeklies for news have been pushed away by the trend toward lighter fare in the magazines themselves. While surveys like the one by the Pew Research Center survey didn't ask specifically about magazines like the Economist and The Week, we showed in the Audience section those titles are drawing readers as Time and Newsweek are losing them.

And change has come to the news genre for the same reason it has come to other media — a variety of choices and niches. People may never again turn to big circulation titles for information as they did for decades with Time and Newsweek. Instead, people will turn to a niche magazine for a niche reason, and no one magazine will command the mass readership Time and Newsweek have long held. For whatever reason, the weeklies have without question grown broader over all in topic — becoming general-interest weekly magazines. In the process they have lost some of their identity.

To some extent, the same problem has beset the evening network news shows: they lost their exclusive franchise over national and international news. The dominant weeklies may ultimately have to decide whether to go back to more serious hard-news coverage or keep stretching themselves to include the latest topics and content trends that seem to be garnering readers.

The editors of those titles may see a threat in the hard-news approach — it could scare off the readers they have gained with their broader range of topics. Targeting a niche may inherently mean looking at a narrower audience. But there is a threat to the broad-content approach as well. If they don't give readers something distinctive, something they can't get anywhere else, will the readers keep coming back?

Charts & Tables

Charts & Tables

AUDIENCE

Circulation of Non-Traditional News Magazines
Circulation Among the Big Three News Magazines
Circulation of Leading Opinion Magazines
Average Age of News Magazine Readers
Average Age of Readership by Magazine
Average Income of News Magazine Readers
Average Income of Readership by Magazine
Regular Audiences of Select Media

ECONOMICS

Change in Ad Dollars and Pages, Select Magazines
News Magazines Ad Pages, by Title
News Magazine Ad Dollars, by Title

OWNERSHIP

Magazine Revenue of Top Ten Companies, 2004
Magazine Revenue, Top 25 Companies

NEWS INVESTMENT

News Magazine Bureaus Over Time
News Magazine Staff Size Over Time
Number of Contributors in Staff Boxes Over Time
Number of Correspondents in Bureaus Over Time

PUBLIC ATTITUDES

Where the Public Gets National and International News
News Magazine Believability Over Time
What Audiences Know
Who the Public Believes

CONTENT ANALYSIS

New Yorker Magazine Topics
News Magazine Pages by Topic, 1980 – 2005
Newsweekly Topics, 2005

Roundtable

Roundtable

The news magazine business, like many old media platforms, is facing its share of concerns. Given the growing emphasis on real time news and instant commentary, these publications – with their weekly schedules and more reflective, analytical approach – are increasingly seen as anachronisms in this new media landscape. And long-time industry leaders like Time, Newsweek and US News & World Report are seeing their circulation and ad pages shrink regularly.

The three big news titles had a particularly rough 2005. Ad pages dropped at all of them with Time and Newsweek witnessing double-digit declines. Last year, circulation for Time and Newsweek was at its lowest point at any time in almost 20 years with US News registering its second lowest circulation count in nearly two decades. Staffs were slashed as well. Last year, Time Inc. laid off 105 people from throughout the organization including Time bureau chiefs in Moscow, Beijing, Seoul and Tokyo. US News endured cuts that reached into the upper levels of the masthead.

But at the same time, titles like The Week and the London-based Economist are experiencing rapid growth in US readership and better advertising performance. This suggests that different editorial models can succeed in a difficult environment and that readers may be looking for creative variations on the traditional American news magazine approach.

In this, the fourth of our roundtables on the future of the news media, magazine industry experts see change as not only inevitable, but essential if the publications are to continue to survive. But they disagree about just what those changes should entail.

The panelists for this roundtable are:

William Falk, Editor, The Week

Samir Husni, Chairperson, University of Mississippi Journalism Department and author of Samir Husni's Guide to New Magazines

Daniel Okrent, former Editor, Time Inc. new media

Victor Navasky, Chairman, Columbia Journalism Review, former Editor, The Nation

1. The death of the news weekly has been predicted for years, but somehow they've managed to survive. Does today's news climate and the recent cutbacks at Time and U.S. News pose more of a real threat? What sort of future do you see for the weekly news magazine?

Daniel Okrent: The news magazines will have to change to survive, and I expect they'll do so. The compression of the news cycle has placed breaking news in the hands of digital providers, compelling deeper analytical efforts by daily newspapers, and thus depriving the news weeklies of their traditional specialty. I wouldn't be surprised to see them revert to what Henry Luce and Briton Hadden first imagined eight decades ago: something to break through the clutter.

Victor Navasky: I see the news weeklies becoming more analytical, interpretive, and perhaps even opinionated.

Samir Husni: I do not believe the recent cutbacks at the news titles are related to the news climate as much as to the content of those magazines. When you reach a stage in the midst of a country which is facing war, terrorism and political upheaval, and you have at least four cover stories in the last six months on teenagers and teenage boys and being 13, etc., you wonder "how were they able to maintain the level of circulation that they have?"

I have heard some folks referring to the new definition of news as “whatever affects your lifestyle,” but I don’t believe that, in this day and age where everything is presented in nuggets, that the role of the news weeklies should not revert to – as the Wall Street Journal Europe calls it – the breaking views. Unless those weeklies go back to covering the news in its pure, journalistic-defined form, I don’t think the future will be great for them.

William Falk: Obviously, I’m biased, but I think the news magazine will remain an important facet of many people’s media consumption. News magazines provide big-picture perspective that daily products cannot; they help readers make sense of what they’ve already read about or experienced. There is also a sense of craft and polish about weekly magazines that provides an enjoyable reading experience.

2. Along the same lines, news magazines have done surprisingly little to create an existence on the web. What has been holding them back? Can their content, including pictures, transfer to the web?

Falk: That is changing, as all the news magazines (including The Week) beef up and diversify their web sites. For the next five or ten years, I think the sites will be function primarily to supplement and add web-friendly content such as blogs to the print products. After that, my crystal ball is very cloudy.

Okrent: The web asks for speed, and news weeklies are not built for speed. But I do see them investing more heavily in web efforts right now that take advantage of their distinctive voices.

Husni: I don’t think the premise is true. Time and Newsweek are very active on the web, very active in delivering their information to their subscribers a day before the print edition is out and very active in occasionally breaking news stories on their website before the printed edition. If they are guilty of one thing, they are guilty of not sending the readers back from the web to the printed edition. We have managed to create a one-way street from the printed edition to the web, with no way back.

Now, the question is, “can their content, including the pictures, transfer to the web?” Definitely it can, but again, for what reason?

Navasky: What has been holding the news weeklies back has been the assumption that their content should be “transferred” to the web. The secret is to create content appropriate to the new medium – interactive, Q&A’s, chat-rooms, maybe each magazine will create its own spin-off web-versions of “Meet the Press”.

3. Over the last two years niche news magazines like the New Yorker and the Economist and most recently The Week have seen strong growth in both circulation and ad revenue. How far can this growth go considering they are niche genres? What does this suggest about the magazine reader of the future?

Falk: Again, I’m biased, but I strongly believe that each of the three magazines can continue to grow.

At The Week, we have found that people are extremely enthusiastic about a magazine that filters and make sense of so much commentary and news. One measure of that is how our subscribers proselytize their friends. In the past year alone, readers have bought more than 100,000 gift subscriptions to friends and family members.

The New Yorker, the Economist, and The Week are very different publications, obviously, but what we have in common is that we help people make sense of news they’ve already heard. In an age in which we are all literally inundated with

media, people are often overwhelmed and unsure what to read and what to think. That creates a demand for an intelligent, trustworthy guide like The Week.

Husni: This is the beauty of the magazine industry – there is something for everyone and, while The New Yorker continues to dwell on in-depth and the coverage of one big story at a time, The Week, on the other hand, provides you cliff notes of all that's taking place, not to mention The Economist weighs in with their views and analysis for those of us who actually have the luxury of trying to understand the world beyond the outer crust of our planet.

What does this suggest about the magazine reader of the future? Simply stated, the magazine reader of the future is going to be the same as the magazine reader of today, as the magazine reader of yesterday, and as the magazine reader of tomorrow. The magazine reader will continue to search for the publication that will best meet their needs, wants and desires.

Okrent: It in fact suggests that the distinctive voices I cite in the answer to concerning creating an existence on the web will be the vehicles to lead news weeklies back into their previous prominence.

Navasky: Ad growth seems to me to say more about the consumer of the future than the reader of the future. And the term niche seems too vague an umbrella under which to lump the three you mention. Each of the magazines you cite is a case unto itself: I think The Atlantic's move to Washington will contribute to a period of confusion rather than growth; The New Yorker is a quality-lit and entertainment magazine; The Week is the latest adaptation of the Reader's Digest formula. In theory these latter two mags could attract an abundance of new advertising.

4. Considering the flood of information available to consumers now and the magazine's primary role of putting the news into perspective, how important do you think a large, geographically spread staff is?

Falk: Frankly, it depends. There is still an important role for what Time and Newsweek do with their domestic and international bureaus, and it's hard to imagine those fine magazines without that reportage. But it's not necessary for all magazines to replicate this approach. At The Week, our role is different: For foreign perspective, we don't send reporters abroad, but tell readers directly what newspapers are saying in Europe, the Mideast, Asia, and other parts of the world. That is not only far less costly, it provides a unique value: It's one thing to have an American reporter tell you what Arabs think of the Guantanamo prison. It's another to hear it directly from Arabs.

Okrent: Less so – partly for the reasons suggested in the question, but also because of the efflorescence of news sources scattered around the world. The modern news magazine will be able to – will be compelled to – make alliances with non-competitive providers for news they can't gather on their own.

Navasky: More important than ever. Yesterday I was talking with an American businessman who specializes in Latin American investments. He tells me that any American businessman who spends any time in, say, Argentina will quickly see that America doesn't matter any more – they look to China rather than America as a major force. I don't know whether that's true or not, but do know that without our newspapers and magazines having their own people on the ground, we are missing these perspectives.

Husni: On one hand, we talk about how the world is flat. And, on the other hand, we want to confine everything to Washington D.C. and New York City. I don't think location (of staff) matters. To paraphrase President Clinton, it's the content, stupid.

5. Why do you think it has been that the biggest magazine owners have shied away from news titles? Conde Nast, for example, has added business titles even as business titles are slumping. How big a factor is the traditional cost associated with operating a news magazine?

Falk: Cost is a huge factor for traditional news organizations, since their staffs are so large. Another problem is that news magazines do not do well on newsstands, compared to “sexier,” impulse buys with celebrities on the cover.

Navasky: Lack of imagination is why people are shying away. I think the next generation of news weeklies may be multi-media as mentioned in the question about moving to the web and they will start from the points where politics and culture intersect.

Okrent: The traditional cost is an enormous factor, even as costs have been stripped away. The apparent difficulties in the news category certainly aren’t going to lure new players into the space.

Husni: As far as I remember, the last major mass-news weekly published in the United States was published in the 1930s. So the question is, why did we wait nearly 80 years to ask this question? I think the feeling is that there is plenty to cover this medium. Plus, let’s not forget that the newspapers are, themselves, becoming daily magazines.

6. One broad trend we sense in the media culture is the paradox of more outlets covering fewer stories. As the audiences for particular news outlets shrink, newsroom resources are then reduced, but these outlets still feel compelled to cover the big events of the day. The result is more outlets covering those same “big” events and fewer are covering much beyond that as much as they once did. How do you view this trend?

Navasky: You ask how do I view this trend? With alarm. The reason is that although you refer to “more” outlets, they are owned by fewer and fewer, larger and larger corporations, which means a narrower range of perspectives. A hopeful countertrend: Small independents, such as the hundreds of periodicals represented by the San Francisco-based Independent Press Association.

Okrent: I’m not sure I agree with the premise. While this may be the case at the apex of the media pyramid – i.e., the networks, the major news magazines, the national papers – the true expansion of media outlets is happening, and will be happening, at the base. I think we’re going to see this happening at the local level especially, and where there’s good local journalism, there will be stories that will be picked up and disseminated nationally.

Husni: Well, I hate to disagree from the outset with this premise, but it’s a little off on two fronts. One, that media outlets are covering fewer stories and, two, that everybody is covering the same big event of the day. If we really look at the daily newspapers and the more-than-daily websites, we see that there is a stream of information continuously converging toward the reader, packaged in different ways. It may give the appearance that there is less information or that it’s shorter, but, in reality, it’s the same old wolf, just now in sheep’s clothing.

I wish that the media outlets would cover more stories in depth and less with the barrage of information that we all see on a regular basis. I think that it’s only a figment of the imagination of the people in the media to believe that the same reader is going to jump from their newspaper to the website, to the television channel, to the radio to read scan, listen and view the same story. Wishful thinking at best.

As for the audience, I don’t believe it’s shrinking. The major news weeklies have maintained their circulation bases for years now, and the marketplace has added many more choices and options. Now, if we are going to define what we

mean by news, that's, of course, a completely different story. Because, what's news for me and you is not news for Joe Smith and Sally Jane.

Falk: I am distressed by it. I think of this as the "O.J." syndrome, perhaps because I was a reporter at Newsday at the time and saw first hand how much one story could consume a major news organization. It was during that case that this trend really became pronounced, and ever since then, TV, newspapers, and magazines seem to focus on one Big Story for months at a time.

I understand why editors who are worried about competition, circulation and ratings would succumb to the temptation to devote their resources to covering the same story or stories everyone else is covering. Nonetheless, it's undermining both the validity and the appeal of traditional journalism. Obsessing over one story, even when there is hardly anything new to say, makes readers cynical about our claims to high motives. It also reduces the need for people to buy our publications, since they so rarely see anything truly original or surprising.

Traditional newspapers and magazines will survive, I think, only if they break stories, do investigative work, and prove to the public day in and day out that we're their advocates.

7. How much confidence do you have that traditional mainstream media organizations will survive and thrive in the transition to the Internet?

Husni: 110 percent. To paraphrase Mark Twain, the news of the death of the traditional mainstream media has been greatly exaggerated. I was told "print is dead" as a student in 1980 when video text was introduced (I guess you're probably wondering, what's video text?). I was told "print is dead" when videotapes and CD-Roms were introduced in the early 90s. I was told "print is dead" in the late 90s when the dot-com became the in thing. And, now, I get yet another question about whether or not mainstream media will survive in the internet age. Being a gambler, and looking at the odds, I'll still place my bets on the mainstream media's survival. And not merely surviving, but surviving and thriving at the same time. They're not going to be transitioning to the Internet. They're going to be using the internet to complement and enhance the printed product.

Falk: There will undoubtedly be a shakeout. But I cannot imagine major newspapers such as The New York Times, The Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, and the Chicago Tribune failing to make the transition. Their reporting, news analysis, and commentary still forms the backbone of the entire media, both electronic and web; without the work their very large and talented staffs do, non-traditional media would have little to say or react to. Though imperfect, these and other major newspapers provide truly astonishing amounts of information and ideas every day. They have a product that the world will continue to need, regardless of how it is delivered.

Navasky: I suspect that some traditional mainstream media organizations will survive and thrive and others will go under; and others will survive in new, mixed- and multi- media forms. I believe that instead of replacing old media, if properly managed, the internet will extend and augment the old media.

Okrent: They won't survive in the present form. Digital distribution (not Internet alone) will force existing media organizations to carry their brands into the digital domain, perhaps exclusively.

8. Do you think the economic model of the Internet has to shift from an advertising based model to something else for traditional journalism to survive at a level that we have become accustomed to? If so, do you have any thoughts on what that new model might be?

Falk: I do suspect that as traditional media rely more heavily on web readership, they will have to find a way to charge for access to their sites. It's difficult to do so now, because so much is available for free; but as the economics drives publishers to start charging small fees, it will become more viable.

Okrent: I anticipate a model that could not have existed in the pre-digital age: readers will be able to choose free content subsidized by, and cluttered by, advertising – or, if they prefer, they will be able to pay for it and not have to endure the advertising. Additionally, once current providers recognize the vast savings in physical costs and distribution costs that digital distribution will afford them, they'll reconstruct a much more favorable business model from the ground up.

Husni: Do you remember black and white television with a knob, where you had to move from your couch and go to the TV to change it to one of the three channels? Three television networks, one TV set, at a cost of less than \$200, and you had television for life. Who would have ever thought that consumers would be paying an average of \$60 a month to watch the same junk that they used to watch for free? I think that will be the model for the future, where if you really want to get what you are looking for, and be able to connect to it, you will have to pay. For now, all that we pay for is the access. Pretty soon we'll have to pay for the content.

Navasky: It is important to distinguish among big and little media. Certainly the advertising-based economic model is one way to go. But in the case of The Nation the main initial consequence of the Internet has been to attract new, paying subscribers to the hard-copy magazine who come to us via our free website. As far as big media goes, although it's a way off, the internet could revolutionize direct mail.

The threat to newspapers now appears from nearly every indicator. From 1950 through 1999, for instance, newspaper revenue grew seven percent a year. From 2000 through 2006, by contrast, it has grown by just 0.5%. Then in the first quarter of 2006, growth was even less: 0.35%.



Radio – Intro

Intro

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

Technology is turning what we once thought of as radio into something broader — listening.

And listening will increasingly occur across a range of devices, from computers to PDAs and cell phones, from satellite receivers to new high- definition radios.

The strategies of programmers for winning audiences and revenue in this new landscape for the moment range the gamut — everything from ultra-niche programming to the broad eclecticism of letting computers randomly select music from all formats at once.

We even see competing trends in ownership. While some companies continue to consolidate, at least one major player in radio is moving to break in two.

As all this occurs, several questions that might have been inconceivable just a few years ago are now worth asking.

Will traditional or “terrestrial” radio fade as new technologies replace it? Or will all the old media merely be supplemented by the new, with each commanding less of people’s time? If that occurs, what will it mean about the resources of radio newsgathering if there are fewer people listening, or listening for less time each day? The answers may be profoundly influenced by new ways of measuring audiences that could topple the traditional foundation upon which radio advertising rates and economics are built.

Already radio news has changed from something that was once heavily local and widely available to something that exists largely on select stations specifically formatted for news or news/talks content.

Another question is more sociological. If people spend more time with personalized playlists and downloaded media, what will happen to the serendipity of learning something unexpected about the world from turning on the radio? The answer depends, in part, on the degree to which they were hearing from radio news about the larger world at all, something that probably varies from station to station.

Content Analysis

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

In the various debates over the state of journalism, the area about which the least is known is probably local news radio.

Critics argue that the field has been decimated, decrying that since the deregulation of the 1980s and the consolidation of the 1990s, station after station has abandoned producing local news, and arguing that cities around the country have suffered as a result.

Defenders say there are more choices and more news, talk and information than ever.

The discussion on both sides, however, is usually anecdotal. The medium tends not to receive the level of academic attention or critical study focused on network TV, print or the Internet.

As part of the Day in the Life of the News, we wanted to find out what local radio was actually offering citizens. ¹ To do so, we studied what was on local news radio on May 11, 2005, in three cities in three different regions: — Houston, a major metropolitan area, Milwaukee, a middle-sized city, and Bend, Ore., a smaller city.

What we found, by and large, is that radio news today is more local than the critics might think, but also quite thin. It rarely involves sending reporters out to explore the community and tell stories about local voices and personalities — the hallmarks of traditional local news coverage. Over all, the stories we found on local radio this day had the shallowest sourcing and explored the fewest angles of any media studied.

Instead, what listeners got was headlines read from wires or provided by national networks. The stories were brief — almost always less than a minute and often less than 30 seconds.

Radio News: Story Types

	Percent of all Time
Anchor Reads	24%
Packages	12
Interview	31
Other News Outlet	7
Traffic/Weather	9
Sports	5
Promos/banter/Fill	12
Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.	

What is probably the most prevalent local component on radio today is traffic and weather, broadcast on every station studied.

Whatever depth of coverage we found came largely from talk-show hosts offering their opinions on issues or taking calls from listeners.

In Bend, the one local radio station listed as offering local news and talk was KBND, where the only story segment longer than a minute in the hours studied was Paul Harvey’s syndicated “Rest of the Story” about the 1931 Indy 500. 2

During morning drive time on News/Talk WTMJ in Milwaukee , the news block was made up of 14 headlines at the top of the hour, but the headlines were brief, without a single source for any information cited.

Of all the hours monitored on local radio this day, only 14% involved correspondents reporting the story and many of those came from the local NPR affiliate or feeds from network owners.

How much radio news did we find? 3 In the biggest city, Houston , with a population of roughly 2 million 4, there were two stations identifying themselves as news/talk, two all-talk stations and one public radio station. The fourth largest city in the country had no station listing itself as “all news” dedicated to coverage of the community.

Listeners actually had more radio news options in the Milwaukee market, population 600,000, with eight stations listed: Three news/talk, two talk, and three public radio. 5

In Bend , a city of 52,000, radio listeners had little choice if they wanted news. One local news station, KBND, a “combined communication station” and CBS affiliate, offered CBS headlines and then mostly local news headlines. Listeners could also tune into an all-talk station broadcast from Redmond , Wash.

What We Studied

To get a closer sense of what was offered in each city we monitored one all-news station, one news/talk station, and a public radio station if it had local news programming hours. If no all-news station existed, we monitored a second news-talk station.

For each, we captured local programming at three different times of the day — an early-morning hour, a mid-day hour and an evening hour — if local news was offered. 6

Topics

Local news radio listeners are not hearing the same stories they would get from other media. And, in spite of the high level of consolidation that has taken place in radio, they are not hearing just nationally syndicated material with little local connection.

More than half the airtime (57%) on May 11 took a local perspective and another 16% were regional in focus. Eighteen percent delved into areas that did not fit clearly into any geographic boundary, such as divorce, health matters or the daily news quiz. The other quarter took a national or international angle.

Geographic Focus of Local Radio News

	Local	Regional	National	Int’l	None	Total
% of all time	57%	16	4	5	18	100

The stories that dominated the national media were a minor factor here. The four national stories that got the most coverage across the media generally this day were covered, but usually just briefly in the headlines at the top of the hour. A mere 5% of the stations' newshole spoke to these stories — only suburban daily papers covered them less (4%). Listeners could easily miss them if they weren't listening closely.

What topics were covered? By and large, listeners learned about three main subject areas: local government issues such as tax bills and the school budget; crime (murders, local voter fraud, and missing persons as well as the murder story in Zion, Ill., a national news item this day); and domestic issues such as education and marriage, whether tied to local events or to broader, non-geographical concerns. Each of those areas accounted for close to a quarter of the total air time. All other topics were fit into the other quarter of air time. That was a different mix from local television that day which was close to twice as dedicated to crime but much less so to government news. And it was a narrower focus than we found in local print media.

Topics on Local Radio

Topic	% of all Time
Crime	24%
Gov't/Elec.	25
Domestic	24
Other	27
Total	100

Of the top 14 stories in WTMJ's morning news hour, for instance, 10 were local. Eight of those were about local crimes.

WTMJ, Milwaukee Morning News: 14 Stories

- Marquette sports name (local)
- Zion murders (nat'l)
- Trial of killer Ted Oswald (local)
- Three shooting overnight (local)
- Local stabbing and shooting (local)
- Search for missing man (local)
- Charges against 13 year-old dropped (local)
- Milwaukee voter fraud (local)
- National Voter ID Bill (nat'l)
- Legislation to restrict cold medicine sales (local)
- Pharmacist on trial for refusing to sell medicine (local)
- Bombings in Iraq (Internat'l)
- Possible Grenade thrown at Bush (nat'l)
- Local mayor charged with sex crimes (local)

The Lost Art of Local Radio Story-Telling

But it was local radio's approach to reporting on those topics that stood out most of all. Rarely could the news content offered be described as thorough, complete or even well rounded. Little of it involved reporters going out to the scene and interviewing people or serving as the public's eyes and ears. Indeed, the local radio news we found on May 11 was not about reporting in a traditional sense at all.

Sourcing of information, for instance, was often absent. A full third of the coverage of the major news items across the stations studied did not contain any sourcing. Another 37% contained only one source other than the host.

Sourcing in Local Media

# of sources	Radio	TV	Metro Dailies
0	33%	40%	15%
1	37	21	16
2	16	18	16
3	9	9	12
4+	5	13	41

Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding

That compared poorly to the other sources of local news we monitored on May 11, from local TV, to weekly papers, to local or suburban daily papers. All of those rivals were significantly higher in the amount of sourcing available to audiences. Suburban dailies included four or more sources in 18% of their stories, and local TV included four or more in 13%. Local radio listeners must put a good deal of trust in the local on-air voices.

When it came to how much context stories provided, local radio scored the lowest of any English-language media studied. On our index of 10 elements that major stories might contain that would explain how a story mattered, 88% contained one or none — and that includes the long, far-ranging talk-radio discussions. ⁷ Again, that was the lowest score of any media studied.

Format Is King

Instead, what we found in local radio news was a medium heavily “formatted,” where everything was fit into a predictable and highly promotable pattern that was easy for listeners to remember. Yet that format tended to shallow-out the reporting on radio, and emphasize what cost less for stations to produce.

Across all the stations we studied in all three cities, the format on local radio was dominated by four elements: headlines, traffic, weather, and talk.

Only one station studied, KBND in Oregon , had a program we monitored that did not feature talk. Both its 6 a.m. and 5 p.m. hours cycled through national headlines from the CBS news desk, local headlines, sports, weather and traffic and business news — and then repeated.

The amount of talk versus news varied with the time of day. On Houston 's KTRH, the 6 a.m. drive time “Lana Hughes and J.P. Pritchard Show” was almost all headlines, traffic and weather. The one longer news segment was a one-minute, 38-second read on a Texas tax bill, with one sound “actualities” from a senator but no reporter at a news scene. The hosts were reading wires. No other story item during the hour ran even a minute long.

In the afternoon on KTRH, however, the “Deborah Duncan Show” was all about talk. After a brief headline summary, Duncan spent most of her time taking listener call-ins. The topic was divorce — everything from being surprised by emotions to what no-fault divorce means in court to protecting children from negative effects.

Headlines

It was in the headline summaries at the top of the hour that the local radio we monitored offered the bulk of what people might traditionally consider the news. All the stations offered headline summaries, and all the summaries were brief. Segments were usually under a minute and often less than 30 seconds, too brief to include much in the way of context or connection to listeners.

When it came to the level of reporting and sourcing, especially for national news, there was some variation. The national stories provided by network feeds (including public radio feeds) offered listeners slightly longer reports. They also tended to have either correspondents reporting or soundbites from at least one source, but they did not often feature both.

KBND's 5 p.m. hour, for example, kicked off with national news from CBS, covering nine stories in four minutes. Three of the nine were reports from network correspondents, but only one included any soundbites or sound actualities from newsmakers themselves. Two of the stories read by the network anchor also included at least one soundbite from a newsmaker.

There does appear to be a trade-off. Stations that handled news summaries locally rather than getting them from a national network news operation tended to be more local in focus. But they also tended to be even more cursory.

In Houston , for instance, KSEV's morning show covered both the national and local headlines in its minute-and-a-half news roundup, but none of the reports featured a correspondent or any soundbites at all. The news summary amounted to a local anchor reading wires.

KSEV Morning News: Top Headlines

Time	Story
00:00 – 00:12	Iraq bombings
00:13 – 00:26	Zion murders
00:27 – 00:41	Ads
00:42 – 01:00	Metro crash
01:01 – 01: 21	Heat protection
01:22 – 01:36	Ads

The station that stood out for offering listeners the richest local news reporting at the top of the hour was the public radio station in Kenosha , Wis. , WGTD. Following NPR headlines at the top of the 8:00 a.m. hour, the station covered six local stories, each over a minute long and with multiple sources. And three of them were reported by a correspondent on the scene. A report on the discovery of uncounted ballots, for instance, featured a local correspondent and quoted reaction from both a Republican and a Democratic state representative. The entire piece was under a minute and half. Among the stories monitored on May 11, that one was unusual.

Another effect of the reliance on headline summaries was that most stories made almost no attempt to offer listeners much context, explore different elements or try to make any sense of how stories might affect them. Looking at stories that were less than 45 seconds (a subset that includes most headline coverage but removes the longer talk segments), more than 80% offered none of the contextual elements for which we measured.

Weather and Traffic

The next key ingredients in the radio format were weather and traffic. They were usually 20-to-30-second segments that were repeated, with updating as needed, throughout the hour, sometimes from a designated traffic and weather personality and other times from the program host.

On KTRH's morning show in Houston , for instance, the rundown following roughly 10 minutes of news headlines with promotions and ad time was an 11-minute, 29-second period that featured traffic, then weather, a station promo, and three minutes of ads. After the break, another promo, then sports headlines, then more ads, then back to traffic and weather. The totals: 86 seconds of traffic, 3 minutes and 37 seconds of weather, 69 seconds of promotions, and nearly five minutes of advertising. The rundown, following the news headlines from minutes 1-11 went as follows:

KTRH 6 A.M. Hour

Programming Min: Sec

Traffic 11:27-12:10

Weather 12:11-12:50

Promo 12:51-13:02

—Ad Break—

Promo 16:04-16:28

Sports 16:29-19:45

Promo 19:46-20:18

—Ad break—

Traffic 21:32-22:13

Weather 22:14-22:55

All of the morning and evening news programs monitored offered between five and eight traffic and weather segments each hour — about every eight minutes on average. The lone exception in our sample was the NPR affiliate, WGTD, in Kenosha , which offered two. (The mid-day hours were less focused on traffic and weather, with just two or three segments each.) It is worth noting, though, that even this dominance was much less than what was found on local TV news that day. All in all, traffic and weather accounted for more than double the news time on local TV than on local radio (22% versus 9%).

Talk

By and large, what depth we did find in local radio this day came through “talk.” Those segments were generally much longer but ranged from 25 seconds of commentary following each news headline to nearly 30 minutes of call-ins or guest interviews on a single topic.

The hosts normally included some facts of the story they wanted to discuss, but usually the “reporting” was secondary to the focus on opinion. Sourcing, to the extent it existed at all, was almost always second-hand, and in some cases the reporting came from the listeners who were invited to call in. On occasion the talk format had the quality of blogging, where citizens offered information and the host was a moderator rather than the center of the show. Yet it was impossible to discern whether the information was reliable.

On KSEV in Houston , for instance, the morning show host Chris Begala took three listener calls about a tax bill at the end of the hour that seemed to be offering information, or at least speculation.

The first caller said he had not yet received his appraisal and wondered if it was intentional, on the chance it might change because of the new tax bill.

Begala responded with speculation of his own: “Now that is entirely possible. Of course it is just conjecture on our part. We have no really hard evidence to argue. I can’t tell you why you haven’t gotten yours, but . . . I think that has about a zero percent chance of passing.”

The next caller said she had inside knowledge that a former mayor had wanted to hold off on the assessments so residents did not get upset and vote against him. It wasn’t clear how she had that inside information, but it was good enough for Begala: “Interesting. Thanks Cathy. That is good solid information.”

The third caller added yet another nugget: “I called in to the office and they hadn’t sent it out but the phone person said I have 30 days from when I get it.”

Begala: “. . . Just keep good track of exactly when you do get it. . . . If you were told by that office that you have 30 days, then I’m sure you do . . . but keep the stamped letter as proof. . . We’ve got the most informed, knowledgeable listeners out there.”

On some of the talk programs it was occasionally possible to figure out where a host had gotten his or her information, but listeners needed to be following closely. In the talk on WTMJ about a possible change to Marquette University ’s team name, one of the hosts recapped the situation and did mention his immediate source, in passing:

Jagler: The MU board of trustees has scheduled an emergency meeting today, that much we know. The agenda, according to Rana Altenburg, Marquette's vice president for public affairs, is to sit down and discuss all of the communication that they've received since the vote one week ago. In other words, they're going to discuss the outcry and anger they've received . . . she doesn't know, she's telling the Journal Sentinel, if they're going to actually vote to reconsider."

WHBL in Sheboygan, Wis., actually provided some of the best sourcing we found in any news/talk segment monitored, though it was still clearly used to make a point. The sourcing came from the replay of soundbites, or "news actualities." In questioning a statement by the mayor that appeared in the Sheboygan Press that morning, the afternoon host replayed a clip from a town meeting earlier that week. The subject was the building of a new police station. The host first read the mayor's comment in the paper: "He said, 'The complaints the police have shared with us have never been about location.' I thought that was the only thing the police were talking about as [sic] their concern."

The host then went back and played audio from a law-enforcement meeting the previous evening at which an officer, speaking on behalf of the department, had said, "The most significant issue for us is the central location." The host played the soundbite again and again and again and again to make his point. But listeners were hearing the words of the officer himself. The program, highly local, also had the feel of a public forum to a greater extent than other

programs we monitored. Even a local alderman called in to comment.  Listen to WHBL Afternoon Host Audio Clip (Get Quicktime® Plug-in)

The Tone of the Talk

Occasionally the tone of the talk-radio programs we heard had an edge that also brought to mind blogging. The words were uncompromising, blunt, often suspicious. This wasn't just opinion. This was a kind of grievance.

KSEV's morning show in Houston was again illustrative. Chris Begala was sitting in for the regular host, Edd Hendee, and his main topic was a state tax bill, supported by Lt. Gov. David Duhurst, that would change the school tax. The State Senate had approved the bill in the wee hours of the morning. Begala was crystal clear in his views of the lieutenant governor and the idea of raising taxes:

"Duhurst wants to take away our school exemption. Duhurst would raise \$482 million in new or higher taxes and property tax relief in 2007. Don't believe it. It's bull crap. A bunch of bull ."

Begala then suggested that the coverage in the Houston Chronicle that morning, which suggested that the bill was "revenue neutral" was also nonsense.

"That's wrong. Of course it is not (revenue neutral)... David Duhurst has gone mad, and any Republican who supports it has gone mad too. . . ."

In Milwaukee, the tone on WTMJ's morning news was not so harsh. The subject was the possible renaming of Marquette University's sports teams. But the message was similar. Something was wrong. The university had made a "mess" of things. But rather than angry, the tone was more ironic, making fun rather than fuming.

Ken Herrera: I don't think anyone on the board expected the feedback to be so overwhelming [sic] negative.

John Jagler: I think you're absolutely right about that. And what are they going to do? I don't know. You mentioned going back to the Golden Eagles. I just don't think they're going to do that.



Listen to WTMJ Morning Hosts Audio Clip (Get Quicktime® Plug-in)

In the end, Jagler would conclude: And the one thing for folks . . . for alum holding out hope, nothing's been finalized. I mean they're not the Gold yet. They haven't taken to the field or the court or anything ... They still have time to fix the mess they created a week ago. I just don't think they will, but you never know.

Beyond the general characteristics of the different program types, there were also differences in the characteristics of what a listener could get in a city generally.

Houston

In Houston , the stations and hours studied all offered a mix in format and topics. KTRH (news/talk), the ABC and Clear Channel station, was all news in the morning hour, call-ins in the afternoon and all national programming in the evening. Even though it was an ABC affiliate, it did not turn to the parent network for national news headlines, but stayed with the local host. The only subject discussed at length in the two hours of local programming was divorce.

KSEV, a news/talk station since converted to just talk, offered local news, talk and call-ins in both the morning and evening hours but aired national talk shows at mid-day. The morning program offered a bit of contextual talk on the Zion murders but spent the bulk of discussion time and all call-in time on the state tax bill. Afternoon listeners heard more talk about a different national news item, the filibuster rule being debated in the U.S. Senate, but again all call-in time was on the state tax bill.

Milwaukee

In Milwaukee , the three stations came out of three different suburbs, with a mix of formats, and perhaps as a result focused on more varied topics. The only story carried across two different stations, indeed, was the debate about the new nickname of the Marquette sports team.

The ABC affiliate WHBL out of Sheboygan (news/talk) was all headline news in the morning, heavily listener call-ins in the afternoon and all national programming in the evening. On the morning program, "Morning News with Kelly Meyer & Mike Kinzel," the longest segment (3:48) and the only one to veer from headline traffic and weather, was a listener news quiz and giveaway. The next longest segment (3:39) addressed the Marquette team nickname. The afternoon program, " Middays with Nick Red," spent roughly 17 minutes on talk and listener call-ins about the site for a new police station. Both hours turned, at the top of the hour, to the ABC news desk for national news headlines, occasionally with ABC correspondents or outside sources.

WTMJ (News/Talk) a CBS station out of Milwaukee , offered a mix of headlines and talk in both the morning and evening hours but had no listener call-in time. The afternoon hours were all national programs. The early morning hour was co-hosted and gave the most talk time (4 minutes) to two boys who went to a local prom together. (The second longest segment was the Marquette nickname debate.) The station stuck with the prom story during the evening drive time with another 3 minutes and 32 seconds on the topic.

The Kenosha station, WGTD, a public station and NPR affiliate, offered the biggest difference. Beyond the top-of-the-hour headlines (mostly from NPR) the entire show was spent with the chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Parkside discussing everything from its connection to students to its community involvement, cooperation with other universities and the tenure process. The mid-day local programming, in contrast, was about news. NPR headlines led the hour, and then the host spent the rest of it on a wide variety of subjects, some national, some local and just one sports segment at the end. Many stories were reported from correspondents and some were even fully reported with multiple sources. The longest of those (4 minutes) was about getting more women interested in hunting. The evening news hours were filled with national NPR programming.

Bend

News radio listeners in Bend, Ore., had just one choice: KBND, a CBS affiliate. During the week, 5 to 9 a.m. is devoted to more to news than talk. In the 6 a.m. hour studied, there is a local “host” but nearly all the content except traffic and weather comes from other personalities. National headlines come from the CBS radio news desk, local news from a local news anchor — some of it correspondent-reported but all of it brief. CNN radio brings business news headlines, and a syndicated health personality offers health news. Then national, syndicated programming kicks in until 5 p.m. From 9 to noon it’s Rush Limbaugh, from noon to 1 Paul Harvey, followed by Lars Larson and Bill O’Reilly. Local news, in the same format as the morning hour, airs from 5 to 6. The day then ends with more national programming, Clark Howard’s consumer news and finally Dr. Laura Schlessinger.

Footnotes

1. As currently licensed, satellite radio networks are restricted by the FCC from providing local content to specific targeted communities.
 2. The story lasted 3 minutes and 23 seconds.
 3. For the purposes of this overview, the Project used unpublished data pulled from BIAfn’s Media Access Pro 4.1 database. Station listings, which included primary format information, were generated for three markets—Houston-Galveston, Milwaukee-Racine, and Bend, Ore. Using the BIAfn data, station format histories were verified and then crosschecked and updated by using information listed on individual station Web sites and with Arbitron’s station information listings. Still, when compared to other radio formats, news is perhaps the most difficult to cleanly define. No precise formula and no real guidelines exist for determining whether a station is a news station, a news/talk station or a talk station.
- It is also difficult to precisely determine issues like reception that may affect the radio station people might listen to as their ‘home town’ station. It is wholly possible that an individual in Houston or Milwaukee is able to receive the signal of a station from outside either city’s designated market-area. 4. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Estimates of the Population for Incorporated Places Over 100,000, Ranked by July 1, 2004. Population: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2004 , <http://www.census.gov/popest/cities/tables/SUB-EST2004-01.xls>
5. Coverage determined by using National Public Radio’s station coverage map.
 6. The result was 11 1/2 hours of local news programming spread across 6 different stations. The specific stations were as follows: In Houston, KSEV (6-7 a.m. and 5-6 p.m.) and KTRH (6-7 a.m. and 1-2 p.m.); In Milwaukee, WTMJ (5-6

a.m. and 5-6 p.m.), WGTD (8-9 a.m. and 12-12:30 p.m.) and WHBL (6-7 a.m. and 11a.m.-12 p.m.); In Bend, KBND (6-7 a.m. and 5-6 p.m.)

7. The index measured the presence of ten different elements that a story might contain. They were the presence of: background information, future implications, the impact of the story on citizens, a human face to the story, some separation of fact and conjecture, potential action someone could take as a citizen, potential action to take as a consumer, contact information for the journalist or news outlet, the underlying principles at play, where to go for additional information.

[Click here to view content data tables.](#)

Audience

Audience

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

Not long ago traditional “terrestrial” radio occupied a unique and seemingly unshakable position among media. It had the portability of a magazine or a newspaper and the content variety of television and cost nothing to use beyond the cost of a receiver. As broadcast television struggled to keep its audience from fleeing to cable and later satellite, radio remained stable. Technology certainly offered alternatives — portable tape and CD players — but they were clunky and lacked the scope and flexibility of old-fashioned radio.

By 2005 that had begun to change dramatically. Seemingly overnight, satellite radio, Internet-only stations, podcasts, MP3s and iPods were changing the way America and the world listened. And all of it was quickly getting portable. A listener could carry around everything from an entire home CD collection to a radio show downloaded last night, and the new audio programmers were capturing and creating content limited only by the scope of imagination — from blues of the 1920s to dance club music like “deep house” to long-form informational content like audio documentaries.

So what impact is all this having on audiences?

By traditional measures, the figures for the reach of radio continue to hold a stubborn line. According to data in the most recent edition (2004) of Arbitron’s annual Radio Today report, 94% of people 12 years old and older still listen to traditional radio weekly. That is a drop of just one percentage point since 1998. Compared to some media, such as newspapers or network news, that is not only a remarkable percentage of the population but a remarkably consistent performance. ¹

That number may soon be shifting, however, and not necessarily because of listeners leaving traditional radio for the new audio, but because of changes in how radio listenership is measured.

Traditional radio research is based on personal diaries and surveys, but there are growing questions about the reliability of those methods. The questions have become even more critical as traditional radio begins to compete with elements of the new audio (Internet radio stations, MP3 downloads) that record detailed information about listener use.

Already, one “observational” study by academic researchers at Ball State University has found that 73% of those observed listened daily to terrestrial radio. The study, involving 394 adults from Indianapolis and Muncie, Ind., who were observed during the course of the day, found that they listened to the radio for an average of 80 minutes a day, and more in the car than at home or work. ²

The current Arbitron data are also not as detailed as the audience data for new audio, which offer advertisers hard numbers on exactly who is listening or, at the very least, who paid in advance to listen. In an effort to develop such concrete data regarding traditional radio audiences, a company called Navigauge created an in-car measurement system that automatically collects data on listener habits. Its device, wired up to the car’s audio system, date- and time-stamps dial changes and tracks vehicle position to provide a detailed record.

But some critics argued that the technology relied too heavily on the perception that radio listening is largely confined to the car. Arbitron tried to solve that problem by creating a wearable device, the Portable People Meter. Launched in the U.S. with a small-scale test in Philadelphia in 2002, the meter, often referred to as a PPM, automatically logs the wearer's media consumption. Tracking is initiated when the PPM detects an audio signal, thereby eliminating potential human errors. The single device can also track terrestrial or satellite radio use in the car, online or through a traditional radio receiver.

Early reported results from the Arbitron PPM trials in Philadelphia and a later test in the Houston market showed that while listeners were listening more often and to more stations than the old diary system revealed, they spent less time actually listening. Bob Papper, a Ball State professor of telecommunications, notes that the findings closely resembled those of the personal observation studies conducted as part of The Middletown Media Studies. ³

Still apparently unsatisfied, Clear Channel Communications released an RFP (Request For Proposals) in July 2005 for the design of a "state of the art audience measurement system." ⁴

In whatever form of measurement emerges, advertisers and others are likely to demand more information about who listens and when, and the economics of radio advertising and subscriptions could be reshaped.

For now, that hasn't occurred. The data available suggest that users may not yet be replacing the old with the new as much as adding it to the mix, the way they did when the FM band was added.

In a survey conducted by Arbitron and Edison Media Research, 82% of Americans surveyed said that even with all the new audio technologies, they planned to listen to traditional radio as much in the future as they did now. That included 70% of 12-to-17 year olds, even though that age group is most likely to consider an iPod or MP3 player a staple of their daily lives. ⁵

The patterns may change in time. Fully 30% in the survey by Arbitron and Edison Media believed that a time would come when there would be no traditional, commercial radio stations because all audio content would come from online or satellite radio providers. Some 62% thought that would never be the case. ⁶

For now, other research seems to support Arbitron's current findings. According to a study on audience attrition conducted by Bridge Ratings & Research, the audience for traditional radio, while appearing to decline in the last half of 2004, had leveled off. In fact, with listeners 35 to 64 years old, listening to traditional radio had increased almost back to its previous level. ⁷

The age group with the most significant amount of attrition, however, was the young — 12-to-24-year-olds. The average amount of time they spent listening to traditional radio dropped from 15.5 hours a week to 13.25. ⁸

Satellite Radio

Another way of assessing the future of traditional radio is to get a sense of the growth in audience for the new technologies. Of those, perhaps the one getting the most attention in the press is satellite radio.

Its audience is still small, comparatively. The combined memberships of XM Satellite Radio and Sirius Satellite Radio exceed 9 million, compared with roughly 247 million listeners to terrestrial over-the-air radio. ⁹

But the satellite number is growing. XM, which reported more than 6 million subscribers at the end of 2005, was projecting adding 3 million more by the end of 2006. Sirius reported a total of more than 3.3 million in 2005 and expected to have 6 million by the end of 2006.

Satellite radio has had similar success in making people aware of it as a possibility. Since January of 2002, awareness of both XM and Sirius has grown at a rapid pace (from 17% to 50% for XM, from 8% to 54% for Sirius).¹⁰

At the same time, the satellite providers have made gains in the kinds of content and outreach they can offer. Among other steps in 2005, XM reached an agreement with AOL for online broadcast and with Hyatt hotels to place satellite radio in guest rooms. It crafted an expansion into Canada and signed a deal with the audio content provider Audible.com, which will be creating a unit that will not only play satellite radio but also allow for iPod-like downloading of audio content. The network continued to add new content as well, signing on Ellen Degeneres, Snoop Dog, Food Network and HGTV.

Sirius, the smaller of the two companies, signed a deal with Jaguar to offer the satellite network's system as an option for their cars and developed a hip hop channel with Eminem, a good-living channel with Martha Stewart and a podcasting channel with the former MTV veejay and "Podfather" Adam Curry. And for those who somehow managed to miss the buzz, on January 9, 2006, the shock jock Howard Stern added his name to the network's program list. Sirius had also found a spot on hotel nightstands, with the trendy New York and Los Angeles W Hotels. In the event that you're unable to get a room at the W, you can also turn to your Sprint phone. In September 2005, Sprint added 20 Sirius channels to its cell phone's capabilities.

Both U.S. satellite radio companies have moved toward portability, as well. XM released its cell-phone-sized portable satellite receiver, the MyFi player, in October 2004. The unit was designed to offer both portable satellite listening and up to five hours of recorded audio content. Both companies have developed a variety of "plug and play" receivers. Plug and play units allow satellite listeners to move the technology between their cars and their homes through a system based around a detachable receiver. The receiver can be connected to a variety of speakers and ports, turning the car unit into a boombox-style player or a home stereo-style player.

HD Radio

In 2005 traditional radio was finally able to come back at satellite with the launch of its long awaited HD radio. The idea behind HD radio is almost identical to its television counterpart. With HD, broadcasters are able to offer radio content with a high-end sound quality — close if not identical to the sound of a compact disc. Broadcasters are also able to insert additional programming by splitting their signal into what become essentially separate stations. For example, WAMU, an NPR station licensed to American University in Washington, D.C., used its HD station, WAMU-2, to broadcast gavel-to-gavel coverage of the hearings on the nomination of Chief Justice John Roberts. Even in the nation's capital, the audience for the broadcast of such proceedings could be expected to be a limited one. But thanks to the new technology, the station was able to reach out to listeners eager to hear every question of the Senate hearings without having to disrupt its regular programming. For those without an HD receiver, WAMU made the audio stream available on its Web site. The next challenge for HD radio is the development of content that will entice listeners to pay for HD radio receivers.

Internet Radio

Before satellite, the new radio approach with the biggest expectations was audio on the Internet. To a degree that may be surprising, those expectations have not yet been met.

Getting definitive numbers is difficult, but what data there are suggests that while the number of Americans with broadband or high-speed Internet connections in their homes has quadrupled to some 48% since 2001, Internet radio stations have not attracted nearly the audience even of satellite.

One piece of evidence can be found in Arbitron ratings. As of September 2005, the five largest online radio networks together attracted an average weekly audience of just 3.7 million.

Still, there is growth. According to the Arbitron study, in January of 2000 “only 5% of the population during the past month had listened to Internet broadcasts of over-the-air radio stations or stations available only on the Internet.”¹¹ By January 2005, that number had climbed to 15%. What is interesting is that the largest concentration of online listening is not in the population one might immediately expect, teenagers. Fully 25% of those saying they had listened to Internet radio in the previous month were 35 to 44 years old. Another 17% were in the 45-to-54 range, and 20% were 25 to 34. Among the younger age groups, just 15 percent of those 12 to 17 years old had listened in the past month, and just 11 percent of those in the 18 to 24-age range.

What is it about Internet radio that is drawing these listeners? The attraction to online radio (including traditional stations simulcasting online) can be traced to the same roots as the public’s attraction to the new audio and other online activities: flexibility. People can listen to programs and stations from other areas, at times that are more convenient to their schedules, and to content they might not be able to get anywhere else. In a survey by Arbitron/Edison Media Research, 17% of those who had reported listening to Internet radio said they did so to hear audio they couldn’t get other places, 13% said they wanted more music variety and 15% sought to control or choose the music played.¹²

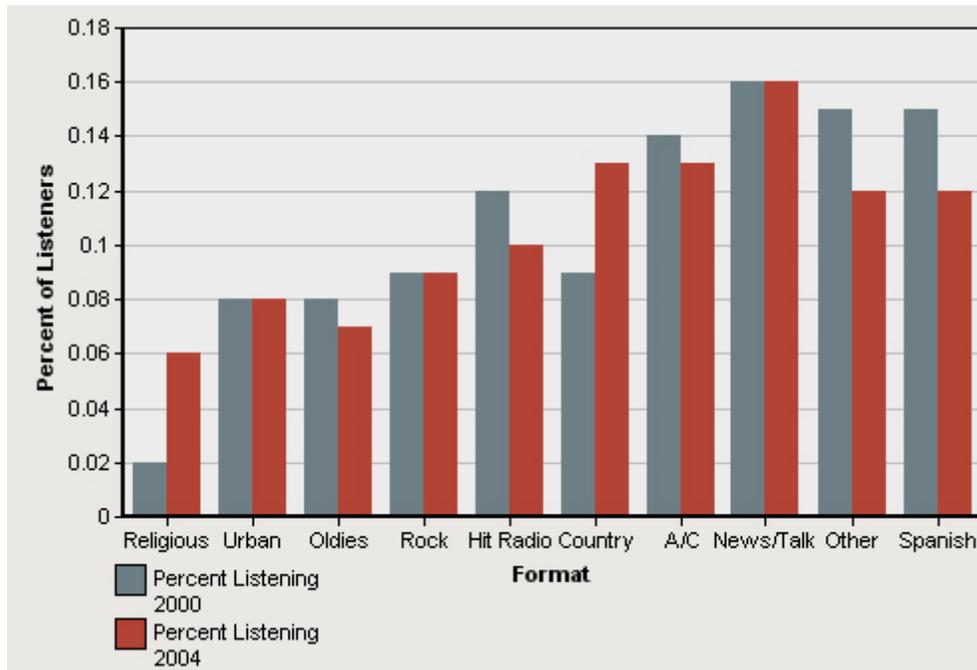
Radio News

While traditional radio, as a whole, appears to be holding on to its audience, what is the future of radio news?

The answer appears to be that while the news sector is steady, what might be conventionally thought of as journalism on the radio may now be quite different and not as local as it once was.

The latest edition of Arbitron’s Radio Today report shows that stations in the format category of News/Talk/Information have held steady over the last four years. Indeed, the news and talk category is the most popular of the top 10 station formats. In 2004, 16% of listeners said they listened to talk and news, three percentage points more than the next most popular format, Country and Adult Contemporary.¹⁵

What Radio Formats People Listen To, 2000 vs. 2004



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Arbitron 'Radio Today' annual report

It is not necessarily current event news, though, that is drawing this audience. The news/talk/information grouping of non-musically centered formats includes stations that broadcast “all news,” “all sports,” “news/talk” and “talk/personality.” When the overall news/talk figure is broken into its individual parts, “all news” stations make up less than 2% of listenership. “All sports” and “talk/personality” makes up another 2%, with almost 11% of the listenership tuning in to other stations that consider their format “News/Talk.” 16

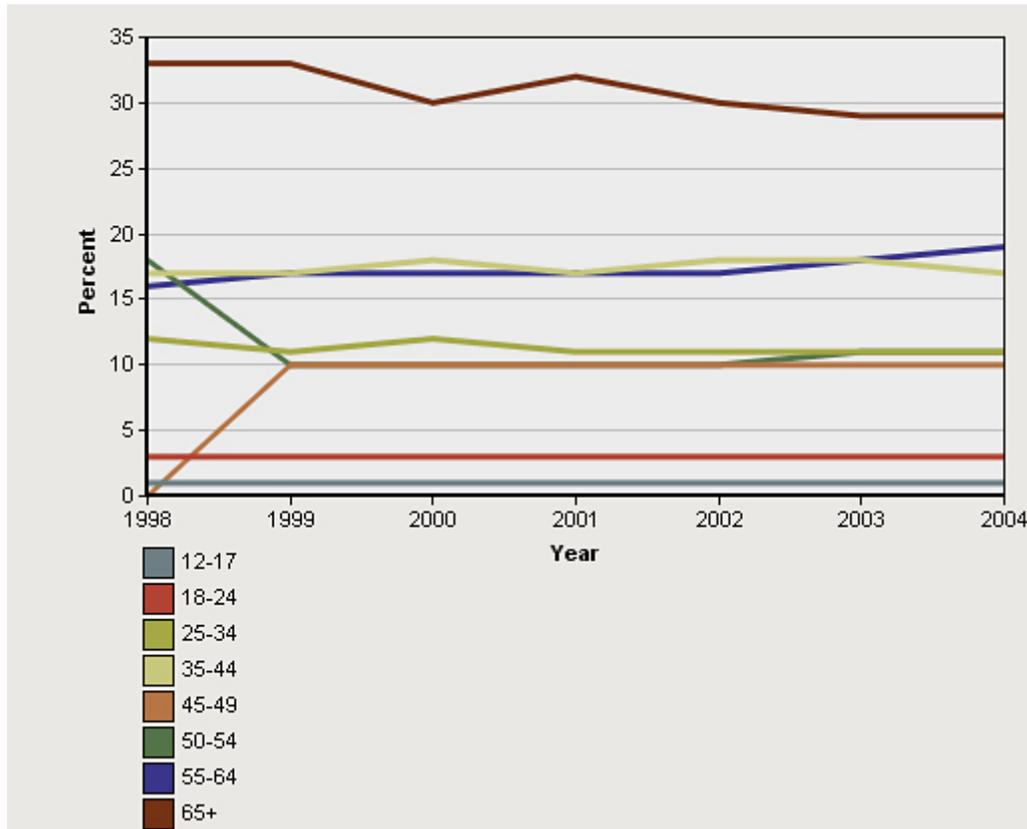
News/Talk stations are something of a puzzle; without listening to every program on every station, it is difficult to determine how much news is broadcast and how much talk. Talk, which is cheaper to produce, probably makes up the lion’s share.

In past years, we have discussed the idea of “incidental” or unintended news consumption by listeners to music-format stations from top-of-the-hour news briefs or headlines. A survey by the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation in 2000 found that most radio listeners did not switch stations during news reports or information breaks. Some five years later, there are signs that the top-of-the-hour radio newsbreak is not as prevalent as before, perhaps reduced to a brief weather or traffic update.

Compared with data gathered in previous years, the age profile of news, talk and information listeners has scarcely changed. The highest proportion of listeners fall primarily into the two oldest demographic groupings: 55- 64 year olds (19%) and those 65 and older (29%). The third highest listening percentage falls in the 35- 44-year-old age bracket

(17%). Those 12 to 24 years old are the least likely to listen to news, talk and information stations. Just 1% of news, talk and information listeners are aged 12- 17 with only 3% being 18 to 24. 17

Listeners to News-Talk-Information Stations, by Age 1998-2004



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Arbitron 'Radio Today' annual reports

* 1998 data includes children's formats.

Listeners to news, talk and information formats are incredibly loyal. Arbitron, in its Public Radio Today 2005 report, defines those who listen to a single radio station more than any other station as "P1" listeners. More than half of those who listen to commercial news, talk and information stations (59%) are considered to be in the P1 category. 18 On public radio, the P1 figure for such stations jumps to 90%. 19

Public Radio vs. Commercial

In all the discussion of the rapid growth of satellite membership and worry over an audience exodus from conventional radio, one can lose track of public radio. That universe includes Pacifica Radio, National Public Radio, American Public Media and Public Radio International. Each of those radio groups operates somewhat like a TV network, supplying programming to public-radio member stations for a fee. The local member station can then intermix nationally broadcast material with locally created content. For example, Maine Public Radio follows its evening broadcast of National Public Radio's "All Things Considered" with the regionally focused "Maine Things Considered."²⁰ KUNM-FM in Santa Fe, N.M., programs a mix of public broadcasting content that includes NPR's Morning Edition, PRI's National Native News and Pacifica's Democracy Now! program.

Public radio appears to be a growth area. Numbers provided to the Project by National Public Radio indicate that NPR's weekly audience had been flat between 2003 and 2005. To keep this number in proper perspective, even with no growth that would still mean that the organization's weekly audience of 22 million represented 50% growth over the past five years and 315% since 1985.

But the Wall Street Journal cited other NPR data suggesting that the audience had grown to 25.3 million listeners, which would be up 3.3 million since 2004. The higher number, according to NPR, included audience estimates not only for NPR programming like "All Things Considered" but also for shorter newscasts played on member radio stations. That makes the numbers inappropriate for historic or longitudinal comparison.

Cognizant of the role public radio plays in fostering a connection between the local and the national and, in a way, stepping into the void left by the consolidation or closing of many local radio newsrooms, Public Radio International, in 2003, developed Capitol News Connection. The idea behind it is to bring political news from Pennsylvania Avenue to Main Street by creating what PRI describes as "unique localized reporting — custom crafted for each subscribing station..."²¹ In other words, rather than asking listeners to make what may occasionally be a complicated connection between national political news and their own lives, CNC works to make that link part of the story. According to its Web site, launched in July 2003, CNC is now broadcast in some 220 markets.²²

The profile of news on public radio — its tendency to tell stories in longer segments with complex narratives — is attracting talent from outside. Recently Ted Koppel, longtime anchor for ABC's "Nightline," signed on with National Public Radio to do occasional commentaries. He joins a list of "outsiders" that includes, among others, the ABC News correspondent Michel Martin (who will continue to do pieces with ABC), Robert Krulwich (also formerly with ABC News), and John Hendren and Elizabeth Sogren, who had both previously been with the Los Angeles Times. Bill Marimow, NPR's managing editor and acting vice president for news and information, came to the network from the Baltimore Sun. That sort of switch is nothing new at NPR — Daniel Schorr and Michele Norris came from other media and are now firmly identified with the organization — but at a time when newsrooms are becoming smaller entities within larger chains and corporations, the public radio newsroom is assuming a new stature. Relating a conversation he had with Koppel, NPR's senior vice president of programming, Jay Kernis recalled, "We said, 'You have to find somebody else who will pay you a lot of money so we can pay you a little money...' Mr. Koppel concurred. He said, 'Jay, this is not about the money.'"²³

Nor is public radio ignoring the growing presence and pressures of the new audio. Public radio has adapted its terrestrial identity to one that exists online. Its programming is available on both of the satellite networks, and it was an early mainstream media experimenter with the creation of program podcasts. NPR's Annual Report for 2003 said its Web site averaged more than 2 million unique monthly visitors and some 50 million total visits. "At the peak of the

lead-up to the war in Iraq , 45,000 simultaneous users were listening to the NPR online program stream,” the report said. 24

NPR’s audience members followed it to the Web not simply because it was a Web site or because there were podcasts to be downloaded, but because of the content available. Again, according to the network’s annual report, NPR.org visitors e-mailed “more than one-half million NPR stories to friends and family...” 25 An article posted in the Online Journalism Review’s Web site reported that “On Nov. 21, NPR’s podcasts held down 11 spots on the iTunes Top 100, more than any other media outlet.” 26 NPR is also hosting podcasts of member-station shows, crafting content from various programs into thematic pods like “NPR: Books,” or “NPR: Open Mike,” and even producing original content for its own alternative brand of alt.NPR “as an incubator for edgier content.” 27 Given the numbers, it would seem that the network’s efforts to adapt to the changing technology while not forgetting the role it serves for its longtime listeners is proving to be a successful model.

The Audience for Public Radio vs. Commercial News/Talk

For the first time, Arbitron research in 2005 took a focused look at public radio. Its inaugural edition of Arbitron’s Public Radio Today: How America Listens to Public Radio Stations records that out of 808 U.S. public radio stations, 225 operate with a News/Talk/Information format. That is the second-largest format group, surpassed only by classical programming with 229 stations, and does not include formats for a group of stations categorized as “Educational.” “Educational,” as Arbitron explains in the report, is not a content designation but a collection of those stations licensed to an educational institution. 28

Most of the comparisons between the audience for public radio news/talk and the one for commercial do not surprise:

Public radio listeners skew to the economically elite and more highly educated. Commercial news/talk listeners are more blue-collar and more male.

The public radio audience is fairly evenly split by gender (53% male and 47% female), while the commercial news, talk and information audience tilts more heavily male (61%, compared to 39% female).

More than 70% of public radio news, talk and information listeners are college graduates. 29 That number drops to 43% for commercial listeners. 30 High school-only graduates make up almost 20% of the commercial news, talk and information audience but less than 7% of the public radio audience. 31

Public radio audiences for the format tend to occupy a higher economic stratum as well. Some 47% of public radio listeners earn an annual income of \$75,000 or more. Fewer than 40% (37.6%) of commercial news, talk and information format listeners earn that much. 32

The Arbitron study doesn’t examine the stereotype that public radio audiences tilt to the left while commercial news talk audiences tilt right. But data from the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press don’t reflect such a tilt. A June 8, 2004 , survey found that 30% of National Public Radio listeners identified themselves as liberal, 31% as conservative and 33% as moderates. Those figures match the profile of the public at large. For commercial radio call-in shows, meanwhile, 45% of listeners identify themselves as conservative and just 18% call themselves liberal. And for one of the shows most known for its conservative take on issues — Rush Limbaugh’s — the ratio is 77% conservative to 7% liberal. 33

One other difference between public radio audiences and commercial news/talk audiences is in the time they spend listening. According to the Arbitron data, the commercial news, talk and information station listener tends to spend more time with the format. Commercial audience members aged 35 to 64 spend 10 hours and 30 minutes listening a week. ³⁴ News, talk and information public radio listeners of the same age spend a full three hours less. That becomes more interesting when we look at data for the distinct parts of the day. ³⁵

While drawing direct comparison between public news/talk and commercial news/talk is slightly complicated by differences in measurement used, ³⁶ some interesting comparisons can be made between the general trendlines. The public radio audience remains remarkably solid not only throughout the entire day, but from weekday to weekend. The greatest percent of commercial and public news/talk listeners tune in during the morning drive time (weekdays, 6am to 10am). The commercial audience then begins a steady decline across dayparts with the lowest listening percentage takes place on weekends. ³⁷

In contrast, the public radio audience bounces up and down with the lowest percentage of listeners tuning in between 7pm and midnight . Weekend listening is high, just 15 percentage points lower than weekday morning drive time. This contrasts with a decline of some 30% for commercial news, talk and information stations. ³⁸

Footnotes

1. Arbitron, "Radio Today: How America Listens to Radio, 2005 Edition," December 22, 2004.
2. Erika D. Smith, "Media Madness," the Indianapolis Star, September 26, 2005.
3. The Middletown Media Studies is a project by researchers at Ball State University's Center for Media Design. The Middletown studies have employed a variety of methods—diary, phone survey and direct observation—to establish a fuller picture of how individuals use various media. Ball State researchers have created two editions of this report.
4. Joe Mandese, "TV, Radio, Outdoor Ratings Poised for Transformation, New Alliances," Media Daily News, July 22, 2005, posted 8:15am EST.
5. Pew Research Center on the People and the Press, "News Audiences Increasingly Politicized," June 8, 2004, p. 8. Younger listeners clearly see the appeal of the new technologies more than their elders do. More than a quarter of 12-to-17-year-olds own one of the new audio devices such as iPods or MP3 players. Compare that to about 20% in the next highest group, 25 to 34, and only 10% of people 45 to 54. As the older demographics become more accustomed to the new audio technology, it is worth asking whether and how quickly those figures might change. Arbitron/Edison Media Research, "Internet and Multimedia 2005: The On-Demand Media Consumer," March 23, 2005.
6. Ibid.
7. Press Release, "Bridge Ratings Audience Erosion Study 2005 – Update," October 10, 2005.
8. Ibid.
9. Membership data for XM and Sirius radio taken from announcements made by the respective satellite networks — XM Satellite Radio press release, January 4, 2006, and Sirius Satellite Radio Press Release, January 5, 2006. Data for traditional radio listenership based on an estimate from the National Association of Broadcasters.

10. Arbitron/Edison Media Research, "Internet and Multimedia 2005: The On-Demand Media Consumer", March 23, 2005.
11. "Internet and Multimedia 2005: The On-Demand Media Consumer," survey report by Arbitron/Edison Media Research.
12. Ibid.
13. Information from the HD Radio Consortium indicates that HD2 stations, those stations split off main frequencies, will run commercial-free for as much as two years.
14. The newly formed HD Radio Alliance (see Ownership) has been working to ensure that second or split stations will broadcast commercial-free, at least while the new technology is gaining a foothold with the public.
15. Arbitron, "Radio Today 2005," pg. 43.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Arbitron, "Radio Today 2005," pg. 45.
19. Arbitron, "Public Radio Today: How America Listens to Public Radio Stations," June 13, 2005, pg. 33.
20. As mentioned in the State of the News Media 2004, some National Public Radio members stations found themselves trying to make the distinction between NPR and being an NPR member station clear following the Kroc family's sizeable financial gift to NPR. Some station's members mistakenly believed that these monies would automatically subsidize the operations of member stations. See Content, State of the News Media 2005.
21. From the Capitol News Connection website: www.pri.org/cncnews/bureau/index.html
22. Taken from the Capitol News Connection website: www2.pri.org/cncnews/bureau/index.html
23. Sarah McBride, "TV News Stars Move to NPR And Sound Off," the Wall Street Journal, January 20, 2006.
24. National Public Radio Annual Report 2003, pg. 4.
25. Ibid.
26. Mark Glaser, "Will NPR's podcasts birth a new business model for public radio?" Online Journalism Review, www.ojr.org, November 29, 2005.
27. Ibid.
28. Arbitron, "Public Radio Today 2005," pp. 18 & 27.
29. Arbitron, "Public Radio Today 2005," pg. 29.
30. Arbitron, "Radio Today 2005," pg.45.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, "Online News Audience Larger, More Diverse: News Audiences Increasingly Politicized," June 8, 2004, pg. 14.

34. Arbitron, "Radio Today: How America Listens to Radio," 2005 Edition, pg. 45.

35. Arbitron, "Public Radio Today: How America Listens to Public Radio Stations," 2005 Edition, pg. 29.

36. Arbitron's reports—Radio Today 2005 and Public Radio Today—calculate AQH (average quarter daypart listenership share separately. This means that percentages given for public radio listening are news, talk and information are based on the percent of the public radio audience and the AQH share for commercial is based on the commercial radio audience. This makes comparing percentages directly inappropriate, but does allow for the comparison of trendlines.

38. Public Radio Today, Pg. 28.

Economics

Economics

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

No matter how fast the delivery method, regardless of how elegant or clever the design, the continued survival of traditional radio lies less in theoretical discussions of cultural worth and social value and more in the hard reality of continuing economic viability. Looking at the available figures, the forecast for traditional radio appears more complicated than it has in years. At the same time, satellite radio has yet to make a dime in profit.

As 2005 began, two of the most prominent corporate names in radio appeared to be signaling trouble ahead. In February, both Clear Channel Communications and Viacom, parent company of Infinity Broadcasting (now CBS Radio) announced dramatic write-downs for their radio holdings (\$4.9 billion and \$18 billion respectively). The companies said they were reacting to new federal reporting guidelines. Whatever their motivations, the step came at a time when the values of several ownership groups — Clear Channel, Citadel and Westwood One — were being downgraded by investment banks.

By the time satellite radio emerged, it was increasingly clear to radio listeners that a large amount of time on terrestrial radio was occupied not by programming but by advertising and promotional content. Satellite offered listeners an option (though it has since begun playing ads on some of its programming). At the same time, Internet radio stations and podcasts and smaller and smaller Mp3 players with larger and larger storage capabilities were actively reminding audiences how many songs and bands they loved were not being played on commercial radio.

In July 2004, Clear Channel (a company that has been the target of much criticism by critics of media consolidation) announced a plan to cut back the amount of air time it devoted to commercials and promotion. Starting in January 2005, Clear Channel music stations would run a maximum of 10 minutes of spots between 10 a.m. and midnight, news/talk stations 15 minutes. ¹ The strategy became known as "Less is More" or "LIM." Clear Channel's CEO, Mark

Mays, publicly acknowledged that the reduction in advertising revenues had been financially difficult for the company (revenue was down 7% for the first quarter of 2005), but in a May 17, 2005, progress report the company “pointed to higher ratings and noted that more national advertisers were buying shorter-length commercials of 30 and 15 seconds versus the traditional 60-second unit spot.”²

Heading into the end of 2005, Clear Channel’s gamble appeared to be paying off. With reductions in advertising inventory, what remained became more valuable. The format change also seemed to be attracting listeners, adding further value to the shorter, less frequent advertising spots. According to Media Life Magazine, “In the fall, Clear Channel outperformed the average radio station among adults 25-44 in New York , Los Angeles and Chicago ... Clear Channel’s average rating in New York was up 2.8% from the summer, compared to a 7.1 % decline for all publicly traded radio owners. It was up 3% in Los Angeles , compared to an industry decline of 4.1%. And in Chicago it was up 2.7%, while the average station was up 2.1%.”³

At a small number of stations, a second change involved the music format. Aware that listeners like the often-eclectic hundred-song library they have on their iPods, the stations tried to respond by going eclectic themselves. They reformatted by making their format no format. In 2005 some stations adopted the newly minted formula of JACK, a concept that started, according to an article in the August 15, 2005 , issue of Time magazine, as an online experiment by a former disc jockey and station manager. Sitting in polar opposition to the narrower and narrower playlists of many commercial radio stations (as they were largely being programmed at corporate headquarters and not by local DJs) JACK is a computerized system that shuffles a massive library into a seemingly random collection of songs that runs largely uninterrupted. According to data available from BIAFm, by December 16, 2005, some 21 stations were using the JACK format. Reports of public reaction were mixed. The Time magazine article noted that New York City’s Mayor Bloomberg “said a very bad word”⁴ when his favorite oldies station went to JACK.

Still a third option has been to go in the opposite direction — to format traditional radio stations so precisely that they would capture a smaller but fiercely loyal niche audience. Grab the underserved bluegrass listener. Program for the old-school rap lover. As Pat McNew, executive vice president and director of operations, PHD Local Media Network told the Radio & Television Business Report, “We are seeing more networks reconfigure due to this need to reach a certain demographic — such programs are ‘Country only programs’, rock programs, specific political talk, etc. Again, because buyers and clients are searching for their own desirable audience specific programming is necessary. Networks need to be more to creating programs that will cater to specific categories, enabling clients to own a specific program.”⁵

Despite all those changes, Wall Street remained worried. Analysts who had tried to be optimistic early in 2005 began rapidly scaling back predictions. In late August, the Radio Business Report Newsletter reported that Universal McCann’s Bob Coen was cutting his prediction of a 5% rise in radio revenues back to only 3.5% for local radio. About a week earlier, Marcia Ryvicker, an analyst for Wachovia Securities, cut her 2005 growth estimate to 1.5%.⁶ By late September Wachovia was lowering its 4th quarter expectations for radio companies as well (from 3% to 2%).⁷

The industry was struggling to gain control over pricing for advertising and dealing with the impact of having an inventory of advertising and promotional minutes that were less and less valuable to clients. There was also the broader economic impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.⁸

Satellite radio networks, on the other hand, reaped large revenue gains through the first half of 2005 and were raising their estimates of year-end revenues.

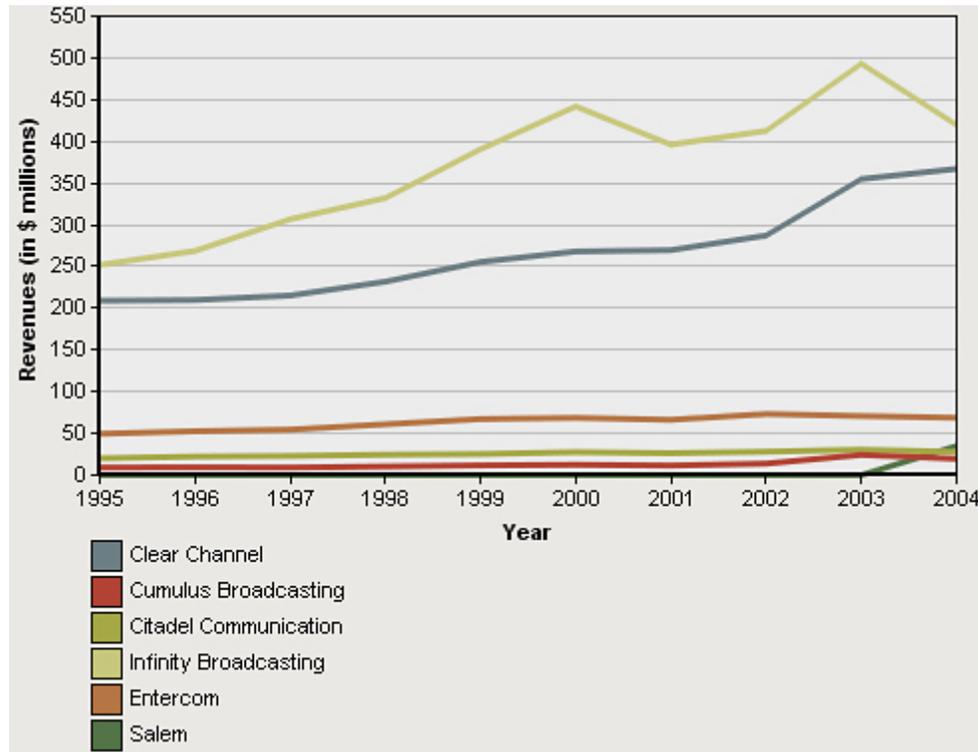
In the third quarter, XM was reporting revenues of \$153 million, up 134% from the same quarter in 2004. Sirius reported third-quarter revenues of \$66.8 million, up 250% over 2004 (\$19.1 million).

What must be kept in mind, however, is that neither XM nor Sirius is making a profit yet. And, it would seem that some have begun to pay attention to their dropping stock prices and investment company downgrades. In mid-February 2006 it was announced that Pierce J. Roberts, Jr., a director at XM radio (and former head of the telecom investment banking unit of Bear Stearns) resigned based on fundamental disagreements with the company's strategic direction. Reportedly, Roberts believed that XM needed to reduce what they were spending on marketing and creating new content.

Indeed, both XM and Sirius "...have racked up huge losses while pouring tens of millions of dollars into professional sports broadcasts and big name talent." ⁹ Much media attention was paid to Sirius's five-year contract with Howard Stern that would cost the company \$500 million. ¹⁰ More recently, XM signed a three-year \$55 million deal with Oprah Winfrey. ¹¹ But some observers, like Michael Goldman of the Yankee Group, have reasoned that the success of the satellite carriers depends greatly on their ability to develop unique identities through personalities like Howard Stern or Martha Stewart. Goldman was quoted in the New York Times as saying, "The music on both is pretty much the same... It's the N.F.L. and Ellen Degeneres that builds a brand in the market, not 30 channels of rock music." ¹² And while both networks are building impressive numbers, one wonders how long they will be able to keep moving forward without turning a profit.

Meanwhile, the important question for this report is where does news fit into the economic equation?

Revenues from News Stations for Top Companies 1995-2004



Design Your Own Chart

Source: BIAfn Media Access Pro, unpublished data

* Top companies by number of stations whose holdings include news format stations.

News Format Stations

Figures for the top radio companies show an almost across-the-board decline in revenue generated by news-format stations. ¹³ According to data from BIA Financial Network, in 2004, the latest data available, total revenue for stations identifying news as their primary format dropped for four of the top five largest owners. To be sure, news stations still contributed significantly to their companies' total station revenue.

Revenues for Infinity (now CBS Radio) news stations dropped more than \$70 million, or 15%. Over all, 19%, or \$420 million, of Infinity's station revenue of \$2.2 billion was generated by stations that list news as their primary program format, down from 22% a year earlier.

Entercom's 2004 news-station revenues dropped \$2.1 million, or 3%, from the year before. Revenues from those stations made up 14%, or \$69 million, of the company's total station revenue of \$486 million, close to the previous year's 15%.

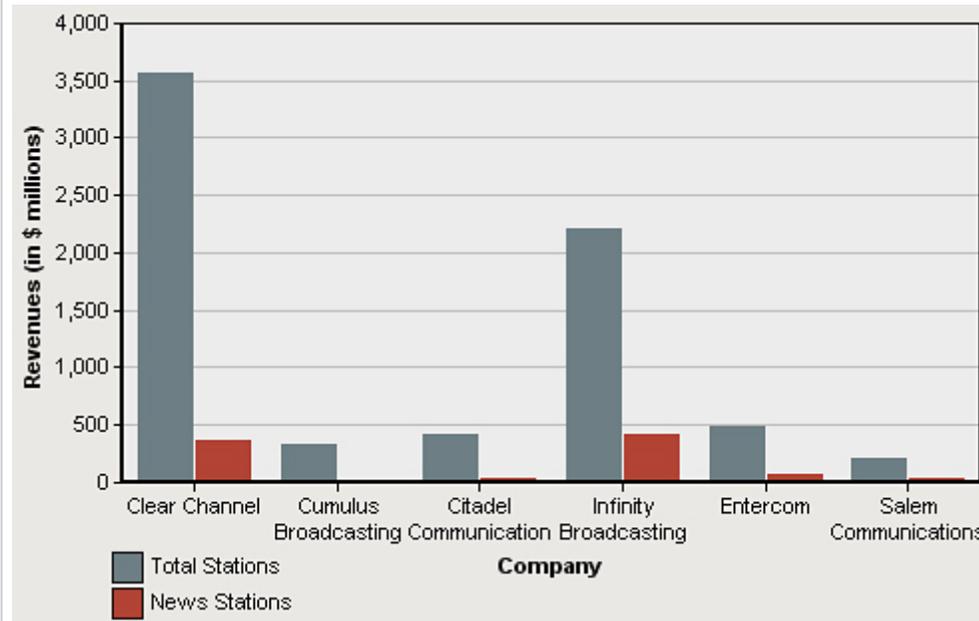
Citadel's news stations accounted for 7% of the company's total station revenue. The amount, \$28 million, was \$2.1 million less than in 2003.

Revenues for Cumulus's news stations dropped 16%, or nearly \$5 million, from 2003 totals. Those revenues, \$20 million, were just 6% total station revenue of \$324 million, down slightly from the previous year's 8%.

Only Clear Channel saw revenue growth from its news stations in 2004. The stations earned \$367 million in revenues, 10% of the company's total station revenue and a 3%, or \$12 million, climb from 2003. (Incidentally, Clear Channel has seen revenue growth in news during all nine years for which the Project has data.)

Revenues of Top Companies, 2004

News stations vs. other stations



Design Your Own Chart

Source: BIAFn Media Access Pro, unpublished data

* Top companies by number of stations whose holdings include news format stations.

How did Clear Channel buck the trend?

The answer is hard to pin down, but Clear Channel does have more news stations in bigger markets. Of its 1,190 stations, 136 list with BIAFn as having a news format. Ten of those are in the top 25 markets by population, and 50 are in the top 100. Cumulus, the second largest owner in numbers of stations, owns 33 news-format stations (out of some 300) but only one is in a top 25 market, and only two are in the top 100.

News Segments

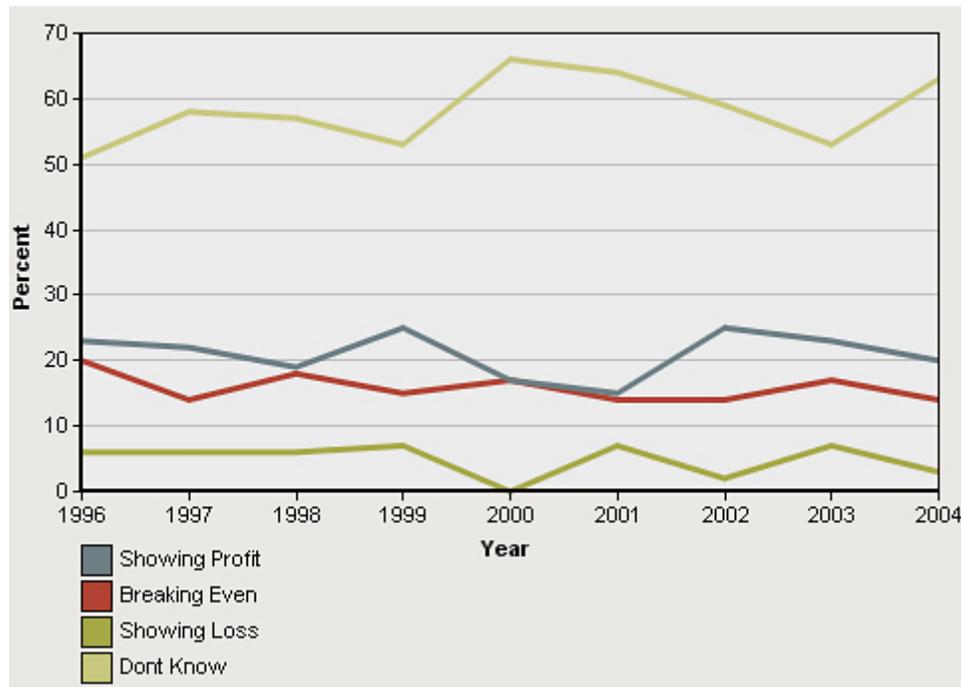
While not as prevalent as they once were, some non-news stations still offer some form of news over the air, normally as top-of-the-hour blocks. The economic value of the segments is hard to determine. As more and more outlets were purchased and consolidated into larger ownership groups, radio newsrooms were pressed to produce for more and more outlets. The average news director is overseeing some four stations, according to survey data, which makes it increasingly difficult to parse out whether or not news is profitable. The product is diffused over too many outlets to tell.

Indeed, researchers from the RTNDA/Ball State University ongoing survey of news directors found an increase in the percentage of news directors who don't know if their news operations are turning a profit or not. Between 2003 and 2004, the figure rose from 53% to 63%. Among news directors from major markets, it increases to 85%.

An examination of survey data over the last nine years shows that the number of stations saying they make a profit is consistently greater than those who say they are breaking even or reporting operating losses. But the uncertainty does not bode well. The last time so many stations were unsure of the future was during the economic downturn of 2000. That was followed by a better 2001, according to the Ball State surveys, but harder times thereafter. With new competition today that was not as robust back then, there is even more reason for doubt heading into 2006.

Radio News Profitability

Survey of news directors, 1996-2004



Design Your Own Chart

Source: RTNDA/Ball State University Newsroom Surveys

Footnotes

1. Sean Ross, "What CC's Spotload Initiative Means For You," Edison Media Research, July 22, 2004.
2. Katy Bachman, "Clear Channel Applauds Its 'Less is More' Initiative," Billboard Radio Monitor, May 17, 2005.
3. Kevin Downey, "Payout: Clear Channel's ratings are up," Media Life Magazine (www.medialifemagazine.com), January 24, 2006.
4. Joel Stein, "You Don't Know Jack," Time, Vol. 166, No. 7, August 15, 2005.
5. Carl Marcucci, "Buyers, sellers address the 2006 radio upfront — Part II," Radio & Television Business Report, October 2005, Volume 22, Issue 10, pg. 14.
6. "2005 the roll of the Dice; Tracking of a Soft Year," Radio Business Report, August 29, 2005.
7. "Wachovia points its arrow further down," Radio Business Report, e-mail newsletter, September 21, 2005.
8. Ibid.
9. Jeff Leeds, "Director at XM Resigns as Costs Skyrocket," New York Times, February 17, 2006.
10. Howard Kurtz and Frank Ahrens, "Sirius Lands a Big Dog: Howard Stern," Washington Post, October 7, 2004.
11. Jeff Leeds, "Director at XM Resigns as Costs Skyrocket," New York Times, February 17, 2006.
12. Eric A. Taub, "With Stern on Board, Satellite Radio Is Approaching a Secure Orbit," New York Times, December 19, 2005.
13. Where designated, charts refer to companies that have stations whose primary format is designated as "news." This year, Salem Communications Corporation owns more stations (104) than the No. 6 Entercom (103). Starting with this year's edition of the State of the News Media (2006) we will begin tracking Salem Communications Corporation.

In 2004, revenues from news format stations were 17% of Salem's total station revenue — \$35 million of \$204 million.

Ownership

Ownership

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

When Clear Channel expanded from 520 to more than 1,100 stations in 2000 the company became, almost overnight, the largest force in traditional radio. Clear Channel was seen as the unquestionable leader in the marketplace, influencing everything from innovations of technology to radio playlists. The media giant fueled fierce debates over the effect of consolidations on content and communities served, but the strictly financial strategy was mostly unquestioned. But heading into 2006, the industry seemed less sure whether bigger is the smartest financial move.

Number of Stations Owned by Top Broadcasting Companies

Rank	Owner	# of Stations	# of News Stations
1	Clear Channel Communications	1,190	136
2	Cumulus Broadcasting Inc.	303	33
3	Citadel Broadcasting Corp	225	24
4	Infinity Broadcasting	178	19
5	Educational Media Foundation	143	0
6	American Family Association Inc.	120	0
7	Salem Communications Corporation	104	22
8	Entercom	103	14
9	Saga Communications Inc.	86	13
10	Cox Broadcasting	78	6
11	Regent Communications, Inc.	74	8
12	Univision Communications Inc.	72	0
13	ABC/Disney	72	5
14	Radio One Inc.	69	3
15	NextMedia Group	59	6
16	NRG Media LLC	59	5
17	Entravision Holdings LLC	52	0
18	Nassau Broadcasting Partners LP	52	3
19	Family Stations Inc.	49	1
20	Three Eagles Communications Inc.	46	4

Source: BIAfn Media Access Pro

Number of News Stations based on number of stations including News as their primary format.

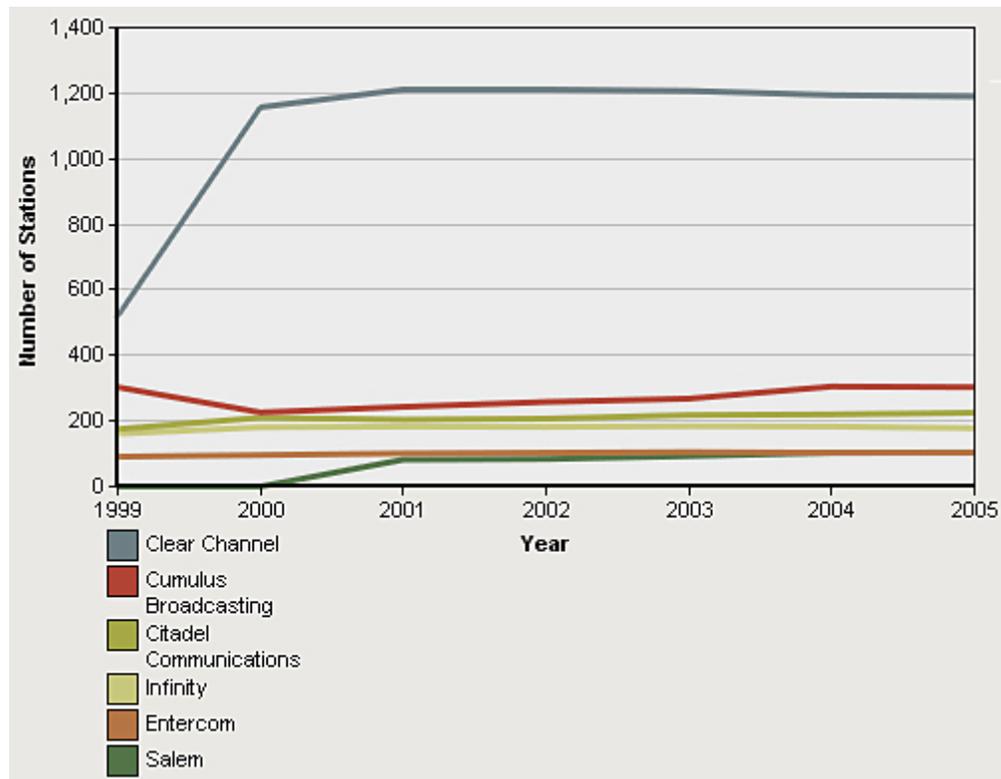
In 2004, there were some signs the answer might be no. Some radio groups further down the line in sheer physical size enjoyed overall ratings gains and, thanks to market positioning, greater revenues than some of their larger counterparts.

By 2005, one of the U.S.'s leading media companies appeared to be moving on the idea that smaller might be better. In June 2005 Viacom announced it would divide its massive cross-media holdings into CBS Corporation and a new Viacom. Infinity radio network would join UPN, Viacom Outdoor, Viacom Television Stations Group, Paramount Television, King World, Simon & Schuster, Showtime, Paramount Parks and the CBS Television network under the banner of CBS Corporation. The other company, operating under the Viacom name, would include the MTV Networks and their associated stations (VHI, Nickelodeon, Spike, TV Land), BET, Paramount Pictures, Paramount Home Entertainment and Famous Music. The divisions tailor Viacom into two more distinct entities. CBS Corporation is made

up mostly of prominent, older technologies — book publishing, network television and radio, billboards, TV syndication. Viacom is made up, though not exclusively, of newer technologies — cable, video and music, with film thrown in.

Change in Stations Owned by the Top Companies

1999-2005



Design Your Own Chart

Source: BIAfn Media Access Pro, unpublished data

* Top companies by number of stations whose holdings include news format stations.

The Viacom split by no means signaled a clear pattern. Other owners, particularly those more clearly invested specifically in radio, pushed to acquire a greater number of stations. Cumulus Broadcasting joined with other investors (Bain Capital, Blackstone Group and Thomas H. Lee Partners) to form Cumulus Media Partners and purchase the 33 radio station holdings of Susquehanna Radio. ¹ In February 2006, Citadel finalized a \$2.7 billion deal with Disney to purchase 22 Disney-owned radio stations and ABC Radio Networks (Disney kept Radio Disney and ESPN Radio). ² In early October 2005, Clear Channel's Mark Mays was similarly in the news for renewing his call for Congress to loosen ownership regulations. Mays, in a speech to the Progress and Freedom Foundation, reportedly proposed that "broadcasters be able to own 10 stations instead of eight in markets where there are at least 60 stations and up to 12 stations in markets where at least 75 radio outlets operate." ³

A single company able to program multiple stations in a given geographic area, the reasoning goes, would be able to coordinate content to such a degree that it could capitalize on audiences seeking the same highly defined formats as they can currently find online or on their satellite receiver. Don't just program a Spanish music station in Dallas ; program a Tejano station and a Spanish pop station and a Spanish-language sports station. With enough stations, an ownership group could do all this without having to lose the audience listening to the station that plays jazz or adult-contemporary English-language programming.

The question is whether size or diversification are important qualities in determining how well positioned a company is to survive the transformation from radio to audio. The new landscape is also leading some to seriously investigate, for the first time in a number of years, alternative programming.

Infinity's 4 response to the approaching departure of Howard Stern, 5 which would leave slots to fill on 27 stations, offered one such kind of experiment. It announced in late October 2005 that it would create a pair of shows — one East Coast, one West Coast. The eastern show would be hosted by the former Van Halen star David Lee Roth and the western version by the comedian Adam Corolla (former star of "The Man Show" on cable's Comedy Central and later of a comedy home improvement show on cable's TLC). Other stations would fill in with several other, less nationally profiled programs.

The targeted or regional programming is a component of Infinity's experiment with a new kind of radio content that it has dubbed "Free FM," which the company describes as stations that " will feature an eclectic mix of local and national personalities on a hybrid of provocative, political, pop culture, news, music and lifestyle formats." 6

The Big Get Bigger Cooperatively

Traditional radio was also trying to embolden itself in 2005, not by consolidation but by cooperation.

Much of the cooperation involves HD Radio, terrestrial radio's most obvious opportunity to answer satellite. Not only does the technology provide the kind of sound quality satellite radio promised, it offers more programming opportunities for terrestrial broadcasters. And while HD still requires a dedicated receiver to pull down the split digital signals, HD radio does not currently require membership fees. It is simply an expansion of traditional commercial broadcast radio.

The possibilities of HD Radio and the increasing audio field led several of terrestrial radio's larger players to come together to develop a strategy to make the greatest use of the new bandwidth and content possibilities HD can provide. 7 The so-called HD Radio Consortium gained attention in the industry because it signaled an almost unprecedented coming together of companies more used to competing with one another for audience than developing a plan for peaceful, beneficial coexistence.

In early December 2005, the HD Digital Radio Alliance was launched. Based in Orlando , Fla., and with Peter Ferrara (previously with Clear Channel) as president and CEO, the alliance will be coordinating the promotion and launch of traditional radio stations' HD frequencies. That will ensure, as Joel Hollander was quoted as saying by the Billboard Radio Monitor, that "all of a sudden, there aren't 17 Z100s in New York ." 8

Such strategic planning may prove critical to the success of HD radio. Unlike the satellite radio companies who program dozens of stations, multiple stations will eventually program HD radio frequencies. The danger for HD is that stations would all program the same, reducing the value of the receiver and re-creating the limited-playlist situation many feel exists on traditional radio.

Footnotes

1. Atlanta Business Chronicle, "Cumulus grows with Susquehanna acquisition," October 31, 2005.
2. David Lieberman, "\$2.7B deal would put Disney radio unit in Citadel's hands," USA Today, February 6, 2006.
3. Jeremy Polofsky, "Clear Channel renews bid to ease ownership limits," Reuters, October 3, 2005.
4. Now known as CBS Radio following the split of the parent company, Viacom, into the CBS Corporation and Viacom.
5. On Friday, December 16, 2005, the shock jock Howard Stern, the self-proclaimed "King of All Media," ended his twenty-year run on traditional radio. Stern, whose program has been targeted by the FCC for what many consider indecent content, made the decision to move to Sirius satellite earlier in 2005 in a move that many in the industry are watching with great curiosity.
6. From an announcement made by Joel Hollander, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Infinity.
7. The group included Clear Channel's CEO Mark Mays; Jeff Smulyan, Chairman of Emmis Communications (Emmis has stations in the top radio markets of New York City, Los Angeles and Chicago) and Entercom Communications' CEO David Field (Entercom owns 103 radio stations in 21 markets).
8. Paul Heine, "Hollander: A Radio Shift is Underway," Billboard Radio Monitor, September 27, 2005.
9. On the Media, "Up from the Wreckage," Oct 21, 2005, taken from the program transcript, www.onthemedial.org/transcripts/transcripts_102105_wreckage.html
10. Ibid.

News Investment

News Investment

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

The state of radio newsrooms remains difficult.

While there have been some gains in salaries, the news investment picture becomes less attractive when all the numbers are brought together.

Radio news salaries are still generally lower than those of their television counterparts. Staffing levels appear to be declining. So is the amount of news being broadcast. The situation is further complicated as the amount of news being locally produced still remains cloudy because of the impact of consolidation on radio newsrooms.

Amount of News

The 2004 RTNDA/Ball State survey indicates that more than half of the radio news directors surveyed anticipated a decrease in the amount of news they would be producing. Some 40% indicated there would be an increase.

In that respect, consolidation may be a negative factor. According to the survey there "...were no significant differences [in the amount of news] based on commercial/noncommercial, staff size, market size or region. Group-owned stations were less likely to have increased the amount of news last year and more likely to have cut it back." 1

According to the RTNDA/Ball State survey data, the average radio station in America doing news produced fewer than 40 minutes of radio news locally each day in 2004. Much of that, 18.1 minutes, occurred during the morning drive time, from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. 2

Consolidation has made it almost impossible to track long-term trends in areas like the amount of locally produced news. While anecdotal data, like the survey information from RTNDA/Ball State would appear to indicate that locally produced news is in decline, statistical data cannot be used to accurately reflect a trend.

Measured by market size, the amount of locally produced news jumps somewhat erratically. Over all, the major markets produce more than double the national average —93.5 minutes a day — and large markets are also above average at 52.1 minutes. Medium markets produce the least amount, less than half an hour (23.2 minutes) while small markets produce some 35.2 minutes. 3

Especially among the major markets, though, it is important to remember that the newsroom that is "locally producing" news is probably producing news for multiple stations. That makes any kind of clear trendline regarding either the increase or decline of radio news production problematic.

Newsroom Size

Much like the figures for radio salary, the numbers for newsroom size are difficult to fully factor out. Even with salaries apparently increasing slightly, radio newsrooms appear to be shrinking. The picture gets fuzzier, too, because people working in newsrooms increasingly handle news for more and more stations.

In other words, while a single newsroom may have six employees — the same number it had three years ago — those six people may be producing news content for three additional stations, which makes the sense of newsroom stability something of an illusion.

The average news director in 2004, for example, oversaw 3.75 stations, according to the latest data from the RTNDA/Ball State survey. And the great majority produced news for more than one station. Only about a quarter of news directors in America are now programming news for a single outlet. That number rose just slightly from the year before (27% in 2004 versus 25% in 2003) but those overseeing nearly quadrupled, to 19% from 5%. 4

Not only have news directors taken on more newsrooms, they have less staff to help run them. Two-thirds of news directors decreased their newsroom size in 2004, according to the survey data, while less than a quarter (23%) increased them. What's more, the situation is expected to get worse. Fully 77% anticipate their newsroom decreasing, with only about 10% expecting increases. According to the survey, noncommercial news stations were twice as likely to have added staff as well as to anticipate future staff increases. 5

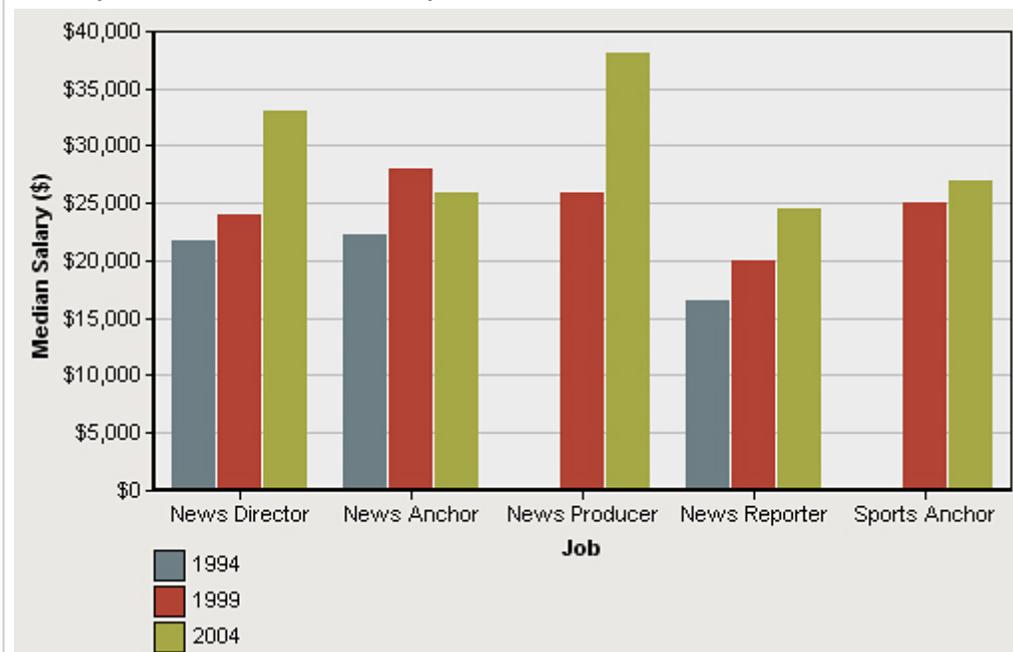
Radio Salaries

The RTNDA/Ball State University annual news director survey showed that radio news salaries as a whole climbed 3.2% from 2003 to 2004. 6 The increase, however, was largely for senior positions.

The median salary jumped \$13,000 for news producers and \$9,000 for news directors. The salary for a radio news reporter increased just slightly to \$24,500, while news anchor salaries dropped by \$2,000 to \$26,000. 7

Radio Salaries, Over Time

Survey of news directors, five year intervals



Design Your Own Chart

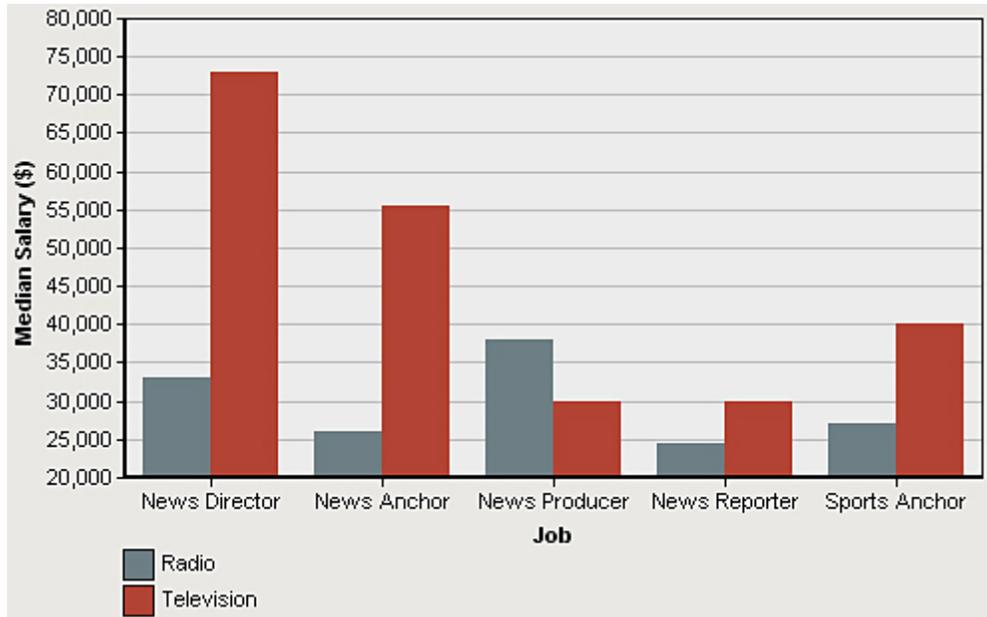
Source: Bob Papper, "Salary Survey," RTNDA Communicator, June 2005, pg. 26

And as Papper points out, the numbers could be skewed by the fact that there are fewer news producers.

Radio news salaries for the most part also still sit below those of television. Radio news directors make less than half what their television counterparts do, \$33,000 versus \$73,000, according to the RTNDA/Ball State survey. So do radio news anchors, \$26,000 versus \$55,500. The difference is not as great between reporters — \$24,500 for radio and \$30,000 for television. Radio news producers are the lone standouts, making \$38,000, \$8,000 more than those in television. 8

Radio vs. Television Salaries

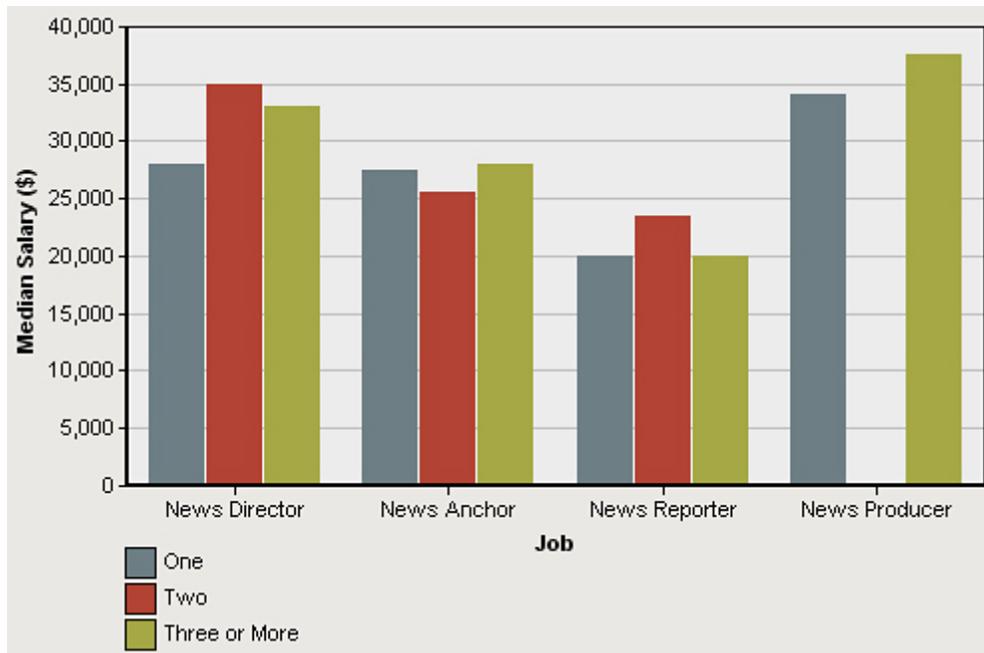
Survey of news directors, 2004



Design Your Own Chart

Source: RTNDA/Ball State Newsroom Surveys

Radio Salaries, by Number of Stations Served Survey of news directors, 2004



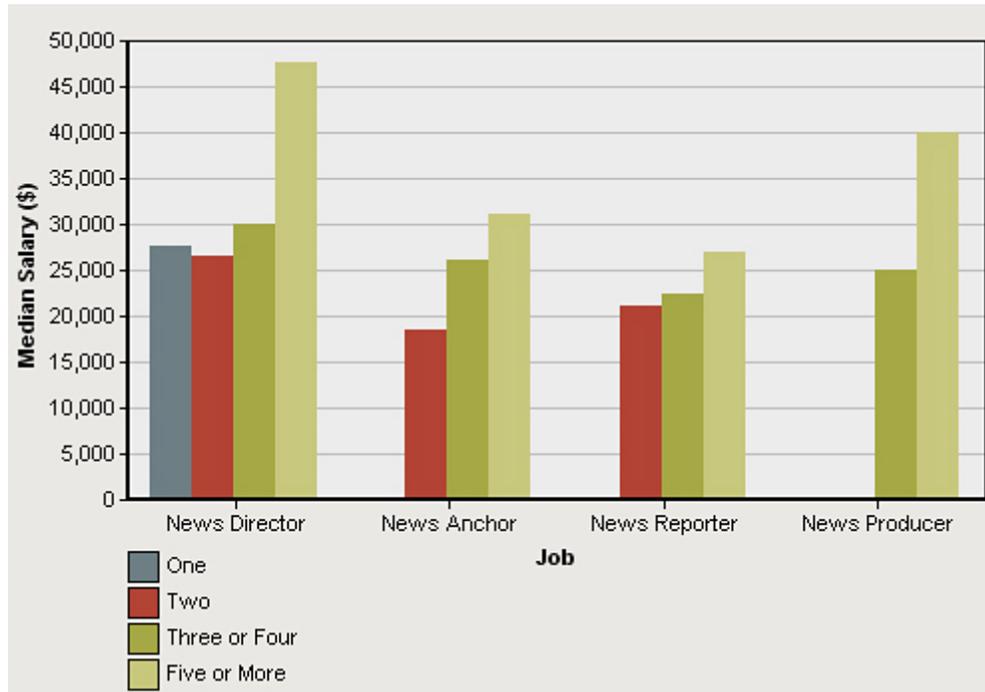
Design Your Own Chart

Source: RTNDA/Ball State University Newsroom Surveys

* Insufficient data available for News Producers serving two stations.

And what about the effects of newsrooms serving more than one station? Does the staff benefit financially from the added responsibility? The answer seems only to a certain degree. News directors serving two stations earn more than those serving one, but they also earn more than those serving three. The same holds true for reporters. Anchors, though, seem better served by sticking with just one station.

Radio Salaries, by Full-time Staff Size Survey of news directors, 2004

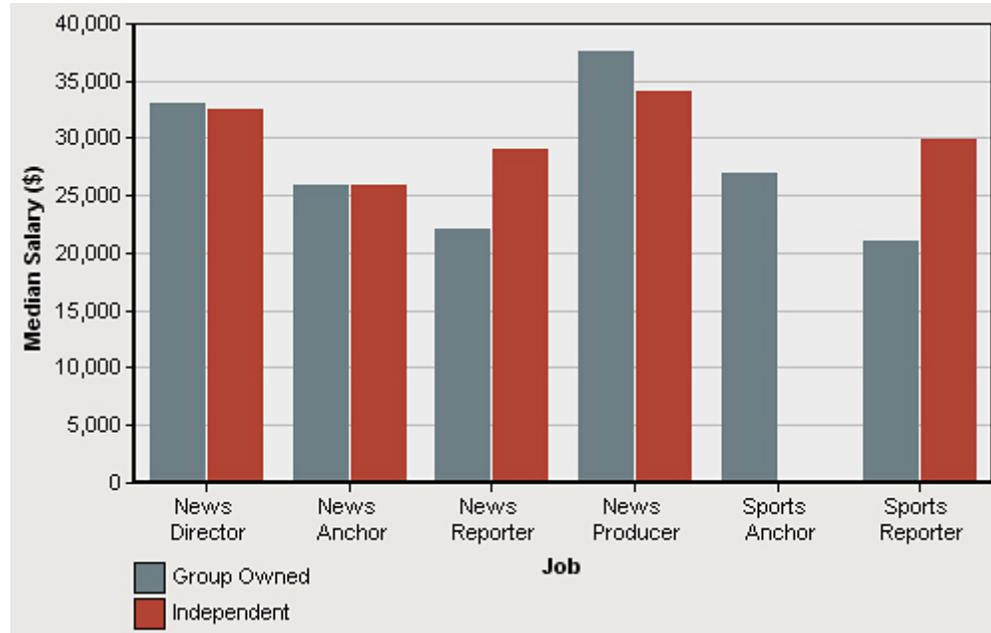


Design Your Own Chart

Source: RTNDA/Ball State University Newsroom Surveys

And when it comes to size, larger newsrooms tend to provide higher salaries, with the exception of news directors at two-man operations. A staff of three or five or more suggests, then, a station that places a higher premium — and therefore a larger budget — on its news operation.

Radio Salaries, by Ownership Survey of news directors, 2004

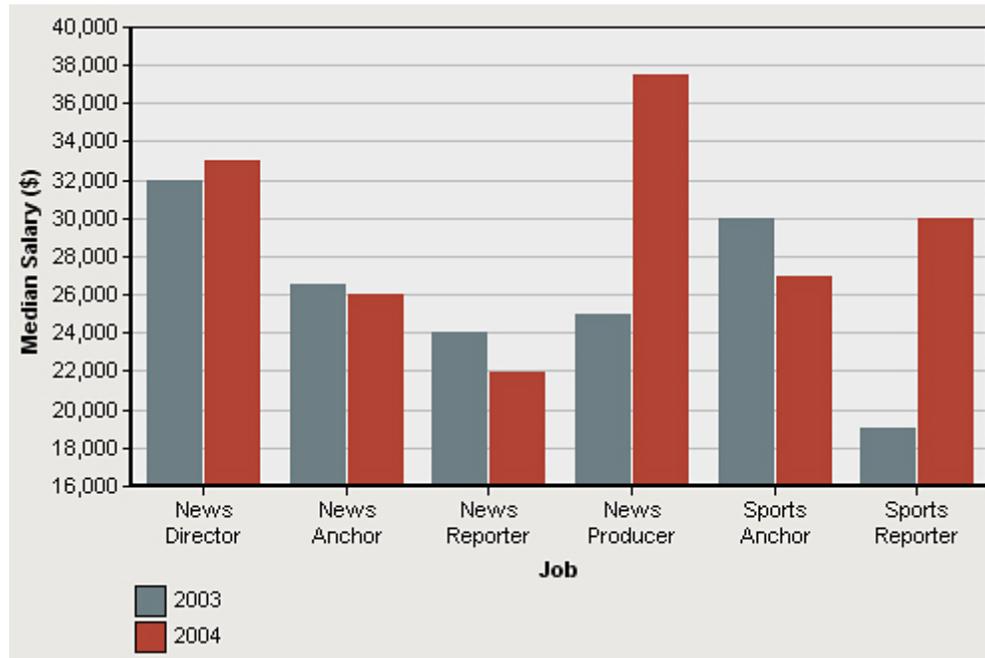


Design Your Own Chart

Source: RTNDA/Ball State University Newsroom Surveys

It's difficult, however, to parse much more of a trend than this out of the raw numbers. Salaries fluctuate by job description, with news directors making slightly more money when they work for group-owned stations but reporters making less. News producers earn more money at group-owned stations, but sports reporters do better at independents. The salary changes between 2003 and 2004 at group-owned stations show that news directors are making more but anchors and reporters are making less. Producers and sports reporters are making more but sports anchors are making less. The bottom line is there is no way to infer from the data whether radio news salaries are affected by whether a station is group or independently owned.

Radio Salaries, Group Owned Stations Survey of news directors, 2003-2004



Design Your Own Chart

Source: RTNDA/Ball State University Newsroom Surveys

Newsroom Diversity

The latest data about newsroom diversity brought outrage among journalist organizations such as UNITY: Journalists of Color (a consortium comprising the national minority journalism membership organizations: Native American Journalists Association, Asian American Journalist Association, National Hispanic Journalist Association and the National Association of Black Journalists).

The data, again from an RTNDA/Ball State survey in 2004, show that the number of journalists of color working in local radio declined from 11.8% to just under 8%. The minority population of the U.S. , according to the survey, is approximately 33%.⁹

UNITY responded that it was “discouraged by the fluctuation of the percentage of journalists of color working in local radio... The percentage of people of color in radio has dropped 50% since 1988, when stringent EEOC” —Equal Employment Opportunity Commission — “rules were eliminated. Journalists of color made up 16% of the radio workforce that year.”¹⁰

Hispanics are the largest minority in the U.S.; by the end of 2004, the country’s more than 41 million Hispanics were roughly 14% of the total population.¹¹ And it is a population that radio broadcasters have become increasingly interested in. Hispanics also make up the largest percentage of the minority radio news work force, 6%. African Americans, Asian Americans and Native Americans each constitute less than 1% of that work force.

In addition, the numbers were better and had improved for Hispanics in terms of news directors. Compared to 2003, the percentage of Hispanic news directors increased some 6% to 8.8. Native Americans, on the other hand, made up just 2.2% of news directors, down from 2.7% in 2003, and African Americans and Asian Americans, based on survey results, remained statistically absent from those posts on a national scale.

The average number of minorities on a radio news staff was less than one (.3).

The statistics raise more questions when looked at in relationship to minority audiences for news/talk and information programming. Neither commercial nor public radio audiences for that format include a large segment of either black or Hispanic listeners. The commercial audience has only 7.6% black listenership and 5.9% Hispanic. Public radio listenership is even lower, only 6.1% black and 5.2% Hispanic.

Footnotes

1. Bob Papper, "New, Staffing and Profitability Survey," RTNDA Communicator, October 2005, pg. 38.
2. Papper, supplementary online charts, www.rtna.org/research/chart_05.shtml.
3. The same hierarchy holds true during the critical morning drive period. Major markets produce the most (27.9 minutes), followed by large (24.1 minutes), small (19.2 minutes) and finally, trailing quite far behind, medium markets with just 11.7 minutes. Papper, supplementary online charts.
4. Papper, pg. 36.
5. Papper, pg. 35.
6. Ibid.
7. Bob Papper, "Salary Survey," RTNDA Communicator, June 2005, pg. 26.
8. Ibid.
9. Bob Papper, "Running in Place," RTNDA Communicator, July/August 2005, Vol. 59, No. 7, pg. 27. The figure for the minority population of the U.S. is credited to the Census Bureau.
10. Press Release, "Unity Discouraged By The Slow Progress of Diversifying Broadcast Newsrooms," July 14, 2005.
11. Data from the Census Bureau, "Annual Estimates of the Population by Sex, Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin for the United States: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2004."

Public Attitudes

Public Attitudes

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

How does the public view the transition from radio to audio?

Sorting through the answer shows several components, but a key one is whether listeners' attitudes toward how they get radio — whether they are willing to pay for it, how portable they want it to be and whether they want it commercial-free — matter more than what content they want there. Another major question in a changing information landscape is how much people will turn to radio as a source for news.

As noted in the section on audience, only 30% of Americans believe that the new audio will result in the complete demise of traditional radio. ¹ Another study, by the Pew Internet & American Life Project, found that of the 11% of Americans who own an MP3 player or iPod, only 30% had ever downloaded a podcast or Internet radio program so they could listen to it later. In short, the penetration of the new audio technology is only beginning. ²

Still, there is evidence that people are open to new sources. In a study commissioned by the Public Relations Society of America with Harris Interactive, the vast majority of adults, 71%, indicated they had a defined set of news sources that they trusted. Of that number, a sizable minority 42%, said they relied on “independent sources like Internet chat rooms, blogs or other alternative media to get news and information.” ³ Only a slight majority, 54%, stated they continued to rely exclusively on traditional sources. Perhaps most interesting, more than half, 65%, said they “actively look for news and information that challenges [their] political opinions and social beliefs.” ⁴ Whether they really do is uncertain, but the numbers suggest they believe they should.

So it might be that the growing array of options is not replacing so-called old media outlets, but supplementing them.

The question for radio is to what extent people want to continue to hear the news, rather than to read it as text or see it on video.

There are some answers already. When it comes to national and international news it appears only a minority look to radio as a prime source. A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center indicated that less than a quarter of survey participants got this kind of information from their radios — just 22%, compared to 74% for television, 44% for newspapers and 24% for the Internet. (Survey respondents were able to select more than one response, so the total figures add to more than 100%). ⁵

This may be a chicken and egg dilemma. Perhaps people don't turn to radio for this type of information because it's not available there. If it were available, as in the past, maybe more people would rely on the medium for it.

There is some indication that the same low numbers may also be true nationally for breaking news. In a separate survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, only 17% of respondents indicated that they were getting their news about Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath from radio, compared to 89% for television, 35% for newspapers and 21% for the Internet. ⁶

In truth, a national overview about media may not offer the full picture of radio's value. During Hurricane Katrina, for instance, the accessible nature of radio — including the portability of radio receivers, the low cost of buying radios and free nature of the content, and ability to run on multiple power sources even when the electrical grid is down — made it a critical lifeline for those stranded by the storm.

That was true not just for those in New Orleans who utilized resources like the constant information stream provided by the United Radio Broadcasters (See Ownership), but also for those evacuated to the Houston Astrodome, where radios were distributed and a mini-radio station was set up to aid communication and speed family reunions. In other words,

while there will always be a desire to move to the "next big thing," there must also be consideration of what can potentially be lost.

Will the new media make the old no longer economically viable, or will they be added on as an interconnected web? The answer will have important civic as well as economic implications.

And one factor in all this may be regulatory. In early December 2005, Chairman Kevin J. Martin of the FCC suggested the creation of so-called "à la carte" offerings for cable television. As a way to provide people with greater control over the media content that comes into their homes, Martin proposed that cable companies allow consumers to pick and choose what individual channels they receive and pay for.⁷

The success of that proposal could have broad implications on which cable producers survive, and what they produce. It could also set the parameters of how other new technologies develop, and whether older technologies like print can begin to get money from their online activities by bundling them the way cable has.

It is difficult to guess how such a change would affect satellite radio, but the basic situation is virtually identical. Like cable, satellite listeners have intentionally purchased special equipment to receive content and have made the decision to receive that content by paying a membership fee. Also like cable, XM Satellite even offers a blocking option. On its Web site, the home page of the "Opie and Anthony" radio show (a shock jock duo whose antics on traditional radio included the broadcast of a couple supposedly having sex in St. Patrick's cathedral as part of a competition) includes a link to information on how to use XM's channel blocking. And Sirius satellite radio's Web site, like some television programming, advises parental discretion for programs like the Howard Stern Show.

If an à la carte system like the one Martin has proposed for cable were to be applied to satellite radio, the biggest question would be how, exactly, members would be charged for the pick-and-play system. Would members choose nine stations for one price and then ten more for an additional fee? Turning to content, would a changing membership structure affect the networks' willingness to program channels that might not be able to attract enough members to pay for themselves? Would an "à la carte" system degrade the niche content that originally made satellite radio desirable?

Indecency Regulations

When President George W. Bush moved Kevin J. Martin from his seat on the FCC to the position of chairman in March 2005, the agency seemed to be entering a new phase of aggressive policing of the public airwaves.

The former chairman, Michael K. Powell, had initially stayed away from regulation of broadcast content, but the Janet Jackson halftime show at Super Bowl XXXVIII on February 1, 2004, brought the issue to forefront. The FCC began leveling some of the heaviest and most wide-reaching fines in its history. By the end of his four-year tenure, according to an accounting by the Washington Post, Powell proposed 28 fines against television and radio broadcasters for so-called indecency violations. As the Washington Post noted, that is 30% of the 92 known proposed fines issued by the agency since Chairman Dean Burch in 1969.⁸

Under Powell, not only were broadcast networks being fined, but individual affiliates who aired the "indecent" content faced financial consequences as well. Those fines had a pre-emptive effect. In November 2004 more than 60 ABC affiliates chose not to air the network's broadcast of *Saving Private Ryan* for fear of being fined for the film's use of foul language and violence. Powell had publicly said that he would ask the FCC to dismiss any complaints brought against the film because the language used was not indecent given the context in which it was used. Yet the rules of

the road naturally differed case by case. In other instances, the agency was dismissing content disclaimers, digitized body parts and bleeps as sufficient protection for listeners and viewers. In the same way that the Supreme Court has said of pornography, indecency was something you knew when you saw it rather than something that could be defined easily in rules.

Radio, which had been publicly dealing with the FCC and its indecency regulations for some time, was also under the FCC's gaze. One public radio affiliate fired a correspondent over an editing error that failed to "bleep" a curse word (See State of the News Media 2004, Content). Facing a fine of nearly \$500,000 from the FCC (which was later absorbed into a \$1.75 million settlement covering multiple charges) Clear Channel did the virtually unthinkable by removing the incredibly popular Howard Stern Show from its stations.

The agency's actions throughout 2004 seemed to be the opening trumpets of a concerted war by the FCC against so-called indecent content. After Powell departed, Martin assumed chairmanship of the FCC. As a board member Martin had suggested the need for broader FCC powers to enforce decency standards. In February 2004, weeks after the Janet Jackson incident, Martin wrote in a report to the Senate: "I hear a call for the same rules to apply to everyone — for a level playing field. If cable and satellite operators continue to refuse to offer parents more tools such as family-friendly programming packages, basic indecency and profanity restrictions may be a viable option that also should be considered." 9

That call for a level playing field may have come from broadcasters who complained that cable had an unfair advantage. To what degree was it also coming from citizens? How much of an issue is indecency for the public?

Working from the numbers, the answer is cloudy. The number of broadcast indecency complaints (television and radio) filed with the FCC shows that activity, while periodically spiking in the post-February 2004 time period, is not a constant stream. The numbers exceeded 100,000 complaints four times between September 2004 and January 2005. In most months, there was little or nothing nationwide. In February 2004, the biggest month, the FCC received more than 543,000 complaints. 10 That is an impressive number, but it also represents less than .18% of the U.S. population. 11

Inevitably, there is also evidence that some of the complaints are orchestrated. In July 2005, after a period of extremely low complaint activity, the FCC received 23,547 complaints. The Broadcasting & Cable Web site reported on November 14, 2005, that 23,542 of those complaints were brought by members of the Parents Television Council. That figure meant that that only five complaints came from a source outside the PTC. (A significant portion of the complaints was lodged against the Fox program "The Inside" for what some saw as violent and sexually inappropriate content. A larger portion, 12,767 complaints, was lodged against ABC's airing of the benefit Live 8 Concert, which included a profanity that made it past the East Coast monitors.) 12

Beyond the number of complaints, other evidence suggests there is broad support for tighter federal restrictions. A survey conducted by Time Magazine and SRBI Research found that 51% of all respondents believed that the FCC should be stricter in its control of sexual language on the radio. Some 11% thought the FCC should be more lenient, 34% felt enforcement should stay the same and the remaining 4% said they didn't know. 13

When the conversation is moved outward to the new audio, the public's attitude toward governmental enforcement changes. Fully 57% of those surveyed felt that governmental regulations should not be enlarged to cover content broadcast on satellite radio. An even larger portion (64%) did not believe that should be done for cable television networks. 14

The opening eight months after Martin's appointment went by relatively quietly, with no action taken on indecency complaints.¹⁵ The commission's activity instead was later revealed to have been of a broader nature. In October 2005, the FCC launched a new Web site designed to fully explain its rules governing indecency, how its complaint system works and its enforcement procedure.

The site also includes information on the television rating system and information on the V-chip and channel blocking. Martin himself spoke of the importance of such technology and even put out a call for more such devices in October when speaking to a group at the inaugural Helms Forum in Charlotte, N.C. "We need an easy way for consumers to be able to control content," he said, adding that "it's important for parents and families to have more tools to have more control over content."¹⁶ Broadcasters themselves have been encouraging and promoting parental-control technology, in the hope that if the public begins to police its own living rooms there will be less call for federal policing of the airwaves. The trick, however, is getting consumers to actually use the technology. For the most part, parental blocking technology like the V-chip has gone largely unused.

At a congressional hearing in late November 2005, Martin returned to an earlier theme of his — the regulation of the cable and satellite television industry — advocating the creation of those "à la carte" cable packages so that consumers could choose not to have offending channels in their homes. The outcome of this is by no means certain. Some religious broadcasters fear Martin's proposal would be the end of their channels because not enough consumers would choose to pay for them and they would die.

Footnotes

1. Internet and Multimedia 2005: The On-Demand Media Consumer, Arbitron Inc./Edison Media Research, March 23, 2005.

2. Lee Rainie, "We Stand By Our Data," Pew Internet & The American Life Project, April 6, 2005.

3. PRSA/Harris Interactive, "Executive, Congressional and Consumer Attitudes Toward Media, Marketing and the Public Relations Profession." Study conducted June 7-12, 2005.

4. Ibid.

5. Survey by the Pew Research Center, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International in association with the Project for Excellence in Journalism. Survey conducted June 8- 12, 2005.

6. Survey by the Pew Research Center, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International. Survey conducted September 6- 7, 2005.

7. Currently, most cable systems offer a number of pre-selected cable packages that individuals can customize through the purchase of 'premium' channels like HBO or Showtime. À la carte would potentially transform this system by allowing customers to tailor their entire station purchase—regardless of whether these channels were 'basic' or 'premium.' Presumably then, the customer who was opposed, for whatever reason, to CNN or Fox News could choose not to purchase those channels.

8. Frank Ahrens, "Delays, Low Fines Weaken FCC Attack on Indecency," Washington Post, November 10, 2005.

9. Kevin J. Martin, "Protecting Children from Violent and Indecent Programming." Written statement for the Commission on Commerce, Science and Transportation, U.S. Senate, February 11, 2004.
10. Data taken from the Federal Communications Commission website, Enforcement Bureau, Complaint and Enforcement Statistics, www.fcc.gov.
11. Data taken from U.S. Census Bureau, Population Clock, www.census.gov/main/www/popclock.html.
12. Broadcasting & Cable, "PTC Drives Spike in Smut Gripses," November 14, 2005.
13. Survey by Time. Methodology: Conducted by Schulman, Ronca, & Bucuvalas, March 15-17, 2005 and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,010.
14. James Poniewozik, "The Decency Police," Time Magazine, volume 165, No. 13, March 28, 2005.
15. Reuters , "TV, radio indecency complaints plunge 96pct-FCC," September 28, 2005.
16. Paul Nowell, "FCC Chairman Kevin Martin speaks at inaugural Helms Forum," Miami Herald, October 11, 2005.
17. Stephen Labaton, Lorne Manly & Elizabeth Jensen, "Chairman Exerts Pressure on PBS, Alleging Biases," New York Times, May 2, 2005.
18. Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Office of Inspector General, "Report of Review: Review of Alleged Actions Violating The Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, as Amended," Report No. EPB503-602, Pg. 6, November 15, 2005.
19. Ibid.
20. From the Young America Foundation website, www.yaf.org/whoweare.asp.
21. David Folkenflik, Morning Edition, June 30, 2005.
22. Stephen Labaton, "NPR Conflict With Overseer Is Growing," New York Times, May 15, 2005.
23. Tom Ashbrook, "The Assault on NPR," Boston Globe, May 26, 2005.
24. Harris Interactive/ Public Relations Society of America, "Executive, Congressional and Consumer Attitudes Toward Media, Marketing and the Public Relations Profession," November 10, 2005.
25. Summary of poll results from The Tarrance Group & Lake Snell Perry & Associates for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, "CPB-Commissioned National Opinion Polls," December 2003, www.cpb.org
26. The Tarrance Group,"Executive Summary to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting," Pg. 6, October 8, 2003, pg. 3
27. The Tarrance Group, pg. 6.
28. Ibid, Pg. 6-7.
29. Transcribed from The Diane Rehm Show, www.wamu.org/programs/dr/index.php, May 18, 2005.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

32. Pew Research Center, "News Audiences Increasingly Politicized," June 8, 2005, pg. 14.

Charts & Tables

Charts & Tables

AUDIENCE

Listeners to News-Talk-Information Stations, by Age

Number of Licensed Broadcast Radio Stations, 1970 and 2003

Number of News/Talk/Information Stations Vs. Total Stations

Radio Reach

Time Spent Listening to News/Talk/Information

Time Spent Listening to News/Talk/Information (Commercial)

Time Spent Listening to the Radio 'Yesterday'

Time Spent Listening, by Age

What Radio Formats People Listen To, 2000 vs. 2004

What Radio Formats People Listen To, 2004

Where People Listen

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Radio News Profitability

Radio News Profitability by Market Size, 2003

Radio News Profitability by Market Size, 2004

Revenues from News Stations for Top Companies

Revenues of Top Companies, 2004

Total Revenues for Top Ten Companies, 2004

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Change in Stations Owned by the Top Companies

Median Radio Salaries, Radio vs. Television

Number of Markets Reached by Top Companies

NEWS INVESTMENT

How many stations news directors oversee, 2003

Median Radio Salaries, by Stations Served

Other Radio News Director Responsibilities, 2003
Radio News Staff, Budget and Time, 2003
Radio Salaries, by Full-time Staff Size
Radio Salaries, by Number of Stations Served
Radio Salaries, by Ownership
Radio Salaries, Group Owned Stations
Radio Salaries, Over Time
Radio vs. Television Salaries

PUBLIC ATTITUDES

Consumer Indeceny Complaints

Roundtable

Roundtable

The year began on a sobering note for the terrestrial radio industry. With increasing competition from satellite, online and now portable devices such as MP3 players, radio advertising revenues in the first five months of 2006 dipped one percent from the same time period a year ago.

In addition, CBS radio recently announced plans to sell off some of its stations in smaller markets and eliminate 115 jobs.

Where does radio lie on the fragmenting old media vs. new media spectrum? A medium with a long, rich history, can it survive and evolve to fit a changing information universe or is it an endangered species?

Experts in the industry answer these and other questions in the second of our series of roundtable discussions about the future of journalism.

The experts expressed confidence that broadcast radio news will remain relevant even with the advent of satellite radio and the growth of multimedia platforms (such as the internet). They believe that 'listening' to radio still offers a niche that no other medium can appropriate.

For more on the Project's new research effort, and to see our previous roundtables, [click here](#).

The panelists for this roundtable are:

Bill Buzenberg, Senior Vice President, News – Minnesota Public Radio

Tim Curran, News Director, Sirius OutQ

Adam Powell, Director, Integrated Media Systems Center, USC and Author of 'Reinventing Local News' (2004)

Dale Willman, Executive Editor, Field Notes Productions and Freelance Correspondent, NPR

1. With the increasing focus and surgical nature of format programming, have we lost a local public audio square that has cultural and political consequences? Or have we gained something, when smaller

communities of interest, liberals who might listen to Air America, or gays and lesbians who can go to Sirius OutQ?

Bill Buzenberg: I think this specialization is not something to be lamented but accepted. A listener, like a reader, can get the information and format that they like best. I also think radio listening begets radio listening, and will increase all listening to the specialized programs, as well as the major newsmagazines.

Dale Willman: We've absolutely lost a great deal. By segmenting the audience, we have lost the commonality that holds us together as a nation. And we've lost the ability to hold civil discourse in a public forum. Segmenting can mean that those audiences without a voice can now be heard. But it should not be done by losing that public square.

Tim Curran: Naturally, as Sirius OutQ's news director, I think it's a spectacular advance for broadcasting to finally serve 'communities of interest' who have been drastically underserved by the mainstream media. I can only hope the trend continues and extends to communities who remain largely untouched by these advances – the poor, racial and ethnic minorities, etc. It's absurd to wax nostalgic for the good old days when America sat around the box listening to Uncle Walter. Those weren't such good days for impoverished African-Americans whose dire situation had been so deeply ignored by the U.S. mainstream media that by 1968 their despair boiled over in nationwide riots.

Adam Powell : Mass media may have been an anomaly of the 20th century and in broadcasting its business model was based on pricing power and profits made possible by government regulation and exclusion of competitors.

The mass media "public square" did not exist when U.S. democracy began and flowered. American democracy was founded centuries ago in the golden age of the pamphlet. American democracy will survive the fragmentation of mass media. Fragmentation of radio – and television and print – may in fact now drive the post-mass media landscape to resemble in many ways the days before we became accustomed to mass media.

And that may not be all bad.

2. Taking the question of community one step further, some have suggested that traditional radio has to return to the local to survive and that in the cycle of consolidation the medium has lost track of what it did best. What do you think?

Bill Buzenberg: Yes, local is very important for radio to survive, but it cannot survive on local alone. The best and largest stations, combine excellent international coverage, national coverage and local coverage. With all three of these, stations can thrive and grow their audience. So, yes, local is critical to radio's future, but it is not sufficient by itself, and it must mix with wider news coverage, and match the best quality of great national and international news coverage.

Dale Willman: I believe the ONLY thing that will allow local radio to survive is a return to local. In my first radio job, I had to read daily the obituaries from the local paper. At 17, I thought this was nuts. It was only later that I realized what a fantastic service it was to the shut-ins who depended on us for their connection to the world around them.

I don't suggest that we all start reading the death columns. But if we begin to once again serve our listeners with local information they can find nowhere else, they will begin to listen again. It's the only thing satellite radio cannot do.

Tim Curran: Satellite radio and the Internet make this more vital now than ever. Localization is the one area where satellite providers can't really compete — and where locally based online audio producers have the opportunity to eat traditional broadcasters' lunch.

Adam Powell : Localism is the traditional basis of U.S. broadcasting, which is why stations are licensed, not networks.

In most major and large markets, there are credible commercial all-news and news-talk stations. But national programming is often what attracts a mass audience, whether television entertainment or radio news. Public radio audience growth has been propelled by national news programming for NPR, PRI and APM.

But is this really new? In the first half of the last century, radio networks were dominant with national network programming. NPR may be the ghost of the NBC Red network, using network stars to drive local station audiences — and local station revenue, whether from commercials or underwriting.

But even as many decry the loss of localism, local news vacuums attract innovators, in print, on the air and on line. In print, dozens of free newspapers now compete with (and are sometimes owned by) major metropolitan dailies. On the air, new newsrooms [like WTOP discussed above] are springing to life.

The medium hasn't lost what it does best. It is just reinventing what it does best — nationally, with quality network and international news, and locally, under the radar screen of most media writers.

3. Much of the discussion surrounding the future, of traditional or terrestrial radio has focused on the entertainment. What do you think about the future of news? Does radio (or, more appropriately perhaps, audio) offer the audience something that they can't get somewhere else?

Dale Willman: Every medium has its strengths. Print is a substantial daily record of life as we know it. Television has images that can quickly and simply convey powerful information and emotion — who can forget the young man at Tiananmen Square staring down a row of tanks? But print is also at times quite unwieldy. TV meanwhile is voyeuristic — no matter how powerful the images, you're staring through a window as if a peeping Tom snooping.

Audio however has an ability that is unique among the other mediums. Well-produced audio reaches into our heads and our guts, to affect us both intellectually and emotionally. That is a very powerful tool for conveying information. You first reach a person through their emotions, which then opens up their heads for information. If radio news can recapture this power, and use it to convey information of a local nature than it can survive for a while.

The reality though is that running a transmitter is quite expensive.

As people become more accustomed to obtaining audio from the web, more local podcasts will spring up to fill in the niche once held by local radio news. So long-term, I would suspect radio news, and perhaps radio itself, will be dead.

Tim Curran: News has been and remains one of the most popular formats on traditional/terrestrial radio. It's free, it's pervasive, and in markets where it's well funded, it will continue to dominate. That being said, terrestrial news directors will have to continue tweaking their formats with an ear to what's being offered by satellite radio and, especially, podcasters. 'Radio' will endure in some form or other because it is the perfect medium for absorbing news and information while getting from place to place or undertaking some other mindless physical activity (jogging, cooking, chopping wood...).

Bill Buzenberg: There is still a huge and important audience for information on terrestrial radio, and will be for a long time to come. There is more growth ahead. Although commercial radio listening has been shrinking, public radio audiences generally have been growing nicely with some flattening taking place in just the last year or so. While some of public radio's programming (non-entertainment), is available on satellite or by podcast, those are still very small compared to over-the-air terrestrial broadcasting. The growth curve for these other platforms is quite high, but it is important to know that the radio broadcasts are needed to promote these other platforms.

Yes, I believe public radio does provide specialized information programming available no place else.

Adam Powell : The future of news on terrestrial radio is in the hands of terrestrial radio broadcasters.

Some enlightened terrestrial broadcasters are expanding news on radio, including commercial radio. All-news WTOP in Washington has created two entirely new radio broadcast services – WFED Federal News Service, an all-news station aimed at federal employees, and last month WTWP Washington Post Radio, in partnership with the newspaper. So in a few years, all-news programming has tripled on commercial radio in Washington, D.C. WTOP added (and then moved to) the FM band and discovered a new audience of younger listeners who never tune to the AM band.

Terrestrial radio news is alive and well, and it can thrive – unless unimaginative broadcasters allow it to wither.

4. Looking at the amount of cross broadcasting going on (stations simulcasting on the Internet, hosts blogging, shows podcasting) does platform even matter anymore? Does the success of satellite really mean the death of traditional radio? Can we have Internet radio without sacrificing the FM dial?

Tim Curran: As wireless web technology matures, platform will matter less. But for now, you can't get that live Knicks game on your Ipod, and platform continues to matter a great deal. As much as I might like to say that satellite and the Internet spell the death of terrestrial radio, I don't think it's really a zero-sum game.

A lot of people listen to a lot more radio now, because more of it suits their needs and tastes. As long as terrestrial broadcasters keep an eye on what it is their audience is tuning in to satellite and Internet competitors to get (and vice versa), I think there's room for all to survive.

Dale Willman: It's no longer about platform, it's about content.

Bill Buzenberg: Multi-platform is the future, and this does not have to be a threat but an opportunity. All of these platforms still require good content (news gathering, commentary, interviews, etc.). No matter how this information programming is delivered, each of these platforms simply super serves the listener. Some people will want their information mobile via MP3 downloads, others will want it via the web, others via satellite radio, etc. I don't believe any of this sacrifices the FM dial, but all are complimentary.

Adam Powell : Platform matters because different people listen to different platforms, and general audience journalism has to be everywhere. If you are not on the Internet – or on FM radio – you are deliberately limiting your listenership. People on all platforms will listen to news – but if only radio journalists will make it available to them.

This is not speculation: it is proven fact. Consider the experience of WTOP radio news in Washington, D.C., which step by step expanded its programming to different platforms – and reached new listeners each time.

5. How much confidence do you have that traditional mainstream media organizations will survive and thrive in the transition to the Internet?

Adam Powell: It is Legacy media that typically have difficulty surviving disruptive change. And to make matters even more difficult for them, traditional mainstream media organizations, to use your phrase, have a central economic problem: their business models have relied on government-granted or -sanctioned monopoly pricing and monopoly profits.

Daily newspapers have their Joint Operating Agreements to guarantee profit margins well above those in most industries. Broadcasting is a government-licensed oligopoly. That's why television stations have had the highest profit margins of any legal industry in the U.S.

You have posed two very different questions: Will mainstream media survive? And if they survive, will they thrive?

Will traditional news organizations survive on the Internet? Of course, just as AM radio stations still survive – but with a fraction of their audiences of forty years ago. Faced with thousands of new and unregulated competitors, traditional news organizations will survive, but with an ever smaller slice of the audience.

Secondly, will traditional news organizations thrive on the Internet? Here, I'm not at all confident that most news organizations will thrive on line – any more than most organizations of any kind will thrive on line. New media are a new business, not an incremental extension of print or broadcasting. And the cold, hard fact of the business world is, absent government-granted or -sanctioned monopolies, most new businesses fail.

One exception: Government-funded news organizations. The BBC thrives on line, because on line as in broadcasting, it views itself as a public service with no need to make money. It can draw on Britain's mandatory license fees to aggregate resources to provide some of the best journalism on line.

Coming next: the French, the Chinese, and of course Al Jazeera. All are government-funded news organizations with an increasingly high profile on the air and on line. The question is to what extent these journalists can be independent from the governments that fund them.

Tim Curran: As in any challenging environment, those that adapt will survive and those that can't will become extinct. Certainly, not every mainstream media organization is a dinosaur. Newspapers who invest heavily in their online presence will make it, as will broadcasters who stream and podcast their programming. But those who cling to old models and fail to keep a close eye on web competition are doomed.

Dale Willman: I think many, but not all, MSM will survive. But I wouldn't characterize it as a transition to the Internet alone. While things like podcasting use the Internet as a delivery tool, it is wrong to characterize it as Internet news. It is important to remember that the Internet is a transmission medium – it's not a news source. So to me, the transition is to new delivery mediums.

Anyway, while many people turn to sources on the Internet for news, they still see clear value in the MSM brand and all that this implies – comfort level, acceptance of the vetting role and more. And I would say this is across-the-board when it comes to age groups. My students are required to bring in clippings to class each week. Overwhelmingly, the primary sources they use are NPR, the BBC, CNN and USA Today. So while they are turning to the Internet as a

delivery vehicle, they still rely on the established MSM as their primary news sources. And this says to me that those who position themselves well on the internet, and carry across their news image, will find a way to survive.

Bill Buzenberg: I am very confident that good news organizations will survive and thrive in the internet era. Although a winning business model is hugely challenging, major media organizations can adapt and be important information resources online and in old media as well.

6. One broad trend we sense in the media culture is the paradox of more outlets covering fewer stories. As the audiences for particular news outlets shrink, newsroom resources are then reduced, but these outlets still feel compelled to cover the big events of the day. The result is more outlets covering those same “big” events and fewer are covering much beyond that as much as they once did. How do you view this trend?

Tim Curran: This is true to some extent. But some of the new outlets in this proliferation are aimed at covering narrower news segments more deeply. In our own sector, there are now three new broadcast news organizations covering the gay community (CBS News on Logo, QTV, and Sirius OutQ) where just a few years ago there were none. We feel no need to cover ‘the big events of the day’ (unless they are gay-related, of course), but we do cover events of considerable import to GLBT people that would never make it on AP Network News, much less the front section of the New York Times.

Adam Powell : It’s not a paradox – it is a deliberate and planned outcome – and it is not universal.

It has been a planned outcome for almost a decade. If you want to put a date on it, consider August 31, 1997. That’s the day that MSNBC discovered they break out and make money by going with live wall-to-wall continuous coverage of the death of Princess Diana. Today, all of the 24-hour cable news networks know they can get a quite profitable rating point or so by focusing on that big tabloid story, hour after hour, night after night.

But please note this is not universal. The New York Times is still a leader in print and on line with broad, deep coverage. The largest audience television news broadcast is still “60 Minutes,” which covers a variety of serious news stories. And one of the largest online information sites, Yahoo, is differentiating itself with original content, some of it focusing on little-covered but important conflicts in remote corners of the world. Quality journalism about serious subjects will always differentiate and brand an organization.

Bill Buzenberg : Yes, I think this is a trend, where many, many important stories are not covered and certain “must-cover” stories are covered too much. Without adequate reporter resources, this trend will likely continue.

Dale Willman: I would disagree with the assumption that there are more outlets out there. The radio chapter of your report certainly outlines the decline of the radio newsroom in the 80s. Print has seen similar declines. So such a statement would be accurate only on a short timeline.

However, I believe it’s accurate to say those outlets remaining tend to focus on the “big” stories, at the loss of coverage of the smaller yet often more significant news events. However, is this a trend? Certainly on the broadcast side, that focus has always been there – for a commercial newscast of five minutes, after commercials and other non-news information, there is perhaps three minutes remaining for news. For a half-hour newscast on television, that figure is about 18 minutes. There is little time left after the big stories have been reported.

So perhaps it's a trend in print, but less so in broadcast. I would suspect that rather than say a trend, we are seeing a reality magnified by things like news aggregators.

If you would like to offer your own thoughts on the future of radio news, please email us at mail@journalism.org. We will then compile and post a selection of responses.



Ethnic/Alternative – Intro

Intro

The ethnic media continued to grow in 2005 with the continuing growth in immigration in the U.S. And while some of the data are soft, and there were even signs of declines in the circulation of print publications, the general picture was robust. Indeed, according to one survey conducted for an association of ethnic media outlets in 2005, about 51 million Americans, 24% of the adult population, are either primary or secondary consumers of ethnic media. ¹

Footnotes

1. Bendixen and Associates for New California Media, The Ethnic Media in America: The Giant Hidden in Plain Sight, June 7, 2005, p. 11.

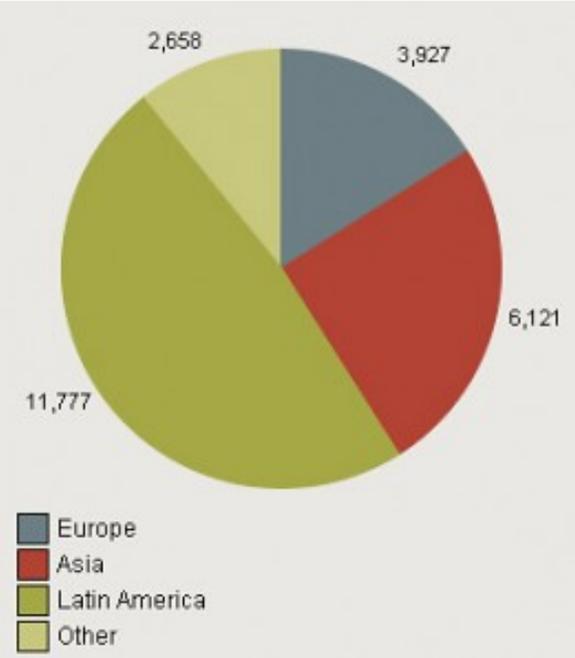
The Population Picture

The Population Picture

The engine behind the growth in ethnic media remains population, and particularly immigration.

A scan of U.S. Census data is enough show the basic picture. There has been a particularly large increase in immigration among people who are likely to speak languages other than English and rely on ethnic media. The U.S. foreign-born population was about 25 million in 1995. ¹ By 2004 it was over 34 million, an increase of 36%. Much of that growth came in immigrants from Latin America. ²

Native Regions for Foreign Born U.S. Population – 1995

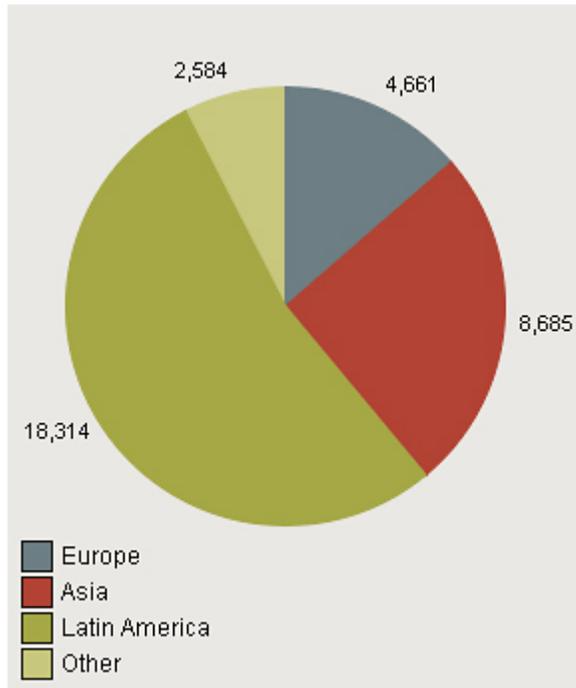


Design Your Own Chart

Source: US Census Foreign-Born Population by World Region of Birth, Age and Sex, March 1995

* Total population of 25 million, numbers in thousands

Native Regions for Foreign Born U.S. Population – 2004



Design Your Own Chart

Source: US Census Foreign-Born Population in US Regions, by Sex and World Region of Birth, 2004

* Total population of 32 million, numbers in thousands

As they settle, ethnic groups tend to congregate in certain regions or cities, and that, of course, plays a large role in how specific ethnic media develop. When the ethnic communities reach a critical mass, newspapers and radio stations are created to serve them in their own languages. Ethnic businesses need to advertise. And, of course, the larger the community, the more news there is to report about it to its members.

The various ethnic groups have definite footprints. The nation's Asian population, for instance, is more heavily concentrated in the Western states than any other immigrant group. A full 45% of foreign-born Asians live in that region, according to the Census. Latin American immigrants gravitate to the West to a lesser degree — 39% of their foreign-born population — and to the Southern states, where 36% live. European immigrants, meanwhile, are most likely to live in the Northeast (39%). The Midwest, furthest from the coasts, has the smallest share of any of those ethnicities. ³

Hispanics, about three-quarters of whom speak Spanish in the United States, dominate the country's foreign-born population. 4 According to the Census, they are at least 5% of the population in 22 states. And in each of nine states, including the four largest — California, Texas, Florida and New York — Hispanics or Latinos are more than 12.5%. Some of the counties surrounding New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Miami, Dallas, San Antonio and Houston, as well as the Chicago and Denver metro areas, have at least 25% Hispanic populations. 5 Those areas are well suited not just for newspapers but for broadcast television as well.

The nation's Asian population, from countries that speak a number of languages, is smaller and less concentrated. Only 10 states have populations that are greater than 3.6% Asian. And only two of the four biggest states, California and New York, are in that group. Again, that doesn't mean that Asians living in those places speak a language other than English, but it does mean those places are more likely to support Asian-language media. Other than Hawaii, no U.S. state has an Asian population greater than 12.4%. 6 According to the 2000 Census, far more counties are more than 70% Hispanic or Latino than are at least 25% Asian. 7

The black, or African-American, population is without question a large force in the U.S. It makes up more than 12% of the population in 16 states and more than 25% in six. 8 But that population, by and large not immigrants, largely speaks English. Because of that the black press, TV and radio are used more often as supplements to mainstream news outlets rather than replacements.

Footnotes

1. U.S. Census, Foreign-Born Population by World Region of Birth, Age and Sex, March 1995.

2. U.S. Census, Foreign-Born Population in U.S. Regions, by Sex and World Region of Birth, 2004.

3. Ibid.

4. U.S. Census, "2004 Community Survey Data Profile Highlights," "2004 Community Survey: Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over."

5. U.S. Census, "Mapping Census 2000: The Geography of U.S. Diversity, Hispanic or Latino Origin" p. 3

6. U.S. Census, "Mapping Census 2000: The Geography of U.S. Diversity, Asian" p. 4.

7. U.S. Census, "Mapping Census 2000: The Geography of U.S. Diversity, Asian" p. 4 vs. "Mapping Census 2000: The Geography of U.S. Diversity, Hispanic or Latino Origin" p. 3.

8. U.S. Census, "Mapping Census 2000: The Geography of U.S. Diversity, Black or African American" p. 4.

Content Analysis

Content Analysis

What did the world that was put forward by the ethnic media look like on May 11, 2005? It varied significantly, depending on where you looked.

The violation of "No-Fly" Washington, D.C. airspace by a small plane, a big story in mainstream and some ethnic news outlets, didn't even crack the paper the next day in Rumbo de Houston, that city's Spanish-language daily newspaper. Instead, news of a mosquito infected with West Nile virus was the big news. On local Spanish-language TV in Houston, a Hispanic man killed when his car was hit by the city's light rail system was a major story.

One national Spanish-language newscast led with the airspace violation, but the other led with the court appearance of an Illinois man accused of killing his 8-year-old daughter and her friend. Iraq, meanwhile, made nary an appearance in any of the outlets, while the topic of immigration was a part of the news mix of each in one way or another.

Our Day in the Life of the News sample of ethnic outlets from May 11 was a mix of different kinds of media.

National ethnic media are hard to find, but we recorded two newscasts, Univision's and Telemundo's. Beyond that, we captured the local ethnic media —newspaper, TV and radio — in Houston, Milwaukee and Bend, Ore. We recorded two local Spanish-language newscasts, both in Houston. Among the cities we chose we examined one foreign-language daily newspaper, Rumbo de Houston. None of the Spanish-language radio we recorded in our cities had meaningful news content. We also looked at one African-American publication, a weekly community newspaper in the Milwaukee area, the Milwaukee Community Journal.

The sample, while admittedly small, revealed noticeable differences in what audiences got from those outlets.

Spanish-Language Outlets

The Hispanic media aren't simply copies of others in a different language. They tend to be broader in the scope of their topics and in the geographic regions they cover, and that is true for local outlets as well as national ones. Stories affecting members of the local ethnic community are given heavy treatment.

Take, for example, the newscast for KXLN, the Univision affiliate in Houston. On May 11, it opened with an interview with a family whose son lost his legs jumping from a moving train five days earlier. That piece was followed by comments from visitors to the station's Web page about railroad safety. Then came a second-day piece about a man who was killed when he was struck by a city light rail train.

The newscast did a serious, lengthy piece on religion. The story focused on a Hispanic woman who was a member of the Episcopal clergy and raised the question why women can't be priests in the Catholic Church. The report wasn't just a profile. It waded into meatier religious topics, at one point quoting a local monsignor about why women are not allowed to be priests. It then challenged his reading of Scripture by noting that supporters of woman priests also quote the Bible. And the piece was just Part 1 of a multi-part series.

The plane scare that dominated cable and network evening news that day, when it did appear on KXLN, got only one paragraph, more than half-way through the newscast.

That was followed by a longish story about the discovery of a mosquito carrying the West Nile Virus in Houston and the fumigation scheduled for the affected area. Immigration made an appearance in two pieces — one about emergency health care for illegal immigrants and a short item on the Mexican government's reaction to the U.S. government's plan to make driver's licenses harder to get.

And the local newscasts reached out further, geographically and otherwise, for some of their topics. For instance, Telemundo's local newscast on KTMD did a lengthy feature on the city of Alvarado in Mexico's Veracruz State, hundreds of miles down the Gulf coast from the Texas border. The city is known as "the place where the most dirty-mouthed people live," and the story was filled with bleeped expletives. At one point the reporter interviewed a resident of the region who told him, "It's very common here for someone to say, '**** your mother,' and I will answer, '**** yours.' We talk like that."

A numeric accounting of the topics that appeared on Houston's local Spanish-language TV is revealing. Consider, for example, that traditional staple of local TV news, crime. It was in short supply on those newscasts, only 16% of their newshole. That is far lower than the 42% that mainstream local TV spends on the topic. ¹

Government news barely cracked the local newscasts we saw on May 11 — only 6% of all coverage. That was less than the government coverage on mainstream local news that night, which weighed in at 9%. But foreign relations was a much bigger part of the Spanish-language newscasts, with just under 15% of the stories. English-language local TV did only about 4% of its stories on the topic. ²

National Spanish-Language TV

The national Spanish-language newscasts looked different from each other and from their English-language counterparts. Telemundo opened its May 11 newscast with three different crime stories from across the country — murders in California, Illinois and Texas — before turning to a relatively short piece on the plane scare in Washington.

Univision, meanwhile, opened with a lengthy package on the plane scare. It quoted a range of people — the Florida Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a Hispanic Congressional employee, and President Oscar Berger of Guatemala, who had been in the Capitol for trade talks.

The pieces on the two networks were different in tone as well. The Univision story at several points drew comparisons to September 11, 2001, and relayed complaints from evacuees that it was difficult to clear the Capitol. The Telemundo piece emphasized that the Capitol was empty in "seconds." The report quoted the president of El Salvador, who was visiting the Capitol, as saying the evacuation "was very effective, and that only a few cell phones were lost. And someone ripped their pants."

Immigration matters and the accounts of struggling immigrants also played a big role in the national Spanish-language newscasts. On May 11, Univision's "Noticiero" did an update of a story on thousands of New York residents who were going to lose their drivers' licenses because they did not have valid Social Security cards. "Today, on the other hand, thanks to a judicial decision, there is hope," anchorman Jorge Ramos told his audience. "Although, as Blana Rosa Vilchez of New York says, we should not get overconfident."

The use of the word "we" is interesting because of the way it links the identity of the station with its audience. "On your side" isn't just a marketing phrase for these newscasts. There is a definite feeling that the news is aimed at a particular community, and that the station is working with its viewers.

On May 11, Telemundo's "Noticiero" did a piece focusing on Springdale, N.Y., where the rape and murder of a housewife, apparently by a Guatemalan worker, had created distrust toward immigrant workers. The story featured some of the same "we're in this together" viewpoint. "The workers simply state that they are paying for the actions of one person," said the reporter. "This is taking away their daily bread as workers: because of one, everyone has to pay."

And both networks were interested in news south of the border. Both had a story about Mexican soap opera actors hit by a car in Mexico City. Telemundo had several other pieces from Mexico, including a story about how the U.S. embassy denied a humanitarian visa to a woman whose husband had been beaten in New Jersey, violence in the Mexican city of Nuevo Laredo, and the death of an actress in Mexico City who had a heart attack when she thought she was being robbed.

Looking at the geographic focus of the stories covered — what the stories were about rather than where they were reported from — Spanish-language TV really stood out. On May 11 Univision's national newscast included stories about the arrest of 400 youths by the government of Cuba, the man who ran over Mexican actors on a street in Mexico City, and the increase in fake versions of drugs like Viagra coming over the Mexican border into the U.S. Even the story of the Washington plane scare took a different approach with its interviews with Hispanic witnesses.

The numbers make the differences between the Spanish-language outlets and their English-language counterparts clear. Roughly 36% of the stories on all the Spanish-language TV newscasts we examined were about international topics.³ That is far above local TV's 9% and cable's 29%, though less than the national evening TV news with 48%.⁴

Perhaps because of Telemundo's heavy focus on murders, crime coverage in the national Spanish-language newscasts was high, 28%, well above the 19% on the network newscasts.⁵

As for the specific topic of foreign relations, Spanish-language newscasts stuck out for the large amount they had at national level, just as they did at the local level. The national newscasts devoted about 19% of their stories to such news, almost twice the 10% the mainstream network evening newscasts carried. The national Spanish-language newscasts looked a bit more like their English-language counterparts in the amount of their government coverage — 16% for Spanish-language, 17% for English-language.⁶

Spanish-Language in Print

The lone Spanish newspaper we examined in our Day in the Life study, the tabloid format *Rumbo de Houston*, had a different approach from the English-language newspapers.

Crime, for instance, barely made an appearance in the May 12 *Rumbo de Houston*. Indeed the paper was less focused on crime (12% of the news space) than any other newspaper type we examined.⁷ The only traditional crime-focused story was about an attack on a journalist in Nuevo Laredo, the town near the U.S.-Mexican border where the lawlessness had become national news in the U.S.

Local news, however, was not lost in the issue. On the front page, the paper featured a large story on the mosquitoes infected with the West Nile virus, followed by a piece about the death on the city's light rail system, which the paper called "one of the most dangerous transportation systems in the whole country." There was a story about the regulation of Houston taco stands and one on the "pressures" involved in the mayor's prodding of firefighters on a contract.

National news did not figure prominently in May 12th's *Rumbo*. There wasn't a story with a national focus until page 6, and that was a preview of a local meeting about military base closings. On page 8 there was a piece on a potential new law that would make drivers' licenses more uniform. The war in Iraq didn't make an appearance until page 9, which had a short item about the number of deaths since the installation of a new Iraqi government. And the small plane that violated D.C. airspace wasn't even mentioned.

We again saw the foreign focus we found on Spanish-language TV. Just after the opening local stories, page three carried a piece about how residents of El Salvador would have to use an extra digit to make calls in the country. Other stories reported on money being shipped from immigrants in the U.S. to friends and family in Mexico, on the Mexican government's opposition to the building of a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border, and various short items about Central and South America (the subjects of eight stories in all).

Rumbo was more like its English-language counterparts in some ways. Roughly 25% of the newshole in the tabloid was devoted to government, compared with 27% for national newspapers, 23% for suburban papers and 19% for metro newspapers. About 10% of the hole in *Rumbo* was devoted to foreign relations, compared to 11% in the national papers and 8% in the metro papers (it's probably not a surprise that suburban papers did little foreign coverage, 2%). Domestic issues got roughly the same amount of coverage in *Rumbo* as in other metro papers, with both devoting roughly 14% to the topics.⁸

On the whole 47% of the Spanish-language stories we examined had an international focus. That far outstripped all the other types of papers: metro (24%), suburban (8%) and even national (30%).⁹

Spanish-language papers were close to the metro-paper average when it came to journalist opinion — neither had much, only 3% of stories and 2%, respectively.¹⁰

African-American Media

The African-American paper we captured, the weekly *Milwaukee Community Journal*, provided content that was truly community-based in almost every sense of the term. The content was either about African Americans, about Milwaukee, or both. Its content fit with what we've found in previous years in this report. The African-American press, published in English and generally published weekly, is not designed to serve as a substitute for the mainstream media but as a complement.

The front page of the paper presented a look at the mix inside. One story reported that the Police Athletic League facility in one of the city's poorest neighborhoods was being put up for sale because of the PAL's bankruptcy. Another noted that the national unemployment rate for African-Americans was twice the national average. Another described a

lawsuit being filed against the city by individuals claiming their constitutional rights were violated by the Milwaukee police.

The pieces had a definite point of view and were as intent on stirring action as they were on reporting facts. The PAL story gave readers contact information for anyone interested in the bidding process. The lawsuit story didn't include a comment from the police department, but it not only outlined the lawsuit in detail, it also quoted a letter from a Milwaukee alderman requesting an investigation by the U.S. Justice Department.

But the unemployment story may offer the most telling sign of the paper's point of view. The piece presented opinion as fact. It called the unemployment numbers "another in a series of blows that the American middle class has suffered under the Bush administration" and added that the Bush budget "fails to promote security or to honor our veterans." It then said, "Democrats will keep fighting for the values that will strengthen the American middle class."

The paper carried an article about a local church's "Day of Restoration" designed to bring the community together to discuss its problems. A lengthy piece reported recent parties and events in the community attended by a columnist from the paper — everything from a high school recognizing attendance and its honor roll to a lecture by the singer Patti LaBelle. There was also a lengthy piece on marijuana and mental health.

Footnotes

1. PEJ research.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.

[Click here to view content data tables.](#)

Audience

Circulation and audience figures for the print side of the ethnic media are difficult to track in the traditional way. Absent large groups to gather the data across the various languages, researchers are left to piece together what they can city-by-city. And often the numbers gathered are publisher estimates that, to attract advertisers, could be made to look larger than they really are.

Spanish-Language Media

The Spanish-language media have the most organized audience data of the ethnic groups, and the picture is something of a reversal from past years. For the first time since 2000, the data suggest that Spanish-language newspapers lost circulation. The audience for television, however, appears to be growing.

The Latino Print Network, a coalition of Hispanic print news outlets (roughly 90% of which are published in Spanish) gathers data from across the country. Even with those figures, the state of the Spanish-language newspaper audience is hard to pin down, and it should be noted that LPN is not an impartial source. But it seems 2004 was a down year in audience for Spanish-language newspapers.

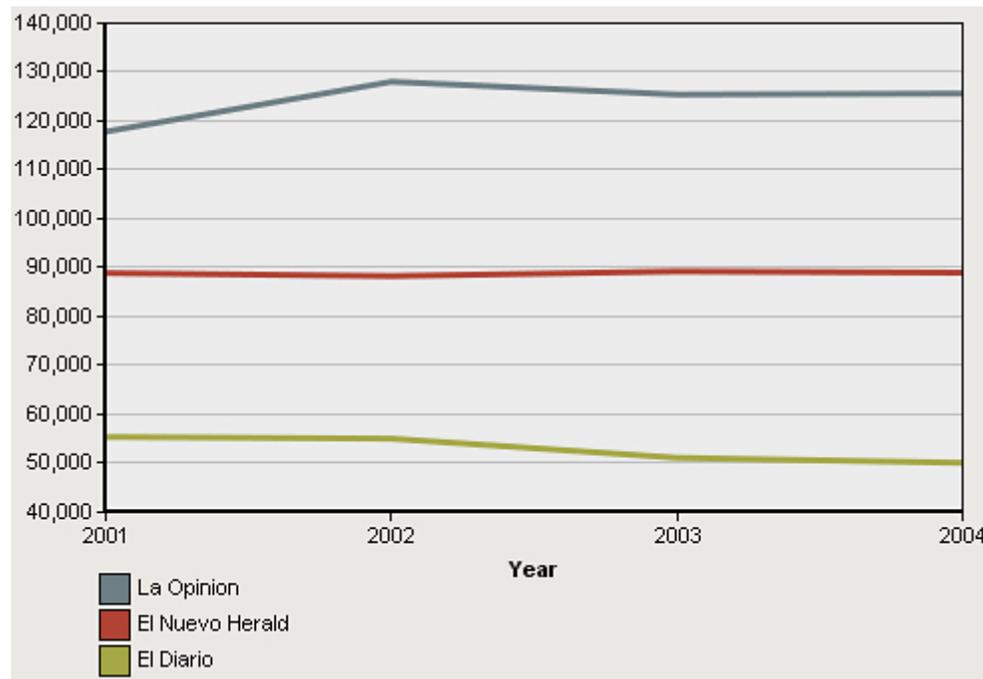
Until 2004, every year for which the Latino Print Network has data (going back intermittently to 1970) had brought new records in circulation and in the number of publications. But in 2004 circulation dropped to 16.7 million from 17.4 million, according to LPN. ¹ Most of the losses came in daily and weekly newspapers. Monthly and semi-monthly papers showed an increase, according to the figures.

Despite declines in circulation, the LPN data also show that the number of newspapers increased at all levels, dailies from 40 to 42, weeklies from 304 to 317, less-than-weeklies from 322 to 345. ²

The biggest question about the LPN data, however, is reliability. Out of the 42 dailies papers for which it gathers numbers, only 18 are audited. Only 75 of the 317 weeklies are audited, and only 8 of the 345 less-than-weekly papers. ³

The figures for three of the largest audited dailies suggest clear differences in audience trends in three cities with very different ethnic populations.

Audited Circulations of Three Major Spanish-Language Dailies



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Audit Bureau of Circulation, annual audit reports and publisher's statements

In Los Angeles, La Opinion was enjoying growth. The paper averaged 125,624 in circulation in 2004 (the latest available audited figures) up from 117,817 in 2001, an increase of 7%.⁴ In Miami, the numbers were essentially flat for El Nuevo Herald — 88,977 in 2004 and 88,904 in 2001.⁵ And in New York, El Diario was experiencing declines. The paper had a circulation of 50,105 in the third quarter of 2004, compared with 55,397 in the third quarter of 2001 — a drop of about 10%.⁶ (The general trend for English-language daily newspaper circulation in 2005 was down, though figures varied from city to city.⁷)

There are a number of possible reasons for the disparity between cities. One is the editorial product each paper provides. And the specific media environments differ; some papers face more serious competition than others, as El Diario has with Hoy. There is also the fact that these are different populations. They may all speak Spanish, but their national origins are varied — the Miami area has a large Cuban population, New York has many Dominicans and Los Angeles is heavily Mexican. Whatever the reason, geography seems to matter with Spanish-language newspapers.

Spanish-language television news may have even more potential than print, considering the amount of television viewed in Hispanic homes. Hispanic households, according to Nielsen Media Research, watch much more television than U.S. households in general, and that is true across all age groups. Again, that isn't to say all those homes are Spanish-language-dominant, but they are more likely to watch Spanish-language TV than homes at large. (There is

some debate within the television industry about how Hispanic homes are measured by Nielsen. For more on the controversy see the Network TV chapter.)

What's more, the number of Hispanic households with televisions is growing. In the 2004-2005 TV season 10.91 million of them had televisions, up from 9.73 million in 2002-2003, an increase of 12%. Over the same period, the number of TV households where Spanish was the primary language grew by about 19%, from 4.26 million to 5.06 million. ⁸

Who is in the best position to capitalize on this growth?

One company — Univision — continued to dominate Spanish-language television. Its flagship Univision network reached 98% of all U.S. Hispanic households in 2005, according to the network. Its second network, TeleFutura, aimed at younger viewers, was launched in 2002 and reached 86% of U.S. Hispanic households, the network said. ⁹

Univision remained the fifth most watched network in the U.S. over all in 2005, holding steady in that position from 2004. And its demographics, which benefit from the younger Hispanic population, are impressive. ¹⁰ In the third quarter of 2005, Univision's 18-to-49 audience averaged 1.98 million prime-time viewers, an increase of 19% over the third quarter of 2004. In prime time, the network ranked second over all in average viewership among 18-34-year-olds in the third quarter of 2005, behind only Fox. And Univision was the No. 1 prime-time network among viewers 18 to 49 in Los Angeles, Miami, Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, Phoenix, Fresno and Bakersfield. ¹¹

It is worth noting, though, that Univision's robust figures come in part from the fact that the network's competition is the more fragmented English-language broadcast media market, where ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox are competing against not just one another but cable as well.

Still, those numbers reveal an impressive market for Spanish-language television and Univision's dominance of it. There are signs, however, that NBC-owned Telemundo, still a distant second in the race (and recently even third behind TeleFutura), is gaining some ground. In the third quarter of 2005, Telemundo reclaimed its spot as the No. 2 Spanish-language network behind Univision in prime time. And while TeleFutura still leads in all other parts of the day, Telemundo finally appeared to be gaining some momentum.

Ethnic Media Audience Survey

In addition to circulation and ratings data, 2005 marked the release of a massive survey on the readership habits of ethnic media users. The polling firm Bendixen and Associates and New California Media surveyed 1,895 media users of various languages and ethnic backgrounds from around the country.

Its central findings were that as of 2005, 51 million Americans, 24% of U.S. adults, are either primary or secondary consumers of ethnic media, ¹² and that primary consumers, those who prefer ethnic media over mainstream outlets, make up 13% of the adult population, or 29 million people, on their own. ¹³

The survey was produced for an ethnic media organization, but the findings still suggest that the ethnic media play a significant role in the American media landscape, influencing the views of a large number of citizens of various ethnic backgrounds. The findings also suggest that more study of those media is needed.

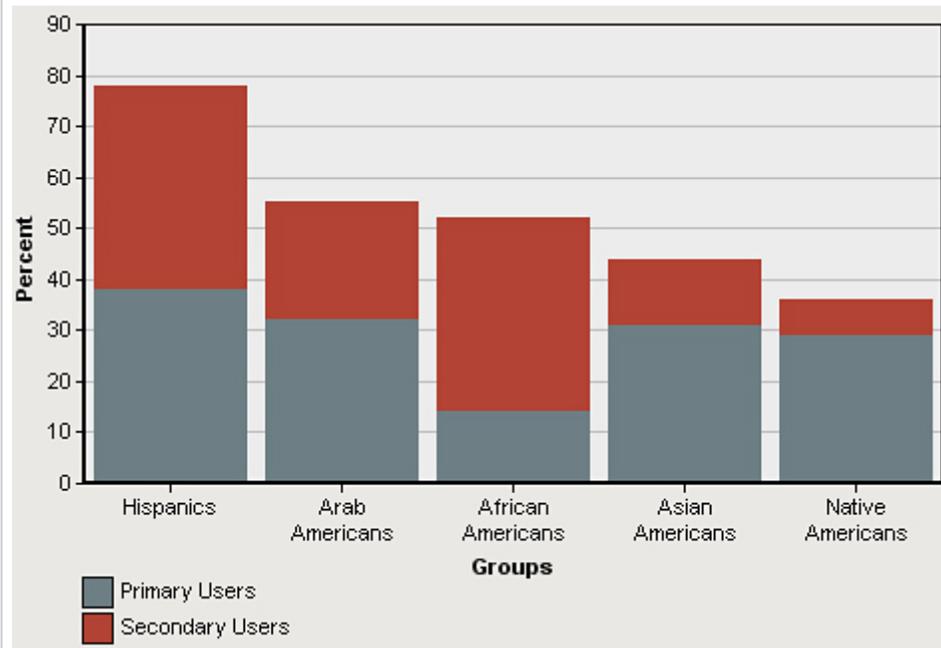
Within ethnic groups and subgroups there are notable differences in the extent of their use of media and in what kind of media are preferred. Hispanics are by far the heaviest users over all. A full 87% of Hispanics use one form of ethnic

media or another 14 (a Pew Hispanic Center survey puts that figure at 69%)¹⁵. African-Americans and Arab Americans are next, with 74% using some form of ethnic media. Then come Asian-Americans at 70% and Native Americans at 64%.¹⁶

Looking at the kind of media preferred reveals other differences among the ethnic groups. Hispanics rely most heavily on ethnic television — 78% watch Spanish-language TV primarily or secondarily. African-Americans, on the other hand, rely more heavily on ethnic radio; 58% of them tune in to it. And Native Americans look mostly to native-language newspapers; 47% turn to their ethnic printed pages.¹⁷

Ethnic Television Use by Population Group

Percent who say they are primary or secondary ethnic TV consumers



Design Your Own Chart

Source: New California Media Poll, The Ethnic Media in America: The Giant Hidden in Plain Sight

* Primary consumers favor ethnic media, secondary consumers favor mainstream outlets but use ethnic ones

Those numbers may have as much to do with the forms available in each language as with preferences among the ethnic groups. For instance, the high penetration of ethnic newspapers among Native Americans has more than a little to do with the tradition and strength of that group's press, which is situated in areas densely populated by its audiences, while there is little Native American TV programming. And the high ethnic television use by Arab Americans is, in part, attributable to satellite television, which brings programming from overseas.

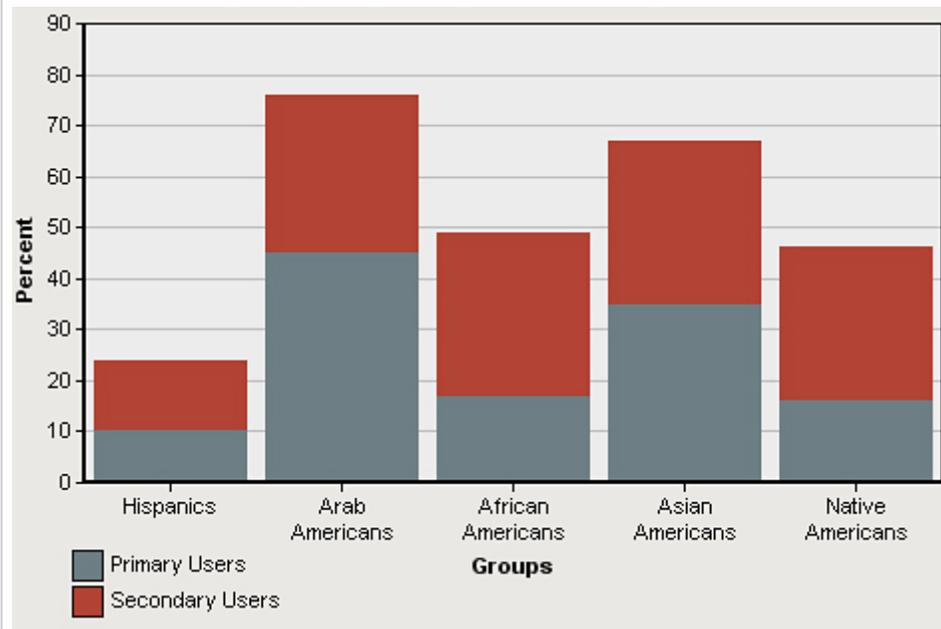
In each medium, though, Hispanics are the leaders in “primary consumers” of ethnic media. They are tied with African-Americans in ethnic radio use and lead outright in the other media. Why?

The answer is probably twofold. First, in sheer numbers, Hispanics make up such a large part of the population that they have reached a kind of critical mass that has allowed their media to grow far faster than those of other ethnic groups. Those media, which are now national, can go beyond what many other ethnic media offer and can more easily be a substitution for other mainstream outlets. Second, roughly three quarters of Hispanics share a common language rather than a common national background, giving the media a broader audience base — immigrants from Puerto Rico and El Salvador as well as Mexico, for example. New California Media’s National Ethnic Media Directory has more than 130 pages listing all the Spanish-language print, radio and television outlets. No other ethnic group has even 90 pages, and some of the others have several different languages represented in their outlets. 18

Access to various media obviously influences the extent of their use. Only 10% of Hispanics visit ethnic Web sites, while 45% of Arab Americans do, according to the New California Media survey. 19

Internet Use by Ethnic Groups

Percent who say they are primary or secondary ethnic internet consumers



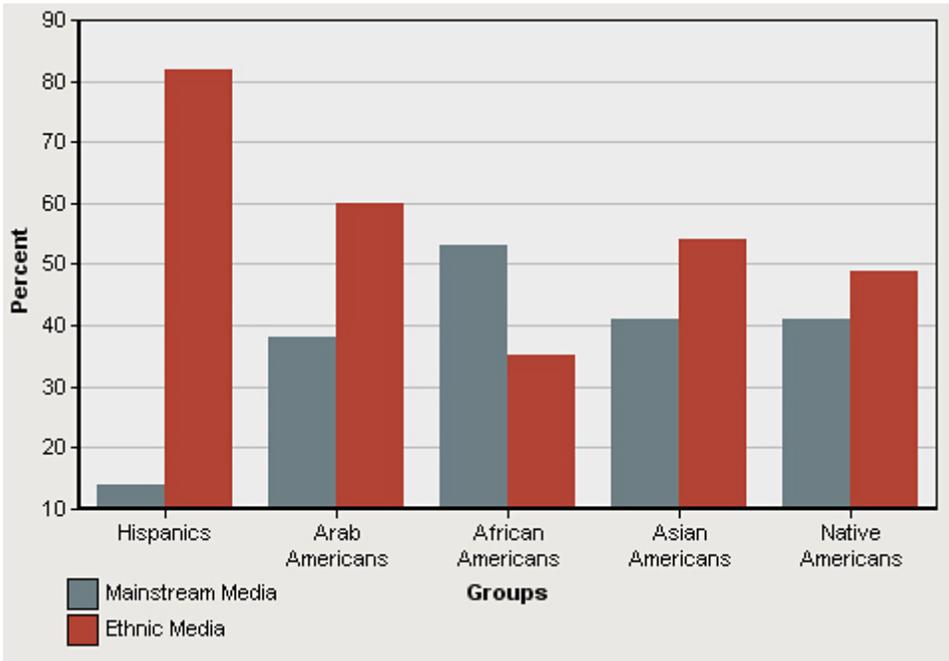
Design Your Own Chart

Source: New California Media Poll, The Ethnic Media in America: The Giant Hidden in Plain Sight

* Primary consumers favor ethnic media, secondary consumers favor mainstream outlets but use ethnic ones

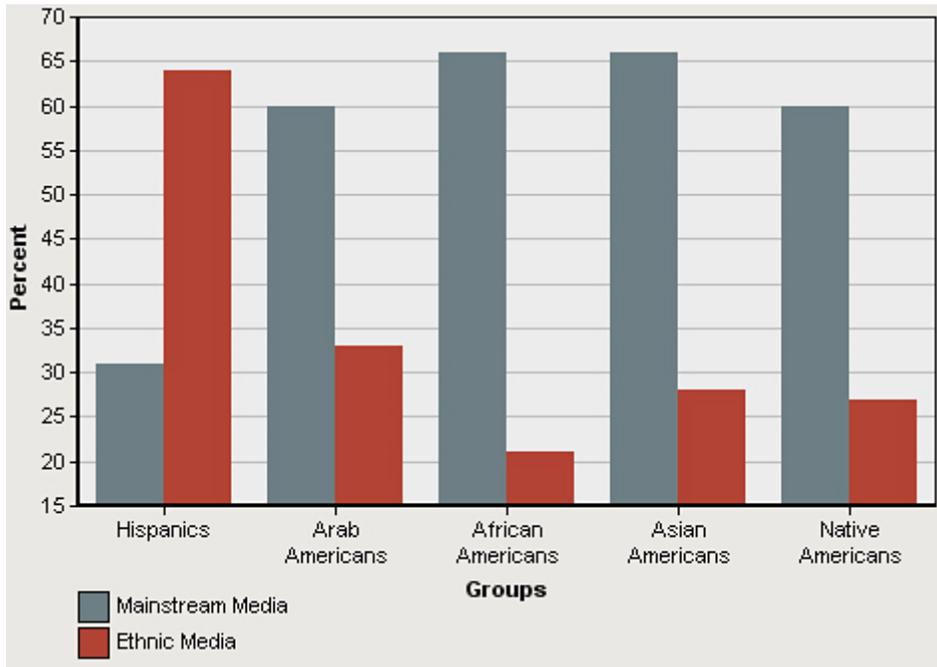
What is it ethnic groups are looking for from their media? The NCM poll finds that nearly every ethnic group studied turns first to ethnic outlets when looking for information on their “native country” or “ethnic community,” news generally not covered by the English-language media. But mainstream media are the choice for information on “politics and government” in the U.S.

Which media do various ethnic groups rely on more heavily for information on their native lands and communities?



Design Your Own Chart
Source: New California Media Poll, The Ethnic Media in America: The Giant Hidden in Plain Sight

Which media do various ethnic groups rely on more heavily for news on politics and government?



Design Your Own Chart

Source: New California Media Poll, The Ethnic Media in America: The Giant Hidden in Plain Sight

Nor are the ethnic media a means of translating what people who have language barriers could otherwise get from the English-language press. The mainstream and ethnic media are by and large complementary.

Here too, however, there are differences between Hispanics and other ethnic groups. They are the only group to turn consistently to their native-language media for traditional ethnic-media issues and government coverage. And the fact that Hispanics so readily turn to Spanish-language outlets may be partly because those outlets are more developed than other ethnic media. Spanish-language are the only ethnic media so far that have developed beyond a local presence. They have national outlets with large organizations that can invest more in newsgathering. They can go beyond what other ethnic media do and devote time and money to covering city, state and national politics.

That finding, along with the large number of secondary ethnic media users, raises the question whether the ethnic media are primarily a transitional convenience for immigrants. Would other ethnic groups do what Spanish-speakers do and turn to their native-language outlets if broader coverage was available?

It may be a question that remains unanswered, at least for some time. Lacking a common language, other ethnic groups are ultimately Vietnamese media, say, or Korean media, more than Asian media. But if immigrant populations continue to grow and targeting audiences by satellite programming or the Internet becomes easier, it is conceivable other ethnic groups could develop broader media as well.

Footnotes

1. "Hispanic Publications in 2004," Kirk Whisler & Latino Print Network, Carlsbad. Calif.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Audit Bureau of Circulations, La Opinion Publisher's Statement Monday – Friday figures.
5. Audit Bureau of Circulations, El Nuevo Herald Publisher's Statement, Monday – Saturday figures.
6. Audit Bureau of Circulations, El Diario Publisher's Statement, Monday – Friday.
7. In that same period the Los Angeles Times lost readers, but an exact comparison is impossible because the circulation measurements were based on different days. The Miami Herald saw a slight increase and the three main dailies in New York (the Times, Daily News and Post) saw increases.
8. Nielsen Media Research chart, Hispanic-American TV Population Growth Trends.
9. Univision 2005 Third-Quarter Results press release.
10. Some experts note that the biggest growth in young Hispanics under 18 is among the native-born, who are not major consumers of Spanish-language TV. But at the same time the proportion of "foreign-born" children increased from 2.7% to 3.7% between 1990 and 2000. And considering the number of immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries, many of those children are probably Spanish-speakers.
11. Univision 2005 Third-Quarter Results press release.
12. The survey was paid for by an ethnic media organization, and the samples for some ethnic groups were smaller than others.
13. New California Media Poll, The Ethnic Media in America: The Giant Hidden in Plain Sight.
14. Ibid.
15. Changing Channels and Crisscrossing Cultures: A Survey of Latinos on the News Media, April 2004.
16. New California Media Poll, The Ethnic Media in America: The Giant Hidden in Plain Sight.
17. Ibid.
18. New California Media Directory, National Ethnic Media, 2 nd Edition.
19. New California Media Poll, The Ethnic Media in America: The Giant Hidden in Plain Sight.

Ownership and Economics

Ownership and Economics Economics

If the audience for the ethnic media is massive, is there also massive potential for economic gain? The data suggest that the answer is both yes and no. Different ethnicities often mean different languages, which often means fragmented audiences. While it is true that news organizations and their economics have often been defined by local markets, they do need some sort of critical mass, a certain amount of geographic concentration.

Until 2005, the Spanish-language media provided the only real exception to that rule because of their audience's common language. Spanish-speakers from Cuba in Florida, or from Puerto Rico in New York, or from Mexico in Texas and California can all watch Univision or Telemundo. Print circulations can be aggregated and ads can be sold on a national scale.

But 2005 witnessed something new: the cable company Comcast took a step toward nationalizing the Asian-American media market. In January, the company announced it was going to “rebrand and reprogram” its International Channel Networks, a collection of channels devoted to programming in different languages. It would now focus just on Asian-Americans under a new name AZN Television.

The station is a hybrid native-language outlet. It offers programming for a pan-Asian audience in English that is aimed in particular at the young — “prime time programming in English, you know your language,” says one advertisement. But it also offers films and TV shows in Mandarin, Thai, Japanese, Hindi, Korean and Vietnamese.

That a company with the national reach of Comcast has created an “Asian programming” channel suggests that the mainstream media companies are beginning to recognize the broader ethnic market as one they want to tap. But the effort has already run into some problems. In late 2005, Comcast announced it was restructuring the network and cutting its staff by about 30, roughly half. ¹ Still, AZN is a move with potentially large implications for the future of ethnic media ownership (more on that later in this section).

The financial potential, however, still trails far behind the Spanish-language outlets. AZN is an experiment that exists only on cable and through one provider. The Spanish-language media are the most mature ethnic sector today and the only one that offers any kind of real, nationalized financial data.

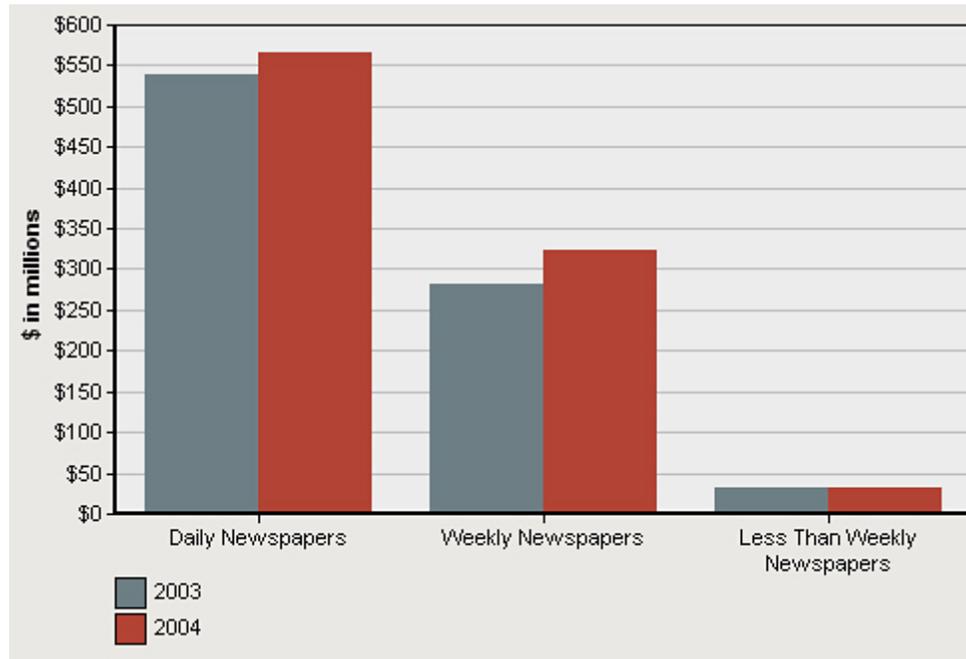
Spanish-Language Media

The Spanish-language newspaper industry offers a fairly solid sense of the financial picture. The Latino Print Network collects the data, though much of it is self-reported and un-audited and therefore has not been substantiated. The information, however, is the only set of nationalized economic data.

Going by those figures, 2004 was another good year financially for Spanish-language newspapers. Despite declines in print circulation, overall ad revenues were up for daily, weekly and less-than-weekly newspapers, climbing to \$923 million from \$854 million in 2003, an increase of 8%. ²

The biggest growth came in the 317 weekly papers the Latino Print Network studies. Those went from \$282 million in ad revenue in 2003 to \$324 million in 2004. ³ On the whole, that meant weekly papers accounted for 35% of all ad revenues among Spanish-language newspapers in 2004, up from 33% in 2003. But 42 daily Spanish-language newspapers still made up the bulk of ad revenues by far, 61% of the whole in 2004. ⁴

Hispanic Newspaper Ad Revenues by Publication Category, 2003 vs. 2004



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Kirk Whisler & Latino Print Network, Carlsbad, CA

Who is doing the advertising in Spanish-language newspapers? The figures from the Latino Print Network show that national ad dollars are a relatively modest source of revenue for daily and weekly newspapers. Local ads made up 82% of the total for Hispanic papers in 2004 (90% of which were published in Spanish), but 84% in 2003. ⁵ But the differences between national and local are greater when the ad distribution is broken down by publication cycle.

In 2004, a full 20% of the ads in daily Hispanic newspapers (96% of which published in Spanish) were national, according to the Latino Print Network and Kirk Whisler. The amount of national ads also grew in weeklies in 2004, from 16% to 17%. In less-than-weekly papers, the amount of national ad dollars actually declined, from 28% in 2003 to 14% in 2004, though the dollar amounts are so much smaller in those papers that a small change in cash equals a big change in percentage. ⁶

Newspapers weren't alone in having a successful 2004 in Spanish-language media. The Hispanic broadcaster Univision saw its net income rise by \$100 million — or more than 60% — to \$255.9 million. ⁷ And the company announced that revenues and income were up again through the first nine months of 2005.

Figures for the other large Spanish-language broadcaster, Telemundo, are difficult to find. Telemundo, as a subsidiary of NBC and a part of GE, does not release its figures separately. Reports come in bits and pieces in GE documents. For

instance, a second-quarter GE financial report noted that Telemundo had signed a deal with Wal-Mart TV to produce Spanish-language segments for in-store channels.

Ownership

The biggest news about ethnic media ownership didn't emerge until the beginning of 2006, as the Spanish-language broadcast giant Univision announced it was putting itself up for sale. The company owns and operates 62 television stations in the U.S. and Puerto Rico and has branches in cable, radio and the Internet. If and when it is sold it would be a powerful tool for its new owner in an attempt to reach Spanish-speakers in the U.S., and the companies expressing interest were among the nation's largest media operations, including News Corp., Time Warner, Disney and CBS.

Univision and Telemundo continue to be the dominant owners in Spanish-language television, with Univision far out front. With its 62 owned stations and more than 90 affiliates, it reaches 98% of U.S. Hispanic households. ⁸

If the company is ultimately sold to one of the mainstream companies that seem to make up the bulk of the early interested parties, it would raise some serious questions for Spanish-language TV in the U. S. Would such an owner mean less Spanish-language TV production and more translated programs from the parent company? Would such ownership lead to an infusion of cash that would allow Univision to strengthen its grip on the market? Would English-language programming make it into Univision's lineup as a way to build brand loyalty as second- and third-generation Hispanics switch over to English-language TV?

In the end, many analysts believe that if the company is sold it may well go to private equity firms looking for an investment. Large mainstream media companies potentially face problems because of federal regulations that limit overall ownership to stations that reach 39% of the nation's television households.

After some large shakeups in the year before, 2005 was quieter again for ethnic print media. There were no large-scale mergers on a par with 2004's uniting of La Opinion in Los Angeles, El Diario in New York and La Raza in Chicago, which made ImpreMedia the giant of Hispanic newspapers.

But ImpreMedia didn't sit completely still. In October, it launched the Domingo Network, a free Sunday edition in the three largest cities where it has papers already. The Sunday papers are delivered to 650,000 targeted homes in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago. ⁹ The edition provides "the largest print vehicle in the top three Hispanic markets," the company says, and aims at Latino women and households. And ImpreMedia purchased two more newspapers for its stable — El Mensajero, a weekly in the San Francisco Bay area with a circulation of 112,000, and La Prensa, a weekly in central Florida with about 50,000. The company's weekly distribution is now 1.9 million. ¹⁰

There were signs that more mainstream outlets were taking serious note of the growth of Spanish-language print outlets. In the face of falling circulations, many media companies have made forays into the ethnic media world as a way to offset lost readers.

In Boston, the well-known alternative weekly the Phoenix made a move to buy into the growing Spanish-language market by purchasing a 35% stake in El Planeta, the largest Hispanic weekly in the area. El Planeta, just launched in 2004, publishes four editions in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, with a fifth slated for Connecticut. ¹¹

In magazines, several established companies and well-known titles launched Spanish-language editions in 2005. Time Warner test-launched Sports Illustrated Latino in April and distributed three issues during the year to half a million Hispanic households, subscribers to People en Espanol or to Comcast/Time Warner Hispanic programming packages. The struggling hip-hop magazine The Source launched Source Latino in May.

And investors are still looking at Spanish-language print outlets as a place for their money, though the market may be cooling off. In early 2005 Meximerica Media, which publishes the Rumbo chain of newspapers in Texas, looked to be in trouble when its original financial backers, Recoletos Grupo de Comunicacion of Spain, pulled out. In June, though, Meximerica received an investment of \$18 million from Pinto America Growth Fund and Rustic Canyon Partners.¹² Pinto is a Texas-based equity fund focused on companies in the U.S. Hispanic market. Rustic Canyon is a venture-capital and private-equity fund established to invest a portion of the funds created by the recapitalization of Times Mirror (later acquired by Tribune Company).

Also in June, Publicitas-LHM, the Hispanic division of the Swiss company PubliGroupe/Publicitas Promotion Network, announced plans to build a national advertising sales platform for Rumbo and Hoy Newspapers.¹³ The goal was to nationalize ad sales among more Spanish-language newspapers.

There were some significant closings in the Hispanic media last year as well. Zoom media, publishers of Poder and Loft magazines, lost its backing and shut down when the Columbian Universal group walked away. But both titles were niche publications, and their fate may not speak to the broader ethnic media climate. Both Poder, a Hispanic business magazine published in English and Spanish, and Loft, a Hispanic men's lifestyle magazine published in English, were aimed at very targeted audiences, some of which were already served by other publications. And neither was primarily a Spanish-language outlet.

The biggest ownership issue for some ethnic print outlets may be the role the mainstream media will play in the future. Mainstream companies bought into the ethnic market because they saw potential for growth. But those struggling mainstream owners now may present some challenges. The deep pockets they have provided come with other strings.

In October of 2005, the Knight-Ridder company closed its Spanish-language weekly in the San Jose area, Nuevo Mundo, and began to distribute Fronteras de la Noticia, which is produced in Mexico. The company also announced it was selling Viet Mercury, its Vietnamese newspaper in San Jose.

If Knight Ridder is sold, what will happen to other ethnic outlets the company owns, such as El Nuevo Herald in Miami? Indeed, if the current wave of consolidation continues across the English-language side of the newspaper industry, what will happen to all those ethnic-media investments those companies have made? Much will probably depend on the specific company and even the specific market, but the net effect is that those outlets could face some turbulent times.

In the world of ethnic television, things are more stable. The creation of AZN by Comcast suggests that companies are looking for the next big wave to catch in ethnic TV, but it's not clear whether it is a sure bet.

For many ethnic groups, the easiest form of TV transmission probably will continue to be satellite. Broadcast television demands a high density of people who speak the same language. New Skies Satellite has research showing that the number of ethnic channels moving around the globe expanded from 378 at the end of 2000 to roughly 1,000 at the end of 2003.¹⁴ And providers are offering those stations to viewers. Both DirecTV and the Dish Network offer extensive language- and ethnicity-specific programming, with Dish providing a wider range of options – everything from Polish to

Farsi to Armenian. Both have a large number of Spanish-language options. Globecast, based in Paris, offers nearly 140 worldwide channels to viewers in the U.S. And Home2US, a satellite firm based in Virginia that was founded in 2003, now has more 100,000 subscribers in the U.S. viewing its offering of ethnic channels from around the world. Its goal is 600,000 to 700,000 subscribers by 2008. ¹⁵

Summary

Looking at the whole picture, there is little question that the ethnic media are growing. Ad revenues, ratings figures and new startups show a market still relatively immune from the downward slide of much of the mainstream media. But there are some real questions on the horizon.

As large mainstream print outlets struggle, what will happen to the ethnic papers they started and/or joined with? Looking at how some circulations are falling and holding steady while others are rising in the Spanish-language press, have some markets reached maturity, while others are more dynamic? With a new Asian network in the offing, are mainstream media owners ready to try and nationalize other ethnic audiences? Or will different dialects and languages get in the way of nationalizing groups that are not Spanish-speakers?

Footnotes

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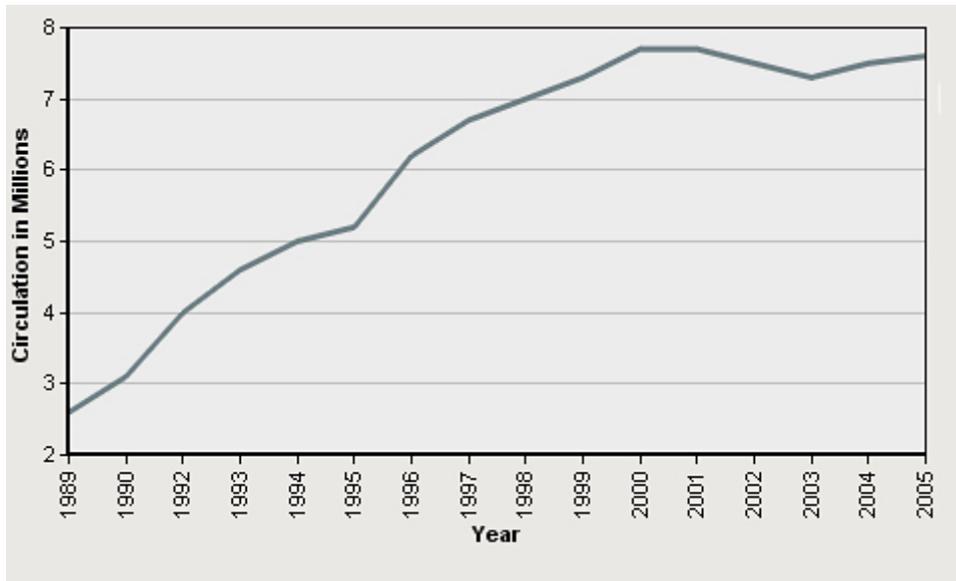
Alternative

Alternative Weeklies

Circulation among alternative weeklies was up again in 2005, according to figures from the Association of Alternative Newsweeklies. The average circulation among all AAN members reached 7.64 million in 2005, up from 7.58 million in 2004. ¹

Growth in Alternative News Weeklies

Association of Alternative Newsweeklies Member Publications, 1989 – 2005



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Association of Alternative Newsweeklies unpublished data

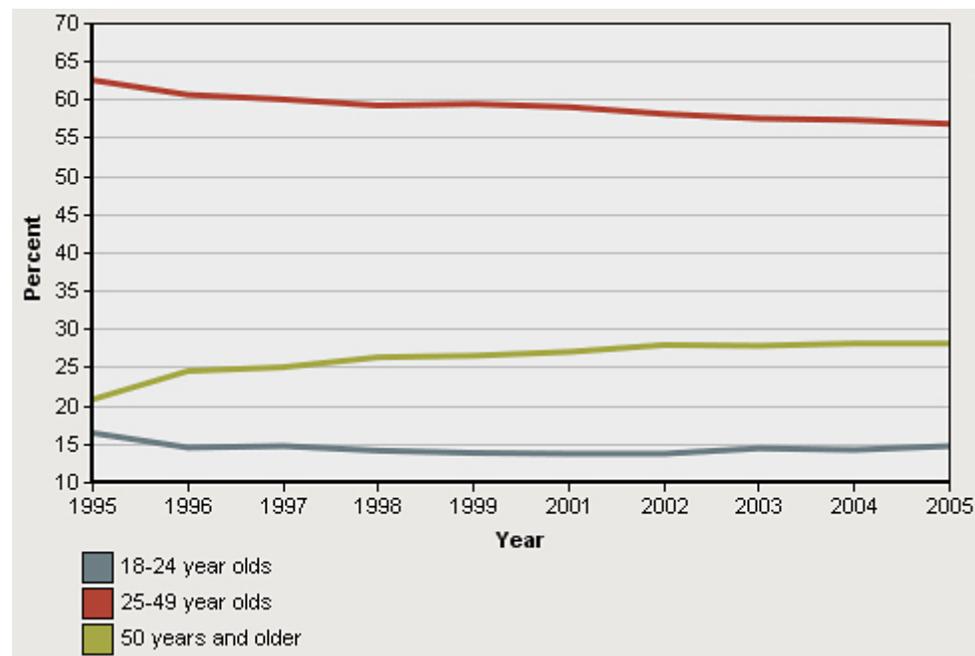
The industry is still below its all-time peak of 7.79 million in 2001. The recession hurt the weeklies, particularly in the area of national advertising, and some titles folded. But since bottoming out at 7.33 million in 2003, the weeklies have regained upward momentum in circulation. ²

The demographic data for the alternative weekly audience didn't shift in any dramatic way in 2005, though there were some very small changes recorded in an annual survey by the Alternative Weekly Network, which sells national ads for weeklies. The survey examined readers of 108 different weeklies in 72 different markets. Readers 18 to 24 years old

increased to 14.8% in 2005, up from 14.3% in 2004, according to the data. The median age of readers, however, held steady at 40. 3

Alternative Weekly Readership by Age Group

1995 – 2005



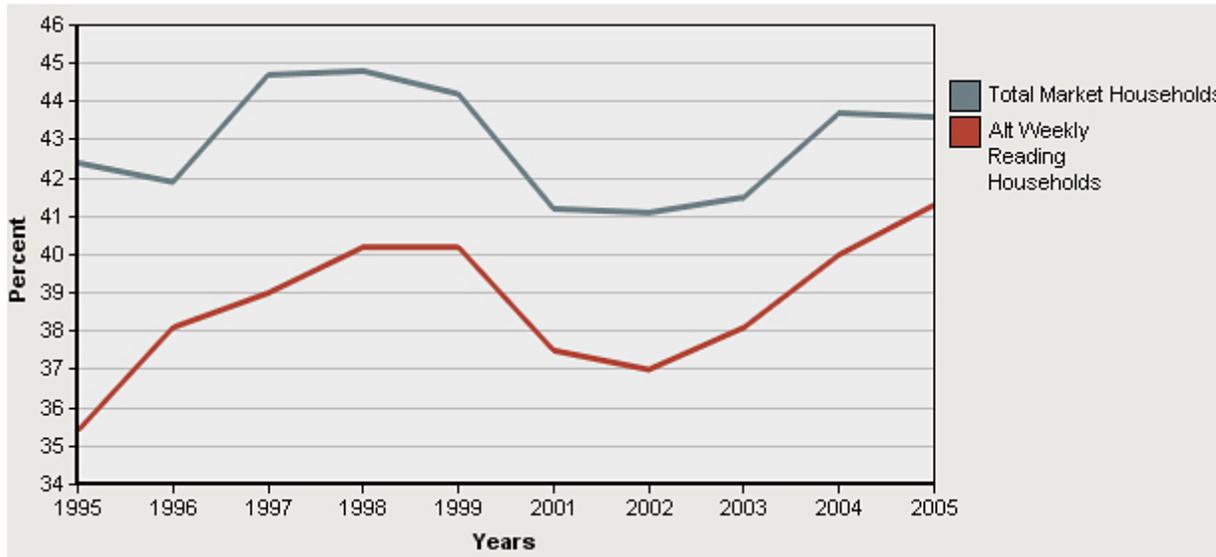
Design Your Own Chart

Source: Association of Alternative Newsweeklies, unpublished data

The percentage of weekly readers who were married climbed to 48.2 in 2005, from 46.9 in 2004. And the number of readers with children at home was up to 41.3% from 40%. Both numbers represent high-water marks since 1995, the first year for which survey data were available, and the changes may represent a few trends. 4

The alternative weeklies are well-established papers, entrenched in many communities as more than simply tabloids for the young. As we have mentioned in previous years, weeklies are by no means outsider publications; their readers have an average income of over \$51,000 and more than 40% of them have college degrees. And the rising rate of those who are married with children in the house reinforces their broader appeal. The gap between the weeklies' readers with a "child at home" and the market average has narrowed. In 1995, some 35.4% of such readers had a child at home, and for the market that figure was 42.4% — a difference of 7 percentage points. In 2005, 41.3% of weekly readers had a child at home, while 43.6% of the market did — a difference of only 2.3 points. 5

Growth of Alternative Weekly Readers Who Have Children Households with a “child at home,” alt weekly readers vs. market average



Design Your Own Chart

Source: Alternative Weekly Network survey

Those numbers indicate not only that more households in the alternative weekly markets have children, but also that more parents are reading them. That may suggest that readers of the weeklies are not moving away from them as they grow older, but continuing to read the papers. And in coming years that may mean that weeklies will begin reaching out to different advertisers and altering their content to appeal to the older readers.

Economics

As this report was compiled the final economic data from 2005 were not yet available. But there was an interesting trend at the national level with advertising: national ads in the alternative weeklies fell after being steady for a few years.

National ads have declined over all since 2001, when they brought in about \$50 million. But for a while the national ad dollars held fairly steady in the range of \$30 million to \$40 million, according to Mark Hanzlik of the Alternative Weekly Network, which sells national ads for 110 weeklies. In 2005, AWN was estimating, the total dropped below \$30 million. ⁶

AWN splits the national ad sales market with the Ruxton Group, a company owned by the alternative weekly publisher New Times. The two sell more or less the same amount of national ads for their clients, with a small amount of national ads being negotiated by some weeklies themselves. In 2004, AWN and Ruxton sold about \$13 million in national ads each, with another \$5 million being contracted by a few weeklies directly. The 2005 numbers for AWN

were down to about \$10.5 million. If the rest of the national ad math holds, it would put the final national ad figure around \$25 million to \$26 million. 7

But using those numbers as a way to understand future ad sales might be difficult. In October New Times, owner of Ruxton, and the Village Voice announced that they would merge. That step will probably change the dollar split between the two major ad companies, since AWN used to sell ads for the Village Voice. But it may also change the amount of ads sold and how much they are sold for.

The merger, subject to government approval, would give the new company leverage in the marketplace. If advertisers want to reach the biggest alternative papers in New York City, Los Angeles, Dallas, Denver, Miami or Houston they have to go through it. On top of that, Ruxton also manages the ads for papers in Chicago, Washington and San Diego, giving the company leverage in most of the biggest markets.

And the alternative weekly reader is a desirable target for an advertiser. According to AWN research, weekly readers are 20% more likely to stay in a hotel than the market as a whole, 35% more likely to rent a car, 36% more likely to ski — as well as 67% more likely to attend a rock/pop concert and 48% more likely to frequent a bar. 8

There do seem to be different economic situations for small-market and larger-market weeklies. With no final ad figures in for 2005, Richard Karpel of the Association of Alternative Newsweeklies said the smaller-market publications were not yet facing the same kind of competition as their big-market brethren. The local dailies in those markets have not yet created commuter dailies or their own weekly publications. And some smaller AAN member publications, like those in Athens, Ga.; Norwalk, Conn.; Portland, Maine; and Wausau, Wis., don't yet have a Craigslist.com site for their towns to take away classified ads. Even in the secondary markets where Craigslist.com does have a site — Memphis, Indianapolis, Birmingham, etc. — it hasn't had the same traction it has in the bigger markets. 9

Weeklies in larger markets have had to adjust to that competition, particularly to Craigslist.com, which has large sites in big cities. Some have improved their Web classifieds to make them easier to use. Some have included new free classifieds. And some have done both.

But the fact is that numerous factors are eating into growth for large-market weeklies. The publications in larger cities are older and more mature, their growth phase largely behind them. Distribution for is tougher for them; competition for space in the street boxes and in stores is hard, and news-rack ordinances can limit space. And consider the sub-niches that have developed in large cities: often more than one daily, maybe a commuter daily, free auto advertising circulars, free real estate circulars, neighborhood publications and local Web sites designed to target specific ad areas, real estate or employment listings. Many of those competitors are less than a decade old. The large-market alternative weeklies are bleeding from dozens of little cuts.

In January 2005 the Village Voice announced a major overhaul of its online classifieds, focusing on real estate ads — the Voice's real estate classifieds have long been the choice of renters in the city — that offered virtual tours, photos and floor plans, and comprehensive neighborhood information. "Unlike other sites, villagevoice.com users won't sift through clutter, unwieldy navigation or outdated listings," the weekly boasted in a press release. The site also made "for sale by owner" ads free. And beyond real estate, the online classifieds for the Voice added an area for free ads in "selected popular categories."

And last year the other member of the Voice/New Times merger pushed forward with its free online listing, Backpage.com. Backpage is linked not only to alternative weeklies but to other outlets as (including the Columbus Dispatch in Ohio) and is meant as competition for Craigslist. Backpage starts by offering a free listing, but then offers the advertiser a chance to spend cash to get a higher spot on the site or, for more money, to place an ad in a print outlet. So far Backpage is available in 40 markets 10 with plans for more on the way, and clearly the merger with the Village Voice would expand its reach. The service also powers Univision's classified sites in nine markets. 11

New Times maintains that the service has "stopped the bleeding" at the company's papers, but Backpage has a long way to go. In December 2005, the service received 3.3 million total visits. Craigslist has more than 10 million unique visitors a month.

The Association of Alternative Newsweeklies announced in December that 20 of its papers were starting to use a classified advertising software called Avenews Remote to create free classified listings for their sites. By the end of 2006, the great majority of AAN members will have free online classifieds, the association said.

Ownership

The merger of Village Voice and New Times raises various questions for those in the industry, beyond simply issues of classified advertising. Will the new giant among the alternatives bring advantages in terms of economies of scale in newsprint, writer features and even employee benefits? Will the company be able to more easily attract large national advertisers? On the content side, will the individual, community-based appeal of alternative weeklies be damaged by larger, more corporate management?

What does appear clear is that the merger binge that has hit the mainstream newspaper field is now clearly a reality in the world of alternative weeklies. Consider the markets the new company will hold, assuming the merger is approved.

Village Voice

Publication City Circulation

City Pages (Twin Cities)	Minneapolis , MN	117,577
L.A. Weekly	Los Angeles , CA	210,045
Nashville Scene	Nashville , TN	51,327
OC Weekly	Santa Ana , CA	70,335
Seattle Weekly	Seattle , WA	105,000
Village Voice, The	New York , NY	249,942

New Times Publication	City	Circulation
Dallas Observer	Dallas , TX	105,060
East Bay Express	Emeryville , CA	85,068
Houston Press	Houston , TX	99,552
Miami New Times	Miami , FL	99,352
New Times Broward-Palm Beach	Ft Lauderdale , FL	69,504
Phoenix New Times	Phoenix , AZ	114,787
Pitch, The	Kansas City , MO	80,000
Riverfront Times	St. Louis , MO	95,415
Scene	Cleveland , OH	80,898
SF Weekly	San Francisco , CA	110,711
Westword	Denver , CO	99,846

All told that would give the new company more than 1.8 million readers and the dominant alternative weekly in 5 of the nation's 10 largest cities, as well as the biggest weeklies in other large cities like Denver and Miami . 12

If the merger is successful, it might not be a stretch to expect more like it. Alternative weeklies are still taking economic hits from a variety of sources —commuter tabs, free weeklies launched by mainstream papers and, of course, Craigslist. The savings that a publisher can achieve with a bigger reader base and perhaps more uniform content could be important in what forecasts suggest could be lean years ahead.

The other ownership question hanging in front of the weeklies at the end of 2005 was Craig Newmark, the founder of — Craigslist.com. Newmark has been discussing wading into the world of news content for some time, and it appeared that something concrete was ahead. It wasn't clear what form any journalism venture would take or how much it would challenge the alternative weeklies directly. Newmark did not reveal much about his plan, but announced that a trial version of his journalism effort would be ready in the spring of 2006.

Summary

The biggest issue on the horizon for the alternative weeklies is the Voice/New Times merger. Despite talk in recent years that the world of the weeklies has been conglomeratized, there is still a lot of room for mergers among the owners that remain.

Beyond the merger, if numbers show that the smaller weekly markets truly are seeing the bigger growth, one can only wonder if the larger weekly publishers will look to purchase publications in smaller cities or if competitors find those markets are big enough for them to push into.

There is also the question of Craig Newmark's venture. Newmark, who sits on the board of advisers of the Center for Citizen Media being started by "We the Media" author Dan Gillmor, may be looking to expand local blogging in some way. As this report outlines in the Blogs section, that is an area that is sorely lacking in real content at the moment. If Newmark can find a way to make local blogs more useful — even help push them into more regular, serious coverage of local issues — the competitive target won't be just local dailies, but alternative weeklies. The attitude and opinion in blogs are more typical of the weeklies than the dailies.

All of which may mean that another competitor for alternative weeklies will soon be on the horizon, and this time it won't just be targeting ads, but content.

Footnotes

1. Association of Alternative Newsweeklies, unpublished circulation figures.
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Charts & Tables

Charts & Tables

POPULATION PICTURE

Native Regions for Foreign Born U.S. Population – 1995
Native Regions for Foreign Born U.S. Population – 2004

AUDIENCE

Hispanic U.S. Daily Newspaper Circulation
Hispanic U.S. Newspaper Circulation
Audited Circulations of Three Major Spanish-Language Dailies
Prime Time Television Viewing per Week, 2004
Ethnic Media Users in the U.S. Population
Ethnic Newspaper Readership by Population Group
Ethnic Radio Use by Population Group
Ethnic Television Use by Population Group
Internet Use by Ethnic Groups

Which media do various ethnic groups rely on more heavily for information on their native lands and communities?
Which media do various ethnic groups rely on more heavily for news on politics and government?

OWNERSHIP AND ECONOMICS

Hispanic U.S. Newspaper Ad Revenue
Hispanic Newspaper Ad Revenues by Publication Category, 2003 vs. 2004
Change in Revenue at Alternative Weeklies
National v. Local Ads in Hispanic Newspapers
Revenue of Alternative Weeklies
Univision Net Income, 2001-2004
Spanish-Language TV Stations by Network

ALTERNATIVE

Growth in Alternative News Weeklies
Alternative Weekly Readership by Age Group
Growth of Alternative Weekly Readers Who Have Children



Journalist Survey – Intro

Intro

Beyond all the facts and figures concerning the American news media, there are the attitudes and opinions journalists themselves have about their industry and profession. This section from the State of the News Media 2004 report details the results of a survey of more than 500 national and local reporters, editors and executives. The survey was conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press in collaboration with the Project for Excellence in Journalism and the Committee of Concerned Journalists.

We hope to conduct another survey among journalists, editors and executives in the coming months of 2006.

Contents:

Commentary on the Survey Findings
By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

Press Going Too Easy on Bush: Bottom-Line Pressures Now Hurting Coverage, Say Journalists
By the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press

Survey Methodology

Survey Questionnaire and Topline

1999 Report: Striking the Balance, Audience Interests, Business Pressures and Journalists' Values

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Commentary on the Survey Findings
By Bill Kovach, Tom Rosenstiel and Amy Mitchell

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What Journalists Are Worried About

A Newsroom-Executive Divide

Specific Areas of Concern

The Internet as a Place of Confidence and Cuts

Confidence in the Public

Politics & Ideology

Crossing from Concern to Frustration

Introduction

While their worries are changing, the problems that journalists see with their profession in many ways seem more intractable than they did a few years ago.

News people feel better about some elements of their work. But they fear more than ever that the economic behavior of their companies is eroding the quality of journalism.

In particular, they think business pressures are making the news they produce thinner and shallower. And they report more cases of advertisers and owners breaching the independence of the newsroom.

These worries, in turn, seem to have widened the divide between the people who cover the news and the business executives they work for.

The changes in attitude have come after a period in which news companies, faced with declining audiences and pressure on revenues, have in many cases made further cuts in newsgathering resources.

There are also alarming signs that the news industry is continuing the short-term mentality that some critics contend has undermined journalism in the past. Online news is one of the few areas seeing general audience growth today, yet online journalists more often than any others report their newsrooms have suffered staff cuts.

Only five years earlier, news people were much more likely to see failures of their own making as more of an issue. Since then, they have come to feel more in touch with audiences, less cynical and more embracing of new technology. In other words, journalists feel they have made progress on the areas that they can control in the newsroom.

While feeling closer to audiences, however, news people also have less confidence in the American public to make wise electoral decisions, a finding that raises questions about the kind of journalism they may produce in the future.

There are also signs that the people who staff newsrooms, at least at the national level, tend to describe themselves as more liberal than in the past.

These findings, which build on work by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press and the Committee of Concerned Journalists five years ago, mark the beginning of an annual collaboration between the Pew Center and the Project for Excellence in Journalism to monitor the feelings of journalists.

In addition to assessing the change from 1999, this survey puts down some new baselines for further study-matters such as whether the press is too timid, the impact of cable, the Internet and political ideology.

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What Journalists Are Worried About

News people are not confident about the future of journalism. Overall, they appear split over whether journalism is headed in the right or wrong direction. At the national level a slim majority are pessimistic. At the local level a slim majority are optimistic. Broadcasters are more pessimistic. Print people are more optimistic. Internet journalists are the most optimistic of all.

Yet eliminate certain job descriptions and things look bleaker. Nationally, remove business executives and a majority of journalists think things are moving in the wrong direction. At the local level, it is only senior news managers who are confident. Business executives are split.

More important, the source of their concern is different than five years ago. Increasingly, journalists worry that the economics of journalism are eroding quality.

Sizable majorities of journalists (66% nationally and 57% locally) think “increased bottom line pressure is seriously hurting the quality of news coverage.” That is a dramatic increase from five years ago, when fewer than half in the news business felt this way.

And their concerns may be justified. The State of the News Media 2004 report produced by the Project for Excellence in Journalism in March found that most sectors of the news media have seen clear cutbacks in newsgathering resources. The number of newspaper newsroom staffers shrunk by 2,000 between 2000 and 2004, a drop of 4% overall. Some major online news sites saw much deeper cuts, such as MSNBC, which cut around a quarter of its staff between 2001 and 2003. Radio newsroom staffing declined by 57% from 1994 to 2001. After an uptick in 1999, network staffing began to drop again in 2000. Since 1985 the number of network news correspondents has declined by 35 percent while the number of stories per reporter increased by 30 percent.

Nationally, quality is still the problem news people worry about most but they are worried about it less than five years ago. Locally, as many journalists now cite economic pressure as journalism’s biggest problem as point to a lack of quality.

And those who have felt the economic pressure more acutely are the most worried of all. Among those who reported staff cuts in the last three years, three-quarters feel increased bottom line pressure is “seriously hurting” news quality. They also were more likely than average to name economic and business pressures as journalism’s biggest problem.

There are also signs that the economic influences on the news business have become more pernicious. Five years ago we found that financial pressure in the newsroom was “not a matter of executives or advertisers pressuring journalists about what to write or broadcast.” It was more subtle than that.

Unfortunately, that is less true today. Now a third of local journalists say they have felt such pressure, most notably from either advertisers or from corporate owners. In other words, one of the most dearly held principles of journalism—the independence of the newsroom about editorial decision-making—increasingly is being breached.

There is also alarming news here for the Internet. Advertiser and corporate interference with the news content are similarly high among those who work in online news, where the line between independently produced content and advertising may be harder to detect.

These numbers bear watching-closely.

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A Newsroom-Executive Divide

All of this may be at the root of another problem that has intensified over the last five years. There is a manifest and widening gulf between journalists and the people they work for.

The survey broke news people down into three separate groups. Executives were those who have chief financial responsibility for the news company-publishers, CEOs, chief financial officers. Senior news executives included editors-in-chief, executive editors, managing editors and executive producers, down to assistant managing editors. Newsroom staff included everyone from bureau chiefs down to cub reporters.

In general, journalists have less confidence in their bosses than they did a few years ago.

Less than a third of national journalists rate their leadership as “excellent,” down six points from five years ago. Less than a quarter of local journalists feel that way, also down slightly from five years ago.

It may be no surprise that the level of confidence in the bosses declines as you move down the ranks. Yet now even senior news managers are not confident in the people above them.

It is here, at the level of senior news executives, where the rating of the leadership has dropped most precipitously. Five years ago, 42% of senior news executives nationally had high confidence in their bosses. Today, just 30% do. Locally, the number is 18%.

What is behind the widening morale problem in newsrooms?

The survey results offer two possible explanations. One is that executives and journalists cannot even agree on the basic situation in their newsrooms. Nationally, journalists are twice as likely to report that their staffs have decreased as are business executives who run news companies.

A second divide between executives and newsroom staffers is over the question of the impact of economics. Nationally, journalists are more than twice as likely as executives to say bottom line pressure is eroding journalistic quality. The divide exists at the local level as well but not as drastically.

Whatever the reasons for this, unless staffers and bosses can agree on first describing what is going on in the company and then agree on its impact, it seems doubtful they could agree on how to deal with it.

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Specific Areas of Concern

Beyond cutbacks and pressure to help advertisers or corporate siblings, journalists have other worries as well. Five years ago, people in the news business shared two overriding concerns. As we said back then, “They believe that the news media have blurred the lines between news and entertainment and that the culture of argument is overwhelming the culture of reporting...Concerns about punditry overwhelming reporting, for instance, have swelled dramatically in only four years.”

Today, the concerns are more varied and less easy to categorize. The worries about punditry are still there but they have diminished both nationally and especially locally.

A bigger issue now is a sense of shallowness. Roughly eight-in-ten in the news business feel the news media pay “too little attention ... to complex issues,” up from five years ago to levels seen in the mid-1990s, at the peak of the fascination with tabloid crime stories like O.J. and JonBenet Ramsey.

On the issue of accuracy, journalists seem divided. Nationally, the number of journalists who feel that news reports are increasingly sloppy and inaccurate is rising. Locally, it is dropping.

And about some matters people in the news business-across all levels-are clearly less worried than they were five years ago.

Fewer journalists today see the press as too cynical. And, compared with five years ago, fewer also see journalists as out of touch with their audiences.

Both of these are areas that reform movements such as public journalism-which was concerned with trying to reconnect journalists and the public-focused on.

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The Internet as a Place of Confidence and Cuts

In such a landscape, the Internet should be a glimmer of hope, and in many ways it is. The State of the News Media 2004 report found that the Internet was one of the few places where news audiences were growing. Just as importantly, young people sought out news online in the same percentages as older people. Privately, some of the country's top newspaper executives report that they now have more readers on the web than they do in print. Financially the picture is also promising, if embryonic. Revenues from the Internet, according to the State of the News Media report, are growing exponentially, though for now they remain small.

Generally, the Internet journalists surveyed, most of whom work for websites of major news organizations, reflect that booming sense of the future. They rate their product highly: fully 85% give the websites of national news organizations a grade of A or B.

Journalists also seem less fearful of technology. While majorities feel the Internet has too much unvetted and unfiltered material, most news people also now see the 24-hour news cycle as not harming journalism. More journalists than five years ago think the Internet is making journalism better.

Yet the survey points to something troubling here that online journalists are privately frustrated by. The Internet is the most likely place in journalism to be suffering staff cuts (62%).

Given the growth in Internet news audiences and the growing confidence of journalists about the content, one might have expected that companies planning on the future would be moving resources into this growth area.

The fact that this is not happening has two possible implications. First, it suggests that the news industry is managing for the short-term to such a degree that it is leaving malnourished the one area that could grow the business out of its current dilemma of declining audience. To maintain profits, it is penny wise and pound foolish. If this is the case, it would be an old story-and a familiar mistake-repeated again.

The other possibility is that the news business has lost confidence in the basic economic principle that had fueled its development for much of the last 200 years:

Namely, that if you can aggregate a large-enough audience in one place, the revenue stream will work itself out eventually.

Yet the companies who produce online news apparently do not have confidence that will happen here. If they are not willing to invest in the newsroom now, when audience and revenues look promising, what will ever convince them to?

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Confidence in the Public

Ultimately journalism is predicated on faith in the public. Here, journalists' views have become dramatically more pessimistic.

The percentage of national journalists who have a great deal of confidence in the ability of the American public to make good decisions has declined by more than 20 points since 1999. Confidence among local journalists has fallen as well.

What is going on? Does this suggest that as news people get closer to their audiences they conclude people are less wise than they once believed? Is it possible that market research data is persuading journalists today that they understand their audiences better and also that those audiences are dumber than they thought?

Or, is the loss of confidence in the public more tied to journalists' views about the content of news? They see news doing a poorer job of covering complex issues and conclude that this will leave Americans unprepared for making good decisions.

It is also possible that journalists are leaping to another conclusion: They see the content of the news becoming shallower and conclude that this must be what the public wants or why else would their organizations be providing it?

There is also a fourth possibility: liberal journalists unhappy with President George W. Bush's policies could be dismayed that the public chose Bush in 2000 and until recently have largely approved of his performance.

In the end, whatever the cause of declining faith in the public, the implications are troubling. Even if the economics of journalism work themselves out, how can journalists work on behalf of a public they are coming to see as less wise and less able? A cynical view of the public becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy that leads journalists to produce a shallower product because they think the public cannot handle anything else.

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Politics & Ideology

The findings on politics also point to trends worth watching. Journalists tend to be split over whether the press has become too timid and also too easy on Bush-and the split is between national journalists and local. The national journalists tend to feel the press has been insufficiently critical of Bush. National journalists also are the more likely to describe themselves as personally liberal.

But this does not mean that journalists want to abandon the model of the independent press. Across the board, news people disapprove of news organizations having a decidedly ideologically point of view. Even among Internet journalists, often thought of as writing with more edge, three-quarters do not favor moving toward this more ideological, more European model of journalism.

The fact that journalists are more likely to see a conservative tilt in the news than a liberal one invites various explanations. It could be a sign of liberal bias. It also could be a natural response by journalists tired of people producing partisan journalism on the right positioning themselves as the counterbalance to a mainstream press they characterize as left wing. There will be no settling of that.

On the other hand, the fact that the New York Times is the organization most often cited as liberal may embarrass the Times. The fact that large majorities of journalists cite Fox as conservative may not embarrass that cable network.

Journalists' own politics are also harder to analyze than people might think. The fact that journalists-especially national journalists-are more likely than in the past to describe themselves as liberal reinforces the findings of the major academic study on this question, namely that of David H. Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit, in their series of books "The American Journalist."

But what does liberal mean to journalists? We would be reluctant to infer too much here. The survey includes just four questions probing journalists' political attitudes, yet the answers to these questions suggest journalists have in mind something other than a classic big government liberalism and something more along the lines of libertarianism. More journalists said they think it is more important for people to be free to pursue their goals without government interference than it is for government to ensure that no one is in need.

This libertarian strain is particularly strong among local journalists, who are also more likely to describe themselves as moderate.

More research here is probably useful. The debate over press ideology is fraught with difficulty. Some of the research done in the past has been, frankly, poor, and on the other side, some journalists would rather not face the question at all. Neither of these approaches is satisfactory.

But there is something here for journalists to be concerned about.

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Crossing from Concern to Frustration

Five years ago we found a profession that had become more concerned about its performance and more willing to adapt. The findings back then, we said, paint "a picture of an industry aware it is at a cross roads. Journalists have come to agree with their critics and are embarking on self examination that is a likely first step to change."

Today, some of that change has happened, but what remains are problems that seem more structural and protracted.

While journalists feel they have gotten closer to their audiences and more willing to innovate, they also are more pessimistic about the public. It is possible that journalists feel they have done much of what they can do themselves to address journalism's problems. What they are left with are issues they cannot contend with alone. And they believe the companies they work for in the last five years have moved in ways that have only made things worse.

On top of that, there are signs that the growth areas in journalism are not seeing the kind of investment of resources to build for the future.

If five years ago we saw the seeds of change, today we see a trend toward fragmentation among all players involved – journalists, executives and the public.

Not only do they disagree on solutions, they seem further apart on identifying the problems

Bill Kovach is chairman of the Committee of Concerned Journalists. Tom Rosenstiel is director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism. Amy Mitchell is associate director.

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Survey Findings

Press Going Too Easy on Bush
Bottom-Line Pressures Now Hurting Coverage, Say Journalists

by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press

Overview

Section I: Views on Performance

Section II: Covering the President and the Campaign

Section III: Today's Changing Newsroom

Section IV: Values and the Press

NOTE: This report is also available on the Pew Research Center Web site.

Overview

Journalists are unhappy with the way things are going in their profession these days. Many give poor grades to the coverage offered by the types of media that serve most Americans: daily newspapers, local TV, network TV news and cable news outlets. In fact, despite recent scandals at the New York Times and USA Today, only national newspapers – and the websites of national news organizations – receive good performance grades from the journalistic ranks.

Roughly half of journalists at national media outlets (51%), and about as many from local media (46%), believe that journalism is going in the wrong direction, as significant majorities of journalists have come to believe that increased bottom line pressure is “seriously hurting” the quality of news coverage. This is the view of 66% of national news people and 57% of the local journalists questioned in this survey.

Journalists at national news organizations generally take a dimmer view of state of the profession than do local journalists. But both groups express considerably more concern over the deleterious impact of bottom-line pressures than they did in polls taken by the Center in 1995 and 1999. Further, both print and broadcast journalists voice high levels of concern about this problem, as do majorities working at nearly all levels of news organizations.

The notable dissent from this opinion comes from those at the top of national news organizations. Most executives at national news organizations (57%) feel increased business pressures are “mostly just changing the way news organizations do things” rather than seriously undermining quality.

The survey of journalists – conducted March 10-April 20 among 547 national and local reporters, editors and executives by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press in collaboration with the Project for Excellence in Journalism and the Committee of Concerned Journalists – also finds increased worries about economic pressures in the responses to an open-ended question about the biggest problem facing journalism today. As was the case in the 1999 survey, problems with the quality of coverage were cited most frequently. Underscoring these worries, the polling finds a continuing rise in the percentage of journalists believing that news reports are full of factual errors. In the national media, this view increased from 30% in 1995 to 40% in 1999 to 45% in the current survey.

When asked about what is going well in journalism these days, print and broadcast journalists have strikingly different things to say. TV and radio journalists most often mention the speed of coverage – the ability to respond quickly to breaking news stories – while print journalists emphasize the quality of coverage and the watchdog role the press plays as the profession’s best features.

Journalists whose own newsrooms have undergone staff reductions are among the most worried that bottom-line pressures are undermining quality. Fully three-quarters of national and local journalists who have experienced staff cuts at their workplace say bottom-line pressures are seriously hurting the quality of news coverage. Those not reporting staff reductions are far more likely to say business pressures are just changing newsgathering techniques.

Beyond the stress of shrinking workplaces, there are a number of specific criticisms of the news media that are closely associated with the view that bottom-line pressure is hurting the quality of news coverage. First, there is almost universal agreement among those who worry about growing financial pressure that the media is paying too little attention to complex stories. In addition, the belief that the 24-hour news cycle is weakening journalism is much more prevalent among this group than among news people who do not view financial pressure as a big problem, and a majority says news reports are increasingly full of factual errors and sloppy reporting. And most journalists who worry about declining quality due to bottom-line pressures say that the press is “too timid” these days.

In that regard, the poll finds that many journalists – especially those in the national media – believe that the press has not been critical enough of President Bush. Majorities of print and broadcast journalists at national news organizations believe the press has been insufficiently critical of the administration. Many local print journalists concur. This is a minority opinion only among local news executives and broadcast journalists. While the press gives itself about the same overall grade for its coverage of George W. Bush as it did nine years ago for its coverage of Bill Clinton (B- among national journalists, C+ from local journalists), the criticism in 1995 was that the press was focusing too much on Clinton’s problems, and too little on his achievements.

There are significant ideological differences among news people in attitudes toward coverage of Bush, with many more self-described liberals than moderates or conservatives faulting the press for being insufficiently critical. In terms of their

overall ideological outlook, majorities of national (54%) and local journalists (61%) continue to describe themselves as moderates. The percentage identifying themselves as liberal has increased from 1995: 34% of national journalists describe themselves as liberals, compared with 22% nine years ago. The trend among local journalists has been similar – 23% say they are liberals, up from 14% in 1995. More striking is the relatively small minority of journalists who think of themselves as politically conservative (7% national, 12% local). As was the case a decade ago, the journalists as a group are much less conservative than the general public (33% conservative).

The strong sentiment in favor of a more critical view of White House coverage is just one way the climate of opinion among journalists has changed since the 1990s. More generally, there has been a steep decline in the percentage of national and local news people who think the traditional criticism of the press as too cynical still holds up. If anything, more national news people today fault the press for being too timid, not too cynical.

Not only do many national news people believe the press has gone too soft in its coverage of President Bush, they express considerably less confidence in the political judgment of the American public than they did five years ago. Since 1999, the percentage saying they have a great deal of confidence in the public's election choices has fallen from 52% to 31% in the national sample of journalists.

Nonetheless, journalists have at least as much confidence in the public's electoral judgments as does the public itself. In addition, the growing distrust in the public's electoral decisions is not being driven by negative feelings about President Bush. Journalists who think the press is not critical enough of Bush are no more likely than others to express skepticism about the public's judgments.

By more than three-to-one, national and local journalists believe it is a bad thing if some news organizations have a "decidedly ideological point of view" in their news coverage. And more than four-in-ten in both groups say journalists too often let their ideological views show in their reporting. This view is held more by self-described conservative journalists than moderates or liberals.

At the same time, the single news outlet that strikes most journalists as taking a particular ideological stance – either liberal or conservative – is Fox News Channel. Among national journalists, more than twice as many could identify a daily

news organization that they think is “especially conservative in its coverage” than one they believe is “especially liberal” (82% vs. 38%). And Fox has by far the highest profile as a conservative news organization; it was cited unprompted by 69% of national journalists. The New York Times was most often mentioned as the national daily news organization that takes a decidedly liberal point of view, but only by 20% of the national sample.

The survey shows that journalists continue to have a positive opinion of the Internet’s impact on journalism. Not only do majorities of national (60%) and local journalists (51%) believe the Internet has made journalism better, but they give relatively high grades for the websites of national news organizations.

News people also acknowledge a downside to the Internet – solid majorities of both national and local journalists think the Internet allows too much posting of links to unfiltered material. In addition, sizable numbers in the national (42%) and local samples (35%) say the Internet has intensified the deadline pressure they face. The changing media environment is generally having an impact on journalists’ workloads – pluralities of national and local news people say they are increasingly rewriting and repackaging stories for multiple uses.

While journalists voice increasing concern over sloppy and error-filled news reports, there is no evidence that recent scandals like those at USA Today and the New York Times are having a significant impact on the way journalists view the profession. The number of journalists who cite “ethics and standards” as the biggest problem facing journalism has not grown since 1999. And most say that while plagiarism may be getting more attention these days, it is actually no more prevalent today than in the past.

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Section I: Views on Performance

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Section I: Views on Performance

Journalists are divided over whether their profession is advancing or regressing. Only about half of local journalists – and even fewer national journalists – feel their profession is moving in the right direction. In particular, national TV and radio journalists are the most negative, with 61% saying the field is headed in the wrong direction, compared with just 33% who say the opposite.

There also is a significant divide between executives and reporters in these national organizations, with executives seeing the profession headed in the right direction (by a 57% to 38% margin) while reporters say things are declining (by 54% to 39%).

Continuing Concerns Over Quality

Problems with the quality of coverage remains a major concern of journalists, but an increasing percentage mention business and financial factors. A plurality of national journalists (41%) cite quality concerns such as sensationalistic coverage; the need for accuracy; and a lack of depth, relevance and objectivity as the most important problems facing their profession. Collectively, these were also the top concerns volunteered by national journalists in 1999, and in a similar survey a decade earlier.

Among local journalists, however, business and financial problems are now mentioned as frequently as concerns over the quality of coverage. More than a third of local news people (35%) cite business and financial factors as the biggest problem facing journalism, up from 25% five years ago.

Print Journalists Worried About Losing Readers

There are significant differences among journalists in different media, as well as those working at local and national news organizations, over the biggest problem confronting journalism. Broadcast journalists, especially at the national level, cite issues relating to quality much more often than do their print counterparts. Roughly half of national broadcast journalists (51%) cite quality concerns, compared with 32% of national print journalists.

By comparison, declining readership is cited by 15% of print journalists at both national and local news organizations, but no more than 2% of broadcast journalists view loss of audience as the most important concern. Instead, broadcast journalists view limits on resources – and the pressure to make profits and get bigger ratings – as the biggest financial problems.

Despite the growing concern over business and financial issues, fewer journalists mention an overly competitive media environment as the biggest problem. In 1999, 17% of national and 15% of local journalists specifically mentioned increasing competition as a problem; just 5% of national and 2% of local journalists say this today.

While the quality of coverage and business concerns are seen as the leading problems facing journalism, the single word mentioned more frequently than any other by journalists assessing their profession is “credibility.” Roughly a quarter of both national and local journalists mentioned problems with public trust and confidence in some form, and one-in-five specifically mentioned credibility as the biggest concern for the profession.

Print journalists are far more likely than those in broadcast to see credibility as the biggest problem facing journalism today. Four-in-ten (39%) journalists working at national newspapers, magazines and wire services say credibility is the biggest problem, compared with just 15% at national TV and radio outlets. And this gap exists at the local level as well, with local print journalists nearly three-times as likely as local broadcast journalists (33% vs. 12%) to cite credibility as their greatest concern.

There is also a sizeable difference between younger and older journalists in perceptions of the credibility problem. Just one-in-ten journalists under age 35 cite concerns about credibility and public trust as the biggest problem facing the profession, compared with about quarter of those age 35 to 54 (26%), and a third of those age 55 and older.

Though a number of journalists specifically mentioned recent scandals involving New York Times reporter Jayson Blair and USA Today's Jack Kelley in describing why the profession has lost credibility with the public, relatively few expressed concerns with any broader ethical problems in their field. In fact, just 5% of national journalists (and 6% of local news people) cite ethics or a lack of standards as the biggest problem in journalism, about half as many as in the 1999 survey.

Plagiarism Not Widespread

The vast majority of journalists of all backgrounds and at all workplaces say that plagiarism is no more prevalent today than it has been in the past, just more of a focus on the problem. More than seven-in-ten national (77%) and local (72%) journalists agree with the statement "We are hearing more about plagiarism but its prevalence has not increased." About one-in-five at both the national and local level (21% of national journalists, 23% local) say there is more plagiarism today than in the past.

There is virtually no difference across different groups of journalists in this perception. Broadcast and print journalists, as well as executives, senior editors, and reporters all predominantly say that recent incidents of plagiarism do not signify a wider problem in the field. There is similarly no difference in this view between young and old, those who are more and less experienced, or those who are more and less educated.

What the Press is Doing Well

Print and broadcast journalists also differ over what journalism is doing well these days. Print journalists most often point to the quality and depth of coverage that is provided. They describe the volume of topics covered, coverage with context and insight, and an ability to make the news interesting and relevant. Fully 42% of local print journalists and 31% of their national counterparts cited some aspect of the quality of coverage as journalism's best performance trait, compared with just 18% of local broadcast journalists and 19% of national broadcast journalists.

Those working in television and radio are more likely to cite the timeliness and speed of reporting as what journalism is doing best today. Among local journalists, broadcast journalists are more than twice as likely as those working in print (33% vs. 14%) to cite the immediate coverage of live and breaking news as journalism's greatest strength. This gap is even wider within the national press, with 37% of national broadcast journalists – and just 11% of national print journalists – citing timeliness and speed as the best aspect of today's news.

The watchdog role of the press is cited as journalism's strength by fewer in the field. Print journalists are about twice as likely as those in broadcasting to say investigative reporting and watchdog journalism is what the press is doing well these days. By contrast, those in TV and radio make far more mention of the value of news websites and the use of production technology to better deliver news to the public.

As was the case five years ago, roughly half of journalists say the profession does a good job of striking a balance between what audiences want to know and what's important for them to know. This opinion is held by comparable numbers of national and local journalists, as well as among those working in both print, broadcast, and Internet media.

Criticisms of the Press

Nearly eight-in-ten in both national and local news organizations believe the criticism that the press pays too little attention to complex issues is valid (78% national, 77% local). This is comparable to findings in previous press surveys conducted in 1995 and 1999. Roughly two-thirds also agree that there are too many talk shows on cable television today, and this view is shared equally by both print and broadcast journalists.

Most journalists also accept as valid the criticism that the distinction between reporting and commentary has seriously eroded, although the percentage who cite this as a valid criticism has, if anything, declined since 1999. However, far more national and local journalists regard this as a legitimate critique than did so in 1995.

A growing number of national journalists, in particular, say news reports are increasingly full of factual errors and sloppy reporting. The number of national journalists who view this as a valid criticism has increased steadily from 30% in 1995 to 40% in 1999 to 45% today. A comparable percentage of local journalists say this is a valid criticism (47%). That represents a decline from 1999 (55%), but is higher than the 1995 level (40%).

In both 1995 and 1999, slim majorities agreed with the criticism that the press was too cynical, but this perception has ebbed among both national (37%) and local (40%) journalists today. In fact, more national journalists say the press is too timid (47%) than too cynical. In addition, the proportion who feel the press can be criticized for becoming out of touch with their audience has dropped slightly within both groups of journalists.

Grading the Media

Journalists give the highest ratings to major national newspapers – 92% of national journalists and 80% of local journalists give national newspapers a grade of A or B. By contrast, local TV news receives the lowest grades; just 32% of local journalists say local TV news outlets deserve a grade of A or B and national journalists' grades are even lower (21% A or B).

Grades for other news media – network TV news, cable TV news, and local newspapers – fall somewhere in between national newspapers and local TV news. In that regard, little has changed from nine years ago, when journalists gave very similar grades to these media organizations.

Most journalists give their own news organization middling grades. Just 22% of national journalists, and 14% of local journalists, gave their organization an A, though roughly six-in-ten of both groups gave their own organization a grade in the B range. These grades also are similar to the grades journalists assigned in 1995.

Print journalists are particularly critical of network and local TV news. Just 32% of national print journalists give favorable grades (A or B) to network TV news, while twice as many (65%) assign grades of C or D. Journalists at local newspapers are, at most, only slightly more favorable. By comparison, a majority of journalists working at both national and local TV and radio outlets give favorable grades to network news programs.

Nearly half (47%) of local TV journalists give favorable grades to their own field's performance, compared with only 18% of local print journalists. The print/broadcast gap is slightly narrower among journalists at national outlets, but only because ratings of local TV news are low among all national reporters whether in print or broadcasting. Among broadcast media, cable TV news channels are the exception to the media divide, as they are graded similarly by both print and TV/radio journalists.

Journalists were also asked to give a grade to national news organizations for their websites, and the marks were fairly strong. Sizable majorities of both national (70%) and local (57%) journalists gave grades of A or B to major media websites. And the grades among local journalists are lower only because more said they were unable to rate these websites – very few in either group gave poor marks to the websites.

Why is Journalism on the Wrong Track?

In the general evaluation of whether their profession is headed in the right direction or the wrong direction, journalists were almost evenly divided in their view. While those taking a pessimistic view were not asked directly what they had in mind, an analysis of their responses to other questions provides some indication of the factors behind this opinion.

In particular, journalists who say things are going badly are significantly more likely to take their profession and employers to task for the quality of the news product. They believe the press has become too timid, and almost unanimously say the press pays too little attention to complex issues. Nearly three-quarters of journalists who say the profession is headed in the wrong direction say the distinction between reporting and commentary has seriously eroded, compared with only half of those who think things are on the right track.

Concerns about the impact of bottom-line pressures also are far more prevalent among those saying the profession is on the wrong track, which is closely related to concerns about sloppy reporting and the increasing commercialization of the news. Many say the emergence of the 24-hour news cycle has weakened journalism and that news reports are increasingly full of factual errors. And those critical of the overall direction of journalism more frequently cite sensationalistic reporting and an emphasis on ratings as the biggest problems facing the profession.

Within the newsroom, those who are unhappy with the leadership of their own news organization are far more negative about the profession as a whole compared with those who are satisfied with their bosses. In addition, those who have participated in training or professional development over the past 12 months are significantly more optimistic about the profession as a whole than those who have had no such training.

But overall cynicism about journalism is not simply an expression of sour grapes on the part of those who have faced economic pressures or staffing cuts at their own place of work. Those who have seen their newsrooms shrink, or who say that resource and staffing limitations are the biggest problem facing the profession, are no more or less likely to be negative about the direction of journalism than those who have not faced resource limitations.

Similarly, there are no generational or ideological divides on this general evaluation of the state of the profession. Journalists young and old, liberal, moderate and conservative are all about evenly divided in terms of whether they are optimistic or pessimistic about the field.

Section II: Covering the President and the Campaign

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Section II: Covering the President and the Campaign

Many journalists today feel that news media has lost its critical edge – especially when it comes to coverage of the Bush administration. Reporters and editors in national news organizations, in particular, feel the press has gone too easy on the Bush administration. Moreover, the perception that news organizations have gone soft is not confined to attitudes about coverage of Bush. An increasing number of both national and local journalists feel the traditional criticism of the press as too cynical is no longer valid. Indeed, on both the national and local level, more fault the press for being too timid than too cynical.

The journalists surveyed give middling ratings to national news coverage of Bush's presidency. A narrow majority of national journalists (53%) give the coverage a grade of A or B; local journalists are far less generous in their grading of how their colleagues in national news organizations have covered Bush (43% A or B). In a similar survey in 1995, national journalists, in particular, offered more positive opinions of coverage of the Clinton administration (65% A or B).

The journalists are somewhat more positive in their assessments of the presidential campaign. A majority of national journalists (56%) say coverage of the campaign has been better than coverage of the 2000 campaign. Local journalists are more divided: 46% say coverage of the current campaign is better than in 2000, while 34% say it is worse.

Differences Over Bush Coverage

Solid majorities of national print and TV journalists, as well as Internet journalists, say the media has not been critical enough in its coverage of the administration. A smaller plurality of local print journalists agree (46%).

But local television journalists, on balance, feel the coverage of the Bush administration has been fair. A plurality of this group (44%) believes the coverage has been fair; moreover, nearly as many say coverage has been too critical of the administration (25%) as say it has been not critical enough (28%).

Ideological Divisions

Much has been made of the public's ideological divisions in this election year, but journalists also are divided along ideological lines over several issues, including press coverage of the Bush administration. Liberals who work in national and local news organizations overwhelmingly feel the press has not been critical enough of the Bush administration. Roughly two-thirds of liberal journalists (68%) express that view, compared with 28% who say coverage has been fair and 3% who believe the press has been too critical of the administration.

Self-described moderates offer a mixed judgment of the Bush coverage – about the same percentages say it has not been critical enough (44%) and fair (43%). But most conservatives (53%) think the press has been too critical of the administration, compared with 30% who view it as fair and 17% who think it has been too critical.

Beyond Bush: Cynicism Concerns Decline

In the 1999 survey, narrow majorities of both national (53%) and local (51%) journalists agreed that the statement, “the press is too cynical,” represented a valid criticism of news organizations.

But there has been a dramatic decline in the percentage of national and local journalists who feel the press can be legitimately criticized for excessive cynicism. Just 37% of national journalists and only slightly more local journalists (40%) view the press as too cynical. This pattern is even more apparent among Internet journalists: 24% view the press as too cynical, compared with 48% five years ago.

Internet journalists, in particular, believe that the press can be faulted for being too timid rather than too cynical (56% too timid vs. 24% too cynical). Journalists working at national news organizations agree (47% vs. 37%). But local journalists are split: 42% view the press as too timid, 40% too cynical.

Ideological Coverage – Valid Criticism?

Overall, news people are divided over whether journalists today too often let their own ideological views show in their reporting. Similar percentages of national (45%) and local (43%) journalists view this as a valid criticism.

But local executives, in particular, approach this issue very differently. Roughly seven-in-ten local news executives (73%) say coverage too often reflects a journalist's ideology; roughly six-in-ten national news executives (62%) agree that this is

not a valid criticism of the press.

By comparison, there is broad agreement across the spectrum of reporters, managers and executives that is a bad thing if news organizations take a “decidedly” ideological point of view in their coverage of the news. Fully 72% of national journalists and 74% of local journalists have a negative view of news organizations taking a strongly ideological stance in their coverage.

Fox's Outsized Impact

Most national and local journalists do not believe any national daily news organization is “especially liberal” in its news coverage. Roughly six-in-ten in both groups (62% national/59% local) say no national daily news organization strikes them as particularly liberal in its coverage. Among the minority that names a specific news organization as being especially liberal, the New York Times was mentioned most frequently (20% national/17% local).

By contrast, solid majorities of both national and local journalists say there is an organization that they think is especially conservative – and for most the organization that comes to mind is Fox News Channel. Fully 69% of national journalists cited Fox News Channel as especially conservative in its coverage. Fewer local journalists (42%) mentioned Fox; still, a much higher percentage of local journalists named Fox than any other single news organization, conservative or liberal.

Roughly two-thirds of self-described conservatives (68%) could identify a specific news organization that is especially liberal, and the same number (68%) could name a news organization that is “especially conservative.” But moderates and liberals could identify conservative news organizations far more often than liberal ones. Roughly three-quarters of liberals (74%) and a majority of moderates (56%) say they couldn't think of any news organization that is especially liberal.

Section III: Today's Changing Newsroom

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Section III: Today's Changing Newsroom

Newsroom staff cutbacks are hitting print journalism at both the national and local level. About half of respondents working at newspapers or magazines (48% nationally, 54% locally) say the size of their newsroom staff has decreased in the past three years. Relatively few in the print sector are seeing growth in the number of staff.

The picture is more mixed in television and radio, with about equal numbers saying their newsrooms are growing as shrinking. About half (47%) of those in national broadcast media say there has been no change in staffing compared with three years ago.

One significant change in the news business is growth in the practice of repackaging and repurposing news stories for multiple uses. About half of both national and local respondents (48% each) say they are doing this more now than in the past; print and broadcast journalists at each level are similar in this respect.

At the same time, relatively few voice unhappiness with this trend, with the notable exception of local broadcast reporters. Three-in-ten local TV reporters (29%) say they are unhappy over repackaging stories for multiple purposes. That compares with only about one-in-ten national radio and TV news people, and similar percentages of national and local print journalists.

Most journalists today give good ratings to the quality of leadership in their own organizations, a view that has changed little since 1999. At the national level, 30% of news professionals say their management is doing an excellent job, and 41% say they are doing a good job. There is relatively little difference between national print and broadcast media in

leadership ratings. But over half of executives at the national level say the quality of leadership is excellent (and 38% rate it as good). Senior newsroom staff and line journalists are less positive.

At the local level, 22% overall rate leadership as excellent, and nearly half (47%) say the quality is good. Ratings are higher among local newspaper journalists than among those in television and executives rate leadership more positively than reporters and producers.

Training and professional development programs are fairly common in newsrooms today. About half (47%) of national journalists and 56% of local journalists say they have participated in such activities provided by their news organization in the past twelve months. Among those who have taken part in training, close to half say they participated in such a program for five days or more over the past year.

Executives and senior editors and producers are more likely than line staff to report having taken part in professional development activity. Respondents who have participated in training rate their own news organization's management more highly than those who have not participated, and this is especially true of reporters.

In a related area, large majorities of respondents (76% nationally and 77% locally) say there are ongoing management efforts to address ethical issues in their newsroom, about the same as in 1999. As with training and professional development, those who report that their organizations are engaged in this activity rate their management more favorably.

Internet's Impact Mostly Positive

Most news professionals (60% at the national level, 51% locally) say the emergence of the Internet has made journalism better; very few say it has hurt journalism. These views are fairly similar to those expressed by journalists in 1999. More local journalists say the Internet has had either a positive or negative impact, with higher percentage today saying it has made journalism worse (18% compared with 8% in 1999). Only local news executives are divided over the Internet's impact: 31% say it has been good for journalism; 27% view it negatively.

Not surprisingly, enthusiasm about the Internet is greatest among younger respondents in the survey. More than seven-in-ten (72%) of those under 35 years of age think the Internet has been good for the profession; just 13% view it negatively. Journalists age 35 and older also have a generally positive view of the Internet's impact, though by a much smaller margin (54% better, 15% worse).

Changes for the Better

Those who believe the Internet has helped journalism most frequently cite its power as a research tool. Nearly half of those who see a positive impact of the Internet mention some aspect of the Internet as a convenient place to find timely information, to get data at any hour of the day, and to do fact-checking on deadline. Those who work for local news organizations are especially likely to mention this benefit of the Internet (61% of local vs. 47% of national and 16% of Internet journalists).

Another widely noted positive impact of the Internet is its ability to deliver information to the public more quickly and to promote greater competition among news organizations. This view is much more prevalent among print journalists than among those working in TV and radio. A frequent comment within this theme is that print journalism now has the ability to compete with television and radio for breaking news. Also, the speed of the Internet in delivering information was the single most cited benefit among journalists who work primarily on their organization's websites.

About one-in-five say the Internet has helped journalism by making far more information available to the public, and by helping to improve the accuracy of the information. A related notion, mentioned about as often, is that the Internet has broadened the range of outlets and voices available to the public. This includes more points of view, deeper stories, and coverage of topics and stories that otherwise would not have fit into existing time and space available. These changes have forced journalism to be more innovative and responsive to the public; one respondent said the Internet has "democratized the press."

A less common argument for why the web has made journalism better is that the Internet has made journalism more accountable by enabling the public – and other journalists – to more easily verify the accuracy of information and communicate these concerns directly to those who produced a report. Only around one-in-twenty who see the web as having had a positive influence make this case.

Changes for the Worse

Those who think the Internet has been bad for journalism most often cite the fact that it promotes the spread of unvetted and unfiltered information to the public; nearly half (53% national, 45% local) cite this concern. Others express a related concern about the speed and pressure of the Internet leading to too many factual errors in news coverage (17% national, 29% local).

Another concern raised by some is that the Internet has promoted the rise of pseudo-journalism, "junk" sites, and low-brow news. One negative consequence cited by several respondents is that "news" reported on these sites force mainstream journalists to waste time chasing down baseless rumors and innuendo. In a similar vein, a smaller group refers specifically to the Internet having damaged the credibility of journalism in the mind of the public.

Around one-in-ten who see the Internet as having a bad influence on journalism say the web has made journalists lazy by allowing them to do research at their desks rather than going out into the field, with some specifically stating that the Internet has made plagiarism too easy.

Internet's Downside

The survey's respondents were asked specifically about two issues related to the growth of the Internet: increased deadline pressures, and the potential spread of misinformation and rumors into the news. Majorities of both print and

broadcast journalists say that the Internet has increased the amount of bad information that finds its way into news stories. Overall, 65% of national journalists and 57% of local journalists agree; smaller numbers think there has been no change (31% nationally, 38% locally). Hardly anyone thinks the Internet has reduced the amount of misinformation in circulation, though only 38% of those working with websites think the problem is worse because of the Internet.

But there is a considerable difference of opinion on the Internet's impact on deadline pressures. Majorities overall believe the Internet has neither increased nor decreased such pressures (55% of national respondents, 60% of local respondents feel this way). Hardly anyone thinks deadline pressures have declined, and 42% at the national level and 35% at the local level say the pressure is greater.

Within these averages there is a great deal of variation by type of medium and by job title. At both the national and local level, print journalists are far more likely than TV and radio journalists to say deadline pressure has been increased by the Internet. National media executives are more likely than their editors or line journalists to feel this way. And, perhaps not surprisingly, those whose principal job responsibility is Internet-based journalism are the most likely to feel greater deadline pressures (78%).

Journalists in the Online Sector

The poll included a separate sample of 68 journalists whose job responsibilities include managing, editing, or writing for the online outlets of national and local news organizations. Job titles for this group of respondents included "online content manager," "online editor," "website manager," and the like.

For the most part, online journalists are not significantly different from others demographically with the exception of age. The average age of respondents in the Internet group is 42, compared with 46 among the rest of the sample. Similarly, those working in online jobs had an average of 18 years experience, compared with 22 years for the rest of the respondents. More say they have undergone training or professional development activities provided by their organization (66% vs. 52%). And far more say the Internet has increased their deadline pressures.

Given the evolving nature of news organizations' websites, it is no surprise that those in the online sector say they are doing more repackaging of stories than in the past: 71%, versus 48% for other journalists. But more are happy about the change than unhappy by a margin of five-to-one (44% vs. 9%).

In most cases, the opinions of online journalists track closely with non-Internet journalists regarding the state of the profession, the reasons for declining audiences, the validity of criticisms about journalism, the quality of their own news organization, and their own personal and political

values. They are somewhat more likely than their counterparts who work in broadcasting to say journalists have become out of touch with their audiences, and to offer that a boring and static news product is one reason some media are facing declining audiences, but many print journalists share this concern. In that vein, more online journalists than others in both print and broadcasting see the changing media environment as the biggest problem facing journalism.

Not surprisingly, most of the key differences between the views of online journalists and others pertain to the role of the Internet itself. One of the biggest differences is that majorities (57%) of those whose principal job is not in online journalism say the Internet allows too much posting of links to material that is unfiltered or unvetted; just 28% of those working in the sector agree that this is a valid criticism. Similarly, far more of those who do not primarily work on their news organization's website say the Internet has allowed more misinformation to find its way into news stories (61%, compared with just 38% among online journalists). And fewer Internet than non-Internet journalists say the Internet has hurt journalism (3% versus 16%).

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Section IV: Values and the Press

Section IV: Values and the Press

Press Going Too Easy on Bush

Bottom-Line Pressures Now Hurting Coverage, Say Journalists

by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press

Overview

Section I: Views on Performance

Section II: Covering the President and the Campaign

Section III: Today's Changing Newsroom

Section IV: Values and the Press

NOTE: This report is also available on the Pew Research Center Web site.

Section IV: Values and the Press

Journalists at national and local news organizations are notably different from the general public in their ideology and attitudes toward political and social issues. Most national and local journalists, as well as a plurality of Americans (41%),

describe themselves as political moderates. But news people – especially national journalists – are more liberal, and far less conservative, than the general public.

About a third of national journalists (34%) and somewhat fewer local journalists (23%) describe themselves as liberals; that compares with 19% of the public in a May survey conducted by the Pew Research Center. Moreover, there is a relatively small number of conservatives at national and local news organizations. Just 7% of national news people and 12% of local journalists describe themselves as conservatives, compared with a third of all Americans.

In this regard, Internet journalists are similar ideologically to local journalists: 57% describe themselves as moderates, while 27% say they are liberals and 13% conservatives. Local TV and radio journalists include the lowest percentage of liberals of any of the journalist groups surveyed (15%). Even among local TV and radio journalists, however, just 13% describe themselves as conservatives.

Major Differences: God and Morality, Homosexuality

The 1995 survey of journalists found particularly sharp differences between journalists and the public when it came to attitudes toward morality and homosexuality. A solid majority of Americans consistently have expressed the opinion that it is necessary to believe in God to be a moral person. Nearly six-in-ten (58%) expressed that view in a 2002 Pew Research Center survey, while 40% said that belief in God is not a prerequisite for morality. Journalists, regardless of their organization and position, take a decidedly different view. Fully 91% of those who work at national news organizations say it is not necessary to believe in God to be moral; 78% of local journalists agree.

As was the case in 1995, journalists are much more accepting of homosexuality than is the general public. Overwhelming majorities of national (88%) and local (74%) say homosexuality should be accepted by society. Only about half of the public agrees (51%).

Since the mid-1990s, however, public support has increased for societal acceptance of homosexuality, while journalists' attitudes have been more stable. In a 1993 Times-Mirror survey, most Americans (53%) said homosexuality should be discouraged; today a narrow majority (51%) believes homosexuality should be accepted. National journalists also have become slightly more accepting of homosexuality since 1995 (83% then, 88% today), while local journalists' views have been stable (75% then, 74% today).

More Agreement on Safety Net

There is more common ground between news professionals and the public in attitudes toward individual freedom and government assistance for needy people. Identical majorities of local journalists (58%) and the public (58%) say it is more important that Americans be free to pursue their goals without government interference, than that government guarantee that no one is in need.

National journalists are divided over this question – 49% place higher priority on freedom from government interference while 42% say it is more important that the government play an active role to guarantee aid to the needy. Opinion among Internet journalists divides along similar lines: 51% believe freedom from government interference is more important; 43% say a government guarantee of aid for the needy is more important.

Conservative Journalists Secular Too

There is a broad consensus among news professionals, regardless of their ideology, that it is not necessary to believe in God to be moral. But other issues – homosexuality and the government's role in aiding the needy – produce wider fissures along ideological lines.

Journalists who identify themselves as liberals are virtually unanimous in their view that homosexuality should be accepted by society (95% agree). More than eight-in-ten moderates (84%) agree. But only about half of conservatives (49%) say homosexuality should be accepted.

The news people surveyed also are deeply divided over the question of whether individual freedom, or government aid to the needy, is more important. Liberals by a wide margin (61%-33%) place greater priority on government guarantees of aid for the needy. By contrast, conservatives overwhelmingly say it is more important that everyone be free to pursue life's goals (88%); just 9% feel it is more important for government to guarantee that no one is in need.

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Methodology

Survey Methodology

This survey is based on interviews with 547 journalists and news media executives by telephone and online. The same questionnaire was used for both modes. The interviews were completed from March 10, 2004 through April 20, 2004.

Design of the Media Samples

Three samples were drawn for this survey: a national news media sample, a local news media sample and an Internet news sample. Both the national and local samples were divided into two groups: print and broadcast (which includes television and radio).

For the national sample, the print category includes newspapers, magazines, wire services, and news services; the television category encompasses cable, television and radio networks.

For the local sample, the print category includes newspapers from a listing of the top 100 newspapers ranked by circulation, excluding those selected for the national sample. The television category includes local television stations from the top 100 media markets.

Within each of these market/medium strata (national and local, print and television), specific organizational positions (i.e., managing editor, correspondent) were selected.

The Internet sample was selected from online-only news outlets, as well as the online news outlets of traditional print and television news organizations. The specific sampling procedures are outlined below.

To obtain a sample that represented a cross-section of news organizations and of the people working at all levels of those organizations, the news media were divided into the following groupings:

(1) Importance of medium in terms of size of audience, market or influence.

- a) National audience
- b) Local audience
- c) Internet audience

(2) Type of media

- a) Newspapers
- b) News magazines
- c) Wire services
- d) News services
- e) Television stations and networks
- f) Radio stations and networks

(3) Organizational responsibility of the individual respondent

- a) Executive
- b) Senior editors and producers
- c) Working editors and journalists

Identifying the Samples

National newspapers were identified using 2002 circulation numbers in 2003 Editor & Publisher International Year Book.

National television news organizations included the three national networks, major national cable networks, public television, and radio chains with Washington, D.C. bureaus. Particularly for the national sample, every attempt was made to replicate the selection of news organizations used for an earlier Center survey conducted in 1995.

The news media executives and journalists in each position within these organizations were drawn from the News Media Yellow Book database online, with the exception of national radio organizations, which were drawn from Bacon's MediaSource, and national newspapers, which were drawn from Editor & Publisher International Year Book. A complete listing of the selected national news organizations is below.

Local newspapers were also identified using 2002 circulation numbers in 2003 Editor & Publisher International Year Book. They include the 84 (out of the top 100) papers that were not pulled for the national sample.

Local television stations were selected from the top 100 media markets, as defined by Nielsen Media Research for 2003. After the local sample was selected, Bacon's MediaSource was used to identify the news media executives and journalists in each organization.

Respondents were selected using a two-stage sampling procedure. In the first stage, news media organizations were selected and in the second stage individuals were chosen from those organizations. The criteria for selecting national and local news organizations are outlined below.

Media Organizations Sampled

National Media

Television Networks

ABC, CBS, NBC, PBS,
CNN, C-SPAN, CNBC,
MSNBC, FOX Cable News,
Telemundo, Univision
Chains with Washington, D.C. Bureaus
Gannett, Cox, Hearst

Radio

Associated Press Radio

ABC Radio Networks

CBS Radio Networks

Westwood One

Black Radio Network

National Public Radio

Newspapers

Arizona Republic

Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Boston Globe

Chicago Tribune

Detroit Free Press

Houston Chronicle

Long Island Newsday

Los Angeles Times

Miami Herald

New York Daily News

New York Times

Philadelphia Inquirer

San Francisco Chronicle

USA TODAY

Wall Street Journal

Washington Post

Magazines

Newsweek

Time
U.S. News & World Report
Wire Services
Associated Press
Bloomberg News Service
Reuters
News Services
Copley
Cox Newspapers
Gannett
Hearst
Knight-Ridder
Newhouse
Scripps-Howard

Local Media

Television

A random sample was selected from all stations listed in the top 100 media markets.

Print

The top 100 newspapers ranked by circulation were selected, excluding those newspapers selected for the national sample.

Respondents Selected at each Organization (By Title)

National Sample

Executive Level

TV & Radio: President/CEO, Vice President, General Manager, Station Manager

Print: Publisher, President/CEO, Vice President

Senior Editors and Producers

TV & Radio: News Division Executive, Executive Producer

Print: Assistant Managing Editor, Managing Editor, Executive Editor, Section Editor

Working Journalists and Editors

TV & Radio: Bureau Chief, Senior Producer, Correspondent, Anchor

Print: Bureau Chief, Senior Editor, Columnist, Associate Editor, Reporter, Correspondent, Assignment editor

Local Sample

Executive Level

Television: President/CEO, Vice President, General Manager, Station Manager

Print: Publisher, President/CEO, Vice President

Senior Editors and Producers

Print: Assistant Managing Editor, Managing Editor, Executive Editor, Business, Metro and Editorial Section Editors

Television: News Director

Working Journalists and Editors

Television: Producer, Correspondent

Print: National Editor, Editor, Reporter, Senior Editor, National and Foreign Editors, Associate Editors, Columnist

Internet Sample

Online Producer, Online Vice President, Online Content Manager, General Manager of Website, Online Editor

The national and local news media samples were each divided into subgroups, defined by the type of news organization and the respondent's position within that organization. Each subgroup was randomly split into replicates. Quotas were set for the number of interviews to be completed in each subgroup. The Internet sample was also assigned a quota. These quotas were set to ensure adequate representation of the smaller subgroups in the final sample of completed interviews. The subgroups, quotas, and number of completed interviews for each are listed below.

Component	Quota	Completed
<i>National Print</i>	110	130
<i>National Newspapers</i>		
Executives	12	12
Senior Editors and Producers	21	28
Working Journalists and Editors	34	40
<i>National Magazines</i>		
Executives	4	2
Senior Editors and Producers	7	7
Working Journalists and Editors	11	12
<i>National News Services</i>		
Executives	2	3
Senior Editors and Producers	4	7
Working Journalists and Editors	7	10
<i>Wire Services</i>		
Executives	2	1
Senior Editors and Producers	3	3
Working Journalists and Editors	3	5
<i>National Broadcast</i>	110	117
<i>National TV and Radio</i>		
Executives	20	19
Senior Editors and Producers	35	38
Working Journalists and Editors	55	60
<i>Local Print</i>	115	118
<i>Local Newspapers</i>		
Executives	30	28
Senior Editors and Producers	35	39
Working Journalists and Editors	50	51
<i>Local Broadcast</i>	115	114
<i>Local TV News</i>		
Executives	30	27
Senior Editors and Producers	35	33
Working Journalists and Editors	50	54
<i>Internet</i>	50	68

Each person sampled for this survey was mailed an advance letter. The letters were intended to introduce the survey to prospective respondents, describe the nature and purpose of the survey and encourage participation. The letter was sent from the Pew Research Center; the Project for Excellence in Journalism; and the Committee of Concerned Journalists was involved. It contained a URL and a password to complete the survey online as well as notification that interviewers would be calling as well.

As soon as the letters were mailed, a website was available for respondents to complete the interview online.

Approximately one week after the letter was mailed, trained interviewers began calling the sampled individuals to remind them of the letter, discuss doing the survey online or conducting the interview on the telephone. In all cases, a follow-up email was sent after three days of initial calls, repeating the substance of the letter and providing the URL again.

If a respondent refused an interview, in most cases an email appeal was sent, asking the individual to reconsider. This was followed approximately one week later by another telephone call.

If a member of the sample had not completed the interview online or by telephone within two weeks of mailing the first letter, follow-up telephone calls were made to complete the interview or to schedule an appointment to do so.

The interviewers were experienced, executive specialists trained to ensure their familiarity with the questionnaire and their professionalism in dealing with news media professionals. The interviews were completed from March 10, 2004 through April 20, 2004.

Interviews were completed with 67% of the selected news media respondents who still held their position; 12% could not be reached in order to complete an interview, despite repeated calls; and 21% refused to participate in the survey.

Profile of News Professionals

Journalists and managers in major national and local news organizations tend to be well- educated, middle-aged, with substantial experience in the field. The median age of those surveyed is 47 years, with nearly four-in-ten (38%) falling between 45 and 54 years of age. Only 13% are under the age of 35. The median experience of the respondents is 22 years.

Most of the journalists surveyed have a college degree; less than 10% have not completed college. Significant numbers have a graduate degree or at least some graduate school experience. About half of print journalists have a degree in journalism; communications degrees are more common among broadcast professionals at the local level.

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Questionnaire



About The Story – Intro

About the Study

The State of the News Media report was written by the Project for Excellence in Journalism, with the aid of many collaborators. Funding was provided by the Pew Charitable Trusts.

[Click here](#) for information about printing pages from the report.

Methodology

Details on how we put together study together, including background on the content analysis sections.

Authors and Collaborators

A list of people who worked on the report.

Source Bibliography

An alphabetical listing of all the sources referenced in the report, including Web addresses.

Contact Us

How to reach the Project for Excellence in Journalism.

Permissions

Details on using information found in the report.

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Information about your privacy. We do not collect any user information.

Site Map

Methodology

Methodology

The data for this study were collected in two parts. Much of the study is based on research conducted originally by other people or organizations. Other research, particularly the content analysis, is original work conducted specifically for this report.

For the data aggregated from other researchers, the Project took several steps. First, we tried to determine what data had been collected and by whom for the eight media sectors studied. We organized the data into the six primary areas of

interest we wanted to examine: content, audience, economics, ownership, newsroom investment and public attitudes. For all data ultimately used, the Project sought and gained permission for their use.

Next, the Project studied the data closely to determine where elements reinforced each other and where there were apparent contradictions or gaps. In doing so, the Project endeavored to determine the value and validity of each data set. That in many cases involved going back to the sources who collected the research in the first place. Where data conflicted, we have included all relevant sources and tried to explain their differences, either in footnotes or in the narratives. For instance, the differences in online news use are probably explained by how survey questions were phrased — different answers emerge if the question is whether someone ever goes online for news, has done so in the last month or has done so in the last week.

In analyzing the data for each media sector, we sought insight from experts by having at least three outside readers for each sector chapter. Those readers raised questions, offered arguments and questioned data where they saw fit.

All sources are cited in footnotes or within the narrative, and listed alphabetically in a source bibliography. The data used in the report are also available in more complete tabular form online, where users can view the raw material, sort it on their own and make their own charts and graphs. Our goal was not only to organize the available material into a clear narrative, but to also collect all the public data on journalism in one usable place. In many cases, the Project paid for the use of the data.

For the original content analysis research conducted by the Project, the methodology follows.

Content Analysis Methodology

Three distinct categories of media were studied as a part of the 2006 PEJ Day in the Life of the News study — national, local, and Spanish-language media.

National media included national newspapers, national Web sites, network and cable television, and blogs. Local media included local television, local newspapers, local radio, local Web sites and blogs. Spanish-language media included newspapers and broadcast.

ADT Research conducted coding for national cable and network television. The University of Missouri School of Journalism Center for Advanced Social Research conducted coding for national newspapers and Web sites and national and local blogs. The School of Journalism at Michigan State University conducted coding of all local media except for local blogs and Web sites. Spanish-language media — first translated into English — was also coded by the team at Michigan .

Coding for all media except newspaper outlets was for May 11, 2005 . For newspapers, local and national, the May 12 editions were coded. In all, the study examined some 2,125 stories (not including blogs): 102 in national newspapers, 100 online, 107 on network television, and 312 on cable news. The local media included 538 local TV stories, 420 on local radio, 425 in local print and 43 local online stories. Spanish-language media consisted of 78 (TV and newspaper) stories. In addition to that main analysis, 112 different postings — 104 national and 8 local — were coded under a different coding scheme.

I. National News Media

Sample, Story, Procurement and Inclusion

To present a meaningful assessment of the national news content available to the public each day we studied a wide range of media outlets and programs.

Newspapers: the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, USA Today. Stories were procured via hard copies of the publications, supplemented by the Nexis database.

All stories with distinct bylines that appeared on a particular newspaper's front page, on the first page of the local/Metro section, and the first page of the business section were selected for analysis.

Network News:

ABC Today Show (7-8 a.m.)

CBS Early Show (7-8 a.m.)

NBC Good Morning America (7-8 a.m.)

ABC World News Tonight

CBS Evening News

NBC Nightly News

PBS NewsHour

The morning and evening broadcasts were procured through videotape, supplemented by transcripts. Videotaped programs were captured live in the Washington D.C. and New York markets. For evening newscasts, that meant each day's 6:30 p.m. East Coast feed. PBS supplied the Project with the tape for the NewsHour.

In the mornings, the following content was analyzed: stories read by the newscaster in the half-hourly news blocks; feature and interview segments outside of the news blocks; banter between members of the anchor team whose import was other than to tease coming segments in that day's program or to promote the network's programming at some later time. Excluded from the analysis were the content of the weather blocks, local news inserts, commercials, and other content-free editorial matter such as logos, studio shots, openings and closings.

In the evenings the same rules applied, but because the content of those newscasts is less varied, concerns about news blocks, banter, weather blocks and local news inserts were not applicable.

Cable: To assess the nature of the 24-hour news on cable, CNN, Fox News and MSNBC were selected because they were the three most heavily viewed cable news channels in 2005. For each we selected a morning hour, a daytime hour, the closest thing to a traditional newscast and the highest rated prime-time talk show. The following programs were captured and analyzed:

7-8 a.m. on CNN, FOX and MSNBC

11 a.m. – Noon on CNN, FOX and MSNBC

Larry King Live (CNN)

NewsNight with Aaron Brown (CNN)

Special Report with Britt Hume (FOX)

The O'Reilly Factor (FOX)

Hardball with Chris Matthews (MSNBC)

Countdown with Keith Olbermann (MSNBC).

All cable programming was procured through videotapes and supplemented in some cases with transcripts. Taped programs were captured live in the Washington D.C. market, transcripts through the Nexis database.

Web.Sites: We downloaded the top stories for the following Web sites at four different times during the day — 9 a.m., 1 p.m., 5 p.m. and 9 p.m. The national Web sites were:

CNN.com

CBSnews.com

NYTimes.com

Dailynews.Yahoo.com (since changed to news.yahoo.com)

News.google.com

To select the Internet news sites to be coded, the Nielsen/NetRatings' list of top 20 news sites was consulted to determine the most prominent sites. The list contained four basic types: news aggregators, newspaper sites, network news sites, and cable news sites. One site was chosen for each of those categories. For aggregators, Yahoo was selected as the highest aggregator in top 20. For newspapers, NYTimes.com was selected, again, as the highest of this kind in Nielsen's list. For network news outlets, CBS was chosen because the study in 2004 examined the Web sites of ABC and NBC but not CBS. For cable, CNN was selected as the highest-ranked cable news site. In addition, we added Google's news page as one of the newest forms of news content offered, with a unique method of aggregation.

Each site was visited four times on each day, at 9:00 a.m. ET, 1:00 p.m. ET, 5:00 p.m. ET, and 9:00 p.m. ET, to download stories. The order in which the sites were visited was rotated for each capture time. Each download took approximately 20 minutes.

Each time, the following method was used to determine which stories to capture:

On the news home page of each of the sites, we identified featured stories. A story at the top of a page tied in to a graphic element — commonly a picture of an event or person — was counted as a featured story and captured for study. Multiple stories on the page relating to the same graphic element were also captured as featured stories. Pages with more than one graphic element were considered to have more than one featured story, and all such stories were studied.

After the featured stories, we included the next three most prominent stories without graphics starting from the top and moving down. Those stories were recorded as non-featured.

The following rules were used in selecting stories:

- For the sample, we omitted from study video, audio, charts, maps, background/archival information, news tickers, chat and polls.
- Any headline that linked to an outside Web site was also omitted. (But stories attributed to other outlets but present on the site being studied were counted.)
- Links to secondary stories about the same topic were counted as unique stories for the non-featured-stories category.
- A graphic attached to a non-story item (i.e., video, audio, charts, maps, background/archival information, “complete coverage,” chat and polls) was not counted as a story.
- If there were no stories associated with a graphic, then only the top three stories were coded and none were considered featured.
- If there was no graphic present, then no story was considered featured, and the top three stories were counted as non-featured.

Blogs: We used the following criteria to select seven blogs:

First, we looked at the most popular blogs by average daily traffic. Within that list, we started with the most popular blog and then moved down the rankings, establishing a mix of political ideology and geography. Finally, we added a seventh blog, a video blog, or vlog, to see how those differed from more traditional, text-based blogs. The blogs are as follows:

Daily Kos , Instapundit, Eschaton, Talking Points, Little Green Footballs, Power Line and Crooks and Liars as the vlog.

For each blog that day, we captured the entire sequence of postings and all embedded links on the main page. The postings were saved in Netscape and then copied and pasted into an MS Word document.

National Media Coding Procedures and Intercoder Reliability

Text-based Media

The national newspapers, Web site stories (both national and local), and blog postings (both national and local) were content-analyzed by the Center for Advanced Social Research (CASR) of Missouri 's School of Journalism from July through September 2005. A description of the study's objectives and data collection procedures was provided in a codebook to orient nine coders and two project managers working on the content analysis (the codebook for blog postings was modified to reflect the uniqueness of blogging in information-gathering and posting determination). The codebook contained a dictionary of coding variables, operational definitions, and measurement scales with detailed instructions and examples. Before actual coding began, extensive training was conducted to all coders, with additional assistance provided by researchers of PEJ. Weekly meetings were held between the coders and project managers to discuss problems and issues identified during the coding process. Coding sheets were designed for each of the media outlets and used consistently throughout the coding process. Because the coding variables were similar across the media outlets, reliability

tests were conducted using a random selection of national newspaper stories for all the coding variables. The overall intercoder reliability was .892, calculated with Scott's Pi (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 1998).

Video-based Media

The network television news and cable news programming were content-analyzed by ADT Research, publisher of the Tyndall Report. Since many of the findings are weighted by time spent on each item, it was essential to ensure accurate measurement of the duration of items. They were documented as rundowns with start times and end times, allowing for the duration to be computed as the difference between the two. All of the commercial network broadcasts were viewed twice to derive an accurate inventory and item-length statistics. To double-check the accuracy of all long-format items, coders not only designated packages, interviews (external or in-house) and stand-ups, but also documented a story summary in the form of headlines/slugs and the identity of the reporter or interview subject involved. Those headlines/slugs were also used to double-check topic and major story coding. All coding was conducted via a standardized codebook provided to ADT by PEJ. The codebook contained a dictionary of coding variables, operational definitions, and measurement scales with detailed instructions and examples. Again, before actual coding began, extensive training was conducted, with additional assistance provided by researchers of PEJ. ADT research reported strong reliability for all coding variables.

II. Local News Media

Sample, Story Procurement and Inclusion

For the local sample we selected three markets, one large, one medium-sized and one small. In selecting the three, the list of 210 markets was first divided into thirds based on population. Each group represented roughly one-third of the population, according to Nielsen Media Research. While ensuring geographical diversity, one market was then randomly selected from each group. The resulting markets were Houston (large), Milwaukee (medium) and Bend, Ore., (small).

Within each market, we captured and examined a wide spectrum of local TV, radio, print and online media.

- Local television: We selected all stations with local news, including all network affiliates (including Fox), and any Spanish-language stations with local news.
- Radio: We selected, where possible, one all-news station, one news/talk station (looking for a diversity of affiliation and ownership), and one local NPR station if it carried local news programming beyond top-of-the hour wrap-ups. If there was no all-news station, we selected a second news/talk station, looking for a diversity of ownership. For the purposes of this overview, the Project used unpublished data from BIAfn's Media Access Pro 4.1 database. Station listings, which included primary format information, were generated for three markets — Houston-Galveston, Milwaukee-Racine, and Bend, Ore. Using the BIAfn data, station format histories were verified and then cross-checked and updated by using information listed on individual station Web sites and with Arbitron's station information listings. Still, when compared to other radio formats, news is perhaps the most difficult to cleanly define. No precise formula and no real guidelines exist for determining whether a station is a news station, a news/talk station or a talk station. It is also difficult to precisely determine issues like reception that may affect the radio station people might listen to as their "hometown" station. It is wholly possible that someone in Houston or Milwaukee is able to receive the signal of a station from outside either city's designated market area.

- Print: We examined, where they existed, the city's largest daily newspaper, the largest suburban daily, two alternative news weeklies (if more than two existed we selected two based on circulation size, focus and ownership), and a Spanish-language daily.
- Blogs: We examined three local blogs, when possible, selecting for a mix of those owned by the mainstream media outlets (such as the local papers) and those owned and run by independents.

The content selected within each medium was as follows:

- Local TV: One hour of morning news, half an hour of evening, half an hour of late-night.
- Local Radio: For each station we selected local news programming. The timing of local news programs varies from stations to station, but we strove to select a segment from the morning drive time, mid-day and evening drive time.
- Local Print: We examined the A (or front), metro/city and business sections for broadsheets. We excluded style, advertising and sports. Weekly tabloids often do not have sections. As a result, for tabloids we examined everything except sports stories, style stories, opinion sections (op-eds, editorials or letters), obituaries, police-beat listings (the crime reports were coded), calendar listings, and classifieds.
- Local Blogs: We examined all postings for the selected day.

The selection criteria led us to the following outlets and content within each market:

Houston

3 local TV stations (CBS, ABC, NBC affiliate)

KHOU-TV Channel 11, CBS affiliate.

6 – 7 a.m.: 11 News This Morning

6 – 6:30 p.m.: 11 News at 6

10 – 10:30 p.m.: 11 News at 10

KPRC Channel 2, NBC affiliate.

6 – 7 a.m. : Local 2 Today at 6

6 – 6:30 p.m. : Local 2 News at 6

10 – 10:35 p.m. : Local 2 News at 10

KTRK – Channel 13, ABC Affiliate

6 -7 a.m.: 13 Eyewitness News at 6

6 – 6:30 p.m.: 13 Eyewitness News at 6 PM

10 – 10:35 p.m.: 13 Eyewitness News at 10

2 local radio (2 news/talk)

News/Talk: KTRH 740 AM

ABC Affiliate and a Clear Channel Station.

1 hour morning: 6 – 7 a.m.

1 hour mid-day: 1-2 p.m.

No local evening news program

News/Talk: KSEV

Owned by Lieberman broadcasting, No affiliation.

1 hour morning: 6-7 a.m.

1 hour evening: 5-6 p.m.

No mid-day news

6 local newspapers (daily, suburban daily, alternative weekly, African-American weekly)

The Houston Chronicle: Houston 's main daily paper

The Baytown Sun: Houston 's largest suburban daily; Baytown is west of Houston .

Houston Press (Alternative): Weekly publication with investigative reporting and coverage of the arts, food and clubs

Houston Forward Times (African-American weekly): The South's largest and only independently owned and published African-American weekly newspaper

Three Local Blogs

houston.metblogs.com: This blog is owned by Metroblogging, founded by two Californians. As of May 11, 2005 , they had blogs in 19 U.S. cities and said they would start in any city where they have at least 10 people committed to making postings. The one rule they stipulate is that all posts have to relate to that city somehow, but otherwise it's fairly open to however individual bloggers see their own city. Subject matter varies.

BlogHouston.net: blogHOUSTON.net is a frequently updated weblog that produces regular commentary on Houston politics and current events, a steady dose of media criticism, and thoughts on Houston 's cultural and entertainment options: "We are about Houston ."

www.chron.com/memo (a Houston Chronicle blog): This is the Houston Chronicle blog on pop culture, which does not seem to be updated every day and is criticized by other local bloggers.

Milwaukee

4 local TV stations (CBS, ABC, NBC, Fox):

W TMJ4 – NBC Channel 4

6 -7 a.m. : Live at Daybreak

6 – 6:30 p.m. : Live at 6

10 – 10:35 p.m. : Live at 10

WDJT CBS 58

6 -7 a.m. : CBS 58 Morning News Express

5-5:30 p.m. : CBS 58 News at 5

10 – 10:30 p.m. : CBS 58 News Ten

WISN-TV Channel 12; ABC affiliate

6 – 7 a.m.: 12 News This Morning

6 – 6:30 p.m.: 12 News at 6

10 – 10:35 p.m.: 12 News at 10

WITI Channel 6 ; Fox News Affiliate

6 AM – 7 AM Fox 6 Wake Up News

6-6:30PM : Fox 6 News at 6

10:00-10:30PM : Fox 6 News at 10

3 local radio (2 News/talk, 1 NPR affiliate that does morning news):

News/Talk: 620 WTMJ Newsradio

CBS affiliated, highest rated

1 hour of local morning news: 5-6 a.m.

1 hour of local evening news: 5-6 p.m.

No mid-day local news

Local NPR Affiliate: WGTD FM News

NPR, WPR, AP

1 hour of local morning news: 8-9 a.m.

1/2 hour of local mid-day news: 12 – 12:30 p.m.

No local evening news program

News/Talk: WHBL AM News

ABC affiliate

-1 hour of local morning news: 6-7 a.m.

-1 hour of mid-day local news: 11a.m.- 12 p.m.

4 local newspapers (daily, African-American weekly, alternative weekly)

Major Daily: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Alternative Weekly: Daily Reporter General Interest

Alternative Weekly: Milwaukee Community Journal Alternative, “ Wisconsin ’s Largest African American Newspaper”

Suburban Daily: Waukesha Freeman, circulation 15,000

Local Blogs:

The two local blogs we found both come from the Journal Sentinel.

DayWatch: A blog hosted by JSOnline of today’s developing local news.

JSOnline weblog on state politics

Both blogs were originally selected for study. But there were no postings on either blog on May 11, 2005 so they are not a part of the final sample.

Bend

1 local TV station (NBC)

KTVZ Channel 21, NBC Affiliate

6-7 a.m. : NewsChannel 21@Sunrise (not on the air on 5/11/2005 because of a power outage)

6-6:30 p.m. : NewsChannel 21@ Six

11-11:35 p.m. : NewsChannel 21@11

1 local radio

KBND AM News, ABC affiliate

-1 hour of local morning news programming: 6-7 a.m.

-1 hour of local evening news programming: 5-6 p.m.

1 newspaper

The Bend Bulletin, <http://www.bendbulletin.com>

There appear to be no local blogs in Bend .

Local Media Coding Procedures and Intercoder Reliability

Stories appearing in newspapers and on television and radio for the three cities were coded for a specific day selected by the State of the Media Project. That included local newspapers, radio and local television in the communities of Bend, Ore., Houston, Tex., and Milwaukee, Wis. The tables appended to this memo report coder-reliability assessments for each medium coded. Finally, an overall summary of reliability is provided.

Personnel Involved in the Network News Coding

Faculty and graduate students in the School of Journalism at Michigan State University conducted this part of the project. The two faculty members who supervised the project have more than 40 years of combined social science experience in conducting such studies, and are two of the most published academic researchers in the field.

Two doctoral students in the Mass Media Ph.D. program at MSU, one a fourth-year student and the other a second-year student, coded most of the stories, assisted by a master's degree student of the MSU School of Journalism.

The coding protocol was provided by personnel at the Project. The protocol called for the coding of 23 variables for all stories in each designated medium, and an additional 27 variables for selected "big stories" from each medium.

The two School of Journalism faculty members conducted extensive training sessions with the doctoral-student coders during the summer of 2005 using news stories collected for other studies. A decision was subsequently made to add the master's degree student, and that student was trained during the fall. The reliability of this additional student was assessed against that of the doctoral students using the same sample stories used to assess the reliability achieved by the doctoral students. Comparability is therefore exact.

Procedure

The fourth-year doctoral student coordinated the coding work of all the other students. Coding was done independently, working from the protocol, without consultation among the coders.

Spanish-language media were also included in the study. To code this material, translators were employed to produce text in English. The translated copy was then coded by the regular coders in the study.

Reliability was assessed for each medium, using stories randomly sampled from the total to be coded. Reliability was first assessed on the 23 variables coded for all stories. Once acceptable reliability was achieved, all stories were coded for

those variables. Reliability then was assessed for the “big story” variables, and once acceptable reliability was achieved on those variables, coding was completed for relevant stories.

In all, about 5% of all stories were used in the reliability assessments. The tables reporting reliability below are for just those variables on which substantive disagreements could occur. Percentages of agreement calculations were made to assess the coding for each of these variables. Each coder (the two doctoral students and the master’s student) were tested against each other on these variables. For news-organization stories on which all three coders participated, reliability assessments were made for all three coders and were then averaged for a total agreement.

Reliability Standards

Project procedures followed in the past relied on percentage of agreement for establishing intercoder reliability, and this study follows that precedent. The following standards, based on experience with past studies, should guide confidence in how reliably the variables were coded, and therefore the confidence researchers should have that findings represent real characteristics of the news coverage rather than coder bias or error.

In general, variables whose percentages of agreement exceeded 90% are highly reliable, and researchers can have high confidence that characteristics in the data are real rather than the result of coder bias or error. Variables whose reliabilities are below 85% but above 80 are accepted. The following chart summarizes these judgments.

Percentage of Agreement	Confidence
90% or more	Very high confidence
85% to 90%	Good confidence
80% to 85%	Acceptable confidence
70% to 80%	Very weak confidence
Below 70%	No confidence

Based on those standards, 7 of 11 variables coded for all stories achieved very high confidence, with the remaining variables achieving acceptable or good confidence. Another 25 variables were coded for big stories only, and 24 of these achieved very high confidence. The remaining variable achieved good confidence.

Individual media exhibited different confidence results, however, and any analysis focusing on just one medium should examine the reliability figures provided for that medium. Even so, just one variable (Government Related stories) fell below acceptable confidence for the radio stories.

Below are the tables reporting reliability for stories examined for each medium and for all stories combined.

Coder Reliability Assessments for All Local Newspapers, Television and Radio News Stories (Figures are percent of total stories in the reliability test for each medium and for all stories combined.)

Variable	Newspaper Stories (N=31)	Television Stories (N=33)	Radio Stories (N=33)	All Stories (N=97)
Dateline	91	85	88	97
Origin	94	88	100	94
Govt Relation	81	91	76	83
Geog. Focus	84	91	85	87
Topic	97	91	85	91
Transparency	97	100	88	95
Source Total	81	79	82	81
Female Total	97	97	97	97
Male Total	88	97	91	92
Anonymous	94	91	94	93
Opinion	94	100	97	97

Coder Reliability Assessments for Only Big Local Newspapers, Television and Radio News Stories

Variable	Newspaper Stories (N=32)	Television Stories (N=34)	Radio Stories (N=33)	All Stories (N=99)
Dominant Source	97	100	91	96
Viewpoints	97	100	85	94
Direct Sources	85	100	94	93
Ordinary Sources	88	100	97	95
No Spl. Exp.	88	100	88	92
Spl. Exp	88	100	97	95
Local Relevance	100	100	100	100
Background	100	100	88	96
Implications	91	97	94	94
Impact	100	100	88	96
Human Face	97	97	96	96
Fact/Conjecture	100	100	97	99
Citizen Action	97	100	97	98
Consumer Action	100	100	100	100
Contact	97	100	97	98
Principles	97	100	100	99
Information	100	100	100	100
TV Newness		100		
Video 1		94		
Video 2		94		
Video 3		94		
Stills		100		
Dup. Video		100		
Focus Type	100	100	100	100
Focus Tone	82	97	82	87

III. Spanish-Language Media

Local Broadcast TV

KXLN-TV Channel 45 — 5 p.m. – 6 p.m. Noticias a las 5 (Univision Affiliate). Local news ran from 5 to 5:30 and Univision Network News from 5:30 to 6

KTMD TV Channel 48 5 p.m.–6 p.m. Noticias a las 5 (Telemundo Affiliate). Local News ran from 5 to 5:30 and Telemundo Network News from 5:30 to 6

Both TV stations are in the Houston metropolitan area.

Local Radio

Spanish-language radio stations broadcast in both the Houston and Milwaukee markets, but offered no scheduled news program to include in the study.

Daily Newspaper:

Rumbo de Houston: Rumbo de Houston is a daily tabloid published Monday through Friday. It is part of a group that publishes throughout Texas, including San Antonio, Houston, Austin and the Rio Grande Valley.

Story inclusion and rules were the same as the English-language process for each media type. Coding procedures differed in that the Spanish-language material was first translated into English and then coded under the same variables and rules as the English-language media.

Intercoder Reliability

Because the same coders coded the translated Spanish-language content and the English-language media, no separate intercoder reliability tests were conducted. The protocol and coders were judged reliable on the basis of the intercoder reliability discussed above.

Authors and Collaborators

Authors and Collaborators

Many partners contributed to this report.

The content analysis was designed by the Project in collaboration with six of those partners, Steve Lacy and Fred Fico of The School of Journalism at Michigan State University, Esther Thorson and Ken Fleming of the University of Missouri School of Journalism, Andrew Tyndall of ADT Research and Lee Ann Brady, formerly of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. The coding of national print media (web sites, newspapers and blogs) was executed by a team

at Missouri under the supervision of Fleming and Thorson. The coding of network TV and cable was executed by ADT Research under the supervision of Tyndall. The local news content (print, radio and television) was coded by a team at Michigan under the supervision of Lacy and Fico. All data was generated by the team at Michigan and by Paul Hitlin of the Project. All conclusions and analysis were sent to the team at Michigan for review.

Daniel Riffe, professor of journalism at Ohio University consulted on the design of the study.

The chapter on newspapers was co-authored by Rick Edmonds of the Poynter Institute. The rest of the chapters were written by the staff of the Project. Bill Kovach, the chairman of the Committee of Concerned Journalists, served as a consultant to the Report.

Andrew Tyndall of ADT Research provided tapes, data and gave particularly close reads and copious suggestions on the chapters on network and cable TV.

From the Project: David Vaina conducted the data aggregation for the newspaper and online chapters. Gauri Malhotra and Atiba Pertilla conducted the data aggregation for the cable and local television chapters. Tom Avila conducted the data aggregation for the radio and network chapters. Dante Chinni conducted the data aggregation for the ethnic, alternative and magazine chapters. Paul Hitlin served as a final reader of all chapters. Jennifer Fimbres managed the budget and distribution.

The firm of Carter Cosgrove designed the website. David Vaina implemented the design and construction of the site with the assistance of Chinni and Malhotra. Tom Avila aided in the visual design of the website as well as the Executive Summary. Pamela Nabholz took the photos that appear on the site. Wendy Kelly of WLK Design will publish the executive summary.

Amy Mitchell, PEJ's associate director and research director, supervised the project. Tom Rosenstiel is the Project's director.

Evan Jenkins, a longtime New York Times editor who is now a consulting editor of the Columbia Journalism Review, was the copy editor.

More than twenty-five people served as readers of the chapters. Among them are: Charles Bierbauer, John Carroll, Sandy Close, Wally Dean, Rick Edmonds, Paul Friedman, Ed Fouhy, Bob Giles, Dan Gillmor, Lawrence Grossman, Mark Hanzlik, Samir Husni, Richard Karpel, Katie King, Bill Kovach, Scott Libin, Dick Meyer, Phil Meyer, Victor Navasky, George Niesen, Bob Papper, Jon Petrovich, Deborah Potter, Adam Powell, Lee Rainie, Alan Seraita, Al Stavitsky, Roberto Suro, Andrew Tyndall and Dale Willman. Their thoughtful insights and suggestions greatly improved the chapters, but the readers are in no way responsible for the analysis or narrative accounts in this report. Moreover, the readers were not sources for information, unless explicitly cited in footnotes. In no case did a reader serve as an anonymous source for anything in the report.

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2006 Annual Report On the State of the News Media

By the Project for Excellence in Journalism

Executive Summary

Overview

Scan the headlines of 2005 and one question seems inevitable: Will we recall this as the year when journalism in print began to die?

The ominous announcements gathered steam as the year went on. The New York Times would cut nearly 60 people from its newsroom, the Los Angeles Times 85; Knight Ridder's San Jose Mercury News cut 16%, the Philadelphia Inquirer 15% — and that after cutting another 15% only five years earlier. By November, investors frustrated by poor financial performance forced one of the most cost-conscious newspaper chains of all, Knight Ridder, to be put up for sale.

Adding to the worry, industry fundamentals, not the general economy, were the problem — declining circulation, pressure on revenues, stock prices for the year down 20%.

It wasn't only newspapers, either. Magazines like Newsweek, U.S. News and Business Week were suffering, too. The largest company, Time Inc., advertising and circulation falling, cut 205 people and promised to transform itself from "magazine publishing" to a "multiplatform media company."

The former dean at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, Tom Goldstein would conclude, "Unless they urgently respond to the changing environment, newspapers risk early extinction."¹

Is it true? From here on will the delivery of news in ink on paper begin a rapid and accelerating decline? Newspapers are the country's biggest newsgathering organizations in most towns and the Internet's primary suppliers. What would their decline portend?

For two years, we have tracked in this report the major trends in the American news media (link to 2005 and 2004). What is occurring, we have concluded, is not the end of journalism that some have predicted. But we do see a seismic transformation in what and how people learn about the world around them. Power is moving away from journalists as gatekeepers over what the public knows. Citizens are assuming a more active role as assemblers, editors and even creators of their own news. Audiences are moving from old media such as

¹ Goldstein is now a professor at the University of California at Berkeley and working on a project to study new ways of generating revenue from journalism.

television or newsprint to new media online. Journalists need to redefine their role and identify which of their core values they want to fight to preserve — something they have only begun to consider.

In 2005, change intensified. The shift by audiences to other delivery mediums accelerated print's problems. Things that seemed futuristic two years ago, such as watching network news on a PDA, began to arrive. The role of new aggregators like Google grew. And new scandals in the old media seemed to confirm worries that some news people are more concerned with their careers than the public interest.

We believe some fears are overheated. For now, the evidence does not support the notion that newspapers have begun a sudden death spiral. The circulation declines and job cuts will probably tally at only about 3% for the year. The industry still posted profit margins of 20%. Measuring print and online together, the readership of many newspapers is higher than ever.

On the other hand, the most sanguine reaction to those changes — that they simply reflect an older medium's giving way to a newer one, and that citizens will have more choices than ever — strikes us as glib, even naïve.

Even if newspapers are not dying, they and other old media are constricting, and so, it appears, is the amount of resources dedicated to original newsgathering.

Most local radio stations, our content study this year finds, offer virtually nothing in the way of reporters in the field. On local TV news, fewer and fewer stories feature correspondents, and the range of topics that get full treatment is narrowing even more to crime and accidents, plus weather, traffic and sports. On the Web, the Internet-only sites that have tried to produce original content (among them Slate and Salon) have struggled financially, while those thriving financially rely almost entirely on the work of others. Among blogs, there is little of what journalists would call reporting (our study this year finds reporting in just 5% of postings). Even in bigger newsrooms, journalists report that specialization is eroding as more reporters are recast into generalists.

In some cities, the numbers alone tell the story. There are roughly half as many reporters covering metropolitan Philadelphia, for instance, as in 1980. The number of newspaper reporters there has fallen from 500 to 220. The pattern at the suburban papers around the city has been similar, though not as extreme. The local TV stations, with the exception of Fox, have cut back on traditional news coverage. The five AM radio stations that used to cover news have been reduced to two.

As recently as 1990, the Philadelphia Inquirer had 46 reporters covering the city. Today it has 24.

In the future, we may well rely more on citizens to be sentinels for one another. No doubt that will expand the public forum and enrich the range of voices. Already people are experimenting with new ways to empower fellow citizens to gather and understand the news — whether it is soldiers blogging from Baghdad, a radio program on the war produced by students at Swarthmore College carrying eyewitness interviews with Iraqi citizens, or a similar effort by young radio reporters in Minnesota to cover local towns.

Yet the changes will probably also make it easier for power to move in the dark. And the open technology that allows citizens to speak will also help special interests, posing as something else, to influence or even sometimes overwhelm what the rest of us know.

The worry is not the wondrous addition of citizen media, but the decline of full-time, professional monitoring of powerful institutions.

Those are just some of the questions and conclusions in this, the third of our annual reports on the state of American journalism. The study, which we believe is unique in depth and scope, breaks the news industry into nine sectors (newspapers, magazines, network television, cable television, local television, the Internet, radio, ethnic media, and alternative media) and builds off many of the findings from a year ago.

This year, the study also includes a distinct content report, A Day in the Life of the News, in which we examine one day's events as they course through the media culture in print, television, radio, online, and blogs, magazines, both nationally and locally in three American cities.

The Major Trends

In 2006, we see six new trends emerging that deserve highlighting and that add to the underlying trends transforming journalism we have noted in earlier reports. This year:

The new paradox of journalism is more outlets covering fewer stories. As the number of places delivering news proliferates, the audience for each tends to shrink and the number of journalists in each organization is reduced. At the national level, those organizations still have to cover the big events. Thus we tend to see more accounts of the same handful of stories each day. And when big stories break, they are often covered in a similar fashion by general-assignment reporters working with a limited list of sources and a tight time-frame. Such concentration of personnel around a few stories, in turn, has aided the efforts of newsmakers to control what the public knows. One of the first things to happen is that the authorities quickly corral the growing throng of correspondents, crews and paparazzi into press areas away from the news. One of the reasons coverage of Katrina stood out to Americans in 2005 was officials

were unable to do that, though some efforts, including one incident of holding journalists at gunpoint, were reported. For the most part, the public — and the government — were learning from journalists who were discovering things for themselves.

The species of newspaper that may be most threatened is the big-city metro paper that came to dominate in the latter part of the 20th century. The top three national, newspapers in the U.S. suffered no circulation losses in 2005. The losses at smaller newspapers, in turn, appeared to be modest. It was the big-city metros that suffered the biggest circulation drops and imposed the largest cutbacks in staff. Those big papers are trying to cover far-flung suburbs and national and regional news all at the same time — trying to be one-stop news outlets for large audiences. In part, they are being supplanted by niche publications serving smaller communities and targeted audiences. Yet our content studies suggest the big metros are the news organizations most likely to have the resources and aspirations to act as watchdogs over state, regional and urban institutions, to identify trends, and to define the larger community public square. It is unlikely that small suburban dailies or weeklies will take up that challenge. Moreover, while we see growth in alternative weeklies and the ethnic press, many small suburban dailies have shrunk.

At many old-media companies, though not all, the decades-long battle at the top between idealists and accountants is now over. The idealists have lost. The troubles of 2005, especially in print, dealt a further blow to the fight for journalism in the public interest. “If you argue about public trust today, you will be dismissed as an obstructionist and a romantic,” the editor of one of the country’s major papers told us privately. An executive at one of the three broadcast networks told senior staff members in a meeting last year that “the ethical anvil has been lifted,” meaning the producers could dispense with traditional notions of journalistic propriety. One of the most celebrated editors in the country, John Carroll of the Los Angeles Times, stepped down in frustration in 2005, but only after taking weeks to persuade his successor not to join him. The most celebrated journalist still at ABC, Ted Koppel, left for cable, but only after announcing that neither cable news nor network news was amenable to the long-form work to which he aspired. The most cogent explanation for why journalism in the public interest has lost leverage was probably offered by Polk Laffoon IV, the corporate spokesman of Knight Ridder. “I wish there were an identifiable and strong correlation between quality journalism ... and newspaper sales,” he said. “It isn’t ...that simple.” From here on, at many companies, the fight on behalf of the public interest will come from the rank and file of the newsroom, with the news executive as mediator with the boardroom. There are some notable exceptions, and journalists who work in those situations today consider themselves lucky. Meanwhile, at many new-media companies, it is not clear if advocates for the public interest are present at all.

That said, traditional media do appear to be moving toward technological innovation — finally. In earlier reports, the real investment and creativity in new technology appeared to be coming mostly from non-news organizations like Google. Traditional news outfits, in practice if not in rhetoric, treated the Internet as a platform to repurpose old material. While the evidence is sketchy and the efforts are frustrated by newsroom cutbacks, in 2005 we saw signs that the pattern was beginning to change. A big reason was that much of the revenue growth in these companies is now coming from online (and from niche products such as youth newspapers). In network television, for instance, viewers of ABC News can now watch an evening newscast from that network three and a half hours before one is broadcast on television. In print, various papers announced reorganizations of online operations. An internal memo at the Los Angeles Times was fairly typical, calling for “a different kind of online news operation, one that recognizes the changing expectations of readers.” In that transition, several big questions remain unanswered. One is whether younger audiences care anything about these traditional news brands. Another is, even if these legacy media do finally try to move online seriously, can they change their culture, or will they succumb to the natural tendency to favor their traditional platforms?

The new challengers to the old media, the aggregators, are also playing with limited time. When it comes to news, what companies like Google and Yahoo are aggregating and selling is the work of others — the very same old media they are taking revenue away from. The more they succeed, the faster they erode the product they are selling, unless the economic model is radically changed. Already there are rumblings. One thing to watch for in 2006 is whether old-media content producers demand that Google News begin to pay them for content. Another option for the aggregators is to begin to produce their own news, and already we are seeing baby steps; in 2005, Yahoo announced it would hire some journalists, but the effort is still minimal. Can the new rivals become more than technology companies? And if they do, will they have more than rhetorical allegiance to the values of public-interest journalism?

The central economic question in journalism continues to be how long it will take online journalism to become a major economic engine, and if it will ever be as big as print or television. If the online revenues at newspapers continue to grow at the current rate — an improbable 33% a year — they won't reach levels equivalent with print until 2017 (assuming print grows just 3% a year). Realistically, even with the lower delivery costs online, it will be years before the Internet rivals old media economics, if it ever does. Fledgling efforts to get consumers to pay for online content edged forward in 2005, but only marginally. All this only adds to the likelihood that the next battleground will be producers of old media will challenging Internet providers and Internet aggregators to begin compensating them for content, the model that exists in cable.

Those trends are in addition to others we have identified in earlier years. Among them: that the traditional model of journalism — the press as verifier — is giving way to other models that are faster, looser and cheaper; to adapt, journalism must move in the direction of making its work more transparent and more expert and widening the scope of its searchlight; those who would manipulate the press and the public are gaining leverage over the journalists who cover them; convergence is more inevitable and less threatening the more one looks at audience data; the notion that people are gravitating to a partisan press model, or red news and blue news, is exaggerated. (LINK See Major Trends 2004 and 2005).

CONTENT

In the first two years of this report, we analyzed the content of American news media by taking 28 randomly chosen days from a wide swath of news outlets and examining what was offered. What topics were covered? What kind of sourcing was there? How were stories framed? How did the various media differ?

This year, we wanted to take a closer look at what Americans get, how specific events are covered, and the style and personality of different media at different times of day. To do so, we examined a Day in the Life of the News, a microscopic look at the coverage of one day, May 11, 2005, nationally and in the local media in three American cities. We examined all kinds of outlets, from national newspapers and television to small suburban dailies, ethnic media, local radio, and blogs. How did stories come and go through the course of the day? How does where we get news influence what we learn? Does the time of day when we get the news matter? What advantage or disadvantage does time offer — waiting till the next morning or the end of the day? Where are the best places to go for certain kinds of information?

Among the findings of this study within a study, “A Day in the Life of the News:”

- What people learn depends heavily on where they go for news. The medium may not be the message, but it no doubt influences it. In print, online and on the network evening newscasts this day, violence in Iraq, a false alarm in Washington, and protests in Afghanistan were the top stories. On cable and morning news, the trial of Michael Jackson and the Illinois murder case were played higher. On local TV and radio, weather, traffic and local crime dominated — and that was an altogether different definition of local than one finds in print. As the media fragments nowadays, consumers must choose strategically to get a complete diet. The notion of relying on a single or primary source for news — one-stop shopping — may no longer make sense.

- When audiences did encounter the same story in different places, often they heard from a surprisingly small number of sources. Every network morning show and cable program covered the story about a security scare involving President Bush by interviewing the same lone person, a security expert from Citibank.² (A grenade, which did not explode, had been found near the site where Bush made a speech in Tbilisi, Georgia.) The murder in Illinois was similarly covered in national broadcast news mainly by interviewing the local prosecutor. More coverage, in other words, does not always mean greater diversity of voices.
- The incremental and even ephemeral nature of what the media define as news is striking. Few of what would emerge as the top stories this day would be remembered months later — or even, a search of data bases reveals, get much coverage within a day or two. And the efforts to add context to some ongoing stories were inhibited by speed, space and journalistic formula, especially on television. Journalism has always leaned toward the transitory and incremental over the systemic — news that breaks rather than news that bends. The older part of the 24-hour-news system — cable news — seems to have exaggerated this with a fixation on immediacy. It is less clear which way the Internet leans. Some online sites, particularly the Web aggregators, seem to be moving toward the ephemeral. Yet others, including some TV sites, may move the other way, toward collecting deeper reports than they offer now. And the arrival of citizens into the mix seems to push further toward more significant or longer-term issues. The blogosphere may have been the platform least focused on the immediate of any that we monitored.
- While the news is always on, there is not a constant flow of new events. The level of repetition in the 24-hour news cycle is one of the most striking features one finds in examining a day of news. Google News, for instance, offers consumers access to some 14,000 stories from its front page, yet on this day they were actually accounts of the same 24 news events. On cable, just half of the stories monitored across the 12 hours were new. The concept of news cycle is not really obsolete, and the notion of news 24-7 is something of an exaggeration.

PUBLIC ATTITUDES

The public continues to be troubled about the news media.

It would be an overstatement to suggest, however, that the country has reached some new crisis point, or even that public confidence in the press is on a worsening downward spiral.

²This story count includes every channel that aired a segment about the incident. Brief anchor reads of a headline about the incident were excluded.

In 2005, Americans registered more censure of the press in some areas, including heightened concerns about bias, criticism of the military, and whether the news media really protect democracy.

But by other measures — among them whether the press is professional and moral — Americans are more confident than they were before September 11, 2001, or in aftermath of the impeachment of President Bill Clinton. Overall, the percentage of Americans with a generally favorable view of the news media is rising. And the vast majority of Americans continue to support the idea that the press should be a neutral judge.

Over the longer term, to be sure, the general trend in public attitudes has been downward. We reviewed the data in our original report two years ago ([link](#)), but since the early 1980s Americans have come to view the news media as less professional, less accurate, less caring and less moral. Pollster Andrew Kohut has concluded, summarizing the data, that Americans increasingly believe that news organizations act out of their own economic self-interest, and journalists themselves act to advance their own careers.

In our inaugural report, we suggested that the heart of that declining trust was a “disconnect” over motive. Journalists see themselves as acting on the public’s behalf. The public believes they are either lying or deluding themselves. There was further evidence of that skepticism in 2005. The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press found that 75% of Americans believed that news organizations were more concerned with “attracting the biggest audience,” while only 19% thought they cared more about “informing the public.”³

The public also increasingly sees the press as slanted. Nearly three quarters of Americans (72%) in the summer of 2005 saw the press as favoring one side, up from 66% two years earlier. And 60% saw the press as politically biased, up from 53% in 2003. Republicans and conservatives are even more prone to feel this way than Democrats

⁴

This is an area that journalists have tended to dismiss over the years. Yet different surveys of journalists also suggest that while the preponderance of news people see themselves as moderate, the percentage who identify themselves as liberal is growing, while the percentage who see themselves as conservative is shrinking.

³ Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, conducted in association with the Project for Excellence in Journalism, “Public More Critical of Press, but Goodwill Persists,” June 26, 2005.

⁴ *ibid*

The percentage of people who believe that criticism of the military weakens American defenses has been rising as well, and in 2005 reached its highest point (47%) since 1985 (then 31%).⁵

But the declines in public confidence are hardly across the board. While esteem is still down from the mid 1980s, more Americans see the press as moral than in recent years (43%, up from 39% in 2002). More see the press as willing to admit mistakes (28% vs. 23% in 2002). More see the press as “highly professional” (59% vs. 49% in 2002).⁶

And while there is doubt about scrutiny of the military, there is enduring and even slightly growing support for the press as a watchdog over politicians. More Americans (60%) believe a critical press “keeps leaders from doing things that shouldn’t done” than did in 2001 and 2003 (when the number was 54%).⁷

The public is also more inclined than a few years ago to favor the press’s right to report on stories that it considers of national interest over the government’s need to censor to protect national security. Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, only 39% of Americans thought it was more important for the press to be able to report, while 53% favored government security. By February 2006, the numbers had reversed, with 56% favoring reporting to 34% more concerned with government security.⁸

In an age when it has become popular to believe that Americans are gravitating to partisan media outlets like talk radio, the data suggest, to the contrary, enduring support for an independent press. In 2005, roughly 7 out of 10 Americans (68%) believed the press should be “neutral” rather than “pro-American,” even in covering the war on terrorism. That support for the idea of a neutral the press has remained consistent since the Pew surveys first began asking the questions in the early 1990s.⁹

Indeed, stepping back from concern over the details and looking at another level, there is even a glimmer of some larger optimism in the numbers of late.

Throughout 2005, there were signs that the percentage of Americans who had a favorable general view of the press was rising. In December 2004, some 43% had a favorable view. In February 2006, that number was 59%. Interestingly, that approval rating is also rising across party lines (though Republicans generally are less favorable than Democrats or Independents

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ *ibid*

⁸ Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, “Bush a Drag on Republican Midterm Prospects,” February 9, 2006.

⁹ *ibid*

That is a number, and an area of inquiry for researchers, worth watching. On the specifics, there are worries, even on core questions like believability. But despite the criticisms there is a growing sense of an underlying appreciation for what the press does.

No magic formula seems embedded in the numbers. Some of them rise and fall with the news. During 2005, the press helped Americans know about Hurricane Katrina, the Asian Tsunami, secret security prisons abroad, and later, in early 2006, about the Bush Administration's conducting domestic wire tapping without first getting court warrants. Whether that performance influenced the approval numbers is difficult to know.

What does seem consistent is that the public apparently appreciates the idea that the press is aspiring to work in the public interest, trying to get it right, trying to be aggressive. People have serious doubts about whether journalists live up to those ideals, and they are disposed to think that money, rather than the public good, drives press behavior.

Radio

Radio is undergoing a transformation from a commercial medium transmitted over the air to something that might better be described as audio that includes satellite, podcasting and the Internet.

Content

- A study of local radio news in three cities found the medium more local than the critics might think—half the stories were local, and another 12% were regional.
- Yet it was also quite thin. It rarely involved sending reporters out to explore the community and tell stories about local voices and personalities—the hallmarks of traditional local news coverage. Only 14% of the airtime involved reporters in the field—and much of this was syndicated content from national networks.
- Instead, what listeners got was headlines read from wires or provided by national feeds—almost always less than a minute and often less than 30 seconds, lots of weather and traffic updates and musings from the host or others.
- Radio also offers citizens more opportunity than other local media to offer their own views or to hear from neighbors, though there is little verification of the information exchanged.

¹⁰ Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, “Bush a Drag on Republican Midterm Prospects” February 9, 2006.

Audience

- The audience for traditional radio continues to hold at 94% according to Arbitron. That number may soon shift, however, as advertisers and marketers demand more precise methods of audience measurement than the listener diary.
- In a survey conducted by Arbitron and Edison Media Research, eighty-two percent of respondents said, even with the new audio technologies available, they would listen to traditional radio as much in the future as they do now.
- By the end of 2005, the XM and Sirius satellite radio networks had some 9 million subscribers. This compares to an estimated traditional radio audience of 247 million listeners.
- Between 2000 and 2005, the number of Americans who had listened to an Internet radio station had grown from 5 percent to 15 percent according to Arbitron.
- Podcasts from National Public Radio were regularly making the iTunes Top 100 list. On November 21, 2005, according to the Online Journalism Review, NPR held 11 spots on the list—more than any other media outlet.

Economics

- The economic picture for radio was difficult in 2005 with market analysts scaling back positive predictions on an almost quarterly basis.
- With the exception of Clear Channel, revenues generated by news-format stations declined across the board for the five largest radio companies.
- According to an RTNDA/Ball State University survey, fewer than 20 percent of radio news directors stated that news was making a profit, down from 22.5 percent a year earlier.
- While still not showing a profit, the XM and Sirius satellite radio networks both reported massive revenue increases. Comparing 3rd quarter reports XM's revenue was up 134 percent from 2004, Sirius was up 250 percent.

Ownership

- The cross-media company Viacom entered 2006 as two distinct companies: CBS Corporation and the 'new' Viacom. Infinity Radio, now CBS Radio, joined (among other holdings) CBS Television, Simon and Schuster and the new CW network under the CBS umbrella.
- Motivated by the growing pressures of the new audio, some of traditional radio's biggest players—including Clear Channel, Citadel, Cumulus and Entercom—joined together to form the HD Digital Radio Alliance. The Alliance's goal is to coordinate the successful launch of the new audio's newest player: HD Radio.

News Investment

- According to RTNDA/Ball State, the average radio station doing news produced fewer than 40 minutes of radio news locally each day in 2004. Nearly 20 minutes of that occurred during the AM drive time.

- Two-thirds of news directors surveyed by RTNDA/Ball State decreased their newsroom size in 2004. Fully 77 percent were anticipating decreases in 2005.
- RTNDA/Ball State survey results showed radio salaries, as a whole, had climbed 3.2 percent between 2003 and 2004.

Public Attitudes

- Survey results from the Pew Research Center indicate that just 22 percent of respondents indicated that radio was their prime source for national and international news.
- In a separate Pew Research survey, only 17 percent indicated they were getting news about Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath from radio. This is compared to 89 percent for television and 21 percent from the Internet.
- On the subject of broadcast indecency, a Time magazine survey state that 51 percent of respondents believed the FCC should be stricter in its control of sexual language on the radio. Fifty-seven percent, however, did not believe FCC regulations should be broadened to include satellite radio content.

Online News

The growth in the overall audience for news online seemed to reach a plateau in 2005, sooner than analysts predicted, but those who do go online appeared to be using the medium more often. There were also signs, finally, that the old media was beginning to see the web as a place to innovate original content, not just a morgue for repurposing old material.

Content

- News websites vary dramatically in how they use technology—from deep original reporting to rapid updates and from multi-media offerings and podcasting to being thinly masked advertorials.
- Virtually all the original news gathering is still coming from the old media, and some of the major new web-only challengers appear to have made less progress in the last year when it comes to web content than the old media.
- Consumers can now find some of the richest news content online—much of it from the web sites of traditional news outlets. The five national Internet sites we examined were more deeply sourced than any other media studied, including national newspapers, with 85% of top stories containing four or more sources.
- The major Internet sites were also second only to the major national papers in how much context their stories offered audiences about events. In our index

measuring how many contextual elements the big stories of the day contained, 51% of the stories online contained three or more.

Audience

- The total online news audience showed very little (if any) growth in 2005. This was also true for blogs which had seen explosive growth in 2004, a presidential election year.
- However, we did see growth in two areas. 1) While the number of those going online for news may not be growing, those who do so may be going online more regularly. 2) And more Americans are reading online newspaper sites--often at the expense of the print version. Both of these findings could portend major changes in the news industry's business model.
- Americans may also be migrating to the Web during major news events, such as in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. While the dreaded MSM lead the way with dramatic video footage and interactive graphics and maps, many Americans appeared were also going to less traditional information sources, such as Flickr, craigslist, and Wikipedia at this time.

Economics

- Largely fueled by a red-hot ad market (projected to grow 30% over 2004), 2005 appeared to be a year of strong economic growth for the online news world which appeared to be on much more solid ground than it was during the previous boom cycle.
- Though the rate of growth may be slowing, increasing broadband penetration could increase online news consumption. Increased broadband access should also increase the supply and demand for online video, which opens yet another window for advertisers.

Ownership

- The country's richest media corporations continued to capture most of the heaviest online news traffic. As the case was the last two years of the annual report, four news sites continue to dominate: Yahoo News, CNN, MSNBC and AOL News.
- The largest media companies spent much of 2005 acquiring other online media properties though most of these were not news sites but those that were largely seen as lucrative streams of revenue that could help compensate for their struggling old media properties.

News Investment

- Media companies appeared to be investing in things that enthusiasts have long championed as the essence of the web: transparency, immediacy and interactivity. Podcasts, video, including the evening network news, news over wireless

technology like PDAs and cell phones, Wikis, and blogs went mainstream in 2005.

- What was less evident, however, was whether or not media companies were making investments in human capital that will enable news organizations to do more original reporting and synthesize the increasing amount of information and news that is available for public consumption.
- Moreover, it appears that relatively few Americans trust blogs—even among those who read them.

Public Attitudes

- Even though the Internet has become a ubiquitous source of news and information for a large majority of Americans, trust in it continues to shrink. For the third year in a row, the number of Americans who say it is reliable and accurate declined. In fact, fewer than half now say that most or all of the information on the Web is reliable and accurate. This was perhaps most illustrative when we looked at trust in blogs.
- Indeed, more and more Americans are now demanding that the Web, including news sites, become more transparent and accountable.

Blogs

- A study of seven prominent blogs found they were among the closest to 24-hour media studied—one blog started posting at 3:07 a.m. and continued until 11:20 p.m. EDT.
- While bloggers were often posting about things read or heard in the mainstream media, often it was from a different angle or source, and we also encountered many new matters such as a scholarly debate over the concept of a “living constitution,” a recent blogger convention in Nashville, a controversy at Commonweal Magazine over the dismissal of the editor, thoughts from a group of Iranian bloggers who met with one of their presidential candidates.
- Generally, bloggers were less focused on immediate and often transitory issues than the mainstream media studied (breaking news like the Cessna plane that mistakenly entered DC airspace and forced evacuation of the White House were minor items)
- There was little or no of what someone would call reporting on the blogs—such as interviewing, document research, or serving as witness to events. Only 5% of the postings on these sites involved original research. Most were straight commentary.

Newspapers

If 2004 was troubling, with circulation beginning to fall again, scandals and job losses, 2005 was roughly three times worse, and most analysts didn't see it coming. The problem, ironically, is that if this oldest of journalism mediums declines, there is still nothing among the newer media that matches its depth or breadth except online...and most of the content there comes from newspapers.

Content

- Newspaper readers on balance learn about the widest range of topics, get the deepest sourcing, and the most angles on the news than do consumers of any other media studied except for one.
- That exception, the Internet, in turn, still relies for the heart of its content on print journalism, and if papers were to vanish it is hard to see what might replace it.
- Most of the local news we found in newspapers was absent on local television.
- The local metro dailies remained committed to offering a complete menu of news—national and international news as well as local. They are not becoming niche products.
- The degree to which citizens could have gotten news sooner from the online version of the paper varied from one paper to the next, but for the most part, the print version remains the papers' primary outlet.
- One lurking question is whether the breadth and depth offered requires a day's delay or can be realized in more immediate reporting online.

Audience

- As of the end of September weekday and Sunday circulation was down roughly 3% from the year before, a sharply steeper decline than in earlier years.
- Between 1990 and 2004, the industry had already lost roughly 12% in circulation daily (or 7.7 million copies) and 8% Sunday (4.9 million copies).
- Various factors explain the decline, but a significant one is only likely to accelerate--more Americans going online for news.
- Major metropolitan dailies appeared to be suffering the most, caught between niche papers on the one side and growing competition from greater access to national and international news from other sources on the other side.

Economics

- Newspaper ad revenues for the year rose by just 1% to 2% but almost of that was thanks to growth in online operations (which grew about 30%) and niche publications, like those aimed at young readers. Without that, revenues would have been flat. More worrisome, the amount of advertising in papers, lineage, fell.
- And the picture only seems more complex looking forward. Competition for the critical category of classified advertising from places like Craigslist, the citizen

based bulletin boards, is only likely to grow. And if circulation declines continue, the ability of newspapers to keep raising ad rates, what industry insiders call “pricing power,” will only erode. Newspapers are trying to innovate by reaching out to new advertising categories, such as drug companies, but the job is getting harder.

- On Wall Street, alarmed by the fundamentals, stock prices fell, as noted in our introduction, by an average of 20%.

Ownership

- Perhaps one of the biggest stories in 2005 was the announcement that Knight Ridder, owner of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Miami Herald* and 30 other papers across the country, was being shopped around after its financial performance and management strategy disappointed major investors.
- To compensate for struggling circ and adverting revenues, several newspaper companies were buying up a number of online properties and not newspapers.

News Investment

- To maintain profit margins, many newspapers resorted to layoffs and buyouts. . By the time the tallies are in later this year, the industry is expected to lose between 1,250 and 1,500 newsroom professionals—editors and reporters.
- That would mean that the newspaper industry would have lost 3,500 to 3,800 newsroom professionals since 2000, or roughly 7%.
- Those suffering most appear to be major metro papers—places like Dallas, Philadelphia, San Francisco, San Jose, New York, and Los Angeles.
- The papers that have avoided these kinds of cuts, such as McClatchy and Newhouse, are those that seem dedicated to long-term investment and toward building circulation. Over time, they also are those that have shown the best long-term results, if that has come at the expense of lower profits margins.

Public Attitudes

- The public remained rather skeptical of newspapers, especially large national papers, when the public compares them to other public institutions. However, many Americans still find newspapers to be a fact-based and comprehensive news source.
- With so much attention on Judith Miller and the New York Times in 2005, it is perhaps not surprising to find that the public raises concerns about the accuracy of stories that use confidential sources though it appears many support their use on an ad hoc basis.

Local TV News

Local TV News continues to be enormously profitable, but there are continuing signs of a thinning product, audience loss and its efforts online may be among the weakest in the news business. Yet it remains trusted, local and highly factual.

Content

- Viewers got a lot of local weather, traffic and crime. (Take out the traffic, weather and sports and half of the newshole was taken up crimes or accidents this day. This was true across markets.
- Local TV news is more likely than other media we studied to try to portray regular people from the community and how they feel about things—rather than just officials.
- As local newsrooms are stretched thinner by producing more hours, anchor people increasingly are these newscasts. Only about a third of the time is made up of reporter “packages.” Most stories were anchor “voiceovers” supplemented with taped sound and visuals, but without correspondents.
- One aspect of the brevity seems to be more straightforward and factual information, with little of the journalist’s opinion thrown in (1% of stories). On cable and network morning news, it is closer to half.
- Morning news is the newest form and the one still evolving but, as a rule, traffic and weather dominate. There is a little less crime than at night (38% of time) and more than double the celebrity and lifestyle news (about 25% of time).

Audience

- The ratings for evening news in local TV in 2005 dropped by an average of 13%, by our calculations. Share fell 2%
- Morning news, which had been a growth area, saw a 7% decline in ratings and a 15% decline in share in 2005.
- For late news, following prime time, however, showed a more complicated picture. Ratings actually rose 7%, though share fell 2%.

Economics

- Veronis Suhler Stevenson projected that total local TV advertising revenue would rise to \$26 billion in 2005, up 1.6%. Coming off an even year – with presidential elections and the Olympics – a flat or slightly down 2005 would be typical for the local TV industry.
- The average local station revenue grew by more than 9%.
- But, according to the latest RTNDA/BSU survey, the amount that newsrooms contributed to total revenue in 2004 saw a 3% point decline, making up 42.8% of station revenue.

- The survey showed that the number of news directors reporting a profit fell by almost 14 percentage points from last year. Only 44.5% of the news directors reported that they earned a profit, down from 58.4% from the year before.

Ownership

- In June 2005, CBS and Viacom split their operations, with broadcast networks retaining the name CBS, and the cable operations placed under the banner Viacom Inc. In January 2006, the new CBS Corp. and Time Warner's Warner Bros. Entertainment announced that they would be merging and dissolving their respective TV networks – UPN and WB - and replacing them with a new network called The CW. This new network, to be launched in September 2006, will likely shake up the local television scene.
- The Fox Network saw some significant developments at the local television level in 2005. In August 2005, Roger E. Ailes, chairman of the cable channel Fox News, was also made chairman of Fox Television Stations. His appointment and other upper-management changes emphasized News Corp's renewed focus on the U.S. local news business. Fox was also in the process of making itself into a traditional-network style engine and in December 2005, launched its first local 11 p.m. newscast in Tampa, Florida. This interest in local stations and competing with the traditional newscasts is bound to change the landscape of local television news.

News Investment

- The amount of news on local TV showed no signs of declining in 2005. On average, local TV stations aired 3.6 hours of news per day, down a little from 3.7 hours the year before.
- In the latest year available, 2004, just under half of local TV stations 44%, had increased their news budgets, while 26% percent said budgets remained the same.
- Network affiliated stations continued to have the biggest staffs and growth in staffing, an average of 37 number of full time newsroom professionals. More than half of the news directors at network affiliates (53.5%) said they would keep newsrooms staff sizes the same as 2004. Most news directors of independent stations (54.3%), on the other hand, said they didn't know what changes would be made, and more than 20% said they would decrease the number of newsroom employees.
- Newsroom salaries in 2004 increased 3.6% over 2003. This was a second straight year of increases. News managers saw their salaries rise 4.8 percent while other off-air positions received pay increases of 6.6 percent from the previous year. Over the past decade, news directors have seen a median salary jump of 60% and they now earn 30% more than the average anchor.

Public Attitudes

- In 2005, a Pew Research Center for the People and the Press survey found that 79% of Americans said they had a favorable view of local TV news, which put local TV news ahead of most other news media and at par with cable news. But that was still four points lower than four years earlier, and when matched with the declines in “believability” found in 2004, the trend lines for local news were down.
- Overall, a full 61% of Americans thought local news “mostly reports the facts about news events.” People tended to say they liked that it was “local,” that it kept them “connected to the community,” and that it was “current, up to date”. Thus, the fact that local TV news is on so often, making it more convenient and presumably late breaking, is something viewers respond to.

Network

2005 was the year people in network news had feared for a generation—the passing of a generation of anchormen—but rather than the end of network news some imagined, there were signs of the next era already beginning—online. It may be an era in which the anchor is less important.

Content

- Timeslot rather than network seems to define news judgment in network news. There was little overlap in what was covered between the morning newscasts and the evening.
- The three commercial evening news contained less opinion from journalists as morning (32% of stories vs. 48%), and was more deeply reported (51% of stories had three or more sources vs. 31% in the morning), but the morning show stories explored more angles on events.
- The commercial evening newscasts are so strikingly similar to each other that on this day the first 12 minutes of news time on the three programs covered the same stories.
- The Lehrer News Hour seems increasingly distinctive now in television news—in its definition of news and its treatment. On this day, it did not cover *any* of what proved the top four stories of the day in the rest of the media landscape—beyond in its brief news summary.
- Morning news programs build stories around emotion, though this varies somewhat by network. One way of doing this is by interviewing “average” people involved in the news and asking them about how they feel rather than merely what happened. Another method is to have anchors and reporters lace their openings and closes with emotional keywords—such as “stunning...horrible...horrific.”

Audience

- Network evening news ratings continued to fall in 2005, another 6% November to November, according to Nielsen Media Research. (Share fell 3 percent). Even with a loss of 1.8 million viewers, the evening news still draws an audience of 27 million viewers.
- Morning news ratings, flat in 2004, also slipped, by 4%, a worrisome two year trend, to 14.1 million in 2005.
- Despite a rocky year for the franchise in 2004, 60 Minutes flagship Sunday program was the only news magazine to make the list of top twenty-five programs for the 2004-05 season. In November 2005 the program had an average audience of 15 million viewers.

Economics

- In 2004, the last year for which there is complete data, morning news revenue grew by 15, and in 2005 it was projected to increase another 6%.
- Evening newscasts had a harder time. NBC and CBS' programs saw revenues decline in 2004, while ABC continued a rebound started in 2002, though this was before the death of Peter Jennings. Projections for 2005 for the three programs anticipated a possible 10% increase in revenues.
- The economic picture for news magazines improved in calendar year 2004—perhaps due to a thinning out of these programs which once occupied some 13 hours of primetime real estate a week.
- In January 2006 it was announced that former Nightline host Ted Koppel and a team of his producers would begin a new documentary program on the Discovery Channel. One question is whether the move to a non-news centered cable network may turn out to be a signal of things to come for television news programming.

Ownership

- Network news divisions and their host networks continue to operate as a small part of much larger corporate entities. Heading into 2006, however, the CBS television network stepped into its own when the cross-media company Viacom split into two separately traded organizations: the 'new' Viacom and CBS Corporation.

News Investment

- In 2005 the big three broadcast television networks took the first significant steps toward using the web as a new media platform rather than simply an extension of their newscasts.
- ABC World News Tonight created a web-based newscast that broadcasts live at 3:00pm and can be downloaded anytime after 4:00pm. The program also does three consecutive live evening broadcasts including a live edition for west coast viewers.
- CBSNews.com started The Public Eye, a kind of online news ombudsman that includes commentary and questions about CBS News stories and an "Outside Voices" column that invites guest writers to post to the site on a media topic of their choosing.
- On May 31, 2005 Brian Williams, anchor of the NBC Nightly News, posted the first entry on the program's blog The Daily Nightly. The site was designed to give the evening newscast greater transparency—opening a window for citizens to hear how decisions were made and why stories were selected.

Public Attitudes

- While viewership of the nightly newscasts is down, the public has a generally favorable impression of the network news divisions.

- Fully 66 percent of those who said that network television was their main source of news indicated that they believed news organizations cared more about attracting audience than keeping the public informed.
- More than half of Americans (53 percent) believe that the content of network evening news is mostly facts, this percentage places the evening newcast higher than cable news networks and major national newspapers but lower than local TV news.

Cable News

In cable, there are signs of a maturing medium. Fox is still gaining audience, in contrast with CNN and MSNBC, and it continued to see substantial growth financially and pouring that back into investing in its programming and news gathering. But the content on cable may be increasingly vulnerable if the web becomes a strong alternative for those who want news instantly.

Content

- During much of the cable day, immediacy seems to be the criteria of significance above all others, which leads to repeated shots of doorways and podiums where sometime in the future things are expected to happen but are not occurring yet.
- There is remarkably little emphasis placed on cable on summing up or offering what would amount to a definitive account of the day's events—even on the programs that air in the evening.
- To get whatever depth or range of views or sources cable offered in its continuous coverage, viewers needed to pretty much do just that—get the news here continuously.
- Cable audiences are more likely than in other media to hear reporters' opinions about the news. In the biggest story of the day, for instance, about a small plane that entered restricted Washington D.C. airspace, 79% of stories contained opinion, compared with 30% on network evening news.
- The close examination of one day highlights the stark differences among the three channels in style and also to some extent in story emphasis—much greater difference than on network broadcast TV. If one had to generalize, CNN is the most earnest, Fox the most analytic, and MSNBC the most ironic.

Audience

- The median prime time audience for cable news grew by 4% in 2005, and the daytime audience grew by 3%. (If one uses the more volatile metric, simple average, ratings were flat.)
- All of the growth was due to Fox; its median prime time ratings rose 9%, its daytime 5%. The median ratings for CNN and MSNBC fell. Fox, which now commands more than half of the cable news audience at any one time (56% daytime and 59% primetime).
- CNN, however, continues to lead cable channels in “cume” or cumulative audience, the number of different people who watch it over the course of the month—though the gap is narrowing. On an average, CNN got about 7 million more cumulative viewers a month than Fox News. In short, more people watch CNN, but generally they dip in and out, while Fox's viewers watch it more often and for longer.
- CNN's Headline News emerged as a new contender in the cable news landscape. By year's end, it had a larger cumulative audience than MSNBC. Early statements

from CNN executives suggest the channel is trying to create its own identify distinct from CNN.

Economics

- The cable news business continues to be robust. In 2005, pre-tax profits were projected to grow by year's end by 21% to \$579 million. CNN, still the financial leader, was expected to account for more than half of this--\$304 million, up 6%. But Fox, gaining fast, was expected to see profits grow 31% (to \$248 million).
- The revenue picture was similar. While CNN led (with projected revenues of \$878 million, up 5%), Fox was expected to see revenues grow at roughly four times the rate (to \$614 million).
- MSNBC continues to struggle. It failed to meet projections of turning its first profit in 2004 and hoped to finally do so in 2005, but whatever profit it generated was likely to come from cost cutting.

Ownership

- The CNN brand is a relatively small part financially of the Time Warner empire.
- Within the cable network division of News Corp., Fox News plays a much larger role than either CNN or MSNBC are playing in their parent groups. It is the most successful of News Corp.'s American cable channels, and the year saw Roger E. Ailes, chairman of Fox News Channel since its inception, being given the additional title of chairman of Fox Television Stations.
- MSNBC is distinct from the other two cable channels in that it develops programming simultaneously for both television (MSNBC TV) and the Internet (MSNBC.com). NBC and Microsoft caught the industry by surprise when, at the end of December 2005, they quietly announced that NBC was taking over controlling interest in MNSBC.
- In 2005, BBC World secured a three-hour block on BBC America, replacing the half-hour bulletins.

News Investment

- Although starting on a smaller base, Fox appears to be building its news gathering infrastructure while CNN is doing so much more slowly, and MSNBC is cutting.
- In 2005, Fox was expected to increase its programming expenses by 20% (roughly the same rate as its growth in profits), and that on top of a 24% increase in 2004.
- CNN was expected to increase its programming costs by 4%, after cutting by 8% a year earlier. But it still had more news staff and bureaus than Fox (37 bureaus, including 26 overseas for CNN, 14, including 3 overseas for Fox, according to the news channels).
- MSNBC, meanwhile, was projected to cut costs 10%, after similar cuts the year before.

Public Attitudes

- The majority of Americans (67%) view cable news favorably. Just 18% have an unfavorable view. Heading into 2005, the public considered cable news about as credible as the broadcast network news divisions, though that is largely due to network news losing ground rather than cable gaining.
- According to the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, more Republicans watch Fox News, but a fair number also tune into the networks and to CNN. Similarly, Democrats don't overwhelmingly watch CNN. More of them watch the networks. What's plainer is that Democrats watch Fox News the least.

Magazines

The year 2005 raised some serious questions for the magazine industry. It was a troubling year for advertising. The biggest news titles continued to lose circulation in their latest audit reports. And large-scale layoffs hit some major titles like Time, Business Week and US News and World Report. The celebrity magazine field stood apart and grew again at a rapid rate in 2005. Advertising and circulation figures stood in stark contrast to the industry as a whole, with some titles seeing double-digit growth in both areas.

But for news titles in particular, the questions coming out of 2005 have to do with what is next. The growth of what we call the non-traditional news titles continued. And as their circulation grows, it may be possible that mass broad-topic news magazines simply aren't going to be dominant in the future. If so, where does that leave the Big Three news titles?

There were already signs of retrenching as both Time and US News announced they were putting more money into their web operations at the expense of print. And while the signs are far from definitive, we may be seeing the beginning stages of a fundamental change in the news magazine industry over the next decade.

Content:

- The slow drift toward lighter fare at Time and Newsweek showed no signs of abating.
- U.S. News and World Report maintained its practice of providing more hard, Washington-based coverage than its competitors.
- In the magazine industry over all, entertainment titles grew after having seemed to plateau.

Audience:

- Time, Newsweek and US News continued to see small audience declines, while The Economist and The New Yorker saw small increases.
- The Week, launched in 2001, saw a huge increase, 38% (to 367,000).

Economics:

- Both Time (-12%) and Newsweek (-11%) saw double digit declines in ad pages in 2005 along with drops in revenues.
- The Week saw increases in ad pages (9%) and revenues (63%) in 2005.
- The Entertainment titles had a big year some newer titles getting double digit increases in ad pages and revenues.

Ownership:

- Overall the magazine industry is dominated by a few large companies, but news titles remain the exception to that rule with smaller owners in control of some of the biggest names. The rise of The Week, owned by Dennis Publishing furthers this trend.
- News titles owners are looking online. Time Inc. and Zuckerman Media Properties, owner of US News, have announced plans to focus more on the Web for publishing even as they cuts to the print side of their operations.

New Investment:

- 2005 will probably be remembered as the year of staff cuts around the magazine industry as many big name titles cut significant staff. Time cut 105. Business Week let go of 60. US News cut its chief political correspondent and others.
- The Week brings a new and cheaper staffing model to the news titles. It relies not on correspondents and bureaus, but a team of editors that culls news sources for excerpts. Its success could lead other publications to consider further cuts.

Public Attitudes:

- A 2005 study by the Pew Research Center found that magazines ranked below all other types of media for where people get “news about national and international issues.”
- Other studies show magazines are ranked with online news providers like AOL and Yahoo in terms of how often people regularly go to them for news.

Ethnic and Alternative Media:

The ethnic media continued to grow in 2005 with the continued U.S. immigration. While some of the data is soft, and there were signs even of some declines in the circulation of print outlets, the general picture is robust. According to one survey, as of 2005, 51

million Americans, 24% of the U.S. adults are either primary or secondary consumers of ethnic media.

- For the first time since 2000, Spanish language newspapers lost circulation, according to Latino Print Network.
- The audience for television, however, appears to be growing. Though the national numbers might be deceiving the health of the paper depends on location. In Los Angeles, La Opinion is growing. In Miami, El Nuevo Herald is steady. In New York, El Diario is losing.
- In October, Impremedia, owner of La Opinion, El Diario and La Raza in Chicago launched the Domingo Network, a free Sunday edition in the three largest cities where it has papers already. The Sunday papers are delivered to 650,000 targeted homes in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago. The edition provides “the largest print vehicle in the top three Hispanic markets,” the company says, and aims at Latino women and households.
- The biggest issue for some ethnic print outlets in terms of ownership may be the role the mainstream media will play in the future. Mainstream media companies bought into the ethnic market because they saw potential for growth. But those struggling mainstream media owners now may present some challenges in some communities. Those deep pockets the mainstream outlets provided, come with other strings.
- In October of 2005, the Knight-Ridder company closed its Spanish-language weekly in the San Jose area, Nuevo Mundo. Instead, it began to distribute Fronteras de la Noticia, which is produced in Mexico. The company also announced it was selling Viet Mercury, its Vietnamese newspaper.

Alternative

- In October the two biggest, richest and best-known alt weekly chains announced plans to merge – New Times and Village Voice Media.
- The proposed merger was perhaps the final proof that the alternative weekly market is becoming mature – especially at in the big cities where revenue and circulation figures appear to be stabilizing.
- National Ad sales took a hit in 2005 after a few years of relative stability. National ad sales are only about half of what they were before 2001, according to leading ad sales companies.
- Threatened by free on-line classifieds like Craig’s List, many alt weeklies added free classifieds to their own web sites.

Authors' Note

For each of the media sectors, we examine six different areas — content, audience trends, economics, ownership, newsroom investment and public attitudes. We aggregate as much publicly available data as is possible in one place, and for six of the sectors the report includes original content analysis. (For local television news, we rely on five years of content analysis the Project had previously conducted. For radio and alternative media, no special content analysis was conducted.) In addition to numerous new charts of data, most charts from the 2004 report are updated and still available.

People can approach the material in this report in several ways. Users can go directly to the medium about which they are most concerned — say local TV news — and drive vertically through it. Or they can focus on a particular issue — audience trends for example — and move horizontally across different media sectors to see where Americans are going for news. Or they can move across the introductory overviews of each sector. They can flip back and forth between our narrative and the interactive charts and tabular material. Or they can work through the statistics for themselves, making their own charts, answering their own questions, in effect creating their own reports.

Our desire in this study is to answer questions we imagine any reader would find important, to help clarify the strengths and weaknesses of the available data, and to identify what is not yet answerable.

The study is the work of the Project for Excellence in Journalism, an institute affiliated with the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. The study is funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, whose leadership challenged us to take on this assignment. The chapters were written by the Project's staff, with the exception of the chapter on newspapers, which was written with the help of a co-author. All of the chapters also benefit from the input of a team of readers who are experts in each media sector.

Our aim is a research report, not an argument. Where the facts are clear, we hope we have not shied from explaining what they reveal, making clear what is proven and what is only suggested. We hope, however, that we are not seen as simply taking sides. Our intention is to inform, not to persuade.

We have tried to be as transparent as possible about sources and methods, and to make it clear when we are laying out data and when we have moved into analysis of that data. We have attempted, to the best of our ability and the limits of time, to seek out multiple sources of information for comparison where they exist. Each year we hope to gather more sources, improve our understanding and refine our methodology.

This approach — looking at a set of questions across various media — differs from the conventional way in which American journalism is analyzed, one medium at a time. We have tried to identify cross-media trends and to gather in one place data that are usually scattered across different venues. We hope this will allow us and others to make comparisons and develop insights that otherwise would be difficult to see.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE AND THE PRESS
SURVEY OF JOURNALISTS
FINAL TOPLINE
March 10 - April 20, 2004
Total National Press N=247
Total Local Press N=232
Total Internet Press N=68

Results are reported separately for national, local, and internet journalists. Further breakdowns by medium (*Print* includes newspapers, magazines, wire services and news services. *Broadcast* includes national TV and radio news, and local TV news) and by employment level (*Executives* include presidents, CEOs, general managers and publishers; *Senior editors and producers*; and *working journalists and editors*). See *Survey Methodology* section for complete sample descriptions.

Q.1 What do you feel is the most important problem facing journalism today? (**OPEN-ENDED; RECORD VERBATIM RESPONSE; PROBE FOR CLARITY: INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF NECESSARY, QUESTION REFERS TO JOURNALISM "IN GENERAL."**)

<u>TOTAL</u> <u>National</u>		<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Local</u>			<u>NATIONAL</u>		<u>LOCAL</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>			<u>LOCAL</u>			<u>TOTAL</u>
'04	'99	'04	'99		<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
N=	(130)	(117)	(118)	(114)	(37)	(83)	(127)	(55)	(72)	(105)	(68)				
41	44	33	39	QUALITY OF COVERAGE (NET)	32	51	30	37	32	45	41	35	28	36	32
8	10	10	10	Reporting Accurately / Factually	7	9	7	12	5	7	9	11	4	12	6
8	8	5	12	Sensationalism / tabloid / infotainment	4	13	2	8	3	10	9	4	1	8	3
7	12	7	6	News not relevant enough / Out of touch	9	4	13	0	8	8	5	7	10	4	10
7	2	3	*	Other quality of coverage	3	10	1	5	3	7	7	2	6	2	4
6	--	4	--	Lack of depth / context	3	9	3	6	3	4	8	4	3	6	6
5	12	4	6	Lack of objectivity / Balanced stories	2	9	3	6	14	4	3	7	4	3	3
3	--	4	--	Lack investigative journalism / Watchdog role	3	3	6	2	3	4	2	2	1	7	0
2	8	*	5	Lack of restraint / Not selective in coverage	0	3	0	1	0	2	2	0	0	1	0
1	3	1	3	Quality of writing / Less clichéd / Hold interest	2	0	2	1	0	0	2	2	0	2	2
1	4	0	3	Follow fads/Pack journalism/Trendy stories	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
30	25	35	25	ECONOMIC/BUSINESS PRESSURES (NET)	31	28	36	33	32	29	29	35	31	37	32
9	14	8	11	Declining audience / Attracting an audience	15	2	15	1	14	8	7	13	8	6	10
8	3	9	4	Lack of resources / Financial cutbacks	7	9	8	10	8	12	6	7	8	10	7
5	8	9	7	Too much bottom-line emphasis / Profits	5	3	9	9	5	5	4	7	8	10	9
5	2	4	2	Corporate ownership & consolidation	5	4	3	4	5	5	4	6	1	5	6
5	*	3	6	Staffing problems / Not enough journalists	5	4	3	4	5	2	6	4	4	3	2
3	6	4	6	Commercialization / Ratings over quality	0	6	1	8	3	2	3	0	3	8	6
1	--	2	--	Not enough time	0	2	3	2	0	0	2	2	0	4	0
1	--	2	--	Other economic / business pressures	1	1	1	4	0	1	1	2	3	2	0

<i>TOTAL</i>		<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>	
<u>National</u>		<u>Local</u>			N=	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
'04	'99	'04	'99			(130)	(117)	(118)	(114)	(37)	(83)	(127)	(55)	(72)	(105)	(68)
28	30	23	34	CREDIBILITY / PUBLIC TRUST (NET)	39	15	33	12	22	30	28	16	29	22	19	
22	23	17	28	Credibility problem	30	12	28	6	16	19	24	15	24	14	16	
5	6	4	8	Lack of public trust	7	3	4	4	0	7	5	6	6	3	3	
2	6	3	3	Other credibility issues	3	1	2	4	5	4	0	0	1	5	0	
15	24	7	19	MEDIA ENVIRONMENT (NET)	15	14	6	9	22	15	13	9	8	6	27	
5	17	2	15	Too much competition / Fragmentation	5	5	2	2	11	4	4	4	1	1	7	
5	--	2	--	Speed / pace of reporting / Too fast	2	7	0	4	0	6	5	2	1	3	4	
3	--	2	--	Need to adapt to changing technology / society	5	1	3	1	11	2	2	2	3	2	10	
2	6	1	3	Too much news / Overload of information	2	2	1	1	3	2	1	2	1	0	2	
2	4	0	3	24/7 News cycle	2	3	0	0	0	5	2	0	0	0	2	
1	--	*	--	Other media environment	2	0	0	1	3	0	1	0	1	0	4	
5	11	6	10	ETHICS AND STANDARDS (NET)	6	4	6	5	0	6	6	6	7	5	4	
MISCELLANEOUS																
4	3	3	3	Public lacks interest / Public apathy	4	3	6	1	5	2	4	2	6	3	6	
3	--	3	--	Limits on press freedom / Government secrecy	2	4	2	5	3	0	5	0	4	5	2	
3	4	1	3	Confusion between opinion & reporting	2	4	1	2	3	2	3	0	3	1	2	
2	--	*	--	Undue criticism of the press	1	3	1	0	3	4	1	0	1	0	0	
0	4	0	4	Confusion between tabloid TV and news	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
*	1	0	0	Arrogance	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
5	8	10	14	OTHER	5	4	9	10	3	5	6	7	11	10	3	
1	3	3	2	NO ANSWER	0	2	1	5	0	0	2	2	4	3	0	

Q.2 What do you think journalism is doing especially WELL these days? (OPEN-ENDED; RECORD VERBATIM RESPONSE; PROBE FOR CLARITY: INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF NECESSARY, QUESTION REFERS TO JOURNALISM "IN GENERAL.")

	<i>TOTAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
	<u>National</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	
'04		'04											
25	31	QUALITY OF COVERAGE (NET)	31	18	42	19	30	28	21	33	36	26	18
5	6	Large volume, scope of coverage	4	5	5	7	8	5	3	2	13	4	3
4	7	Other quality of coverage	5	3	10	4	3	5	4	9	7	7	4
4	2	Depth of coverage	5	3	1	4	11	4	2	4	0	3	7
3	5	Relevant to people's lives	4	2	7	4	3	1	4	11	3	4	0
3	3	Insightful analysis / What's behind the news	4	2	5	1	0	7	1	0	4	4	2
2	2	Interesting coverage	2	2	4	0	0	2	2	0	6	1	0
2	1	Covering trends / change	3	0	2	0	0	2	2	2	1	0	0
2	1	Accuracy	2	1	2	0	3	1	2	0	1	1	0
1	3	Graphics, color, design	2	0	6	0	0	1	1	4	1	4	0
1	2	Good writing	2	0	4	0	0	1	2	2	6	0	0
1	1	Relevant to important issues	1	1	2	1	3	0	1	4	0	1	3
23	24	TIMELINESS AND SPEED (NET)	11	37	14	33	24	25	21	13	25	29	24
19	17	Quick response to breaking news / speed	11	28	12	23	19	19	19	6	22	20	21
3	6	On-site reporting / Live coverage	1	6	0	12	0	6	2	4	4	9	0
1	4	Ability to cover 24-hour news cycle	0	3	3	5	3	1	1	6	0	6	2
*	0	Other timeliness and speed	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	2
20	18	COVERAGE OF SPECIFIC TOPICS (NET)	23	17	20	17	24	21	19	18	19	17	16
9	4	War, terrorism, foreign policy	7	10	3	4	8	8	9	0	6	5	2
6	1	Foreign reporting / International news	7	4	1	2	11	7	3	2	0	2	3
3	3	Other coverage of specific topics	5	1	3	3	0	2	4	0	4	4	6
2	1	Election / political coverage	4	1	1	1	3	1	3	0	0	2	0
1	9	Local news and issues	2	0	9	8	3	1	1	16	8	5	9
1	1	Economic issues / Business news	2	1	2	0	0	1	2	0	1	2	2
0	1	Sports	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0
11	7	WATCHDOG ROLE (NET)	15	6	9	5	8	16	9	9	7	7	10
7	3	Investigative reporting	10	4	4	1	8	10	6	4	1	3	4
4	5	Watchdog/ Keep eye on government for public	6	2	5	4	0	7	3	6	6	4	6

<u>TOTAL</u> <u>National</u> '04	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Local</u> '04		<u>NATIONAL</u>		<u>LOCAL</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>			<u>LOCAL</u>			<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Internet</u>
			<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	
		MISCELLANEOUS (NET)											
6	2	Wide variety of media sources / Choice	5	7	0	4	3	4	8	0	0	4	6
5	2	Technology (general mention)	2	8	1	4	5	5	4	2	0	4	4
2	5	Diversity of views/ Wide range of perspectives	2	1	6	4	0	2	2	4	4	7	4
2	3	Informing the public	2	3	2	5	5	2	2	6	3	3	7
2	3	Online websites / The Internet	1	4	1	5	5	0	3	0	1	6	15
2	3	Willing to examine itself / Self-policing	3	1	6	1	0	2	2	6	4	2	3
2	3	Fairness, balance, lack of bias	2	2	3	3	8	1	0	4	3	3	4
1	1	Innovation / Response to declining audience	2	0	3	0	3	0	1	0	1	2	3
1	1	Efficient, does a lot with limited resources	2	1	2	1	0	1	2	0	3	1	0
11	9	OTHER	12	10	9	9	14	10	12	11	8	8	18
10	6	NO ANSWER/NONE/NOTHING	9	11	3	9	5	6	14	9	1	8	6

Q.3 Thinking about journalism overall in the U.S. today, do you think it is generally going in the right direction or the wrong direction?

<u>TOTAL</u> <u>National</u> '04	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Local</u> '04		<u>NATIONAL</u>		<u>LOCAL</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>			<u>LOCAL</u>			<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Internet</u>
			<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	
43	51	Right direction	52	33	53	48	57	43	39	49	60	46	54
51	46	Wrong direction	42	61	43	49	38	52	54	49	36	51	44
<u>6</u>	<u>3</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>
100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Q.4a Thinking more generally about the news media, what grade A, B, C, D, or F would you give network television news for its overall news coverage these days?

<i>TOTAL</i> <u>National</u>		<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Local</u>			<i>NATIONAL</i> <u>Print</u> <u>Broadcast</u>		<i>LOCAL</i> <u>Print</u> <u>Broadcast</u>		<i>NATIONAL</i> <u>Exec</u> <u>Sr.</u> <u>Jour</u>			<i>LOCAL</i> <u>Exec</u> <u>Sr.</u> <u>Jour</u>			<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Internet</u>
'04	'95	'04	'95												
4	2	8	4	"A"	1	7	4	12	11	2	3	4	7	10	3
39	46	44	45	"B"	31	48	34	55	35	35	43	45	37	49	35
44	38	36	41	"C"	48	39	45	26	43	45	43	40	38	32	47
11	8	10	6	"D"	17	5	13	7	8	15	10	9	14	8	12
1	*	2	1	"F"	1	1	3	0	0	2	0	2	4	*	2
<u>1</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>*</u>	<u>3</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>2</u>	<u>*</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
100	100	100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
C+	B-	B-	B-	Average Grade	C+	B-	C+	B-	B-	C+	C+	C+	C+	B-	C+

Q.4b What grade A, B, C, D, or F would you give local television news for its overall coverage these days?

<i>TOTAL</i> <u>National</u>		<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Local</u>			<i>NATIONAL</i> <u>Print</u> <u>Broadcast</u>		<i>LOCAL</i> <u>Print</u> <u>Broadcast</u>		<i>NATIONAL</i> <u>Exec</u> <u>Sr.</u> <u>Jour</u>			<i>LOCAL</i> <u>Exec</u> <u>Sr.</u> <u>Jour</u>			<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Internet</u>
'04	'95	'04	'95												
1	1	4	5	"A"	0	3	2	6	3	0	2	7	4	2	0
20	13	28	34	"B"	14	27	16	41	19	18	22	22	31	29	37
39	37	39	34	"C"	38	40	40	37	51	34	39	40	36	40	35
31	30	23	19	"D"	39	21	35	11	21	38	28	24	22	24	25
7	13	6	6	"F"	8	6	7	5	3	10	7	7	7	5	3
<u>2</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>*</u>	<u>2</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
100	100	100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
C-	C-	C	C	Average Grade	C-	C	C-	C+	C	C-	C-	C	C	C	C

Q.4c What grade A, B, C, D, or F would you give the major national newspapers for their overall coverage these days?

<i>TOTAL</i> <u>National</u>		<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Local</u>			<i>NATIONAL</i> <u>Print</u> <u>Broadcast</u>		<i>LOCAL</i> <u>Print</u> <u>Broadcast</u>		<i>NATIONAL</i> <u>Exec</u> <u>Sr.</u> <u>Jour</u>			<i>LOCAL</i> <u>Exec</u> <u>Sr.</u> <u>Jour</u>			<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Internet</u>
'04	'95	'04	'95												
25	23	23	17	"A"	21	31	25	22	29	25	24	22	15	31	21
67	71	57	68	"B"	71	63	61	53	65	66	69	56	61	54	69
7	4	15	12	"C"	7	5	12	17	3	9	6	13	17	14	9
1	*	4	1	"D"	1	1	2	6	3	0	1	7	6	1	1
0	0	0	0	"F"	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
100	100	100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
B+	B+	B	B	Average Grade	B+	B+	B	B	B+	B+	B+	B	B	B+	B

Q.4d What grade A, B, C, D, or F would you give the typical daily newspaper for its overall coverage these days?

<i>TOTAL</i> <u>National</u>		<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Local</u>			<i>NATIONAL</i> <u>Print</u> <u>Broadcast</u>		<i>LOCAL</i> <u>Print</u> <u>Broadcast</u>		<i>NATIONAL</i> <u>Exec</u> <u>Sr.</u> <u>Jour</u>			<i>LOCAL</i> <u>Exec</u> <u>Sr.</u> <u>Jour</u>			<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Internet</u>
'04	'95	'04	'95												
3	1	6	2	"A"	2	4	5	7	5	0	3	4	4	9	10
46	35	52	44	"B"	46	46	55	49	52	50	42	40	51	59	56
43	47	35	45	"C"	47	39	37	32	38	43	45	43	38	28	28
5	7	5	7	"D"	3	6	1	9	5	5	4	11	3	3	3
*	*	1	0	"F"	1	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	4	0	2
<u>3</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>1</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
100	100	100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
B-	C+	B-	C+	Average Grade	B-	B-	B-	B-	B-	C+	B-	C+	B-	B-	B-

Q.4e What grade A, B, C, D, or F would you give cable TV news channels for their overall coverage these days?

<i>TOTAL</i> <u>National</u>		<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Local</u>			<i>NATIONAL</i> <u>Print</u> <u>Broadcast</u>		<i>LOCAL</i> <u>Print</u> <u>Broadcast</u>		<i>NATIONAL</i> <u>Exec</u> <u>Sr.</u> <u>Jour</u>			<i>LOCAL</i> <u>Exec</u> <u>Sr.</u> <u>Jour</u>			<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Internet</u>
'04		'04													
5		7		"A"	3	7	6	9	5	4	5	2	2	14	15
38		41		"B"	41	34	38	43	35	34	41	31	39	47	38
38		32		"C"	38	38	36	29	41	40	36	42	39	23	37
17		15		"D"	16	18	15	15	16	19	16	16	15	14	7
1		3		"F"	1	2	3	2	0	2	2	6	1	2	2
<u>1</u>		<u>2</u>		Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>
100		100			100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
C+		C+		Average Grade	C+	C+	C+	C+	C+	C+	C+	C	C+	B-	B-

Q.4f What grade A, B, C, D, or F would you give national news organizations for the way they have covered George W. Bush's presidency, so far?

<i>TOTAL</i> <u>National</u>		<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Local</u>			<i>NATIONAL</i> <u>Print</u> <u>Broadcast</u>		<i>LOCAL</i> <u>Print</u> <u>Broadcast</u>		<i>NATIONAL</i> <u>Exec</u> <u>Sr.</u> <u>Jour</u>			<i>LOCAL</i> <u>Exec</u> <u>Sr.</u> <u>Jour</u>			<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Internet</u>
'04	'95	'04	'95												
4	4	6	4	"A"	5	3	5	7	3	2	5	4	4	8	6
49	61	37	43	"B"	48	51	33	42	54	54	45	36	31	43	29
37	29	43	43	"C"	37	38	46	39	35	37	38	43	50	38	47
7	5	11	9	"D"	8	5	14	8	5	4	9	13	12	9	13
2	*	2	1	"F"	1	3	2	2	3	1	2	2	3	1	2
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>*</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>
100	100	100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
B-	B-	C+	C+	Average Grade	B-	B-	C+	B-	B-	B-	C+	C+	C+	B-	C+

1995 figures for the way news organizations "have covered Bill Clinton's presidency, so far."

Q.4g What grade A, B, C, D, or F would you give national news organizations for their websites?

<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
<u>National</u>	<u>Local</u>		<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
'04	'04												
18	13	"A"	14	22	12	15	16	21	16	5	13	18	25
52	44	"B"	53	49	46	43	40	54	52	51	43	42	60
18	20	"C"	18	19	25	15	30	17	16	20	29	14	13
2	3	"D"	3	1	2	2	3	3	2	2	1	4	0
*	1	"F"	1	0	1	1	3	0	0	2	0	1	2
<u>10</u>	<u>19</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>11</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>0</u>
100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
B	B	Average Grade	B	B	B-	B	B-	B	B	B-	B	B	B

Q.4h What grade A, B, C, D, or F would you give (Name of respondent's news organization) for its overall coverage these days?

<i>TOTAL</i>		<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
<u>National</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>National</u>	<u>Local</u>		<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
'04	'95	'04	'95												
22	20	14	13	"A"	18	26	14	14	38	20	19	14	19	10	
61	67	59	69	"B"	64	56	64	53	54	59	64	60	67	52	
14	9	21	16	"C"	14	15	21	21	5	19	13	15	11	31	
2	0	3	1	"D"	2	3	1	4	0	1	4	2	0	5	
*	0	*	0	"F"	1	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	1	
<u>1</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	
100	100	100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	
B	B+	B	B	Average Grade	B	B	B	B	B+	B	B	B	B	B-	

Q.5 Thus far, do you think press coverage of the presidential campaign has been better or worse than it was in 2000?

<i>TOTAL</i> <u>National</u>			<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Local</u>				<i>NATIONAL</i> <u>Print</u> <u>Broadcast</u>			<i>LOCAL</i> <u>Print</u> <u>Broadcast</u>			<i>NATIONAL</i> <u>Exec</u> <u>Sr.</u> <u>Jour</u>			<i>LOCAL</i> <u>Exec</u> <u>Sr.</u> <u>Jour</u>			<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Internet</u>
'04	'92'	'04	'92'																
56	46	46	51	Better		61	51	46	46	68	56	53	49	40	48				57
24	19	34	18	Worse		23	26	35	33	16	22	28	33	35	34				27
10	30	15	27	Same (VOL PHONE SURVEY ONLY)		8	12	13	18	11	11	9	14	21	12				6
<u>10</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)		<u>8</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>6</u>				<u>10</u>
100	100	100	100			100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100				100

Q.6 Would you say the press has been too critical, not critical enough, or fair in the way it has covered the Bush administration?

<i>TOTAL</i> <u>National</u>			<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Local</u>				<i>NATIONAL</i> <u>Print</u> <u>Broadcast</u>			<i>LOCAL</i> <u>Print</u> <u>Broadcast</u>			<i>NATIONAL</i> <u>Exec</u> <u>Sr.</u> <u>Jour</u>			<i>LOCAL</i> <u>Exec</u> <u>Sr.</u> <u>Jour</u>			<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Internet</u>
'04		'04																	
8		19		Too critical		9	8	14	25	19	4	9	26	17	18				12
55		37		Not critical enough		55	55	46	28	40	53	60	29	37	41				54
35		42		Fair		34	36	40	44	41	40	30	45	42	40				29
<u>2</u>		<u>2</u>		Don't know/Refused (VOL)		<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>				<u>5</u>
100		100				100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100				100

Q.7 In your opinion, is increased bottom line pressure seriously hurting the quality of news coverage these days or is it mostly just changing the way news organizations do things?

<i>TOTAL</i> <u>National</u>						<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Local</u>							<i>NATIONAL</i> <u>Print</u> <u>Broadcast</u>			<i>LOCAL</i> <u>Print</u> <u>Broadcast</u>			<i>NATIONAL</i> <u>Exec</u> <u>Sr.</u> <u>Jour</u>			<i>LOCAL</i> <u>Exec</u> <u>Sr.</u> <u>Jour</u>			<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Internet</u>
'04	'99	'95	'04	'99	'95																				
66	49	41	57	46	33	Hurting																			
29	40	38	35	46	50	Just changing																			
1	1	8	3	2	8	Neither/no effect (VOL PH. SURVEY ONLY)																			
3	9	11	4	5	7	Both (VOL PHONE SURVEY ONLY)																			
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)																			
100	100	100	100	100	100																				

¹ In 1992 the question was worded: "...better or worse than it was in 1988."

Q.8 Here are some criticisms made of the press. For each one of these criticisms, do you think this is a valid criticism of the news media overall, or not?
(INSERT ITEM)

a. The distinction between reporting and commentary has seriously eroded.

<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>	
<u>National</u>			<u>Local</u>			<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>	
'04	'99	'95	'04	'99	'95												
64	69	53	59	68	44	Valid criticism	58	71	57	61	54	64	67	62	63	55	57
35	30	44	40	32	53	Not a valid criticism	41	29	42	37	43	35	33	38	36	43	43
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
100	100	100	100	100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

b. News reports are increasingly full of factual errors and sloppy reporting.

<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>	
<u>National</u>			<u>Local</u>			<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>	
'04	'99	'95	'04	'99	'95												
45	40	30	47	55	40	Valid criticism	44	47	41	54	35	48	47	51	44	48	57
54	58	65	52	42	59	Not a valid criticism	55	52	59	45	65	51	52	49	54	52	41
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>
100	100	100	100	100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

c. Too little attention is paid to complex issues.

<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>	
<u>National</u>			<u>Local</u>			<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>	
'04	'99	'95	'04	'99	'95												
78	71	80	77	72	75	Valid criticism	74	84	73	82	65	80	82	78	81	74	75
21	27	17	22	28	22	Not a valid criticism	25	15	27	17	32	20	17	22	18	26	25
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>*</u>	<u>3</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
100	100	100	100	100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

d. The press is too cynical.

<u>TOTAL</u> <u>National</u>			<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Local</u>				<u>NATIONAL</u>		<u>LOCAL</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>			<u>LOCAL</u>			<u>TOTAL</u>
<u>'04</u>	<u>'99</u>	<u>'95</u>	<u>'04</u>	<u>'99</u>	<u>'95</u>		<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
37	53	54	40	51	53	Valid criticism	38	36	42	38	43	36	35	40	47	34	24
63	45	44	59	48	45	Not a valid criticism	62	64	58	60	57	64	65	60	50	65	76
0	2	2	1	1	2	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	3	1	0
100	100	100	100	100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

e. Journalists have become out-of-touch with their audiences.

<u>TOTAL</u> <u>National</u>			<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Local</u>				<u>NATIONAL</u>		<u>LOCAL</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>			<u>LOCAL</u>			<u>TOTAL</u>
<u>'04</u>	<u>'99</u>	<u>'95</u>	<u>'04</u>	<u>'99</u>	<u>'95</u>		<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
47	57		44	51		Valid criticism	58	34	52	34	43	55	43	49	49	37	59
50	41		55	49		Not a valid criticism	39	63	47	64	51	42	55	51	50	61	41
3	2		1	*		Don't know/Refused (VOL)	3	3	1	2	6	3	2	0	1	2	0
100	100		100	100			100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

f. Journalists are letting their ideological views show in their reporting too frequently.

<u>TOTAL</u> <u>National</u>		<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Local</u>			<u>NATIONAL</u>		<u>LOCAL</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>			<u>LOCAL</u>			<u>TOTAL</u>
<u>'04</u>	<u>'99</u>	<u>'04</u>	<u>'99</u>		<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
45		43		Valid criticism	43	46	43	44	38	46	46	73	36	33	47
53		56		Not a valid criticism	55	51	57	54	62	51	52	27	61	67	52
2		1		Don't know/Refused (VOL)	2	3	0	2	0	3	2	0	3	0	1
100		100			100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

g. The press is too timid these days.

<u>TOTAL</u> <u>National</u>		<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Local</u>			<u>NATIONAL</u>		<u>LOCAL</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>			<u>LOCAL</u>			<u>TOTAL</u>
<u>'04</u>	<u>'99</u>	<u>'04</u>	<u>'99</u>		<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
47		42		Valid criticism	48	44	51	32	32	45	52	31	43	47	56
52		56		Not a valid criticism	52	53	47	67	62	55	47	66	56	52	44
1		2		Don't know/Refused (VOL)	0	3	2	1	6	0	1	4	1	1	0
100		100			100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

h. There are too many talk shows on cable television today.

<u>TOTAL</u> <u>National</u>	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Local</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>		<u>LOCAL</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>			<u>LOCAL</u>			<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Internet</u>
			<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	
'04	'04												
63	64	Valid criticism	63	64	69	59	54	70	62	64	62	65	52
34	31	Not a valid criticism	35	32	27	36	43	28	35	31	31	32	44
3	5	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	2	4	4	5	3	2	3	5	7	3	4
100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

i. The emergence of the 24 hour news cycle is weakening journalism.

<u>TOTAL</u> <u>National</u>	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Local</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>		<u>LOCAL</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>			<u>LOCAL</u>			<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Internet</u>
			<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	
'04	'04												
42	40	Valid criticism	35	49	41	39	27	43	45	38	40	40	38
57	59	Not a valid criticism	63	50	58	59	73	57	53	58	58	60	62
1	1	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	2	1	1	2	0	0	2	4	1	0	0
100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

j. The Internet allows too much posting of links to material that is unvetted or unfiltered.

<u>TOTAL</u> <u>National</u>	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Local</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>		<u>LOCAL</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>			<u>LOCAL</u>			<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Internet</u>
			<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	
'04	'04												
57	58	Valid criticism	58	55	57	59	54	59	56	64	58	54	28
42	37	Not a valid criticism	41	44	40	34	43	40	43	33	35	41	72
1	5	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	1	1	3	7	3	1	1	3	7	5	0
100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

ROTATE Q.9 AND Q.10

Q.9 Is there any daily national news organization that you think is especially *liberal* in its coverage of the news, or can't you think of any?

<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
<u>National</u>	<u>Local</u>		<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
'04	'04	Yes	38	38	48	34	30	40	39	51	43	34	34
38	41	Can't think of any	60	58	50	61	70	55	58	45	53	63	62
59	56	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	2	4	3	5	0	5	3	4	4	3	4
3	3												
100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

IF 1, IN Q.9, ASK:

Q.9a What news organization is that? (RECORD VERBATIM. ALLOW MULTIPLE ANSWERS, BUT DO NOT PROBE)

BASED ON TOTAL:

<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
<u>National</u>	<u>Local</u>		<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
'04	'04	New York Times	22	19	26	7	16	24	19	27	17	11	13
20	17	Washington Post	6	2	4	0	0	2	6	4	3	1	4
4	2	CNN	1	4	3	10	5	1	2	9	4	6	6
2	6	CBS	1	4	3	7	0	1	4	4	6	5	3
2	5	ABC	0	4	2	3	0	1	3	6	0	2	2
2	2	NPR	2	2	2	3	0	0	3	2	3	2	6
2	2	NBC	1	2	2	4	0	1	2	4	3	2	4
1	3	Los Angeles Times	2	0	3	0	0	0	2	2	3	1	2
1	2	Other Newspaper	2	1	2	1	0	2	1	0	0	3	3
1	1	Fox News Channel	1	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	1	2	3
*	1	OTHER (NET)	5	3	5	5	5	5	4	4	8	4	2
5	5	Don't know/Refused	3	5	3	3	0	5	5	2	0	6	2
4	3	TELEVISION (NET)	5	11	9	21	11	7	7	15	15	14	13
8	15	NEWSPAPER (NET)	28	21	33	8	16	29	24	33	24	12	18
24	21												

Q.10 Is there any daily national news organization that you think is especially *conservative* in its coverage of the news, or can't you think of any?

	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>National</u>	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Local</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>		<u>LOCAL</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>			<u>LOCAL</u>			<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Internet</u>
				<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	
'04	'04													
82	63	Yes		78	86	68	59	87	83	80	58	61	68	66
15	35	Can't think of any		20	10	30	39	14	13	17	42	35	30	29
3	2	Don't know/Refused (VOL)		2	4	2	2	0	4	3	0	4	2	5
100	100			100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

IF 1, IN Q.10, ASK:

Q.10a What news organization is that? (RECORD VERBATIM. ALLOW MULTIPLE ANSWERS, BUT DO NOT PROBE)

BASED ON TOTAL:

	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>National</u>	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Local</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>		<u>LOCAL</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>			<u>LOCAL</u>			<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Internet</u>
				<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	
'04	'04													
69	42	Fox News Channel		57	83	39	46	68	70	69	36	44	44	60
9	4	Washington Times		11	7	5	3	3	10	10	2	1	7	2
8	11	Wall St. Journal		11	5	18	4	16	6	7	11	11	11	6
2	2	Radio (Miscellaneous)		1	3	0	4	3	0	2	0	4	2	2
1	1	New York Post		2	1	2	1	0	4	0	0	0	3	2
1	1	Rupert Murdoch newspapers/NewsCorp		1	1	2	1	0	0	2	4	1	0	2
3	6	OTHER (NET)		5	2	7	5	5	4	2	6	3	9	3
1	2	Don't know/Refused		2	0	2	3	0	2	1	2	0	4	0
70	44	TELEVISION (NET)		58	83	40	48	70	70	69	38	44	47	60
19	20	NEWSPAPERS (NET)		24	13	31	9	22	19	17	20	15	23	9

Q.11 Do you think that it is a good thing or a bad thing if some daily news organizations have a decidedly ideological point of view in their coverage of the news?

	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>National</u>	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Local</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>		<u>LOCAL</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>			<u>LOCAL</u>			<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Internet</u>
				<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	
'04	'04													
22	21	Good thing		23	21	20	21	24	17	25	20	22	20	25
72	74	Bad thing		74	69	77	72	68	78	69	76	72	75	74
6	5	Don't know/Refused (VOL)		3	10	3	7	8	5	6	4	6	5	1
100	100			100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Q.12 Do you feel that the emergence of the Internet has made journalism better, worse, or hasn't it made much of a difference?

<i>TOTAL</i>		<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
<u>National</u>		<u>Local</u>			<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
'04	'99	'04	'99												
60	54	51	47	Better	60	60	46	57	57	51	67	31	53	61	63
15	12	18	8	Worse	16	13	19	18	13	13	16	27	19	12	3
21	26	27	42	Not much difference	21	22	32	21	27	30	14	38	22	24	32
3	5	2	2	Both (VOL PHONE SURVEY ONLY)	2	4	2	1	3	4	3	2	4	0	2
<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	Don't know/refused	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>
100	100	100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

IF 1 OR 2 (BETTER OR WORSE) IN Q.12

Q.12a In what ways do you think this has changed journalism for the (worse)(better)? (OPEN-ENDED. RECORD VERBATIM RESPONSE)?

<i>TOTAL</i>		<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
<u>National</u>		<u>Local</u>			<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
'04	'04														
47	61			Change for the Better:											16
25	20			Research tool for journalists / Easier/faster info											54
23	19			Greater speed /24 hour cycle /More competition											23
20	11			Public gets more information/greater accuracy											23
3	8			More voices heard/Democratizes news business											5
3	4			Promotes greater accountability for journalism											0
1	1			Other											2
(148)	(119)			Don't Know											(43)
				(N)											

<i>TOTAL</i>		<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
<u>National</u>		<u>Local</u>			<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
'04	'04														
53	45			Change for the Worse:											n/a
17	29			Too much unvetted, unfiltered information											
17	7			Increased speed leads to error											
				Makes journalists lazy/encourages plagiarism											
14	21			Promotes rise of pseudo-journalism, junk sites,											
14	10			low-brow news											
14	17			Damages public credibility of journalism											
(36)	(42)			Other											(2)
				(N)											

Q.13 How confident are you that a news organization that is owned by a corporate parent can do a good job covering news about the parent company? Are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?

<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
<u>National</u>	<u>Local</u>		<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
'04	'04												
18	12	Very confident	14	22	12	13	46	15	12	7	21	10	10
43	39	Somewhat confident	41	45	40	38	40	48	39	49	38	35	43
29	36	Not too confident	35	22	35	37	11	25	37	33	25	45	34
10	12	Not at all confident	9	11	13	10	3	12	11	9	15	10	13
*	1	Don't know/refused	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	2	1	0	0
100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Q.14 Which of the following statements comes closer to your view about plagiarism in journalism today? First (READ OPTIONS)...

<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
<u>National</u>	<u>Local</u>		<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
'04	'04												
21	23	There is more plagiarism today than in the past	24	18	20	25	16	19	24	27	24	20	27
77	72	We are hearing more about plagiarism but its prevalence has not increased	76	77	78	67	84	78	73	71	72	73	72
2	5	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	0	5	2	8	0	2	3	2	4	7	1
100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Now, thinking about your own newsroom...

Q.15 How would you rate the quality of leadership in your news organization? Would you say it is excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

<i>TOTAL</i>					<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
<u>National</u>		<u>Local</u>			<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
'04	'99	'04	'99												
30	36	22	24	Excellent	30	30	23	21	54	30	23	40	18	15	21
41	44	47	51	Good	45	37	55	38	38	41	42	38	67	38	47
22	15	21	21	Only fair	19	25	20	23	3	25	25	9	10	35	25
5	5	6	4	Poor	3	7	2	9	0	3	8	2	1	11	4
2	*	4	*	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	3	1	0	2	5	1	2	11	4	1	3
100	100	100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Q.16 Is there any on-going effort to address ethical issues in your newsroom, directed by your news organization's management?

<i>TOTAL</i>		<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
<u>National</u>		<u>Local</u>			<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
'04	'99	'04	'99												
76	81	77	72	Yes	75	77	85	68	92	82	67	86	81	69	78
21	19	18	25	No	22	19	13	24	5	13	30	9	14	27	21
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>
100	100	100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Q.17 Compared to three years ago, has the size of the newsroom staff at your organization increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

<i>TOTAL</i>		<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
<u>National</u>		<u>Local</u>			<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
'04	'04														
18	23			Increased	15	22	16	30	24	17	17	24	28	19	19
37	43			Decreased	48	26	54	31	19	43	39	40	40	46	62
41	30			Stayed the same	34	47	29	32	54	35	40	29	28	33	18
<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>			Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
100	100				100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Q.18 Approximately how many stories or packages do most reporters at your news organization produce in a typical week?

<i>TOTAL</i>		<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
<u>National</u>		<u>Local</u>			<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
'04	'04														
0	*			None	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
33	20			1-3	45	20	35	5	13	40	35	20	31	13	22
27	44			4-7	21	33	36	52	14	29	29	27	39	55	38
5	12			8-10	2	7	2	22	14	2	3	9	13	13	10
8	4			10+	2	15	0	7	5	4	12	6	3	3	6
<u>27</u>	<u>20</u>			Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>30</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>24</u>
100	100				100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Q.19 These days, are you rewriting or repackaging stories for multiple uses more, less or the same as in the past, or don't you do this at all?

[IF REWRITING OR REPACKAGING "MORE" (CODE 1 IN Q.19)]

Q.19a Are you happy or unhappy about this change, or doesn't it matter to you?

	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>National</u>	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Local</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>		<u>LOCAL</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>			<u>LOCAL</u>			<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Internet</u>
				<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	
'04		'04												
48	48	48	More	52	43	53	42	54	56	41	62	46	42	71
18	16	16	Happy	24	11	18	12	46	19	9	27	22	5	44
6	8	8	Unhappy	6	5	4	12	5	5	6	6	6	11	9
23	24	24	Doesn't matter	21	26	30	18	3	30	25	29	17	26	18
1	*	*	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0
1	4	4	Less	0	2	3	5	0	3	0	0	4	6	0
20	19	19	Same	16	25	15	24	24	19	20	18	19	20	16
12	10	10	Don't do this at all	13	10	6	14	6	10	15	7	14	8	0
<u>20</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>19</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>19</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>13</u>
100	100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Q.20 In the past 12 months, did you participate in training or professional development - other than technical training - provided by your news organization?

	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>National</u>	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Local</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>		<u>LOCAL</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>			<u>LOCAL</u>			<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Internet</u>
				<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	
'04		'04												
47	56	56	Yes	58	36	65	47	68	47	42	62	73	41	66
52	41	41	No	41	64	32	50	27	53	58	33	24	57	34
<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
100	100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

IF YES, PARTICIPATED IN TRAINING (Q.20=1)

Q.20a On approximately how many days did you participate in training or professional development?

	<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
	<u>National</u>	<u>Local</u>		<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	
'04	'04		N=	(75)	(42)	(77)	(53)	(25)	(39)	(53)	(34)	(53)	(43)	(45)
38	38	1-3 days		35	45	29	51	20	36	49	29	36	47	31
33	34	4-6 days		35	29	35	32	44	38	23	32	32	37	36
21	18	7-13 days		20	21	26	7	12	18	26	27	26	2	22
4	9	14 + days		4	5	9	8	8	5	2	12	6	9	11
4	1	Don't know/Refused (VOL)		6	0	1	2	16	3	0	0	0	5	0
100	100			100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Q.21 Have there been instances in which your newsroom was encouraged to do a story because it related to an owner, advertiser, or sponsor?

	<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
	<u>National</u>	<u>Local</u>		<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	
'04	'04													
15	32	Yes		18	12	29	36	5	18	16	24	31	38	35
81	60	No		77	84	64	56	87	80	79	69	65	52	57
4	8	Don't know/Refused (VOL)		5	4	7	8	8	2	5	7	4	10	8
100	100			100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

IF Q.21=1, ASK:

Q.21a PLEASE DESCRIBE _____

	<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
	<u>National</u>	<u>Local</u>		<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	
'04	'04													
38	36	INTERNAL SOURCE:												
24	24	Corporate ownership, or managerial influence												
8	12	Coverage of company-sponsored events												
8	3	Promotions of other programming on network/station												
27	36	EXTERNAL SOURCE: Advertiser/sponsor influence												
11	16	Other												
27	20	Refused/Rather not say												
(37)	(75)	(N)												

Q.22 Generally speaking, how good a job does journalism do striking a balance between what audiences want to know and what's important for them to know?
(READ CHOICES)

<i>TOTAL</i> <u>National</u>			<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Local</u>				<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
<u>'04</u>	<u>'00</u>	<u>'99</u>	<u>'04</u>	<u>'00</u>	<u>'99</u>		<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
3	2	4	4	2	6	Excellent	4	3	5	3	8	0	5	2	4	5	0
46	35	45	44	33	49	Good	46	45	49	39	57	39	47	47	46	42	55
43	55	45	45	57	42	Only fair	45	41	43	46	24	55	41	47	44	44	41
6	5	4	5	5	3	Poor	5	7	2	9	8	5	5	4	3	7	4
<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
100	100	100	100	100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Q.23 For each of the following, please indicate whether you think it is a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason some types of news media have lost audience or readership.

a. The press does not pay enough attention to stories that are meaningful to average Americans.

<i>TOTAL</i> <u>National</u>		<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Local</u>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
<u>'04</u>	<u>'99</u>	<u>'04</u>	<u>'99</u>		<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
39	41	48	42	Major reason	54	23	54	43	32	43	39	58	53	41	52
39	40	36	40	Minor reason	34	44	36	35	46	34	39	27	36	39	35
21	18	14	18	Not a reason	12	31	10	18	22	19	22	13	8	19	13
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>*</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
100	100	100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

b. The public is not interested in serious news.

<i>TOTAL</i> <u>National</u>		<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Local</u>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
<u>'04</u>	<u>'99</u>	<u>'04</u>	<u>'99</u>		<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
30	22	24	26	Major reason	30	30	19	29	19	29	34	25	15	29	24
36	42	43	43	Minor reason	35	37	50	36	32	40	34	44	49	39	44
33	35	32	31	Not a reason	35	31	31	32	49	30	31	31	33	31	32
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>*</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
100	100	100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

c. Specialized news outlets allow people to get only the news they want.

<i>TOTAL</i> <u>National</u>		<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Local</u>			<i>NATIONAL</i> <u>Print</u> <u>Broadcast</u>		<i>LOCAL</i> <u>Print</u> <u>Broadcast</u>		<i>NATIONAL</i> <u>Exec</u> <u>Sr.</u> <u>Jour</u>			<i>LOCAL</i> <u>Exec</u> <u>Sr.</u> <u>Jour</u>			<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Internet</u>
'04	'99	'04	'99												
45	40	42	40	Major reason	44	47	40	44	52	46	43	46	43	39	55
43	42	40	50	Minor reason	45	40	45	35	43	39	46	38	42	40	32
10	17	17	10	Not a reason	10	9	15	18	5	12	9	14	14	20	13
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>*</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>1</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
100	100	100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

d. News organizations focus too much on sensational stories and scandals.

<i>TOTAL</i> <u>National</u>		<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Local</u>			<i>NATIONAL</i> <u>Print</u> <u>Broadcast</u>		<i>LOCAL</i> <u>Print</u> <u>Broadcast</u>		<i>NATIONAL</i> <u>Exec</u> <u>Sr.</u> <u>Jour</u>			<i>LOCAL</i> <u>Exec</u> <u>Sr.</u> <u>Jour</u>			<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Internet</u>
'04	'04														
37	43			Major reason	25	50	33	54	22	40	39	37	39	50	37
38	39			Minor reason	43	33	45	32	48	37	36	47	38	35	41
24	17			Not a reason	31	15	22	12	30	22	23	16	22	14	22
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>			Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
100	100				100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

e. News coverage is too boring and static for a fast-paced society.

<i>TOTAL</i> <u>National</u>		<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Local</u>			<i>NATIONAL</i> <u>Print</u> <u>Broadcast</u>		<i>LOCAL</i> <u>Print</u> <u>Broadcast</u>		<i>NATIONAL</i> <u>Exec</u> <u>Sr.</u> <u>Jour</u>			<i>LOCAL</i> <u>Exec</u> <u>Sr.</u> <u>Jour</u>			<i>TOTAL</i> <u>Internet</u>
'04	'04														
15	22			Major reason	17	13	33	11	11	15	17	34	24	14	31
45	41			Minor reason	48	42	44	39	38	46	46	46	38	42	37
39	35			Not a reason	35	43	23	47	51	37	36	18	37	42	32
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>			Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
100	100				100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

f. Americans are too busy these days.

<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
<u>National</u>	<u>Local</u>		<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
'04	'04												
47	51	Major reason	52	40	58	42	46	48	46	53	56	46	55
34	32	Minor reason	34	35	31	34	38	36	32	29	31	35	35
18	16	Not a reason	14	22	11	21	16	15	20	18	12	17	10
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

g. Too much of news coverage is repetitive.

<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
<u>National</u>	<u>Local</u>		<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
'04	'04												
43	55	Major reason	41	44	39	50	49	49	36	56	40	41	38
39	44	Minor reason	41	37	47	41	38	39	40	38	44	47	44
17	10	Not a reason	18	16	14	6	13	11	22	6	13	11	16
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Q.24 How much trust and confidence do you have in the wisdom of the American people when it comes to making choices on election day? A great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?

<i>TOTAL</i>		<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
<u>National</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>National</u>	<u>Local</u>		<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
'04	'99	'04	'99												
31	52	22	28	A great deal	27	35	24	21	48	34	24	12	28	24	15
51	41	54	56	A fair amount	54	48	57	51	38	48	57	62	54	49	53
15	6	21	13	Not very much	18	13	19	22	8	17	16	22	14	25	28
2	1	2	3	None at all	0	3	0	3	3	1	2	2	1	2	3
<u>1</u>	<u>*</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>*</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>
100	100	100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Q.25 Has the Internet increased or decreased the deadline pressure you face, or has there been no change?

<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
<u>National</u>	<u>Local</u>		<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
'04	'04												
42	35	Increased	53	31	48	22	57	41	39	34	49	25	78
2	4	Decreased	1	2	3	3	0	1	2	2	1	6	0
55	60	No change	45	66	49	72	40	58	58	60	49	69	22
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Q.26 Has the Internet increased or decreased the amount of misinformation, such as false rumors, that finds its way into news stories in general, or has there been no change?

<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
<u>National</u>	<u>Local</u>		<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
'04	'04												
65	57	Increased	60	70	60	54	54	66	67	56	58	56	38
1	2	Decreased	2	1	3	1	0	1	2	2	3	1	6
31	38	No change	35	26	35	41	41	30	29	42	35	38	54
<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>2</u>
100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Finally a few questions about your personal views and values.

Q.27 How would you describe your political thinking. Would you say you are:

<i>TOTAL</i>		<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>NATIONAL</i>		<i>LOCAL</i>		<i>NATIONAL</i>			<i>LOCAL</i>			<i>TOTAL</i>
<u>National</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>National</u>	<u>Local</u>		<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>
'04	'95	'04	'95												
5	2	2	2	Very liberal	5	3	2	1	0	2	7	0	0	4	
29	20	21	12	Liberal	36	20	28	14	16	25	34	11	24	25	
54	64	61	64	Moderate	48	61	57	65	60	59	49	76	60	53	
7	4	11	17	Conservative	8	7	11	11	19	4	6	11	11	11	
*	1	1	1	Very conservative	0	1	1	2	0	0	1	2	1	1	
<u>5</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)	<u>3</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>6</u>	
100	100	100	100		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	

Q.28 Which comes closer to your own views, even if neither is exactly right?

<u>TOTAL</u> <u>National</u>		<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Local</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>		<u>LOCAL</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>			<u>LOCAL</u>			<u>TOTAL</u>		
				<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>		
'04		'04														
91		78				95	86	90	65	92	86	93	80	78	76	94
6		18				3	8	9	27	5	7	5	16	17	20	4
*		*				0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
3		4				2	5	1	7	3	6	2	4	4	4	0
100		100				100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Q.29 Which comes closer to your own views, even if neither is exactly right?

<u>TOTAL</u> <u>National</u>		<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Local</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>		<u>LOCAL</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>			<u>LOCAL</u>			<u>TOTAL</u>		
				<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>		
'04	'95	'04	'95													
88	83	74	75			94	82	79	68	92	87	88	78	75	71	91
5	4	14	14			4	7	14	14	3	5	6	13	14	14	7
7	13	12	11			2	11	7	18	5	8	6	9	11	15	2
100	100	100	100			100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Q.30 What's more important in American society – that everyone be free to pursue their life's goals without interference from the government OR that the government play an active role in society so as to guarantee that nobody is in need?

<u>TOTAL</u> <u>National</u>		<u>TOTAL</u> <u>Local</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>		<u>LOCAL</u>		<u>NATIONAL</u>			<u>LOCAL</u>			<u>TOTAL</u>		
				<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Print</u>	<u>Broadcast</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Exec</u>	<u>Sr.</u>	<u>Jour</u>	<u>Internet</u>		
'04		'04														
49		58				44	54	53	64	70	40	48	69	57	53	51
42		35				49	34	42	27	27	49	42	26	33	41	43
2		7				7	12	5	2	3	11	10	5	10	6	6
100		100				100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100