

The New Era of News: What it means to be a journalist in the age of digital media

By

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Abstract

The following study is a qualitative analysis on what it means to be a journalist in today's changing world of media and technology. With the introduction of the Internet, newspapers are now being published online and presents major implications for those who are both producing and consuming the news. With the shift from print to online newspapers, journalists are now required to be multimedia experts while constantly being pressured with a 24-hour news deadline. This study asked thirteen reporters, editors, and journalists how online newspapers have affected their roles and responsibilities in the newsroom. The findings show that the newsroom is not only shrinking but also disappearing as most communication is done via phone and email. Articles are becoming shorter and covering less information as journalists attempt to deal with the required immediacy that exists for online newspapers. The implications of shortening articles could possibly mean the deliverance of only headlines as the future of news production. Even more, journalists no longer need to go into the office and do their research but are happy to do most of their work out of their home or local coffee shop. Though social networking elements have been introduced to online news sites, consumers do not seem to affect the way the news is produced as much as previously thought. In addition, multimedia features such as audio, video, and graphics are becoming more the responsibility of the journalist and less of the editor in order to keep articles exciting and up-to-date. Journalism is evolving into an even more fast-paced profession and is being tested as print newspapers become extinct and online news sites take their place.

Introduction

News in Ann Arbor, MI

After 174 years in operation, *The Ann Arbor News* closed its doors in July of 2009 (Karoub & White, 2009). Other Michigan newspapers already had begun to slow their print operations including *The Flint Journal*, *The Saginaw News*, and *The Bay City Times* (Oosting, 2009). While these newspapers have reduced their publications to a few days per week, the closing of *The Ann Arbor News* presents a unique case in the state of Michigan: "...even such a vibrant and affluent town could not guarantee The News' survival, as Ann Arbor today becomes the first city in the country to lose its only daily newspaper" (Heflin, 2009a). The closing of *The Ann Arbor News* shocked employees and community members alike: "There was an audible gasp when she [Laurel Champion, publisher of The News] told workers that the newspaper would close, and some people could be seen wiping tears from their eyes" (Knight, 2009). *The Ann Arbor News* had been a large part of the community, employing over 272 community members (Heflin, 2009b). The closing of such an established and well-read newspaper, with a daily circulation of 45,000 readers, forced readers to turn their attention to online new sites to fulfill their need for news (Knight, 2009).

The Ann Arbor News has great historical significance in the college town of Ann Arbor, Michigan. Home to the University of Michigan, an established and liberal campus, *The Ann Arbor News* was an innovator in reporting momentous events in Ann Arbor throughout its 174 years of history: "Throughout the years, amid the varying approaches to gathering news, came the thousands of stories, headlines and editorials that knit together the triumph, tragedy and excitement that tell the history of a fascinating

city” (Heflin, 2009a). The paper’s closing has been a key moment within the broader context of challenges facing the newspaper business in the U.S. Understanding the economic, technological, and socio-cultural dimensions of this transition—of the print newspaper re-imagined online—is critically important if we are to understand the changing relationship between media technology and the production and circulation of news content and information. With the introduction of online news sites, a new type of news forum has been created along with a new delivery system for news. “News content is much more fluid—dynamic—in an online environment, which enables better representation of events and processes in real life” (Pavlik, 2001, 21). The situation presented in Ann Arbor is an occurrence unlike any other closing of a print newspaper thus far, as it was the first major city in the U.S. to have its daily newspaper replaced by an online web organization, AnnArbor.com (Heflin, 2009a). This research, therefore, shows an importance to the community, and what it could mean for other major cities in danger of losing their daily newspapers in our technologically advancing society.

The website AnnArbor.com opened as a replacement to *The Ann Arbor News*. The website is still owned by the same parent company, Newhouse’s Advance Publications, relies on outside investors, and is run as a large corporation (Trop, 2009). Laurel Champion, former publisher of *The Ann Arbor News*, has taken on the new role of executive vice president of Ann Arbor.com (Karoub & White, 2009). In this new role, Champion explains that AnnArbor.com will continue to serve the local community. As cited by Knight (2009), Champion explains, “This isn’t about abandoning local journalism, it’s about serving it up in a very different way.” The paper did not simply transform from a print newspaper to a print newspaper that appeared only online; rather,

AnnArbor.com was created as an entirely new “web-based company” that not only includes news articles and local happenings, but also includes “social networking features, reporters equipped to report the news as it happens, and the ability to have reader input drive features on the site” (Prakash, 2009). AnnArbor.com is a unique case where a print newspaper slowly came to its end, and a brand new web-based company was created in its place. In addition to the website of AnnArbor.com, there are two printed editions delivered on Thursdays and Sundays along with an advertising supplement delivered once a week (Knight, 2009).

Although all of the former employees from *The Ann Arbor News* were told that they were able to apply to new positions at AnnArbor.com, the positions also were open to non-employees (Knight, 2009). The addition of new roles and new employees, and the loss of past roles and past employees, shows that the dynamic of the re-imagined newsroom has obviously changed. Whereas *The Ann Arbor News* employed more than 270 employees, AnnArbor.com only has 69 full-time staffers with more than 60 bloggers that sparingly contribute to the site (Contact Us, 2010). This shows that the digital newsroom, filled with traditionally trained journalists, is shrinking. Even more, it shows that AnnArbor.com was unable to hire all of the previous workers at *The Ann Arbor News*. Many employees were put out of a job with the closing of the print edition, which illustrates the larger implications of a shrinking newsroom. According to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, ASNE, in 2010, “American daily newspapers lost another 5,200 jobs last year bringing the total loss of journalists since 2007 to 13,500.” The ASNE also reported that the number of full-time journalists working at newspapers today is the same as it was in the mid-1970s: “Since 2001, American newsrooms have lost more

than 25 per cent of their full-time staffers bringing the total of full-time journalists working in daily newsrooms to 41,500.”

The main reason *The Ann Arbor News* was forced to shut down was due to the loss in revenues: “Heavy losses in revenue drove the decision [to shut down The News]. Champion [the former publisher] said the current ‘business model is not sustainable.’ Advertising slumped more than 20 percent in January compared to the same month last year” (Knight, 2009). This loss in advertising led to the paper’s demise and is one of the main reasons that *The Ann Arbor News* closed down and reopened on the web. However, many factors seemed to drive Advance Publication’s decision to stop print publication of *The Ann Arbor News*. The introduction of a web-based company was a way to save the parent company large expenses such as printing and distributing. According to Laurel Champion in her final letter from the publisher:

Our company...has chosen our special city to use as a laboratory to create new ways to share local news and information. Our owners have decided to continue to invest significantly in our market, and will be starting a new online media company to better service our tech-savvy readers and advertisers. (Champion, 2009)

Later in her letter, Champion explains the reasoning behind opening the web-based company: “Our new strategy reflects shifting media consumption habits and advertising revenue in the newspaper business, and particularly in Michigan” (Champion, 2009).

Before *The Ann Arbor News* entered its final days as a print publication, other online news sites had been established in order to keep up with the new era of digital media and in order to fill a void of declining quality in print news that was felt within the community (M. Morgan, personal communication, March 8, 200). News sites such as the AnnArborChronicle.com, an entirely online news organization, and the

AnnArborObserver.com, an online supplement to a monthly-printed paper, had already been in circulation for many months when *The Ann Arbor News* closed its doors.

The AnnArborChronicle.com opened its digital doors in September of 2008 (M. Morgan, personal communication, March 8, 2010), ten months before *The Ann Arbor News* shut its doors (Knight, 2009). Publisher Mary Morgan, a former employee at *The Ann Arbor News*, left her old role as technology and business editor before *The Ann Arbor News* shut down. Though she left before the end of *The Ann Arbor News*, she was unaware of the plans to close down and simply felt that “she knew she needed to leave” (M. Morgan, personal communication, March 8, 2010). She understood that it was a hectic time in the profession of journalism with the transition to online news sites; therefore, Morgan and her husband Dave Askins, editor of the AnnArborChronicle.com, decided to open the news site because “we wanted to contribute to the community,” says Morgan. The AnnArborChronicle.com is an interesting model to look at because its physical appearance is that of an old, traditional newspaper, but digitized on a computer screen. The appearance is meant to entice nostalgic newspaper readers as well as make them feel at home, according to Morgan. With a staff of just two people, Dave Askins and Mary Morgan, the AnnArborChronicle.com operates entirely online and hires freelancers to contribute to its online publication. The website only publishes local advertisements and has decided to be counter to the online trend of immediacy, writing longer articles and not prioritizing speedy publishing. Its growing popularity shows that a locally published, online newspaper is what newsreaders want as a result of the loss of traditional paper newspapers across the country.

The New Era of News Production

The role that a journalist plays during this time of transition is crucial to research in order to understand the way that news is being produced and consumed in a digital age. Though extremely different, analyzing two news sites, AnnArborChronicle.com and AnnArbor.com, and the roles of online journalists at these sites has provided valuable insight and research on the changing state of the journalism profession. By interviewing editors, reporters, and those filling new positions created by the online newspaper, this study explores the new role of the digital journalist as well as looks into the new dynamic of the digital newsroom.

With many organizations moving partially or completely online, publishing, editing, and journalism are being re-imagined and reinvented to keep up with the popularity of the digital newspaper. Journalists no longer cover a story, type it up, and turn it in to their editor. Today's journalists travel with cameras and video recorders and even appear in news videos themselves. Journalists are doing more work on their computers and spending less time out in the community. What is lost is the communication that occurs within a traditional newsroom as most communication is now done via smart phones and computers.

With complete news organizations operating online, sometimes news sites do not even have an actual office space. For example, AnnArborChronicle.com lacks a corporate office space (M. Morgan, personal communication, March 8, 2010) and AnnArbor.com's brand new office on East Liberty Street looks more like a local coffee house-meets-loft than a corporate office (M. Rothstein, personal communication, March 31, 2010). When editing a story and getting it ready for publishing, journalists, not

editors, are adding hyperlinks, graphics, audio, and videos to their articles. These new responsibilities are pressuring journalists to constantly be up-to-date on the latest technology in order to stay competitive in an era of digital news. These multimedia elements are also providing a new way of consuming the news. The introduction of hyperlinks can lead readers to click right through to other pages of interest. Readers who are too busy to scroll through an entire article can flip through a picture gallery or watch a thirty-second video clip that supplements an article. However, even with these new elements of news production and consumption, this research found that journalists feel that the same news that has always been covered is still being delivered, simply via a new delivery system: the Internet.

Even more, the social networking features of the online newspaper have been researched in order to determine the effects that consumers have on the content in the online paper. Though it may be expected that consumers' comments strongly affect the way journalists produce the news, this research found that these comments rarely affect a journalist's approach when covering a story. Asking journalists how consumers' comments and inquiries affect journalists' reporting and writing resulted in little to no effect. These comments are only used if they point out a mistake or error that has been made in the article. This proposes an interesting counterpoint as AnnArbor.com has prided itself as being interactive with the community. According to a welcome note from Tony Dearing (2009), editor of AnnArbor.com, the website is shaped by the community:

In fact, we've said from the beginning that we are of, by and for the community. The site we launched today was shaped by your input. And while we're still very much in beta, we promise to continue to involve the community in every way as we grow and develop.

This study shows that readers' comments and discussions on online news sites do not highly influence journalists' reporting styles and therefore counters Dearing's claim. This is of major importance because many news sites are claiming to rely heavily on consumers' thoughts and opinions, and yet this research found that most journalists briskly skim comments and do not give them much thought. Researching the dynamics of an online newsroom and how it interacts with its readers and the community in which it functions is of utmost importance for the city where the newspaper is published and for the people living there. But the people living in Ann Arbor will be surprised to learn that their involvement is not vital to the production of online news.

With the transition from traditional newspapers to online news organizations, the roles and responsibilities of journalists are constantly evolving. As a result, a new type of news forum has been created. The Internet is the newest media form in which news is being created and delivered. "Only in an interactive, broadband online medium can context be provided for complex, multidimensional news events where perspective and point of view are centrally important in understanding the complete truth behind the news" (Pavlik, 2001, 23). Therefore, the study of digital news is important and critical in this new Internet age.

The journalists who took part in the survey provide answers to the changing profession of journalism in today's digital age. Journalists prioritize immediacy, localization, and the inclusion of multimedia elements in their work. The biggest changes are the means of communications, with almost all communication done via email, the increased pressure from a 24-hour deadline, and the decreased length of articles. With the growing commonality of shorter articles that cover less information,

journalists feel that consumers are skimming more and reading less. These decreased article sizes can have many implications on the new era of news delivering. Many of the journalists surveyed are afraid that the new era of news will simply mean the deliverance of headlines.

The AnnArborChronicle.com provides a counter trend to the previous conclusions. Whereas most online journalists feel pressured to constantly be reporting the news, the AnnArborChronicle.com stays true to the fundamentals of traditional journalism. An in-depth interview with Mary Morgan, publisher of the site, showed that this publication is consciously trying to adhere to traditional journalistic values and therefore write longer, in-depth articles than most online publications and is not necessarily concerned with the immediacy that trouble most online journalists today. Morgan shares, “The website is 24/7, yes, but people sleep and people have downtime” (personal communication, March 8, 2010). The Chronicle does stay true to the digital newsroom as they do not have a defined office space and communicate mostly via email with their freelancers and contributors. They present an advertising model that stays within the local community and does not intrude on the reader when perusing the site in order to give the reader a feeling of being within the Ann Arbor community. With all of these local components, the AnnArborChronicle.com is an example of a news site that is truly made for the consumer and perhaps a testament to the necessity for a traditionally based model. However, this also proposes the question of why a traditionally based model would work when delivering news online when it is failing in print.

The massive decrease in advertising revenue has caused the downfall of the print newspaper industry. According to the research department at the Newspaper Association

of America, NPA, advertising expenditures in print newspapers decreased 28.6% in the year 2009 (Advertising Expenditures, 2010). This problem is definitely one that needs to be discussed when dealing with online newspapers. As newspapers go online, they are sure to encounter similar problems with enticing advertisers to publish advertisements online. In the same study done by the NPA, online advertising had decreased 11.8% in 2009 (Advertising Expenditures, 2010). This lack of advertising will have major implications for online news sites. Unfortunately, due to the main focus on journalism as a profession in this research, not much was found on the topic of advertising. Those journalists surveyed believe that it is more difficult to find online advertisers than it was in print. This could have serious consequences on the future of online news publishing, as online news sites will need to establish a viable business model. Advertising revenues for print newspapers was \$24,821,000 in 2009 while online revenues were only \$2,743,000 (Advertising Expenditures, 2010). If advertising is declining in print, the promise of large advertising revenues from online advertising looks bleak.

This research focuses on the changing roles of journalists in today's era of media digitization. As the newsroom has changed from traditionally run newspaper organizations to web-based companies, new roles have been created and old roles have either been transformed or replaced. Examining the dynamic of these new roles and responsibilities is critical for understanding contemporary news production. Further, answering what it means to be a journalist in today's era of digitization is crucial in understanding the current state of the profession of journalism. With the transition from print newspaper to online news sites, technological advances have begun shaping the way news is produced and consumed and is a pertinent topic of interest in this paper.

Literature Review

In today's changing world of technology, people are constantly faced with new media to supplement, complement, and sometimes even replace older forms of media. Throughout U.S. history, Americans have come to adopt newspapers, television and radio as popular forms of media. Each medium was tried and tested and eventually adopted by the American people as popular sources where consumers could receive news updates and information. As these new media slowly but surely situated themselves into people's lives, consumers were given more opportunities to use different mediums as news sources. "People can get their information from literally thousands of news sources around the world. They can get the story from multiple perspectives, placed in rich historical context, and told using a wide variety of communication modalities..." (Pavlik, 2001, p. 31). The Internet is one of the newest and most popular mediums that is used to gather news by producers and to deliver news to consumers.

As consumers embrace the numerous advantages of the Internet, many concerns are brought about. The Internet has little to no checks and balances and is virtually infinite. Thus, naturally, businesses are beginning to make the transition to the Internet in order to capitalize on the most innovative medium since the introduction of television. The Internet is joining "television, newspapers, and radio as one of the four major sources of news for Americans" (Klotz, 2004, p. 125). It has surpassed the days of introduction and is continuing to mature each year as an easily accessible and reliable place to produce and gather news. The Internet's features have allowed it to surpass other media when it comes to consuming news according to The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. Because of its convenience, its appealing physical appearance, and its simplicity

to use and navigate, regular news consumers are 60% more likely to use the Internet to gather their news (Online Papers Modestly Boost Newspaper Readership, 2006). Even further, according to the most recent Nielsen report, the unique audience of newspaper web sites has increased from 66,880,280 in January of 2008 to 76,097,361 in February of 2010 (Newspaper Web Sites, 2010).

The major transition to the online world resulted in a shift from print newspapers to online newspapers. But print newspapers have come to be part of the daily life of all people throughout the world. People from all walks of life have morning rituals with their newspaper and hot cup of coffee before beginning their day. Daily newspapers are simply everywhere, “From living rooms, to bathrooms, from offices to factories, from hospitals to hairdressers, from libraries to coffee shops, and from trains to planes, current issues of print papers are almost omnipresent inhabitants of modern life” (Boczkowski, 2004, p. 6). Newspapers are a critical part of community discussion, democracy, and national affairs and document the current way of life. “Daily newspapers are a lucrative yet steadily declining business...the indicators of progressive economic decline (among them losses in penetration of the print product and share of the advertising pie, and difficulties in attracting and retaining younger readers) have not gone unnoticed by decision makers” (Boczkowski, 2004, p. 3-4). Younger generations have been raised on the Internet, and therefore this delivery system provides a new route to reach a younger demographic. The youth are growing up Internet savvy and constantly adopting the newest technologies available to them. Consequently, newspapers are taking on the same idea and are going online.

With the vast amount of technological advances occurring during the twenty-first century, print newspapers have conformed to the current digital age by making the shift to online newspapers. “Websites are almost universal for traditional news organizations...The highest-circulation newspaper in each of the fifty states, for instance, has a corresponding website...A website is now understood to be part of the overall news product” (Klotz, 2004, p. 114). But with this transition comes a new era in the newspaper world—an era of digital newspapers.

One of the major changes that has occurred in online newspapers is a larger focus on the consumer. As Boczkowski (2004) discusses in his book, Digitizing the News, consumers are beginning to play a role in the production of news:

...by voicing their opinions in forums, chat rooms, and publications housed within the new-media outlet, and hyperlinking these web pages to other sites from personal weblogs to the homepages of advocacy groups, users appear to shape what is seen as newsworthy, who gets to communicate about it, and how it gets covered. (p. 184)

Boczkowski’s analysis of this newest form of media has provoked many areas of study involving online newspapers. Though Boczkowski acknowledges the importance and frequent use of print newspapers, he is aware of the growing popularity of online newspapers. As a result, Boczkowski is sensible about the decline of print: “...rising newsprint and distribution costs, growing segmentation of consumption patterns, and the increased appeal of audiovisual media among younger generations,” have all led to an increase of online newspaper usage and a decrease in the circulation of print newspapers (2004, p. 4).

One main proposal involving the decline in print newspapers put forth by Boczkowski is the idea that younger generations have grown up with the Internet and are

therefore more prone to its usage, and in turn, less prone to print newspapers (Boczkowski, 2004, p. 7). Since younger generations have been using the Internet for most of their lives, their knowledge about the medium and their ability to use the medium is quite high. Due to the fact that the Internet plays such a big role in the lives of younger generations, they have simply never had the need to use a print newspaper because the same, and sometimes even more, information is available online. Especially now, with the decline of print newspapers, younger generations are going online more than ever in order to search for news. However, other studies have shown a different outcome. Some propose that print newspapers are still a vital part of daily life and will never completely go out of circulation.

A study done by de Waal, Schönback, & Lauf (2005) researches whether or not online newspapers will be a substitute or a complement for their print counterparts. One major difference between print newspapers and those newspapers accessed online is the use of cues:

The non-linear, layered structure used online makes it more difficult to come across 'all' articles...Clicking on links may draw readers away from the other articles in the online paper, whereas stories on a (double unfolded) page in a print paper remain visible for a print reader. (de Waal et al., 2005, p. 57)

While the layout, headlines, and advertisements in a print newspaper are able to direct readers to articles they may not have read on their own, online newspapers are more restrictive in the linear sense. Though the layout and appearance of online newspapers sometimes resembles those of print newspapers, they still do not have the concrete space that print newspapers use to attract readers' attention to other articles of interest.

Online newspapers present many advantages—“Online papers are mostly free of charge, often updated throughout the day, easily accessible for everyone with an Internet connection, and they can be visited while working at one’s PC”—however, they also require a high level of involvement (de Waal et al., 2005, p. 56). Instead of perusing the pages of a print newspaper—browsing articles here and there—online newspapers require their users to navigate themselves to specific stories and therefore have a limited spectrum. Readers of online newspapers are obliged to click, by themselves, the articles and links that are of personal interest: “...it is likely that one encounters fewer articles, and certainly fewer *complete* articles, while surfing an online newspaper compared to paging through a printed paper” (de Waal et al., 2005, p. 56). This presents the issue of how the readers—consumers—feel about this theory.

In a study unlike any done in the United States, de Waal et al. (2005) conducted a telephone survey of online newspaper readers in the Netherlands. Common belief held that online newspapers would not be as well received as their printed counterparts. One of many results did indeed prove this: “What catches the eye is that online newspaper readers believe that a printed newspaper always fulfills the need for information better than the online version, in all domains” (de Waal et al., 2005, p. 67). Those accessing the online newspapers were “mainly younger, highly educated, and male” (de Waal et al., 2005, p. 65). De Waal et al. (2005) concluded that though print newspapers are declining in number, “online newspapers still do not seem to be a substitute for print newspapers...but can better be described as complementary. So, there is no need to be concerned about the important function of printed newspapers for society” (p. 69). Even though this study was completed in the Netherlands, it can be applied to the U.S. because

of the congruency of news history. They, too, are experiencing a shift to online news sites. And while readers of online newspapers are growing in number, online newspapers are seen as an *additional* source of news, not a *replacement* for printed newspapers in de Waal et al.'s (2005) study. Their results support the idea that print newspapers are not going to be *replaced* by online newspapers, but rather they will act as a complement to print newspapers and will be used alongside one another in a convergent atmosphere.

In another study conducted by Schönbach, de Waal, & Lauf (2005), the perceived public agenda is tested in a content analysis of print versus online newspapers.

Schönbach et al. (2005) hypothesized that readers of online newspapers, and not print, would have a smaller knowledge of the public agenda. A reason for this hypothesis involves the usage of cues in print newspapers, an idea that has already been discussed earlier. Readers of print newspapers may be scanning the paper for articles of interest and stumble upon an interesting headline or photograph that would draw them into a piece they otherwise would not have read. Schönbach et al.'s (2005) results do indeed support the idea that reading the print newspaper “contributed to awareness of more public events and issues than using an online newspaper does” (p. 76). This reinforces the commonly held belief that print newspapers contain more information and are more thorough than online newspapers.

Lindsay H. Hoffman (2006) also conducted a study comparing the difference between the content in online versus print newspapers. The Pew Research Center studied those who gathered online news three days per week and found that “Those seeking news online increased from 23% in 2000 to 29% in 2004” (as cited in Hoffman, 2006). Therefore, Hoffman (2006) created a content analysis in order to compare the subject

matter in print versus online newspapers (p. 58). By comparing the amount of mobilizing information (information aiding people to act on pre-existing attitudes) in print and online newspapers, Hoffman (2006) found that the two mediums rarely differ when it comes to content (p. 67). This definitely counters Schönbach et al.'s (2005) study that found that traditional print newspapers have not only different content, but also more content than online versions.

Hoffman (2006) proposes that the reason why traditional and online newspapers are so similar is due to the fact that “online newspapers might simply be seeking consistency with their print counterparts in order to maintain a common voice” (p. 68). This study supports the results found by de Waal et al. (2005) by showing that print newspapers and online newspapers maintain consistency and are extremely similar in content. This technique is quite easy to put into action since this would simply mean transferring the stories and graphics used for the print newspaper into a computerized version in order to publish the complete entity online. This would allow print newspapers to maintain their current readers, while online news sites could reach out to a new demographic. However, the content of print versus online newspapers is not the only area of interest in this research. What occurs in the newsroom, behind the scenes of news production, also affects the changing profession of journalism.

The digital transition from print newspapers to the online world has had a large impact on what is happening within the online newsrooms and sometimes the lack of the newsroom itself. The shift from print to online is not only changing the world of the consumers of news, but also for those who produce the news. While the convergence in newsrooms has changed the way readers consume the news—watching video, browsing

through photos, and clicking hyperlinks to other online articles and sites—the journalists who are part of this convergence now face the challenge of learning how to adapt to a plethora of new roles in the newsroom.

Klinenberg (2005) conducted a case study of the Metro News, a pseudonym used to describe “an emerging second-tier media corporation that is broadly considered an industry model organization for integrating different forms of media work,” in order to further research this newest area of convergence (p. 51). As mentioned earlier, journalists are being expected to adopt not only new roles, but also *more* roles in the production of news making. Convergence is leading journalists to have to tackle all sorts of jobs, whether it is creating a headline, deciding which graphics to put alongside their story, or even being telegenic in order to keep up with this newest age of digital media (Klinenberg, 2005, p. 55). Klinenberg (2005) refers to the never-ending time cycle for producing news in the digital age as the “news cyclone” (p. 56). The Internet is being used to deliver the news on a twenty-four hour basis, and is constantly being updated and changed throughout the day. This was never possible in print due to hard-standing deadlines and specific print cycles. “The Internet, rather than television or print, offers the most exciting possibilities for creating new forms of journalism with advanced technology and convergence production” (Klinenberg, 2005, p. 58). Articles, graphics, and videos can constantly be updated and altered to show the latest news. Simply carrying a mobile phone offers a journalist the opportunity of catching the latest breaking story in a picture or video. The Internet is offering endless opportunities to *show* the news along with traditional storytelling.

This overwhelming convergence is leading to extremely loose spatial limitations. The Internet offers endless possibilities on the amount of information available to the consumer, along with the way that information is presented. And so, when major news organizations tackle stories that are outside the immediate realm, “editors and managers encourage journalists to ‘localize’ the stories, that is, to illustrate why news far from home is relevant to the local community” (Klinenberg, 2005, p. 59). Though localization has always been a goal of journalists, localization online is becoming more imperative since the space available is virtually unlimited. If journalists are not relating their stories to their readers, they will be unable to maintain a following because readers will lose interest quickly if they have no reason to become invested in a story.

Klinenberg (2005) discusses the numerous advantages to online newspapers, including the unlimited space:

The advent of twenty-four-hour television news and the rapid emergence of instant Internet news sites have eliminated the temporal borders in the news day, creating an informational environment in which there is always breaking news to produce, consume, and—for reporters and their subjects—react against. (p. 54)

However, Klinenberg (2005) also understands that the online medium can be uncontrollable due to its limitless borders. It is extremely difficult for online news organizations to capitalize on and make profit from these online outlets. “The most exciting innovations in journalistic forms, particularly those involving multimedia packages disseminated through the Internet, have received little support from news organizations because they are not profitable” (Klinenberg, 2005, p. 61). News organizations are wary of putting large amounts of funding into online newspapers. It is unknown whether consumers, who were once, or still are, readers of print newspapers,

will be willing to pay for a subscription for an online newspaper. If news organizations decide to spend extreme amounts of money on online newspapers, they need to be assured that a profit will be made from their investment.

Though news organizations are still unsure as to how to make online newspapers into a profitable business, Klotz (2004) is not worried about the slow adaptation of a profitable business:

The often slow road to profitability should not be a huge surprise...Even when not profitable on its own, the [news] website may be making contributions to the overall organization by promoting traditional money makers. It may also be laying the groundwork for future profitability. (p. 114)

Although users may not be paying to view online newspapers, visiting an online paper can add to brand awareness and loyalty of the consumer to the news organization, which could lead to future profitability in other areas.

Klotz (2004) shows that other media have faced long roads to profitability. Producers of radio and television had to patiently wait for the acceptance of the American people. These media also had to prove their sustainability in order to gain the confidence of advertising companies, which would in turn, generate profit. Without the revenue from online advertising, online newspapers will have a hard time staying afloat: "As with traditional media, the largest share of revenue from most news websites now comes from advertising" (Klotz, 2004, p. 115).

The most common form of advertising is the banner advertisement, which is stretched horizontally across the entire computer screen. Most websites nowadays have banner advertisements on their homepage. The initial page of an online newspaper is almost always filled with other advertisements in addition to these banner ads.

According to Klotz (2004), “78% of the [leading state newspaper] sites sell space in the initial page view” (p. 115). However, this almost never occurs in print newspapers. Print newspapers tend to save advertising for later pages. Therefore, online newspapers are able to offer advertisers a unique opportunity to be present on the homepage of news websites. Not only are advertisers given the opportunity to *appear* on the webpage with text and a picture, but these advertisements are also actually *clickable*. Consumers are able to click on an advertisement and are immediately led to the website of the advertiser (Klotz, 2004, p. 115). Advertisements are giving companies an opportunity that no other form of media can offer: the opportunity to literally reel in consumers as they are led to the homepage of the advertiser. This opportunity demonstrates a main difference between print and online newspapers and offers advertisers a unique way of reaching consumers.

In addition to advertising, some newspapers are attempting to sign up consumers online through payable subscription. As Klotz (2004) explains, news organizations are beginning to adopt a subscriber model in order to charge consumers for news access: “Access to the website could be password protected. Subscribers could receive an access code that allows them to receive the content” (p. 116). Though some news organizations are asking for subscriptions online, almost all online papers release some content for free on their homepage. A happy medium needs to be found within the subscription model so that online newspapers can begin to be a profitable business while still giving the consumer what he or she wants and needs.

Klotz (2004) also discusses the unlimited spatial opportunity for online newspapers. He believes that this limitless space has no real bearing on the journalists

who are producing the news. Whereas in the past journalists have simply had to write a story, they are now able, and usually required, to add a video to complement their piece, and sometimes even replace it. These journalists are now beginning to appear in videos as newscasters in order to keep a competitive edge and remain valuable to their news organizations. Yet, Klotz (2004) states: “The Web allows traditional news organizations to attractively package their excess material. News journalists are well trained to deal with time pressure and are unlikely to be fazed by the speed at which life proceeds online” (p. 118). Klotz (2004) believes that journalists are used to having to make deadlines and produce news on a tight deadline, and therefore they should be able to adapt easily to the online newspaper world. Klotz’s (2004) study counters Klinenberg’s (2005) stance, which states that journalists are in fact having trouble adapting to this rapid digital immediacy.

Klotz (2004) seems to reach an overarching affirmation as to the key to online newspapers’ success. He shows that there is a necessity of breaking stories *in progress* in online newspapers, but that print newspapers allow more time for the journalists to go into more depth and to check for accuracy before these stories are presented: “The key, then, is to have the online and traditional products working together. By working together, the organization improves its chance of breaking the story first” (Klotz, 2004, p. 124). Whereas a reporter could quickly put together an article and post it online to beat other news organizations, a more thorough and follow up piece could be published the following day in the online newspaper’s print counterpart. As news organizations begin to capitalize upon online news, they have to remember to maintain a balance between the availability of news and the accuracy of their stories. “Journalists and reporters are trying

so quickly to get their stories out there on the Internet that the accuracy of the stories sometimes is compromised” (Klotz, 2004, p. 128). It is this problem of accuracy that has led many consumers to put more trust in print newspapers since they are usually well edited and have been in print for many years. Online newspapers value immediacy and therefore have loosened accuracy requirements in order to be the online news organization to break the story first. It is this need of immediacy that has led to inaccurate stories and false information being published online.

Online newspapers themselves have rarely been studied without the comparison to their print counterpart. However, in Tremayne, Weiss, & Alves’s (2007) study, the changing content of the online newspaper, without any print counterpart, is researched. Tremayne et al. (2007) realized that the Internet allows for exploitation of the news by adding video, audio, and graphics to online newspapers, just as Hoffman (2006) and Klinenberg (2005) demonstrated. But, Tremayne et al. (2007) focuses solely on the online version of newspapers. They issued a longitudinal content analysis of online newspapers throughout the U.S., ranging from high to low circulation. “A change in gatekeeping practices promoted by the nature of the Web and perhaps users’ expectations has resulted in a more continuous news flow,” and therefore Tremayne et al. (2007) decided to study the dynamic content available online (p. 827). Tremayne et al. (2007) did this by comparing the changes that have taken place in different online news sites every hour over a specific time period (p. 830). Using this method, the researchers were able to determine that the level of dynamic content, “[the] content which changes hour-by-hour on newspaper websites,” increases over time (Tremayne et al., 2007, p. 826). These dynamic changes included: “the addition or subtraction of stories, the alteration of

headlines, the changing or addition of photos, and other multimedia events” (Tremayne et al., 2007, p. 826). This shows the constantly changing and altering of news stories and information in order to keep online newspapers ahead of print newspapers when it comes to breaking a story. Even more, online news sites have the pressure of having to break the story before their *online* competitors. Taking all of this into account, online news sites are working harder than ever to be the first ones with the latest story.

In addition, just as Klinenberg (2005) stressed the importance of localizing online stories, Tremayne et al. (2007) also proposed a hypothesis about the importance of local content in online papers (Tremayne et al., 2007, p. 829). While the amount of news content increased over the time period studied, the only statistically significant increase was of local news, rather than national or international (Tremayne et al., 2007, p. 835). This shows that online newspapers seem to be stressing a similar area of interest for their readers by localizing their content. This helps online news organizations deal with the infinite space of the Internet by staying within a specific area of content.

The addition of multimedia effects is also growing in online newspapers across the country. Video, graphics, and audio are becoming more advanced and therefore are inviting consumers to access online news on a daily basis. One research question Tremayne et al. (2007) proposes asks about whether or not these multimedia elements were part of the dynamic journalism that was steadily increasing over the course of the study (p. 829). The most significant finding was the “sharp rise in 2006 of multimedia elements, especially video” (Tremayne et al., 2007, p. 835). Once again, this demonstrates the importance of these complementary elements to the essential fundamentals of the stories.

All of the previous studies and articles have largely focused on either the producers of news in the newsrooms or a comparison of print and online newspapers through analyzing content or researching how they are perceived. Another area of interest, however, is a sociological approach to those consuming the news.

Online newspapers may seem accessible to all those interested in using the Internet as a news source, however, it is not available to those who are unable to access computers or obtain Internet access. Nguyen & Western (2007) conducted a case study on the socio-economic factors relating to online news gathering in order to look at the sociological side of the Internet, “because understanding their [socio-structural] effects provides some deep insights into the social impact of new media technologies on the already existing social inequality between different segments of society” (p. 168). Their case study provides great insight into the different characteristics of those reading online newspapers. According to Nguyen & Western (2007), there are five key characteristics that determine the adoption rate of an innovation, such as the Internet: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability (p. 170-171). All five of these “along with the role of news and information as an essential part of daily life, suggests that this new medium [the Internet] is an ideal place for human beings to meet their seemingly insatiable need for news and information” (Nguyen & Western, 2007, p. 171). However, there are factors that prevent people from using online newspapers as a source of news.

Nguyen & Western’s (2007) study proves their three hypotheses. The first and third hypotheses both state that usage of online newspapers is associated with a “more socio-economically advantaged background” (Nguyen & Western, 2007, p. 173) and that

“more accessibility to the Internet increased the adoption likelihood and usage level of online news and information” (Nguyen & Western, 2007, p. 174). Therefore, those most likely to access online newspapers are of higher socio-economic status and have the *ability* to access the Internet.

In a study done by Katz & Rice (2002), it is proven that there is a digital divide that needs to be addressed. “The Internet has become an extension of everyday life and is useful according to one’s interests and social location,” but unfortunately, not all people have the access to exploit all of the Internet’s advantages (Katz & Rice, 2002, p. 333). They have shown that the three main barriers to Internet usage are cost, access, and complexity. Their main argument states: “The digital divide based on usage is shrinking: those who were less well educated, less affluent, female or older were less likely to be Internet users” (Katz & Rice, 2002, p. 322). In addition, Nguyen & Western (2007) also found that in the future, “if the Internet as a news and information medium continues to expand, the group most likely to adopt it as a *major* news and information source is young male online professionals” (p. 181). Earlier, de Waal et al.’s (2005) study also proved that the online newspaper demographic was of a younger generation, was highly educated, and was part of a male population (p. 65). So, a next step for online newspapers is to attempt to extend the reach of their audience to new demographics. A possible audience could be those who are already savvy in technology but are not regular consumers of news.

The main area of focus in this study will be the role of the journalist in an era of digital newspapers. No longer does a journalist simply take notes for a story with a pad and pencil, but is now using advanced-technical equipment to record and capture

interviews. With the introduction of the Internet, journalists and news organizations have been given the opportunity to enhance their news production with the addition of multimedia effects: “The Internet not only embraces all the capabilities of the older media (text, images, graphics, animation, audio, video, real-time delivery) but offers a broad spectrum of new capabilities, including interactivity, on-demand access, user control, and customization” (Pavlik, 2001, p. 3). Journalists are able to report in real-time to their audiences and are working hard to break the story first. According to Pavlik (2001), the Internet only has three limits as a medium: “bandwidth, connectivity, and credibility of content” (p. 4). Due to the fact that the Internet contains so few limits, a new era of news production has begun as journalists learn new ways to cover the news.

According to Pavlik (2001), a new era of “contextualized journalism” has started as journalists have begun writing for online audiences. “Contextualized journalism has five basic dimensions or aspects: (1) breadth of communication modalities; (2) hypermedia; (3) heightened audience involvement; (4) dynamic content; and (5) customization” (Pavlik, 2001, p. 4). Anonymous tips no longer fuel the way journalists gather news. Instead, journalists are able to go online themselves, research a story, and possibly never leave their homes in order to write a newsworthy story. But on the other end of the spectrum, journalists are becoming more and more responsible for adding multimedia elements to their stories.

Pavlik (2001) has become outdated since he wrote about why online journalism was *slowly* incorporating multimedia aspects into their stories, when it is actually rapidly increasing in 2010:

...some news operations tend to view online reporting as merely an extension of their existing activities, and if they are print based, they tend

to not view video and audio as terribly relevant...many operations do not have staff with multimedia capabilities and backgrounds and are likely to hire reporters similar to those who have worked for the parent print operations, where the emphasis is on the written word; graphics, images, audio, and video are not part of their training. (p. 5)

What Pavlik failed to realize in 2001 when he wrote his book was that editors and publishers now *expect* their reporters to be able to be masters of the written word *and* experts at including multimedia effects to their stories. No longer can reporters claim to be illiterate in the language of social media and online news production; journalism is being redefined as a profession. Journalists help to create the news stories that appear online, but they also lead their readers to other web pages that are related to their story:

Stories told online (including via television linked to the Internet or other network-based digital technology) can make connections much more easily than in any other medium. This is done primarily through the use of hyperlinks, or clickable pointers to other online content, although other tools for making such links or associations are now emerging. (Pavlik, 2001, p. 15)

With the inclusion of hyperlinks within an online news article, readers of online news sites can be led to other stories and find new information that is related to an area of interest. In this way, online news sites are allowing consumers to personalize their newsgathering, as they are the ones who lead themselves in their chosen direction.

Though some may argue that the personalization available to online news consumers can be detrimental to their newsgathering habits, Pavlik (2001) argues that this personalization occurs on a strictly local level, including readers' interests in sports, community, and finance: "Personalization as it is manifesting itself on the Internet today is more a matter of obtaining news customized to an individual's life situation than a screening out of important news" (Pavlik, 2001, p. 22). It is not that readers will filter out important national and international news stories, but rather that they will focus on

their favorite sports teams or follow a specific stock in addition to their consumption of the main-headlining stories.

Pavlik (2001) also addresses the new online newsroom. “Online newsrooms tend to be increasingly decentralized and flexible, especially those that are original to the Internet, and they reflect a more experimental and adaptable entrepreneurial culture” (Pavlik, 2001, p. 99). This decentralization is not necessarily a negative aspect of digital journalism—it is simply different. More and more work is being done on the computer and not out in the community:

A virtual newsroom exists without any physical boundaries. Through electronic mail, remote electronic access to databases, and the ability to transmit multimedia content via the existing public telecommunications infrastructure, journalists are able to work entirely from the field without ever needing to enter a central newsroom location and to exchange messages, stories, and picture files with editors anchored firmly in cyberspace. (Pavlik, 2001, p. 106)

The implications of this strategy can lead to a multitude of effects. Whether or not these techniques are hurting or improving journalism is of great importance to this study.

Many journalists have begun collecting all of the information and statistics for their stories online. Therefore, “It is also important to verify online information from off-line sources and never to rely exclusively on online information for a story, just as one should avoid relying on a single source for any story” (Pavlik, 2001, p. 63). The fundamentals of journalism still seem to be in place but new strategies and practices are being created every day.

As has been mentioned earlier, the way consumers react to online news sites plays a vital role for the producers of news. Consumers want precise and accurate information as it happens: “People want and get their news on demand and in real time. Audiences

aren't willing to wait for the evening news or the next day's paper for developments in a breaking story" (Pavlik, 2001, p. 21). Reporters are being forced to write faster in order to continue to compete in the world of online journalism. The pressures to be the first one to get the story can lead to many inaccuracies within an article. "The rising importance of real-time journalism has also contributed to inaccuracy in online reporting, with some claiming that speed is the enemy of accuracy" (Pavlik, 2001, p. 126). But Pavlik (2001) agrees with Klotz (2004) and argues that journalists have always had to answer to deadlines, and will always have to answer to deadlines, and therefore the 24-hour deadline is simply one more thing to become accustomed to. "Journalists will become more comfortable reporting online, and online news operations will develop the necessary culture and newsroom policies to manage in a real-time, twenty-four-hour news environment" (Pavlik, 2001, p. 126). While journalists become accustomed to the pressures and requirements of online journalism, consumers will have to be patient with their constant need-to-know mentality: "It is this balancing of the public's need to know quickly with the need to know fully that will fundamentally challenge journalism in the twenty-first century" (Pavlik, 2001, p. 218). Though this balance has always been a part of journalism, the new immediacy available with the Internet has spoiled consumers into constantly expecting new updates and information.

Consumers' roles are also changing regarding the production of news.

Consumers continue to react to the news, but sometimes they are part of *creating* the news such as in blogs and comments: "...civic journalism is rapidly growing via the online media and will become a vital part of the electronic republic of the twenty-first century" (Pavlik, 2001, p. 132). As more and more consumers begin adding their own

thoughts, opinions, and even multimedia effects, journalists are being forced to compete with citizen journalism in a completely new way. A casual bystander can catch a fifteen-second video of a topic of interest on their camera phone that a reporter may have missed. It is the introduction of this concept—that everyone can be a reporter in today’s world of technology—that is beginning to threaten the profession of serious journalism. Therefore Pavlik’s (2001) biggest argument is proposed: journalists can no longer report only the bare necessities of a story. Online journalism is being reinvented and is requiring journalists to become masters of their field:

The journalist of the twenty-first century will need to become a much more skillful storyteller, one who can not only weave together the facts of an event or process but connect those facts to a much wider set of contextualizing events and circumstances. She will need to place a premium on helping the reader sort through the myriad of Web sites and other forms of online content that provide news and commentary on events around the world or at home and establish which forms are reliable. (Pavlik, 2001, p. 218)

The Internet has introduced hundreds of thousands of web sites to the online consumer. With the amount of new sites available online, consumers will have to learn how to evaluate a web site’s credibility, and it is now becoming the responsibility of the journalist to help the consumers learn how to judge these online news sites.

All of the above literature has led to few concrete conclusions. But one thing is clear: journalism is changing. Although many, such as Boczkowski (2004) and de Waal et al. (2005), believe that newspapers and journalism will always be around, others are not so sure. In “The Death and Life of Great American Newspapers,” John Nichols & Robert W. McChesney (2009) do not possess an optimistic attitude: “Journalism is collapsing, and with it comes the most serious threat in our lifetimes to self-government and the rule of law as it has been understood here in the United States.” Nichols &

McChesney (2009) have taken their argument to a level beyond that of journalism and have applied it to the founding freedoms of our country. They have accepted the end of print newspapers, “Newspapers, as we have known them, are disintegrating and are possibly on the verge of distinction,” and have accepted the introduction of news production online (Nichols & McChesney, 2009). But with this introduction of online news, journalism is constantly facing new challenges: “...it is not just newspapers that are in crisis; it is the institution of journalism itself” (Nichols & McChesney, 2009). Online journalism is not adhering to the same standards as print. In their article, “How to Save Journalism,” Nichols & McChesney (2010) discuss the current state of the journalism profession. “Just about every serious journalist involved in an online project will readily concede that even if these ventures pan out, we will still have a dreadfully undernourished journalism system with considerably less news gathering and reporting, especially at the local level” (Nichols & McChesney, 2010). The profession of journalism is being threatened as more news organizations are appearing online and as more print establishments are folding.

Nichols & McChesney (2010) also argue that the Internet is not what is actually causing the death of journalism: “the second great misconception: that the crisis in journalism was created by the rise of the Internet and the current recession.” Journalism has been hurting since the introduction of privatization and corporate ownership of media. “It owes far more to the phenomenon of media corporations maximizing profits by turning newsrooms into ‘profit centers,’ lowering quality and generally trivializing journalism” (Nichols & McChesney, 2010). Journalism will have to fight to establish

itself as an online profession in the twenty-first century. Nichols & McChesney (2009) propose a solution to the crisis in journalism—creating competition:

In our view we need to have competing independent newsrooms of well-paid journalists in every state and in every major community. This is not about newspapers or even broadcast media; it entails all media and accepts that we may be headed into an era when nearly all of our communication will be digital.

As we come upon this age of digitization, all professions, not simply journalism, are changing. It is how we react to this change and conform to a digital world that is of great interest to this research.

As one studies the new emergence of online newspapers, many gaps still need to be addressed. The spatial element is of ample significance. How are online newspapers to decide how much information to include in their online versions? Should they never delete articles and simply keep adding to what is already there? Are word counts increasing in number and photos increasing in size? What about making past newspapers and complete archives available online? Though Klinenberg (2005) touches on the vast amount of space available on the Internet, no one has researched the impact of this infinite space on the deliverance of news. Another gap in this research focuses on the time that both consumers and producers have available to play their roles in the process of news production and consumption. With many more available ways to both produce and consume the news, how much time these processes take, such as producing and watching videos, is an area of research that needs to be developed in order to learn about the current age of online news delivery and consumption.

With the hour-by-hour updates in online newspapers and the constantly changing content, it is definitely possible for inaccuracies to be printed due to constantly present

deadlines. Though Klotz (2004) touches on the need for balance between availability and accuracy, there should be more of a focus on the impact of these inaccuracies. How have these misprints affected readers and their perception of online newspapers? Though the overall circulation of print newspapers are declining, will readers want to go back to the days of print, when reporting was supposedly more accurate and concise? The transition to the online world is on an exponential rise, but if reporters and editors do not find a way to slow down and correct their reporting activities, consumers may lose faith in online sources and search for alternate suppliers of news.

Finally, one more gap involves specific newspapers which have completely gone out of print and now *only* have an online version. Many papers have been unable to survive the shift in the digital world and have been forced to fold. Other papers have been originally created online and never had a parent-print newspaper. Therefore this study will provide valuable insight as to why printed newspaper versions are no longer sustainable and how online journalism is becoming the norm. Even further, an analysis of online newspapers and journalism can provide insight into how an online newspaper with no print counterpart is able to be successful, while so many other online versions are mere complements to printed versions.

Research Questions

Due to the small amount of existing literature on those newspapers that have completely shifted to online, web-based companies, this study proposes the following research questions based on the closing of *The Ann Arbor News* and the changing profession of journalism in the shift to online newsrooms:

RQ1: What does it mean to be a journalist in today's age of digital media?

RQ2: How has the transition to an online newspaper changed the role of employees within the newsroom?

RQ3: How does the digital newsroom function as an online news organization?

RQ4: How have the technological affordances (various interactive features and social media) of the Internet altered the basics of news production?

RQ5: How has the role of advertising affected online news organizations?

Research Design

My research will map and examine the new dynamics of the online newsroom. In addition, the role of the digital journalist will be closely examined. This study will contribute to a growing body of scholarly literature on the transition from print to online news production and circulation.

To address the above research questions, I have created a survey to examine the role of the journalist and the functioning of journalism in today's age of digital media. This five-part, forty-seven question survey will be given to journalists who have had experience working at both print newspaper publications and in the field of digital journalism. The survey will be offered online in order to collect as many responses as possible. In addition, to those respondents who are willing, further in-depth, in-person interviews will be collected.

One of the major implications of an online news organization is that a newsroom does not always exist. In the case of the AnnArborChronicle.com, there is no actual office space that is home to the writers, editors, and contributors to the online news site. Instead, the staff members and contributors communicate digitally (M. Morgan, personal communication, March 8, 2010). Questions from the survey will explore this idea of digital communication and what it means to no longer have actual face-time in an office. The way employees of a news organization interact with and communicate with each other has also changed with the absence of office space. Journalists are no longer able to pop their head into their editor's office to ask a quick question. Due to the technologically advanced setting of an online newsroom, it is possible that employees simply communicate via computer, i.e. instant messaging or G-Chat. The modes used to

communicate will also reveal interesting information about the way an online newsroom functions. Because an online newsroom is so computer-oriented, it is possible that interpersonal communication has come to a halt, while computer communication has become the new norm.

The fact that entire newspapers are produced online would suggest that little to no paper products would be used in the publication of an online news site. This will definitely be an area of interest in order to see how and if newsrooms use traditional means of organization such as paper memos, paper templates, etc. Though entire newspapers are sometimes completely produced and published online, I am interested in finding out whether or not a copy of an article is printed onto paper first in order to be edited, approved, and released on the web. Discovering whether or not editors edit articles and entire web pages on their computers or on paper will also delve into the dynamics of the online newsroom.

This study will also rely on a series of qualitative, in-depth and open-ended interviews with a range of personnel working at various online news organizations, mostly based in Ann Arbor, in varied capacities. The goal is to map the range of jobs involved in producing news primarily online. Given that this transition from print to the web is a recent and ongoing phenomenon, there is very little research on the workings of an online newsroom. Thus, this study aims to understand ways in which established roles—writer, reporter, sales agent, marketing executive, editor, photographer, etc.—are being redefined. Hence, interviews will be open-ended and conducted with the goal of gathering information about the day-to-day routines and patterns of work.

Using in depth interviews of different employees within the newsroom will reveal different perspectives across the large job spectrum. This will attempt to discover the responsibilities of those working for an online paper. Interviewees who were part of the late *The Ann Arbor News* will provide great insight into the changing roles of the employees and dynamics of the old, traditional newsroom with the new, online newsroom. Even more, employees who were not part of *The Ann Arbor News*, and perhaps have never worked at a print newspaper, will provide a different, new perspective into this brand-new newsroom environment.

I will need to interview many different positions in order to get a comprehensive look into the happenings in the newsroom. I will need to learn about past job experience as well as current responsibilities at online news organizations. Since an online newspaper includes much more than simply articles, i.e. hyperlinks, videos, and graphics, I will need to find out whose responsibility it is to add such elements to the online newspaper.

An online newsroom tends to mean 24-hour deadlines. Though it is possible that some news organizations have specific deadlines throughout the day, if there is breaking news, a news site will be expected to cover it immediately. Learning how all employees within the online newsroom deal with these deadlines—from reporting to editing, and advertising to page layout—will shed invaluable insight on the intricate workings of the newsroom. The 24-hour deadline will definitely have an impact on the relationship between editors, reporters, and contributors. It will be important to study how reporters and contributors report to editors and how often, and whether it is on paper or via computer messaging. The time and consistency of staff meetings, if even held at all, will

also be an area of study to show what is discussed and what is of importance to an online news staff.

Another new feature included in online newspapers is the ability for consumers to respond to articles. Sometimes readers will have to register and sign into a website in order to comment and other times no registration is required. Finding out how the newspaper side perceives these comments will further delve into online news production. Whether or not these comments are used as valuable feedback and are responded to could definitely affect the content of digital newspapers. The new era of social networking is impacting the world online, and the way journalists, editors, and publishers deal with this new fad is definitely an important area of research.

Besides article creation and page layouts, there is another major aspect to the online newspaper—advertising. Advertising will definitely be a main area of interest as it is the way newspapers can be produced. It will be necessary to learn about the number of companies advertising in the online newspaper as well as the types of companies that are attracted to such an advertising outlet. Though banner advertisements seem to be extremely popular in much larger news organizations such as NYTimes.com and LATimes.com, smaller and more local news sites seem to lack this seemingly all-important revenue collector. Investigating the reason behind local news organizations' inclusion or lack of giant, corporate advertising will definitely add insight into the dynamics behind the production of digital news sites.

Qualitative Investigation

This study utilized an online survey, SurveyMonkey.com, in order to best measure the roles and responsibilities of journalists in today's world of online newspapers (Refer to Appendix for a complete listing of survey questions). The survey included five sections in order to better understand the profession of journalism in today's digital age. The first section asked questions about the journalist's professional responsibilities; the second section inquired about consumers and social networking; the third about the technological aspects of online news organizations; the fourth covered advertising and its affect on journalists and the online news site; and the final section covered the respondent's demographics. In total, there were forty-seven questions and thirteen respondents.

The first section of the survey, "Responsibilities as a Journalist," is meant to measure the different roles and responsibilities of online journalists and includes seventeen questions. Questions range from asking how much work is done on computer versus on paper, to learning about different reporting styles. In addition, as the previous research showed, twenty-four hour deadlines have become exceedingly popular. Therefore, questions are asked on how these constant deadlines affect the work of the journalist as well as the techniques and strategies that are used in order to keep up with the deadlines. An extremely important question in this section reads: "In your opinion, how has content changed from traditional newspapers to online newspapers? Do you think articles have gotten longer or shorter, more in-depth or less specific, etc.?" This question will definitely provide insight on how journalists believe the profession of journalism is changing as it moves to the Internet.

The “Consumers and Social Networking” section focuses on how readers affect the way journalists report and write their stories. The section contains nine questions that inquire into how readers’ online comments affect journalists’ writing. It covers whether or not journalists target new audiences while working online compared to past print newspaper jobs. In addition, whether or not journalists are responsible for working with or adding social networking features to online news sites is asked.

The “Technology” section is quite short, only five questions, as is not the most important area of focus in this research. It does question whose responsibility it is to add hyperlinks, videos, graphics, etc. to articles. It also questions whether or not journalists upload articles and make changes to articles themselves (if for instance, a typo is found and commented on). There is one question about the formatting of the actual template of the online newspaper, however most journalists will be unable to answer this question since it does not apply to their job.

The “Advertising” section is meant to shed light on how online news sites are able to make a profit or at least stay afloat. As previous research has shown, it is incredibly vital for online news sites to have a steady stream of revenue in order to stay in production. Therefore, how online news sites find advertisers who are willing to invest in their site is an important question to answer. Questions also ask about the type of advertisers on news sites, about the change in the number of advertisements from paper to online newspapers, and about consumer feedback to the types of advertisements published.

Finally, the “Demographics” section, with seven questions, was simply used as a control for the respondents. Whether or not journalists are older or younger would seem

to affect their perspective of online newspapers. In addition, the last question asks whether or not respondents would be willing to meet for an in-person interview in order to further explore their opinions on the topic.

Analysis of Qualitative Study

Of the thirteen respondents that were interviewed, current job titles included reporter, blogger, digital journalist, and editor. Five of the respondents are employed at AnnArbor.com while the rest hold jobs in Ann Arbor, MI; Sacramento, CA; Albuquerque, NM; and Washington, D.C. Two respondents chose not to answer where they were working. Thirteen respondents started the survey, but only eleven respondents completed the entire survey (84.6% completion rate). All questions were open ended and allowed for responses to range from a few short words to long paragraphs of thought.

In addition to the thirteen responses, two respondents agreed to meet for an in-depth, personal interview: Mary Morgan, publisher of AnnArborChronicle.com, and Mike Rothstein, a sports writer at AnnArbor.com.

Survey Analysis

Responsibilities as Journalists

Though the respondents all had different roles, there were many similarities that appeared throughout the survey in regards to answering the most important research question, RQ1:

What does it mean to be a journalist in today's age of digital media?

There was an overall agreement that the online newsroom does not necessarily present “new” news but rather provides a new way of distributing the same stories that appeared in print newspapers. When asked what the newsroom means, a digital journalist from AnnArbor.com states, “It means a new delivery system for the same stories we’ve always been writing.” Many mentions were made of the constant deadlines and the pressure to break the story first. The fact that news can be published at any time of the day on an online news site puts pressure on reporters and editors to get their stories online before any other news organization. In addition, many respondents discussed the importance of the interaction between consumers and producers of news.

In regards to the online newsroom, responses helped to answer RQ2:

How has the transition to an online newspaper changed the role of employees within the newsroom?

Most respondents agreed that the biggest change in working online is the interaction with readers that takes place. With the introduction of commenting after full articles, journalists can engage in conversations and discussions with their readers. Though online newsrooms operate differently than print newsrooms, most respondents agreed that they are still doing the same job, simply in a new manner. When asked about the

changes in the newsroom, in regards to the role of a journalist, one respondent who remains anonymous answered, “I actually don’t believe the role of journalists is changing. I think the medium is changing and the business of journalism is changing but the actual role of a journalist is much as it was.” Most other respondents had similar answers in that journalists are still being asked to find the most important and exciting stories to make interesting content for their readers. Online newspapers not only allow for interaction with the readers but also have the addition of videos, graphics, and hyperlinks that make online newspapers more interactive for the reader. However, online reporting also means faster turnover rates and constant deadlines. In the words of an assistant city editor who wishes to remain anonymous: “The addition of the online and mobile platforms has meant [that] we think of quicker turn-around times for reports and we have almost continuous deadlines as opposed to the once-a-day print deadline cycle.” The result of this constant pressure, according to respondents, is leading to less in-depth reporting, with shorter stories taking the interests of most readers over longer stories.

All respondents were in agreement that most of their work is done on a computer. The most common response was that 80% or more of their work is done on a computer. This includes taking notes during interviews, writing and editing articles, editing photos and videos to supplement their articles, and communicating with coworkers and editors. Almost all editing was said to be done on the computer. Only a few respondents admitted to having printed out copies in order to use a red pen to correct it. This was an expected response because of the short turnaround time for reporters as well as the absence of a physical newsroom.

Freelancers and reporters are not working out of offices as they once were. Almost all of their work is now done on trusted laptops. Overall responses showed that there is less face time with editors and colleagues and almost all communication is done online. But, most respondents agree that although most communication is done via email, texting, and Gchat, the face-to-face contact of the newsroom is missed. Mike Rothstein, a beat writer at AnnArbor.com says, "...I find I do a lot of my communicating with bosses and coworkers through e-mail, text messaging and on the phone. Some of what is lost is the banter about stories which sometimes create story ideas, but I like the freedom better [of not having to go into the office]." Staff meetings appear to have dwindled from a newsroom norm to a desired rarity. One freelance writer who is also a web editor explains that the loss of the traditional newsroom can be replaced with communication online: "People and relationships will always be important to reporting, it's just that now, you can have those same relationships entirely online. Do I attend staff meetings? No. I often write for websites when I've never met the editors." Entire news stories and articles can be created and published, from start to finish, without a reporter ever stepping inside an actual newsroom or meeting a coworker. In-person interviews are still preferred than over the phone or online surveys, but these, too, seem to be dwindling in number according to Carol Guensburg, a freelance reporter and editor.

The addition of multimedia tools to online news articles has also changed the way journalists are producing the news. When asked whether or not they were responsible for including their own multimedia effects, such as audio interviews, videos, and graphics into their stories, nine respondents said yes. For those who did not have a straightforward yes, it was because they were not yet responsible for this task. However, they then

explained that they were learning how to incorporate audio, picture, and video into their stories in order to gain a more competitive edge. This proves that even though journalists feel that they are still doing what they have always been doing, new elements are in play. When asked how the addition of these multimedia variables have changed one's reporting style, responses ranged from "requires more time," and "I'm still learning," to "...it makes me think about the story from various angles and it sometimes helps me catch holes in my reporting," according to an anonymous reporter. Almost all respondents stated that they were responsible for adding their own hyperlinks to their stories.

One major area of focus is the new idea of the online journalist. Dealing with immediacy shows that most journalists are under a constant pressure to update current information as well as provide new material. Constant deadlines have definitely caused many of respondents to publish errors in their writing such as committing typos when they are rushing to finish a story that could have been caught with the longer deadlines that exist in print. Angela Keane, a reporter, explains why the pressure of immediacy exists when she says, "There's no reporting tomorrow what happened today. It's reporting what's happening right now or what's going to happen." This demonstrates the speed and accuracy that is required when working in journalism today. Respondents admitted that there is a pressure to always get the story *first* and worry about the typos and errors *later*. Many responses discuss the constant pressure that is placed upon journalists to always be uploading new information and therefore journalists feel rushed. For example, an anonymous assistant city editor relates, "We don't have the luxury of editing for better writing when we're [d]oing a story online. We're editing for content and accuracy and logic, but not for nice use of language." The most important factor

when covering a story can be the need to get the story out first while the quality of writing is compromised. However, many respondents point out that this was true with traditional print journalism as well and that this process has simply exacerbated with the introduction of 24-hour deadlines.

The final questions in the first part of the survey asked about the opening of web-based companies in the place of traditional newspapers and how the content has changed with this shift. This goes to answer RQ3:

How does the digital newsroom function as an online news organization?

The responses all seem to show that online news companies will be viable if they stay within a strong editorial model. Many respondents discussed the positives of online newspapers in that they can reach more people and interact with readers, have more space for journalists and editors to work with, and have the ability to quickly update their work. Whereas most respondents seem to have accepted the transition to online newspapers, an anonymous assistant city editor still believes in the viability of print: “I don’t think web-based companies will replace traditional papers completely. I think each type of publication will find its equilibrium based on its strengths.” The problem here is that the traditional newspaper industry no longer has strengths to fall back on. *The Ann Arbor News* is a great example of a traditional newspaper that was unable to stay in circulation due to dwindling advertising sales. In addition, with the easy access to and immediacy of the Internet, it is unknown whether or not paper newspapers will survive in the long run.

Finally, one of the biggest implications from the survey shows that the content of online newspapers has definitely shifted to shorter, less in-depth stories. One exception to this is the *AnnArborChronicle.com*. Mary Morgan, publisher, says the

AnnArborChronicle.com prides itself on the fact that it "...publishes significantly longer, in-depth articles than you'll find in traditional [online] newspapers—the online medium makes this possible, because we aren't constrained by space. But we are counter to the trend [of immediacy]" (M. Morgan, personal communication, March 8, 2010). The rest of the respondents answered that articles are becoming shorter and more similar to headlines than full stories. Though the amount of space on the Internet allows news sites the ability to create longer stories, as does the AnnArborChronicle.com, unfortunately, readers' attention spans are shorter and therefore journalists have to respond to the desire for brief, fragmented news. In the words of senior reporter Megan Kamerick of *New Mexico Business Weekly*, "The biggest shift [from print to online newspapers] is the inclusion of hyperlinks, which encourage you to stop reading and jump to something else referenced in the story. It's a little schizophrenic, but it's so common now that most people probably don't recognize it." This schizophrenia is causing readers to simply read headlines and watch 30-second video clips instead of reading 2,000 word articles.

Consumers and Social Networking

With the introduction of interactive features on news sites, it would seem that consumers are playing a bigger role than ever in the production of online news. This section answers a small part of RQ4:

How have the technological affordances (various interactive features and social media) of the Internet altered the basics of news production?

According to the survey's respondents, consumers' comments are not exactly affecting the way journalists produce the news. Journalists have always been writing for their readers and that has not changed with the introduction of Internet news. Even though consumers can now post comments and give feedback to online articles, respondents said that this did not change the way they reported a story. The only effect that consumers' comments bring about, according to respondents, is that they introduce the opportunity of having dialogue with readers. Most respondents also feel that their target audience has not changed much with the shift to online newspapers. Though many feel that the Internet itself is targeted towards a, in the words of Angela Cesere, a photographer and videographer at AnnArbor.com, "younger, Internet savvy audience," most respondents answered that they are *not* attempting to target a new or different audience now that they are working online.

The overwhelming implication from this section is that these journalists are not depending on consumers' responses and feedback as a tool for how well their stories are received or for how to continue gathering and producing news. In fact, the only time that respondents actually listen to a suggestion from a reader is if a reader points out a mistake or error in a story. Otherwise, respondents seem to leave their stories be. Respondents

do use comments to begin dialogue with their readers, but are not using these comments and feedback as a guide to writing their stories.

With the addition of social networking tools to online news sites such as Twitter and Facebook, a question was proposed about how these features affect journalists' jobs. This helps to answer another part of RQ4 about social media. Almost all respondents spoke highly of social networking features and explicitly stated the positive attributes of both Twitter and Facebook. Not only are Twitter and Facebook being used as tools for online news sites to get news out there, but these sites are also being used as tools for communication between journalists and their readers. Although using these features involves more time commitment, it allows news sites to have a greater presence in the Internet world. For example, social networking sites, such as Twitter or Facebook, can lead consumers to an online news organization's website with one short click. "I think that more people find content through links in social networking sites, and comment more on articles which sometimes leads to insight on stories that may have not been possible before," as explained by Angela Cesere from AnnArbor.com. This shows that the interactivity of social networking sites, as well as social networking features on news sites, can lead to a positive relationship between journalists and their readers. Even if the journalists are not necessarily responsible for tweeting on account of their news organization, most respondents admitted to having personal Twitter accounts in order to share their news stories with a different demographic.

There is some negative feedback, however, in response to social networking features on news sites. Readers can personally attack reporters and journalists in the comments area following an article. Although most respondents seem to agree that social

networking features are a positive part of a news site because they are able to reach more people, these features can also be looked at as bothersome and additional responsibilities for the journalist. Mike Rothstein, beat writer at AnnArbor.com, has mixed feelings on the subject: “It [social networking] is yet another thing that overworked, often underpaid reporters have to do and it stretches them thin, which allows for more mistakes to happen. On the other hand, it helps get the story out there more.” Journalists’ responsibilities are growing with the introduction of new technical features but the positives seem to outweigh the negatives in regards to social networking.

The development of existing as well as the creation of new social networking features will definitely play a roll in the production of news in the future. Existing features have provided an interactive discussion board where journalists and readers can interact with one another, which in a sense go back to the foundations of journalism when journalists were out working in the community, amongst the community members. Now, as journalists work more and more on computers, the ability for readers to comment and give feedback to journalists shows that consumers are still hungry for information and want to be part of the news gathering and production process.

Technology

Almost all respondents answered similarly when focusing on the various technological and interactive features part of RQ4:

How have the technological affordances (various interactive features and social media) of the Internet altered the basics of news production?

Articles are uploaded to news sites constantly throughout the day unless the publication has set deadlines for when they upload their site. However, even those with set deadlines will make updates if errors need to be corrected or breaking news occurs. Mike Rothstein of AnnArbor.com explains the norm in today's newsgathering world: "How often articles are uploaded depend on how much news there is in a given day." No longer do journalists wait until the end of the day to submit their stories. This again goes back to the being the first to get it published mindset and the immediacy that online news provides to the readers.

All respondents also agreed that the time it takes to go back into an article in order to fix an error or make an update takes a few seconds or moments as long as there is not too much traffic on the website. This again demonstrates the immediacy of online news sites and their ability to break news as it occurs.

Finally, in regards to the physical appearance of the websites, the few that responded said that the template is up to the publisher of the site. Unfortunately, most respondents were not publishers and therefore no conclusions can be made on the physical appearance of a news site. Whether or not news sites feature top stories or have banner advertisements is not up to the reporters and journalists who work at the paper.

Advertising

Advertising is an interesting topic of discussion when looked at through the eyes of a journalist in order to answer RQ5:

How has the role of advertising affected online news organizations?

Fortunately, editors from the survey were able to explain their viewpoints on the changing world of advertising with the shift to online advertisements. Previous research shows that advertisements are actually clickable and that gives advertisers a bigger incentive to want to advertise online. However, respondents to the survey believe that advertisers are still a bit uneasy when it comes to online advertising. This is most likely due to the original problems occurring with advertising in print newspapers. Most respondents said that it is more difficult to find advertisers for online newspapers than it was for print newspapers. This brings up a conflicting point since respondents also talked about the popularity of online news sites and how being online is now the norm. The reason for this may be due to the overall decline of advertising in print newspapers. The main reason the print newspaper industry is diminishing is due to a loss in advertising. Therefore, online newspapers seem to be experiencing the same problem of enticing advertisers to publicize online. Unfortunately, this survey was only targeted at journalists, editors, and reporters, and therefore this presents the view of advertising in the eyes of the production side of newsrooms and does not explain how advertisers make decisions.

Angela Keane, a reporter from Washington, D.C., did discuss the fact that online advertisements use “personalization” in order to target specific readers. This is definitely a tactic that should become popular in the near future if online newspapers prove to

attract online advertisers. This technique of personalization already exists in other online sites such as Facebook and therefore should be analyzed in order for online news sites to learn the best ways in which to draw in online advertising.

Analysis of Interviews

Mike Rothstein, AnnArbor.com

Mike Rothstein is currently working at AnnArbor.com as a columnist covering University of Michigan basketball. A graduate from Syracuse University in 2002, Rothstein has been freelancing for the past seven years in which he has worked in New York, NY; Boston, MA; Washington, D.C.; Mojave Desert, CA; Harrisonburg, VA; and Ft. Wayne, IN. A fairly recent addition to the profession of journalism, Rothstein is extremely comfortable working at an online organization such as AnnArbor.com due to his familiarity with blogging. In 2005, Rothstein worked in Ft. Wayne, IN, as he covered sports for the University of Notre Dame. In addition to covering sports for a written spot, Rothstein was given a blog in order to reach sports enthusiasts at the University. Rothstein began working at AnnArbor.com in July of 2009, and although it is the first online publication he has been working for, he feels that it has not been much of a transition in his role as a journalist.

Working at an online publication has meant many things for Rothstein as a journalist. He believes that going online is a tough transition for a lot of people to make: “Some things are done better [online] and something things are lost in the struggle to get [the story] up first. Now if you get [the story] at 10am, you want it up [on the website] by 10:10am and you are updating it throughout the day” (M. Rothstein, personal communication, March 31, 2010). This carries heavy implications for journalists as the immediacy factor can compromise the quality of a story. But, Rothstein explains, “Readers don’t care as much as who breaks it, but maybe who does it better.” Rothstein means to say that because there are many news sites up and running, it seems that

everyone is breaking the story around the same time. Therefore, though immediacy is important, readers will soon begin choosing which sites they visit depending on how *well* the story is broken.

At AnnArbor.com, print editions are published two days a week, Thursdays and Sundays, and therefore Rothstein has these deadlines to meet. However, in the online world, Rothstein explains, “There isn’t as much as a deadline as there is as soon as possible” (personal communication, March 31, 2010). When covering a sporting event, Rothstein is required to have a story ready to go online at the final buzzer. For a few hours following the game, Rothstein will go back and edit the story, adding more detail. When he is finished, the completed story will go on the website replacing the previously published, final buzzer piece. Once the final piece is published, the final buzzer piece is no longer accessible on the website and is completely deleted.

In regards to web-based companies opening in place of traditional print newspapers, Rothstein seems to believe that it is still an evolving process for most companies. He believes that most news sites are learning how to operate as they go and are still learning to sell ads on the web. Rothstein’s top picks for online news organizations are Yahoo and CNN because of the large size of their operations. According to Rothstein, “The more resources you have, the better you do. It has always been that way in news gathering” (personal communication, March 31, 2010). With the addition of social networking features on online news sites, Rothstein seems to think they have a positive effect on journalists, “Readers’ comments make you feel more accountable. If you get called out a lot, you lose your credibility.” Though Rothstein does not constantly follow his readers’ comments, he sometimes responds to his readers

and tends to get involved if there is an interesting debate going on amongst the readers. However, Rothstein does concur with survey respondents that readers' comments do not affect the way he reports his stories. He looks at them as more of something he has to do rather than a constructive tool. In addition, Rothstein explains that at AnnArbor.com, readers must be registered in order to comment on articles and comments are moderated and taken down if inappropriate, but that moderation is not a part of his responsibility at the news site.

The most interesting conclusion drawn by Rothstein is that Twitter will be the online news site of the future: "Twitter will be how most people get their news in a few years" (personal communication, March 31, 2010). He explains that Twitter is a valuable tool and he tweets any good story he finds online, including his own, immediately. Shortened attention spans and the popularity of Twitter are proving to be a winning equation for the deliverance of news in Rothstein's opinion. This takes the idea from the survey respondents a bit further. While survey respondents attested to the shortening of articles and attention spans of readers, Rothstein is a strong believer in the viability of Twitter as a way of delivering news.

Mary Morgan, AnnArborChronicle.com

Mary Morgan, publisher for the AnnArborChronicle.com, presents a unique case in the study of online newspapers. Morgan was a business editor and then an opinion editor for *The Ann Arbor News* for more than twelve years before leaving in July of 2008. Though Morgan enjoyed her job at the News, “[I] didn’t feel like I had the resources to do the job I was proud of because the newsroom was shrinking and I didn’t have the capacity to take on what I wanted” (M. Morgan, personal communication, March 8, 2010). She sensed from the leadership at *The Ann Arbor News* that nothing was going to get better any time soon and therefore decided to leave. After Morgan left, she decided to open her own online news site, AnnArborChronicle.com, in order to contribute news to the community in a way she would have wanted as a reader. Dave Askins, editor of AnnArborChronicle.com and husband of Morgan, was also interested in starting an online news site. Consequently, in September of 2008, the AnnArborChronicle.com opened its virtual doors for business (M. Morgan, personal communication, March 8, 2010).

The Ann Arbor News closed its real doors in March of 2009, six months following the launch of the Chronicle. Morgan, though shocked along with the rest of the community at the closing of *The Ann Arbor News*, had known that the newspaper industry was on the decline, “The industry at the time was—you could tell it was imploding. The newsroom had shrunk dramatically” (personal communication, March 8, 2010). Morgan felt that there was still a way to deliver the news in the traditional way, merely in an online format. It was this belief that led the Chronicle to its current sustainability.

This project is based on defining the journalist in the age of digital media. Some may call this the “online journalist.” However, when asked how she feels on the subject, Morgan shed light on the purpose of the Chronicle, “We use the online component as a delivery device. We don’t view ourselves as digital journalists or online journalists. We see ourselves as journalists who are delivering and publishing content online only” (personal communication, March 8, 2010). Whereas many journalists, and most respondents in this study, admit to constantly feeling pressured to publish stories and meet 24-hour deadlines, the Chronicle operates much differently. Morgan explains that the immediacy trend does not exist for the Chronicle: “We are completely counter to that trend. We write long, and we don’t worry about speed necessarily.” In Morgan’s eyes, being first to get the story is not what drives her publication. Rather the Chronicle writes in-depth articles and publishes them in a time sensitive manner but is certainly not rushing to beat other online news sites. The AnnArborChronicle.com, in fact, prides itself on remaining true to traditional journalistic values, which is why the site appears to look like a traditional print newspaper: “We wanted to evoke a traditional newspaper and didn’t want to be like all of the other media sites with all the bells and whistles because we wanted a sensibility [for our readers].” Even the advertisements that appear on the site, all from local businesses and local franchises, have a traditional newspaper feel to them.

In staying with the traditional side of journalism in an online publication, when asked whether or not anything in her role as a journalist turned publisher has actually changed, Morgan responded: “I think you have to be more engaged” (M. Morgan, personal communication, March 8, 2010). She mentioned that the addition of social

networking features has allowed the community to connect with its news producers. In Morgan's words:

I think that one of the things that has transformed is that people feel because they can comment on articles with immediacy and they can contact people quickly—I think that there's a sense on the readers' part that they don't look at [the Chronicle] as an institution but they look at it as an individual and interacting with individuals."

For Morgan, the immediacy and interactivity that occurs online plays a large role in the production of news and in shaping today's journalist. However, she views the immediacy that other journalists see as a threat as a positive element on the side of the readers. It is the immediacy of the interactivity that Morgan believes is of good value to a community newspaper.

Another major aspect in online news that has changed is the newsroom. The AnnArborChronicle.com employs two staff members, Dave Askins and Mary Morgan, editor and publisher, respectively, along with twelve regular contributors that write for the publication. What is unique to the Chronicle is that an office space does not exist. Although Morgan jokes that Askins and she hold staff meetings in the "publisher's office," referring to an office area made out of a spare bedroom in their home, there is no physical office space in which the staff meets. This is one of the biggest changes in the industry right now as entire news sites are being created and serving news while those producing these sites have never actually met face to face. Communication with the contributors at the Chronicle is vastly done via email, according to Morgan. She even admits to not knowing a regular contributor, Adam Glynn, and explains that many of their contributors were hired over the phone. The Chronicle truly encompasses the virtual newsroom but when it comes to editing, a traditional approach is still followed.

“We [Dave and I] have a planning meeting every Sunday where we look at the week ahead and we map out what we’re doing both in terms of ourselves and our freelancers and what’s coming up,” says Morgan (personal communication, March 8, 2010). She goes on to explain that when a copy comes in, one of them becomes the primary editor of the piece, but both will look at it so that they are both comfortable with what will be published on the site. Morgan feels that these practices are what have kept the publication alive: “We are small but we still have those standard practices in the editorial process which we think are important.”

When asked what her plans are for the next ten years, Morgan’s response did not include dominating Ann Arbor with the Chronicle’s publication. She mentioned offhandedly that Dave and she would possibly try to replicate the Chronicle’s model in other communities such as Saline and Chelsea but then vehemently explained that they do not want to franchise. “We are not empire building,” explains Morgan, “We don’t have ambitions to be super huge. We want to have resources to cover as much as is needed to be covered but we don’t want to grow for growth’s sake” (personal communication, March 8, 2010). It is this sustainable mentality that has led the paper to survive, and prosper, for these past nineteen months.

The Chronicle is a local publication that lends itself to the community. Its stories and advertisements represent the Ann Arbor community. Morgan shares her mindset behind this idea, “We want you to come to the site and feel like you are in the community and not just anywhere in the USA” (personal communication, March 8, 2010). The site even has links to other online news publications in the Ann Arbor area. Morgan explained that the site provides links to other sites, such as the AnnArborObserver.com,

because, “we want to support other locally owned businesses.” The one site’s link that does not appear on the Chronicle’s page is that of AnnArbor.com. When comparing the Chronicle to AnnArbor.com, Morgan feels it is a polar opposite:

They’re exponentially more staffed and resourced. And they’re not locally owned. They are more interested in social media and the volume of their content. But a large part of their content is not generated by their staff.

Even in the online world, there will be bigger and smaller publications. The Chronicle’s small size is by choice and lends itself to the mindset behind the purpose of the Chronicle. As a small, community-involved, online publication, the Chronicle presents a working example that journalists do not have to give in to the pressure of breaking the story first and writing shorter stories in order to be successful.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this project was to explore what it means to be a journalist during the time of transition from print to online newspapers. The profession of journalism is changing as the print industry is dying and as news is now appearing solely online. “The cutbacks [of newspaper distribution in the state of Michigan] deliver the latest blow to an industry besieged by bankruptcy, layoffs and downsizing as the economy worsens, advertising revenues plummet and publishers figure out how to adapt to a growing Web readership” (Trop, 2009). Gone are the days when journalists carried pads of paper and pencils for note taking and raced to be the first ones on the scene of a crime. Today, journalists are able to snap photos on camera phones and do research online out of the comfort of their own homes. The reason this project started was due to the absence of newspaper reading in younger generations. With the introduction of the Internet, younger generations are growing up on computers and no longer need a concrete piece of paper to look at while “reading the paper.” Therefore, I wanted to explore how the news industry is changing as it evolves via an online medium. Due to time constraints, I was unable to do a comparison between a traditional print newsroom and online newsroom. As a result, I decided to focus on the way news is being produced for the online newsroom.

In beginning my project, I first proposed a case study of AnnArbor.com. When this case study was found to be undoable (due to conflicting schedules of the publisher at the online organization), I decided to open up my project to a broader pool. This presented many problems as I had planned to study a plethora of job responsibilities of those working for an online news site. When I was unable to study AnnArbor.com, I

decided to focus solely on a journalist's responsibilities at an online news sites. I was unable to examine the newsroom at AnnArbor.com and therefore had to make deductions on the new newsroom dynamics based on journalists' responses to survey questions. The survey I designed looks into the minds of journalists in order to see how the profession is changing from the inside out.

Moving to an online newsroom has proven to diminish face time among news employees. Respondents to the survey explained that it is entirely possible to never even meet face-to-face with an editor or contributing reporter. The capabilities of communicating online have proven to decrease the amount of time that news producers spend with each other. However, this has also led to quicker reporting lending itself to an immediacy that was never possible in the print newspaper industry. This aspect of newsgathering is desirable to those producing the news because of the freedom it allows journalists when investigating, writing, and adding features to their stories.

The transition to an online newsroom does not only affect those producing the news. The introduction of online newspapers coincides with the conception of online commenting and reacting. Whereas in print newspapers, consumers could write letters to or phone those producing the news, consumers can now immediately posts their feelings about an article as soon as they finish reading it. In addition, consumers are able to engage in debate with the writer of an article as well as other readers. Even though most respondents do not heavily weigh the comments made by readers, they still are read and taken into account. According to Mary Morgan at the AnnArborChronicle.com, "Having comments doesn't affect the way we report our articles" (personal communication, March 8, 2010). Sharing the same opinion is senior reporter Megan Kamerick when she says, "I

do occasionally [look at consumers' comments], but it has nothing to do with how I write the story.” Readers’ comments are definitely useful for catching errors and typos in a writer’s story and are therefore seen as a useful tool for journalists. This counters what news sites such as AnnArbor.com are trying to accomplish with their interactivity. This proposes an intriguing question of why journalists are not paying more attention to consumers’ comments and opinions. If online publications are attempting to be local and stay part of the community, journalists should look to readers’ comments as a useful tool in their news production practices. Though respondents were asked how readers’ comments affect journalists when they are gathering and producing the news, the way this practice affects news consumers is an area that needs to be further investigated.

I found that those who took the survey all seemed to agree with the same conclusion: being a journalist in today’s world means being a savvy computer user with the ability to add multimedia elements to the bare structure of a story. Journalists constantly feel pressure to update new stories and add more features to those stories. I also found that the profession of journalism is not changing completely—the fact-finding and storytelling skills are still required abilities in today’s journalist. Responsibilities of journalists are simply increasing while the length of stories is decreasing. I do not believe that this is a problem that journalists cannot overcome. Many of respondents explained that they are learning to use multimedia elements in their reporting style in order to make themselves more marketable. Journalists are able to use other techniques, i.e., videos, photos, and audio, in which to tell their stories. Even more, journalists are writing shorter stories in order to stay competitive in the online news world. Respondents agreed that the length of stories is getting shorter and covering less

information due to readers' shorter attention spans. With the popularity of Twitter and the shorter articles, it is entirely possible that most newsreaders in the future will simply peruse headlines or use Twitter to satisfy their daily news wants. If this occurs, there will be major social implications as the public will be less informed and unable to gather important news information and stories.

This study encountered many challenges during its duration. Many limitations were placed on this study due to the small sample size as well as the anonymity of its participants. Unfortunately, not all of those sampled came from the same backgrounds or work at the same news organizations. Therefore, to apply this study's findings to all journalists and online news organizations is simply not possible. In addition, this study's findings may not even be applicable in a few short years due to the exponential increase in technological advances.

A problem that was brought about during my research was the existence of citizen journalism. Just as journalists are beginning to be responsible for snapping their own photos and providing their own videos, non-journalists have the same access to mobile phones with cameras and video recorders. An innocent bystander on a street could capture a major news story with a click of their phone. The fact that blogging and social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, are becoming so popular provides an outlet in which these citizen journalists can publish their own findings. Therefore, how journalism is able to compete with citizen journalists needs to be addressed in future research.

Another issue of concern that was not addressed is the viability of online newspapers. Though a few respondents did allude to the fact that journalism will always

be needed, the poor shape of the economy is affecting the news industry both on and offline. Mary Morgan from the Chronicle has been successful in creating a volunteer subscription model for her online new site, but it is unknown how long consumers will be willing to pay for online news when they can find the same information on other news sites for free.

Online newspapers present a new and innovative way for consumers to read their news. Hyperlinks allow readers to look up information they are unaware of while videos and slideshows can physically show readers the site of a major event. The immediacy of the Internet is allowing news to break in real time but it is also putting a huge pressure on those producing the news to constantly update stories and news sites. The future of the news industry is uncertain as print newspapers continue to decrease and many companies are showing up online. With such a massive decline in advertising revenue in the print industry, if online news is to succeed, a sustainable business model needs to be found. As technological advances continue to be made, journalists must adopt and acquire new skills to stay competitive in a changing industry. The virtual newsroom provides journalists the opportunity to work from anywhere and to contribute to online news sites that may be geographically out of reach. The online newsroom also gives digital journalists a freedom to be out in the community and do their work where they please. However, this can prove to be a problem if journalists are simply doing all of their research online instead of attending actual newsworthy events. In addition, with this freedom also comes the restriction of the 24-hour deadline. Though some publications refuse to give in to the immediacy mindset of publishing a story first, such as the AnnArborChronicle.com, most journalists are feeling the pressure of constantly needing

to update and add new information to their stories. Hopefully, as Rothstein explained in his interview, news sites will begin to understand that since everyone is publishing news in real time, new methods will need to be used to make a site stand out. Online news sites provide numerous advantages for both those producing and consuming the news. As online news sites gain popularity and viability, attention must be paid to the decreasing size of articles and to the rush to be the site to break a news story first in order to maintain quality newsgathering and production.

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Appendix

Digitization of Journalism Survey

Responsibilities as a Journalist

1. What is your current job title?
2. If you are currently free lancing or do not hold a steady job, what was your most recent secured job?
3. Did you have any connection with *The Ann Arbor News* before it closed in July of 2009? If yes, what was your role and/or connection?
4. As more and more newspapers are beginning to be published online, the roles of journalists are changing as well as the roles of newsrooms. What exactly does the online newsroom mean to you?
5. How much of your job/profession is done on a computer?
6. Please explain your responsibilities both on a computer as well as off of a computer. For example, do you have to attend staff meetings? Or do you simply communicate with other journalists and editors online? When you do research for a story, do you go to a library or to the local coffee shop and sit on your computer?
7. When you edit your own story, do you edit it on your computer or print off a hard copy? If you are responsible for editing a story or the entire newspaper before it goes online, do you edit it online or as a paper template?
8. As a journalist, are you required to capture audio interviews, record videos, and find your own graphics to supplement your story?
9. If you answered yes to the above question, how have these new variables changed your

reporting style?

10. If you answered yes to the previous two questions, are you responsible for adding your own hyperlinks, pictures, and videos? If not, who does add these interactive variables?

11. If you used to work at a traditional print newspaper but are now working for an online news site, please explain how your role and your responsibilities have changed.

12. How do you manage to keep up with constant 24-hour deadlines in this new era of digitalization? For example, have constant deadlines caused you to make mistakes in a story such as typos or wrong statistics?

13. Do you ever feel rushed to publish your story online that you do not do as well as a job as you had hoped? Have you ever gotten the story wrong due to trying to be the first one to get it published online?

14. Have the ongoing deadlines affected the quality of your work? For the better or worse? Please elaborate.

15. How do you feel about the opening of web-based companies in place of traditional newspapers?

16. Has the shift from traditional newspapers to online based newspapers made your job easier or harder? Please elaborate.

17. In your opinion, how has content changed from traditional newspapers to online newspapers? Do you think articles have gotten longer or shorter, more in-depth or less specific, etc.

Consumers & Social Networking

1. How do readers/consumers affect the way you cover and write a news story?
2. Have you personally conducted any research to see how your readership has changed when moving from writing for a traditional newspaper to an online news site?
3. Do you feel that your target audience has changed with the shift to online newspapers? (i.e. do you have more/fewer readers; are your readers younger/older?)
4. When writing for an online newspaper, do you target different or new audiences than when you write/wrote for a traditional newspaper?
5. Many online newspapers provide space for readers and consumer to post comments and feedback. How does this affect the way you cover/write a story? Do you ever go back and make changes to your article after reading consumers' comments?
6. How has the addition of social networking features to online news sites affected your job?
7. In your opinion, how has the addition of social networking features affected the content of online newspapers?
8. Do you think that the addition of social networking features to online news sites has had a positive or negative affect on these newspapers? Please elaborate.
9. Does your job include any involvement with adding social networking features to a website? Please elaborate.

Technology

1. Who is responsible for the implementation of hyperlinks, videos, graphics, etc. into online news articles?
2. How often are articles uploaded to online news sites, and after upload, how often are changes made to them?
3. How long would it take to implement a change in an online article, if, for example, a date needed to be fixed or a name changed?
4. Who is responsible for making these changes? Journalists themselves or their editors?
5. If you deal with creating the actual appearance of an online newspaper (i.e. the layout of the home page, where advertisements appear, etc.), please elaborate on how a news site decides which type of layouts and template to use. For example, who decides if there is a banner advertisement or a "top story" on the welcome page?

Advertising

1. In your opinion, are online newspapers attempting to cater more to readers' interests or more or to advertisers' interests?
2. How has advertising changed with the introduction of the online newspaper (from the point of view of the newspaper)?
3. Is it easier or more difficult to find advertisers for online newspapers versus traditional papers?
4. Have the same companies that advertised with traditional newspapers continued to advertise with online newspapers? Or are online advertisers completely different than what used to appear in print?
5. What types of companies are advertising online?
6. Do all of the companies that are advertising online have common characteristics?
7. Is there a general trend that advertising is following online?
8. Do you think there are more or fewer advertisements in general in online newspapers than there are/were in print versions?
9. How have consumers responded to advertisements online? Any positive or negative feedback?

Demographics

1. What is your age?
2. What is your marital status?
3. How many children (if any) do you have?
4. What is your race/ethnicity?
5. What is your income?
7. Please check the following box if you are willing to meet with the survey designer for a more in-depth interview. These interviews would only last for 30-60 minutes. If you are willing to meet, please make sure that you filled out the demographic questions above or simply put your e-mail in the "other" box and I will contact you in the near future.

Yes, I would be able to meet for a one-on-one interview.

No, I am unable to meet at this time.

Possibly, if my schedule permits it.

Other (please specify).