

Tow Center for Digital
Journalism
A Tow/Knight Report

Local News in a Digital World: Small-Market Newspapers in the Digital Age

DAMIAN RADCLIFFE
AND CHRISTOPHER ALI

Fall 2017

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia University, especially Emily Bell, Claire Wardle, Elizabeth Hansen, Kathy Zhang, and Nausicaa Renner for their support and encouragement of this project. This is the second of two papers that we produced for Tow, following an online survey of over 400 journalists at small-market newspapers, which was published in May 2017. We are also grateful to our two graduate assistants Rosalind Donald (Columbia) and Thomas R. Schmidt (University of Oregon) for their tremendous research support. Earlier and emerging versions of these findings were presented at the LION Publishers Conference (2016), the International Journalism Festival, the Demystifying Media Series hosted by the University of Oregon, the International Communications Association, and the Local News Conference hosted by Ryerson University (all 2017). Early findings were also published in an article we wrote for NiemanLab. Lastly, we are deeply indebted to the dozens of people who took the time to speak with us, and share their thoughts and insights about small-market newspapers.

Damian Radcliffe and Christopher Ali

November 2017

Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	7
Research Context and Literature Review	11
Why Local Matters: The Three Major Impacts of Local News	13
By the Numbers: Essential Data on the Newspaper Industry, 2007-2016	16
Methodology	21
Definitions: What Is a Small-Market Newspaper?	23
Methods	23
Why This Report Matters	24
How Are Small-Market Newspapers Responding to Digital Dis- ruption?	27
Business and Revenue Models	29
Seven Popular Revenue-Raising Practices	31
Changing Journalistic Practice	41
Evolving Principles and Philosophies	49
Final thoughts on evolving principles and philosophies	54
How Can Small-Market Newspapers Best Prepare for the Future?	59
Context: The Impact, Influence, and Importance of Business Models	61
Nine Strategic Questions for Industry Leaders	66
Concluding Remarks	77

About the Authors	81
Appendices	83
Appendix I: List of Interviewees	85
Appendix II: Interview Protocol	89
Further Reading: Recent Research into Local Media and Newspapers	91
Citations	97

Executive Summary

Too often we tend to hear one single narrative about the state of newspapers in the United States. The newspaper industry is not one sector. While there are considerable variances between the myriad of outlets—whether national titles, major metros, dailies in large towns, alt weeklies, publications in rural communities, ethnic press, and so on—a major challenge for anyone trying to make sense of industry data is its aggregated nature. It’s nearly impossible to deduce trends or characteristics at a more granular level.

The story of local newspapers with circulations below 50,000, or what we call “small-market newspapers,” tends to get overlooked due to the narrative dominance of larger players. However, small-market publications represent a major cohort that we as a community of researchers know very little about, and a community of practitioners that too often—we were told—knows little about itself.

Our study seeks to help redress this recent imbalance. We embarked on our research with a relatively simple yet ambitious research question: How are small-market newspapers responding to digital disruption?

From the data collected in our research, we also strove to report on the future of small-market newspapers by asking: How can small-market newspapers best prepare for the future?

Our research findings are based on interviews with fifty-three experts from across the publishing industry, academia, and foundations with a strong interest in the local news landscape. So as to make a fair assessment of the topic’s placement against a wider news background, we did not limit ourselves just to those with immediate connection to small-market newspapers. From these conversations and our own analysis, seven key themes emerged.

Key Findings:

1. We need to talk about the experience of local newspapers in a more nuanced manner. There is a plurality of experience across the newspaper industry, not to mention across small-market newspapers operating in different towns across the United States. Overgeneralization about the newspaper sector loses important perspectives from smaller outlets.

4 Local Journalism Survey

2. Local newspapers may be in a stronger position than their metro cousins. While local outlets face the same challenges associated with their larger regional and national counterparts, including declining circulations, the migration of advertising to digital platforms, and getting audiences to pay for news, they've experienced notable resilience thanks in part to exclusive content not offered elsewhere, the dynamics of ultra-local advertising markets, and an ability to leverage a physical closeness to their audience.

3. Change is coming to smaller papers, but at a slower pace. Attributable to lower audience take-up of digital (in particular among older and more rural demographics) and the continued importance of traditional advertising routes (print, TV, and radio) for local businesses, many local newspapers have enjoyed a longer lead time to prepare for the impact of digital disruption.

4. The consolidation of main street is changing local advertising markets. Although local businesses may be more likely to retain traditional analogue advertising habits, the increasing homogeneity of our consumer experience (manifest, for example, in the rise of Amazon and Walmart) is reshaping local advertising markets. As local businesses are replaced by larger national chains with national advertising budgets, this reduces local newspapers' advertising pools.

5. Financial survival is dependent on income diversification. The evolution of local advertising markets and, in particular, the consumer retail experience makes it increasingly important that local newspapers continue to explore opportunities to broaden their revenue and income base. Our research found that small-market newspapers are experimenting with multiple means for generating revenue, including paywalls, increasing the cost of print subscriptions, the creation of spin-off media service companies, sponsored content, membership programs, and live events.

6. There is no cookie-cutter model for success in local journalism. Each outlet needs to define the right financial and content mix for itself. This may seem obvious, but during our interviews some editors whose papers

are part of larger groups were critical of corporate attempts to create templates—and standardize approaches—that remove opportunities for local flexibility. “What works in one area, won’t necessarily in another,” was a message we heard from multiple interviewees, and a maxim which can be applied to both content- and revenue-related activities.

7. The newspaper industry needs to change the “doom and gloom” narrative that surrounds it. While acknowledging that the future for small-market newspapers will continue to mirror the rockiness of the industry sector at large, our research shows that there is cause for optimism. Sizable audiences continue to buy and value local newspapers. As a result, it is incumbent that the sector begin to change its own narrative. Outlets need to be honest with their audiences about the challenges they face, but they can also do more to highlight their unique successes, continued community impact, and important news value.

Introduction

This report stems from our long-held interest in the health of local news, and the importance of local journalism to communities and the wider information ecosystem. Given the significance of local media in these areas, it is perhaps surprising that this is the first attempt at a national landscape review since the 2011 analysis featured in the FCC's 468-page omnibus report about the "Information Needs of Communities."¹

Following this seminal but overlooked report, much subsequent discussion has focused on single geographic areas (such as New Jersey) or emerging players (like online hyperlocals) rather than the local sector as a whole. Moreover, with most of the focus on digital players, the experience of traditional outlets, including local newspapers, has been ignored.

During the past decade, the fortunes of the newspaper industry changed dramatically. In 2007, newspapers boasted revenues of approximately 55.6 billion dollars (combined advertising and circulation revenues) and a workforce of 68,160. Two years later, well over one hundred titles had closed, including major publications like the Rocky Mountain News; revenues plummeted by almost twenty billion dollars, hovering around thirty-seven billion dollars; and the workforce fell to 56,230.²³⁴

The sector has never fully recovered. Titles continue to shrink or be shuttered, layoffs are a regular occurrence, and the perennial search to replace print advertising dollars with new sustainable revenue forms continues unabated.

In examining the causes and impact of these dramatic developments, attention from researchers has predominantly focused on large metro and national newspapers, with less attention given to the small-market newspapers that populate and inform many American communities. This study aims to rectify this through a careful study of small-market newspapers, or those weekly or daily print newspapers with a circulation of under 50,000.

Research Context and Literature Review

Why Local Matters: The Three Major Impacts of Local News

Scholars have studied the influence of local newspapers on society for over a century. Beginning with turn-of-the-century academics like Gabriel Tarde in France, research showed how newspapers help form and solidify communities, and crystalize public opinion by provoking conversation.⁵ Later, researchers from the Chicago School of sociology documented how newspapers help immigrant communities both integrate in, and define themselves against, the American melting pot.⁶⁷

Current research informs us about how newspapers assist in voting decisions, continue to foster community identity and solidarity, and—as is often the case with small-town newspapers—act as community champions.⁸ As Jock Lauterer writes, these papers (what he calls “community newspapers”) are “relentlessly local” and provide “affirmation of the sense of community, a positive and intimate reflection of the sense of place, and stroke for our us-ness, our extended family-ness and our profound and interlocking connectedness.”⁹

While digital technologies have certainly impacted these roles and responsibilities, the core mission of local newspapers remains unchanged.¹⁰ Based on our review of recent academic research, we identified three key areas where local news and newspapers add clear value to American life, specifically in the areas of democracy, community, and media ecosystems. Understanding this contribution provides useful context for our own research.

1. The value to democracy

First and foremost, newspapers—both large and small—perform an important watchdog role: acting as the public’s eyes and ears against those in power.¹¹¹² Steve Barnett emphasizes their important role in likewise representing communities back to the powers-that-be and campaigning on behalf of the community itself.¹³

For her part, Penelope Muse Abernathy notes five democratic functions of local newspapers in her book *Saving Community Journalism*:

14 Local Journalism Survey

- Being the primary source for local, original reporting
- Defining the public agenda
- Encouraging economic growth and commerce
- Fostering a sense of geographic community
- Helping us understand our vote¹⁴

This final function on Abernathy's list is a particularly important relationship—that between voters and newspapers. Studies by Jack McLeod, for instance, identify a relationship between local media consumption and “institutionalized participation”—actions like voting and contacting local officials—concluding “it is clear that communication plays a central role in stimulating and enabling local political participation.”¹⁵¹⁶ Lee Shaker's study of Seattle and Denver, two cities where newspapers had recently stopped printing, echoed these results. Shaker found that both “Seattle and Denver suffered significant negative declines in civic engagement when they lost one of their daily newspapers.”¹⁷ The relationship between newspaper reading and civic engagement was again confirmed by Sam Shulhofer-Wohl and Miguel Garrido, who studied the closure of *The Cincinnati Post* in 2007 and observed a reduction in the competitiveness of elections.¹⁸ In helping community members determine their vote, newspapers provide for what is now called the “information needs of communities.” This has been defined as: “those forms of information that are necessary for citizens and community members to live safe and healthy lives; have full access to educational, employment, and business opportunities; and to fully participate in the civic and democratic lives of their communities should they choose.”¹⁹

2. Value to the community

Building on the information needs of communities, newspapers also create community and help people feel more attached to where they live.

To do this, they take on numerous roles: informing the community about itself;²⁰²¹ performing a ritualistic function as part of readers' everyday lives²² and providing a sense of comfort to readers and viewers;²³ helping communities understand themselves and shape their identities;²⁴²⁵ setting the standards and norms of the community;²⁶ positioning themselves as the

conduit between global events and local conversations;²⁷²⁸ and transcribing the first record of history for many American communities.²⁹

Acting as a local champion is another way local newspapers help fashion, maintain, and celebrate community solidarity and identity..³⁰ These media outlets not only serve a specific place, but actively help to create it by defining its contours and boundaries.³¹

Findings show that these community-building and solutions-oriented functions are particularly important and valuable for minority and immigrant communities, both in helping them assimilate to their host country and to stay connected to family and friends abroad.³²³³

In performing these roles, small-market newspapers also modify the watchdog function discussed above. Here, community members are often more interested in newspapers' ability to be a "good neighbor" rather than an attack dog.³⁴³⁵

To do so, small-market newspapers often focus on solutions rather than just identify problems. This departs from traditional concepts of objectivity in American journalism, bringing it more in line with the tenets of public journalism and civic journalism.³⁶ Today, these characteristics are increasingly reflected through the lens of "solutions journalism."³⁷

3. Value to media ecosystems

Newspapers remain an integral part of the local media ecosystem. Indeed, they are often the only news voice in a community.³⁸ Even when they're not, they still perform the bulk of original reporting. In his 2009 book, *Losing the News*, Alex Jones asserts that newspapers account for eighty-five percent of all accountability news within a media ecosystem.³⁹

Unfortunately, Jones does not provide an explanation for how he came to this figure. A 2010 study by the Pew Research Center on Baltimore, however, did discover that newspapers accounted for nearly half (forty-eight percent) of the original reporting in the city during the time period covered.⁴⁰ Taken at face value, this suggests that the bulk of stories covered by television and cable news find their origins in newspaper reporting.

Nevertheless, we cannot discount the fact that the prominence of newspapers as a media source for consumers has declined as readers gravitate toward a plethora of other sources.

16 Local Journalism Survey

This led Nielsen to argue that even though newspapers may have lost their status as “mainstream media,” they nonetheless serve as “keystone media” by existing as “the primary providers of a specific and important kind of information and enable other media’s coverage.” Their ongoing decline has severe “ecological consequences that reach well beyond their own audience.”⁴¹

By the Numbers: Essential Data on the Newspaper Industry, 2007-2016

The newspaper industry’s vital statistics over the past decade do not make for pretty reading. As demonstrated by Pew’s annual “State of the News Media” reports and other studies, the sector has faced many challenges during the last ten years in terms of general revenue, circulation, and employment.

In its 2017 report, Pew described an industry in decline, with subscriptions retreating eight percent from 2015, and advertising revenue dropping ten percent to around eighteen billion dollars (plus eleven billion dollars from circulation). There has also been a notable reduction in newsroom employees, with a four percent reduction since 2014 and a thirty-seven percent reduction since 2004 to now account for 41,400 people.

State of the News Media Industry: Key Statistics

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

Source: Pew Research Center⁴²

What about local?

These numbers—reporting on revenues, circulation, and employment—while valuable, do not tell the entire story. A major challenge for anyone trying to make sense of this data is its aggregated nature, which makes it difficult to deduce trends at a more granular level.

More specifically, what do we know about changes at small newspapers versus major metros, national newspapers versus metros, and weeklies versus small dailies? The answer, based on available and published data, is not very much.

The missing middle: small-market newspapers in the United States

There are currently 7,071 newspapers (daily or weekly) in the United States according to Editor & Publisher. Of those, 6,851 have circulations under 50,000.

This means that upwards of ninety-seven percent of newspapers in the United States can be categorized as “small-market.” Of the weeklies in particular, most, if not all, have a circulation under 30,000.

Using Editor & Publisher’s data, we have endeavored to provide granular information on the types of small-market newspapers that exist in the United States.

Daily Small-Market Newspapers by Circulation

Circulation	Number of newspapers
25,001–50,000	139
10,001–25,000	366
5,001–10,000	396
5,000 or less	301
Total small-market dailies	1,202

Source: Editor & Publisher

Implications

Three things become clear from these datasets:

18 Local Journalism Survey

The vast majority of newspapers in the country have small circulations of under 50,000. Yet they seldom get much attention from researchers.

There is a tremendous amount of diversity in the size and scale of publications that are considered “small-market.” With a threshold of 50,000, this includes everything from The Chariho Times (Rhode Island, circulation 637) to Newport News’s Daily Press (Virginia, circulation 48,828). This variability cannot possibly be appreciated when circulation numbers and revenues are consolidated into a generic “newspaper industry” category.

We need a regular detailed census of local newspapers, split into different sub-markets, to understand and map a more holistic picture of the U.S. newspaper industry. Unfortunately, many existing surveys are being rolled back,⁴³ meaning that our knowledge of this space will diminish unless others step in.⁴⁴

The data and the three clear conclusions which derive from it suggest that small-market newspapers represent “a silent majority”: a major cohort that we as a community of researchers know very little about and a community of practitioners that too often—we were told—knows little about itself.

These conclusions also underscore our point that when telling the story of the newspaper industry in the United States we need to show more nuance and specificity, rather than aggregated numbers. While consolidated data has its place, it should be accompanied by sub-sector analysis, which allows us to more effectively understand the diversity of this sector.

Our study seeks to help redress this recent imbalance. We embarked

Weekly Small-Market Newspapers by Circulation

Circulation	Number of newspapers
35,001–50,000	99
20,001–35,000	368
10,001–20,000	758
5,001–10,000	1,084
1,001–5,000	2,843
1,000 or less	497
Total small-market community weeklies	5,649

Source: Editor & Publisher

on our research with a relatively simple yet ambitious question: How are small-market newspapers responding to digital disruption?

From the data collected from our research, we also strove to report on the future of small-market newspapers by asking: How can small-market newspapers best prepare for the future?

Through in-depth interviews, secondary research, and an online survey of local journalists, we began to address these all-important questions.

Methodology

Definitions: What Is a Small-Market Newspaper?

The focus of this study is small-market newspapers. There is no agreed-upon definition of what constitutes a “small,” “medium,” or “large” newspaper. For the purposes of our research we have chosen to define a small-market newspaper as a daily or weekly print publication with a circulation of under 50,000.

This is consistent with the literature on community newspapers and community journalism, the most closely related academic fields.⁴⁵ It also allows us to exclude the major national and metro newspapers, and the emerging cadre of online hyperlocal news sites, as both of these platforms have received substantial and comprehensive coverage from researchers of late (see the Knight-Temple Table Stakes Project and the Free Press’s New Voices: New Jersey project).⁴⁶

Methods

To answer our research questions, we drew upon an established research method in the social sciences: in-depth interviews. Given the deliberate broadness of our research question, the goal was to be exploratory, approaching as many respondents as possible to get a variety of perspectives from stakeholders with an interest—and informed perspective—on our research topic. To this end, we did not limit ourselves just to those with immediate connection to small-market newspapers. Instead, to ensure that we benefited from a wider overview of the local news landscape, we interviewed experts and practitioners from across the industry. This also allowed us to place our findings in conversation with the other discussions about the health of the newspaper and local news industries. Despite our desire not to limit ourselves, the majority of our respondents had experience at small-market newspapers.

In total, we conducted fifty-three in-depth interviews. Positions of our respondents included: Small-market newspaper editors, publishers, journalists, and owners (n=12) Metro newspaper editors (n=10) Executives at major newspaper chains (n=5) Editors, publishers, reporters at hyperlocal

24 Local Journalism Survey

online news organizations (n=4) Researchers, think tanks, funders, foundations (n=13) Policymakers, industry watchers, advertisers, and associations (n=9)

Each interview lasted between thirty minutes and two hours. They were non-directive, open, and semi-structured in nature. Although an interview protocol was drafted and used, we did not stick rigidly to it. Instead, interviews had a more conversational tone, flowing—when possible—naturally between our points of interest. If key topics did not emerge organically, they were introduced by the interviewer.

Our initial list of respondents was compiled by using existing contacts and knowledge of the field. Thereafter, a snowball method was used to locate and recruit more respondents. Interviews continued to be solicited until such point as saturation (i.e., no new knowledge) was achieved.

Professional transcription services were used to transcribe the interviews.

Using a method known in the social sciences as grounded theory,⁴⁷ we conducted close readings of the transcripts and began to assemble categories and themes. These themes were then refined through comparison and combination. This culminated in the structure and themes in this study.

In the end, we developed three overarching themes (revenue and business models, changing journalistic practice, and evolving philosophies of journalism) that we share below.

From these themes, we have also created a list of recommendations for researchers and practitioners alike. The aim, of course, was not and is not to create a static list of best practices, but rather to begin a conversation about small-market newspapers—their present and future, challenges and opportunities.

Why This Report Matters

Our research is the first attempt to provide a national lens on local media (and in this instance, we are looking solely at the experience of small-market, local newspapers) since the Federal Communication Commission's 2011's report "The Information Needs of Communities" (the "Waldman Report").⁴⁸ A summary of important papers published since that time is included in the Further Reading chapter of this report.

In its 2011 study, the FCC conducted an omnibus study of local media ecosystems, focusing specifically on the information needs necessary for American communities and American democracy. Considerable attention was paid to the newspaper industry, in particular small-market newspapers. With the exception of the Pew Research Center's annual "State of the News Media" reports, this was the last time that researchers paid such attention to small-market newspapers, or indeed the newspaper industry in its entirety.

The media world has changed substantially in the years following the Waldman Report in 2011. Newspaper chains have merged, creating the behemoths of the industry: New Media/Gatehouse (432 newspapers), Gannett (258 newspapers), and Digital First Media (208 newspapers). Social media's impact has grown, further fracturing audience attention and advertising dollars. These changes have encouraged newspapers to accelerate their digital presence and experiment with digital tools such as paywalls, partnerships with—and against—Facebook and Google,⁴⁹ and integrate new digital metrics into the workplace.

This study enables us to take stock of how local newspapers are responding to these developments and ongoing digital disruption.

Alongside discussing the impact of these major changes, our interviewees also revealed an industry keen to tell its own story and to hear about the perspectives of others. One reason for this desire is that, until recently, this has been an underreported sector and one that needs to hear its own story reported back and analyzed.

Although there has been lots of great work in this space, the majority of efforts have focused on either a defined geographic area such as New Jersey⁵⁰ or specific verticals such as media deserts⁵¹ and online hyperlocal media.⁵² The experience of local newspapers, especially from a cross-country perspective, has tended to be overlooked.

A number of developments in the past six months have begun to address this. We note, for example, a weekly newsletter on local matters published by Poynter, the excellent case studies/how-to guides from the Local News Lab,⁵³ The Local Fix,⁵⁴ and the Columbia Journalism Review.⁵⁵ Our study sits alongside these efforts as part of a revitalized discussion about the health and future of local journalism in the United States.

26 Local Journalism Survey

Embracing the methodology of oral history research, our interviewees told us not just what local journalism leaders are doing, but what they want to do and what they believe they are doing.⁵⁶ This approach allowed us to see local journalists as a social group, telling their stories and that of the local media landscape as they see it in 2016–17.

Combining these insights with our own analysis and expertise, we hope this report will make a significant contribution to the discussion about the state of small-market newspapers in the United States, and their continued importance to communities and the wider news and information ecosystem.

How Are Small-Market Newspapers Responding to Digital Disruption?

In this section we outline some of the key themes to emerge from our interviews with industry practitioners and experts, as we address how small-market newspapers are adapting to the constantly changing media landscape in which they operate.

This analysis is especially important, given that there has been no wholescale exploration of this topic since the Waldman Report in 2011. Yet, as we have noted, the media landscape has changed considerably, as revenue and consumption models have rapidly evolved. For better or worse, the last two decades have brought about a period of digital disruption for local newspapers. By this, we mean that newspapers have been forced to adapt to the now-ubiquity of digital technology in our everyday lives. This has changed reporting practices, information flows, audience reading habits, business plans, revenue streams, distribution mechanisms, and competition.⁵⁷⁵⁸

In talking about digital disruption we don't attribute negative or positive connotations to this term, but rather recognize that there has been a seismic change within the industry over the past decade, a segment of which—small-market newspapers—has been under-examined.⁵⁹⁶⁰ Small-market newspapers are having to address, on multiple fronts, core questions related to their business and content: this includes reexamining their structures and income models, as well as changing the nature of what they do and how they do it.

It's this story, which touches on business and revenue models, as well as the practice and philosophies of journalism at local newspapers that we explore in the first part of this report.

Business and Revenue Models

Arguably the two most important issues facing small-market newspapers are their revenue model and the business structure which supports it. There is considerable diversity in this space. Small-market newspapers, for example, encompass everything from “mom-and-pop” weeklies to daily products from large groups such as Gannett and Hearst.

Despite this diversity, all outlets—large and small—are grappling with many of the same issues. In particular, that means how to ensure their

30 Local Journalism Survey

financial survival and future prosperity. Income diversification is fundamental to this, even if the long-term potential of some ideas are, at present, unproven.

Our research identified a number of ways in which small-market newspapers are seeking to diversify their income streams and secure their futures. Publications will have to determine which of these options might work best for them, accepting that what works for one title in one market might not work for a similar paper in a different environment.

We hope, nonetheless, that these ideas and case studies can provide valuable inspiration and reaffirmation for newsrooms embarking on this journey.

Context: the revenue challenge

Business and revenue models often get conflated, but for the purposes of this report we delineate between the two by separately analyzing the income streams flowing into a newspaper (the revenue model) from some of the larger structural questions (the business model) small-market newspapers are addressing.

As Josh Stearns of the Democracy Fund reminded us, “A revenue model is not a business model and to get [an] actual, sustainable business model you have to figure out which of these [revenue models] work given your capacity and your community needs.”

Across the industry, print revenues continue to dominate the income ledger, accounting for seventy-five to eighty percent of income at most small-market newspapers, just as they do at larger outlets.⁶¹

This is potentially problematic in the long-run, given the impact of changes to local advertising, which are reducing the revenue pool that local newspapers can draw on. As Kevin Anderson observed, as retail moved from local to regional to national, so too did advertising: “Looking back at old editions (of the Sheboygan Press in 2015), it’s not just the volume of the ads that’s striking, but also the variety—the number of local businesses that used to advertise with us . . . hundreds of small, local businesses that would have advertised with my newspapers simply no longer exist.”⁶²

Because of this, it is incumbent on small-market newspapers to broaden their revenue base, and to reduce this dependency on traditional income

streams. Our research found that publishers are very aware of this need, but also recognize that this transition cannot be achieved overnight.

Seven Popular Revenue-Raising Practices

Against a backdrop of the continued reliance on print dollars for most small-market newspapers, and the challenge of attracting sufficient local advertising, this section explores some of the ways in which small-market newspapers are looking to expand and diversify their income base.

It's not easy, but fortunately, good ideas are plentiful: there are a plethora of case studies showcasing different ways in which local newspapers can generate income.⁶³⁶⁴ Below we outline some of the more popular and practical options being explored by publishers.

1. Subscriptions and single-copy sales

Alongside traditional display advertising subscriptions(online and in print), single-copy sales and paywalls continue to be popular income sources at small-market newspapers.

Many smaller titles, particularly weeklies, remain heavily dependent on single-copy sales. Al Cross, director of the Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues, told us, "People are making the buying decision every single week, plunking down fifty cents, or seventy-five cents, or even a dollar for that paper."

Without the certainty of subscription income, many smaller papers are "vulnerable," Cross argued, and understandably wary of rocking the readership boat. While this type of risk aversion is not unique to these kinds of weekly outlets, these titles may have less wiggle room than those with a larger circulation base. The type of papers that Cross describes have an average weekly circulation of around 4,000.

At many daily newspapers circulations are higher, which may offer a slightly larger margin for error in terms of the opportunity to experiment. Nevertheless, as many interviewees told us, they are still potentially hamstrung by a number of other strategic considerations. Several editors identified issues such as the fact that their print subscribers tend to be older and

32 Local Journalism Survey

resistant to change, while others highlighted the discrepancy between the size of their digital and print subscriber bases (sometimes digital is around ten percent, or less, of the print audience). These factors can impact on the scope for maneuverability and innovation.

Yet change is often necessary, not least because of shrinking newsrooms and the need to create content for an increasing number of platforms. This means that the newspaper of today cannot afford to look like the newspaper of yesterday.

As Robert York of *tronic* explained:

If you want to do new things, you have to stop doing old things that don't work. And I think that's something in our industry [that] is very difficult to do because everything has a constituency of at least one.

So, if you take a comic out of the newspaper, somebody likes that comic, and they will call and complain and cancel their subscription. If you take a box of ten mutual funds that you always run, and take that out of the paper, off to online, once again, somebody will call and complain because that was their mutual fund.

2. Paywalls and digital subscriptions

The predominance of paywalls, often present at even the smallest small-market titles, is a more recent phenomenon than is generally recognized. In 2012, Gannett, Lee Enterprises, and McClatchy all announced plans to introduce paywalls for some—or the majority—of their titles⁶⁵⁶⁶⁶⁷ with Scripps following suit later that year,⁶⁸ before Digital First Media in 2013.⁶⁹⁷⁰

Since then, in just a short period of five to six years, paywalls have rapidly become an established means for newspapers to generate income from readers.⁷¹ This doesn't mean, however, that paywalls aren't necessarily a source of potential tension for newsrooms and audiences alike.

In an era where journalists are frequently rewarded for page views, anything which creates a barrier to readership can be a source of friction. Meanwhile, for audiences accustomed to free, unmetered access to content for much of the early internet age, the move to paywalls marks a major shift in their online relationships.

From an audience perspective, research from Alex T. Williams for the

American Press Institute⁷² found that larger newspapers were often good at communicating to readers how and why paywalls were being introduced.⁷³ But that dialogue often ceased post-launch. New visitors may be therefore unclear about paywall structures and the need for them.

Journalists can play a direct role in contributing to this conversation. Lauren Gustus, at the time the executive editor of the Coloradoan in Fort Collins observed how her reporters will often share details on social media of special subscription offers, telling their followers: “I’m proud of the work I do . . . Here’s the link if you wanna subscribe.”

Gustus contends that, alongside this, her journalists don’t simply leave these matters to the sales guys. “Anyone in our newsroom could tell you about the demographics of our subscribers,” she said. “They could tell you how many subscribers we have and they could tell you how much it costs to subscribe to the Coloradoan for print or digital.”

The paper has one of the highest digital-only subscriber bases across the Gannett group, with paid circulation up year-on-year for the past two years. Whether this can be attributed to the continued communication between the newsroom and the paper’s audience cannot be proven, but it remains, nonetheless, a model that others can potentially learn from.

Our research also found clear evidence that paywalls and digital subscription models are not set in stone. There are plenty of opportunities to experiment with them. The Dallas Morning News, for example, has deployed three different paywalls over the years, from a hard paywall,⁷⁴ and later⁷⁵ a mixed premium⁷⁶ versus free site, to a metered model.⁷⁷ The current paywall also distinguishes between in-market and out-of-market audiences.

For titles like The Dallas Morning News, some sections of the site (e.g., entertainment) don’t count toward the meter, as the content is well supported by ads. Other outlets, but not all, take a similar approach to popular verticals such as job boards and “what’s on” listings.

It’s clear from our research that not only are paywalls newer than we might realize, but they’re also a space that is far from static.

3. Events

Of the new, emerging sources of revenue that newspapers are engaging in, the events space may be one of the most promising. Aside from their potential as a means for story gathering and community engagement, events also offer opportunities for sponsorship, ticket sales, and other income streams.

One digital site, Billy Penn in Philadelphia, has made events a cornerstone of its business model.⁷⁸ As founder Jim Brady told us, “I’ve said a bunch of times, and I’m dead serious about it, that part of what makes it—people say, What’s your business model?’ It’s like, Events and low overhead.’ ”

For many other digital operators, such as those tracked by Michele McLellan as part of her database of promising online local news startups, Michele’s List,⁷⁹ events are described as an effective means to engage with their community, even though for most outlets they account for less than twenty percent of revenue.

This percentage may grow in the future, but it also alludes to another benefit from events: their ability to provide opportunities for face-to-face engagement and interaction with readers and non-readers alike.⁸⁰

MinnPost, a nonprofit serving the Twin Cities in Minneapolis, for example, uses events to deepen relationships with existing supporters by offering members free and discounted tickets.⁸¹ Others such as The Seattle Times have worked with external partners to bring non-subscribing audiences to their education events.⁸² Meanwhile, as far back as 2013 the Chattanooga Times Free Press (circulation 75,336) was producing twelve large events a year, generating seven-figure income levels, eleven percent of its retail revenue, in the process.⁸³

Tom Slaughter, executive director of the Inland Press Association, was one interviewee who felt that events were likely to be part of the “portfolio of businesses” required to “support the infrastructure of what we call a daily newspaper.” After all, he reflected, “Newspapers will not be able to sustain themselves solely on digital advertising.”

4. Media services

One clear way that a number of publishers are expanding revenue sources is by creating, or buying, spin-off businesses which capitalize on their editorial and design expertise. Income from these services, which includes building apps and websites for small and medium-sized businesses, can then be poured back into resourcing the core product.

In doing this, small-market newspapers are not just leveraging the skills they have developed, but also the trust and heritage associated with their brand.

As Steven Waldman, author of 2011's FCC report on "The Information Needs of Communities" argued:

Those brands and that reputation means something and that's partly why I think these service businesses really do have some potential. I think when you're a small business and you're getting calls from five different people claiming to be able to help you with your website, and you have never heard of four of them and one of them is the local newspaper, I think you may get the local newspaper [to help you].

Other newspapers such as the Oregon-based RG Media Group and EO Media Group are leveraging different areas of expertise and resources, offering commercial print operations, which includes printing the publications of their neighbors.⁸⁴ The Columbian in Vancouver, Washington, prints The Oregonian, which is based in nearby Portland, and The Register-Guard in Eugene publishes the Gannett paper for Salem, the Statesman Journal.

Given these transferable skills, it's perhaps no surprise that we're seeing small—and large—newspapers across the country branching out into the media services space. This is another trend we can confidently expect to continue.

5. Newsletters

On a smaller scale, the humble newsletter is back and in vogue with sales teams and audiences alike. "As the digital ecology evolves, it sometimes pays to go back to basics and adapt relatively old ideas for new times," noted London School of Economics' Charlie Beckett in his introduction to a 2016 report, "Back to the Future—Email Newsletters as a Digital Channel for Journalism" by Swedish journalist Charlotte Fagerlund.⁸⁵

36 Local Journalism Survey

The revenue opportunities in this space include sponsorship for specific newsletters covering key verticals such as politics, sports, the environment, or education, as well as the opportunity to embed advertising as hyper-linked text or display ads.

With analytics offering user insights such as clickthroughs and open rates, it's relatively easy to calculate an ROI, too. Although as Digiday has pointed out, this is not without its challenges.⁸⁶ "E-newsletters are limited in their ability to monetize because of the lack of a third-party auditor and the constraints of third-party platforms," argued a recent article,⁸⁷ not least because if emails are forwarded, then third-party tools don't count these as new opens.

This is clearly an issue, but irrespective of this newsletters remain⁸⁸ a source of investment for small-market newspapers, and a potential tool for valuable revenue and consumer data.

Rob Barrett, president of digital media for Hearst Newspapers, stressed the role that newsletters can play in creating a "daily habit" with readers, which is particularly important at a time when the daily habit of reading a newspaper may be on the wane.

Meanwhile, Lee Rainie at the Pew Research Center highlighted the power of using newsletters to offer a "foot in the door" to your website and other content. From these lower-level engagements, deeper relationships may flourish.

Perhaps with this in mind, Barrett posited that newsletters are about more than just delivering content (and ads); they should also be considered part of a newspaper's customer relationship management (CRM) efforts, given the potentially valuable information that newsletter subscribers share on sign-up and through their consumption.

He explained, "I wouldn't say, Hey, we're investing in newsletters.' We're investing in customer retention, customer relationship management, and it's very clear that using sort of the best email technology to generate it, to target, to personalize it, and to have the database of customers, and that having the best technology investment is a very, very big deal."

Given these factors, newsletters are an area of investment—and one with a potentially positive financial return—that we expect to see a further focus on.

6. Obituaries

As we noted in our discussion about digital subscriptions, publishers aren't necessarily blocking access to all of their content. Obituaries are one area where we see different approaches being used.

The Bulletin, a daily newspaper in Bend, Oregon, excludes obituaries—alongside classified ads, job openings, its events calendar, and restaurant and golf guides—from its thirteen-dollar-a-month paywall. In contrast, the Calhoun County Journal, a weekly in Bruce, Mississippi, places obituaries, along with other popular content such as recipes, behind a paywall accessible via a WordPress login.

One possible reason for this divergence is the different attitude that some small-market newspapers adopt when producing this content. As Waldman told us, the cost for publishing obituaries can range from hundreds to sometimes thousands of dollars. But not everyone is comfortable with that approach. He said:

There's still a couple newspapers out there that do it for free. They [see] this is a service to our community and we're not gonna charge for it. I think those are very few and far between, but I have come across some like that, and some have kept their prices down in the forty-fifty-dollar range, something like that. But, certainly in the metro papers, the rates are going way up.

As publishers seek new revenue streams, some of them are turning to obituaries as a potential means to attract different sources of revenue. The Courier Record of Blackstone, Virginia, is one such paper which has made this journey. As owner Billy Coleburn reflected, "We used to never charge for obits, then we charged for some versions and didn't charge for others. Now, basically most obits in our paper are paid. Do a color photo, and it's not a bad additional piece of revenue." At the same time, Coleburn readily conceded that "obits are a very important part of record of the paper, no doubt, [and a] record of the community."

This wider value helps explain why some small-market newspapers wrestle with where obituaries sit on the revenue versus information continuum. Many local journalists, perhaps, underestimate the importance of this content to members of their community and individual readers. But Waldman

38 Local Journalism Survey

reminded us, “The most important news event in most people’s lives is not the Iowa Caucus, it’s the birth of their child or the death of your parent.”

Leveraging this may seem rather cynical to some, but as Waldman argued, “If the newspaper can be a part of actually helping that person, you’re gonna be connecting with them on a much more powerful level, being much more useful than you’ve ever been.”

7. Foundations, crowdfunding, and other emerging ideas

Finally, in this section we highlight some of the other revenue-raising ideas being explored by our interviewees and others across the industry. This list is by no means exhaustive, but instead seeks to highlight some of the various ways in which small-market newspapers across the United States are looking at different revenue sources to help underpin their journalistic endeavors.

Foundations are, perhaps, the most obvious example of this. In many cases their support has enabled news organizations to experiment and do new things. This has included new forms of journalistic activity,⁸⁹ support for specific beats such as Education Lab at The Seattle Times⁹⁰ and state reporting by the Center for Public Integrity,⁹¹ exploration of new revenue models,⁹² and relationship-building.⁹³

Of course not every publisher is able to benefit from the foundation support. In particular, we note that the pool of outlets that has benefited from this is small, relative to the size of the sector, and that the focus is often restricted to tech and innovation. However, there’s no doubt that this income source is valuable for those that have benefited from it. We expect to see more publishers seeking to tap into this potential revenue stream.

Another reasonably established form of fundraising is crowdfunding,⁹⁴ which has been used to cover specific stories and beats such as The Texas Tribune’s series “Undrinkable,” “The Shale Life,” “The Ticket,” and “Bordering on Insecurity,”⁹⁵ as well as its recruitment of a community reporter in late 2016.⁹⁶

Another long-established means for attracting additional revenue is the use of consumer questionnaires by local news outlets such as the Herald and

News (Klamath Falls, Oregon) and The News Journal and DelawareOnline.com (Wilmington, Delaware).


Though this isn't necessarily a new idea (Nieman Lab wrote about an early iteration in 2011⁹⁷) it offers publishers an opportunity for alternative forms of monetization, with publishers being paid by Google for each completed Google Consumer Surveys (GCS).⁹⁸

Pop-Up Consumer Survey from the Herald and News (Oregon)

Answer a survey question to continue reading this content

Question 1 of 2 or fewer:

Do you own and use a **Honeywell smart thermostat** at home? *(see image below as one example, but not limited to this version)*



^ Select an answer

OR

↺ Show me a different question

↪ Skip survey

Google [INFO](#) [PRIVACY](#)

Source: Herald and News⁹⁹

Meanwhile, the Blue Mountain Eagle in John Day, Oregon, the oldest weekly community newspaper in the state, launched in 1868,¹⁰⁰ enables its audience to purchase popular images (see below).¹⁰¹

Readers can repurpose images for everything from a four-by-six print

40 Local Journalism Survey

Fire crews fight blaze in southern Grant County

Blue Mountain Eagle
Published on June 9, 2016 1:35PM



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

Source: Blue Mountain Eagle¹⁰²

(\$3.99) through to mugs, mouse mats, t-shirts, and large canvas prints (twenty-four-by-thirty-six mounted, \$143.50).¹⁰³

This additional revenue stream sits alongside traditional advertising and metered access to its content (unlimited access to the website costs forty dollars per year).¹⁰⁴

It's likely this isn't a large money-spinner for the publication, but setting up an online store in this way may be a relatively simple method for generating some additional revenue with minimal effort.

Other outlets are also exploring opportunities around eCommerce, rang-

ing from mounted front pages of *The Denver Post*¹⁰⁵ to keepsake pages and coffee-table books from *The Seattle Times*.¹⁰⁶

For some outlets, harnessing their unique local archive in this manner may be a revenue area to watch.

Final thoughts on revenue matters

These examples, as well as initiatives such as membership schemes, sponsored content, and other ideas, give us a sense of how newspapers are experimenting with different opportunities to generate income. There's no magic combination for making this work, but what this section shows is that there are no shortage of potential routes to revenue.

Changing Journalistic Practice

A fundamental reason why publishers need to experiment with different opportunities for income generation is because the traditional funding model for news is broken. Technology is rapidly changing the way content is created, distributed, consumed, and monetized.¹⁰⁷

This is all happening at such a pace that it's easy to forget that many popular digital platforms and online behaviors are, in fact, relatively recent additions to media diets.¹⁰⁸

In the space of a few short years, new storytelling tools like Facebook Live, Periscope, and Snapchat have quickly become part of the journalist's toolkit, while usage of more established platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram has evolved as their functionality and audience continues to grow.¹⁰⁹¹¹⁰¹¹¹ Meanwhile, platforms like Vine, Meerkat, and Google+ have either closed or effectively been consigned to the digital graveyard.¹¹²¹¹³

These developments have required news and media outlets to move with the audience, embracing new platforms and finding new ways to tell stories.

In this section we explore some of the ways that local newspapers are engaging with these channels, highlighting examples of practice and some of the strategic implications and challenges which many small-market newspapers are trying to make sense of.

Social media as standard (but it's an often uneasy relationship)

For some, such as Levi Pulkkinen at Seattlepi.com, the emergence of newer and more established digital platforms can be a cause for optimism. “It’s a really exciting time for journalism,” he said, “because if you run a small newspaper, your potential audience for the stuff you’re doing has gotten gigantic in the last decade.”

The influence of these channels on our media habits is such, Pulkkinen argued, that if you’re not active on these platforms “you’re basically deciding not to play.”

There’s certainly an element of truth to that. But it’s also true to say that some local publishers are deliberately deciding not to play. This is particularly true of many smaller outlets, where resource constraints make it difficult to do everything, and be everywhere.

Moreover, for many of these titles, a reliance on physical newspaper sales means that some publishers are being careful not to cannibalize their print audience by giving away the crown jewels (for free) on social, or indeed anywhere else online. These titles still need people to buy their paper each week if they are to survive.

The Calhoun County Journal of Bruce, Mississippi (population 1,939)¹¹⁴ is a good example of this. With a circulation of a little over 5,000 a week, it’s the only newspaper in Calhoun County. Although active on social media, the paper purposefully eschews Facebook (although not the Facebook-owned Instagram¹¹⁵).

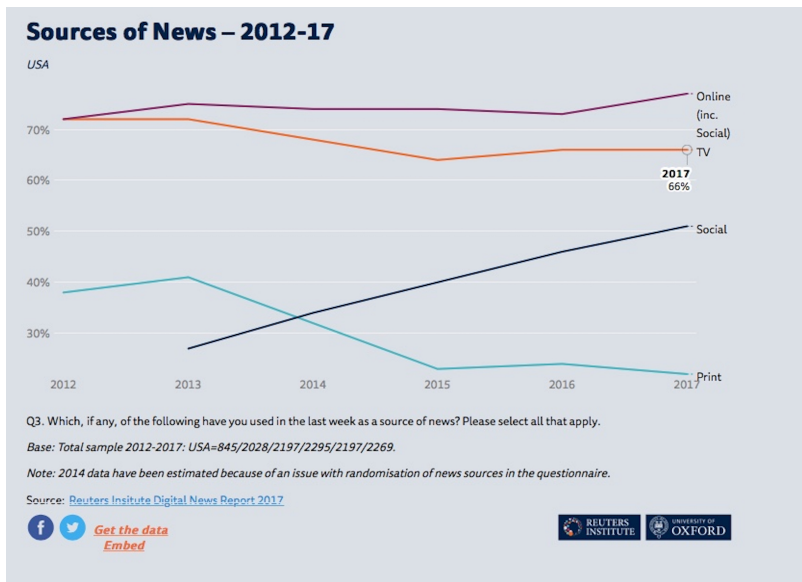
Publisher Joel McNeece, a past president of the Mississippi Press Association who sits on the National Newspaper Association Board of Directors, explained that too many small publishers “think they can stick something on Facebook and that equates to a good advertisement because thirty people liked it. It’s not generating any business for you,” he said, arguing that “your best dollar is still in print.”

For others, the challenges of this relationship go beyond just revenue. Billy Coleburn from Richmond’s Courier-Record (Virginia) was just one publisher who stressed the impact of the new digital gatekeepers on both revenues and audience time, saying, “I view my number one competitor really as Facebook and social media because you’re competing for the hearts,

and minds, and the attention span of human beings. And our attention span is ridiculously small these days.”

Despite these challenges, the popularity of social networks as a news source means that it takes a bold publisher to purposefully refrain from using these channels. Data from the “Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017” found that fifty-one percent of digital news consumers in the United States now get news from social media, a cohort that’s grown five percent since 2016 and doubled since 2013.¹¹⁶

During this same period (not long after the Waldman Report was published), print as a source for news fell precipitously. Reports from Pew have consistently told a similar story, especially among younger audiences.^{117 118}



Source: Reuters Institute/Oxford University¹¹⁹

The growth of video and live video reporting

At the end of 2016 we undertook an online survey completed by 420 journalists based at small-market newspapers across the United States.¹²⁰ Our research identified a cohort that is enthusiastically embracing digital storytelling, especially video and live video.¹²¹ Newsrooms are benefitting from

44 Local Journalism Survey

the low barriers of entry created by smartphones and cheap (and sometimes free) editing tools, as well as new live video streaming services.

However, despite this engagement, publishers face a number of important strategic issues in this space. One key consideration is skills and training, as identified by our survey, which revealed that most journalists tend to be self-taught with new technologies, or they learn from articles on sites like Nieman Lab, Poynter, and MediaShift.

Audiences may need support and training, too, and publishers can play a role in providing compelling content which drives audiences to digital platforms, while at the same time explaining how to use/access these platforms. In doing so, news organizations can play a key role in helping to develop these types of media literacy and digital behaviors.

These platforms may be less effective for some small-market newspapers. Access issues are an important consideration, especially in rural communities where availability may be more limited. Slower-fixed and mobile broadband speeds mean that video, as well as other rich multimedia content, is not necessarily viable for non-urban publishers or audiences.

Finally, a number of interviewees also identified the unproven business and revenue models from many of these platforms as issues. As Amalie Nash, the Des Moines Register's executive editor and vice president for news and engagement at the time of interview and now Gannett's executive editor for the West Region, explained: "You look at something like Facebook native videos, which we all agree that's great for brand, that's great for getting yourself out there, and this and that, but at the end of the day, you're making pennies on the dollar in terms of what those videos are providing as far as revenue sources."

On other platforms, revenue may be even less. A cursory glance at the YouTube channels for many small-market newspapers, for example, shows video views often total between a few thousand and a few hundred.

"Getting five or six or seven hundred views on a single video isn't a sellable item to an advertiser," warned Lou Brancaccio, emeritus editor of The Columbian of Vancouver, Washington. As a result, he suggested this may not be a viable medium for smaller outlets to continue investing in so heavily. "The jury is still out on whether or not that is going to pull more viewers onto our website," he said.

In contrast, given the need for scale and reach, video may be a format that is far more successful for larger newspapers, where views are greater and thus the opportunity for advertising or sponsorship may be more discernible. It will be interesting to see how this dynamic shapes up as the video market continues to mature.

The emerging importance—and influence—of metrics

“Metrics inspire a range of strong feelings in journalists, such as excitement, anxiety, self-doubt, triumph, competition, and demoralization,” wrote Tow Fellow Caitlin Petre in her 2015 report “Traffic Factories: Metrics at Chartbeat, Gawker Media, and The New York Times.”¹²²

Petre observed how “metrics exert a powerful influence over journalists’ emotions and morale,” and that, for all of the positives which these tools can unlock, “traffic-based rankings can drown out other forms of evaluation.” This trend is now beginning to permeate the different tiers of local journalism.

One potential benefit of these tools, suggested Lauren Gustus, the former executive editor of the Coloradoan (Fort Collins, Colorado), is that it enables journalists and editors to quantify readership in a manner not previously possible. The conclusions can sometimes be surprising. “If you look at the metrics, you know that so much of what we do doesn’t get consumed in a way that maybe we think it does,” she said.

The impact of this can be used to realign and reframe certain types of stories, providing evidence (which is especially valuable in a climate of reduced resources) for dropping or diminishing certain beats, while also enabling newspapers to double-down on topics which really resonate with their communities.

Liz Worthington, content strategy program manager at the American Press Institute (API) who leads the Metrics For News program, argued that these types of insights can help to deepen relationships between audiences and small-market newspapers:

By focusing on a few key topic areas, you create more loyalty. The readers really respond to it . . . And the newsrooms we work with are pretty transparent with their audience about why are we doing this and why you are taking this survey to help us figure out what we should do differently.

46 Local Journalism Survey

It does lead to higher page views, but also less churn, more loyalty, and hopefully deeper engagement with your audiences.

Editors at papers ranging from the Herald and News in Klamath Falls, Oregon, to The Dallas Morning News in Texas told us that they had benefitted from this approach. Others highlighted some of the cultural challenges presented by metrics, not least when they proffer conclusions that newsrooms don't necessarily want to hear.

"I think there's a hesitancy in the newspaper industry among reporters not to recognize what the metrics are telling us," said Levi Pulkkinen at Seattlepi.com, namely "that we need to change the content." Specifically, he added, "What we're finding is that readers have very little taste for incremental coverage, and that's the bread and butter of local newspaper[s]."

Metric-informed practices can help to achieve these ambitions, and their influence can be seen at some small-market newspapers. However, they may well encounter resistance from those wary of changes to the traditional culture and practice of journalism, and the risk that metrics can have a potentially overt influence on an outlets content mix.¹²³

"Feeding the goat"¹²⁴

Many of our interviewees come from smaller weekly publications. Journalistic practice in these environs can be very different than metros or newspapers in larger, more competitive news markets. Arguably one of the biggest differences is in the speed of publication and audience expectations around the availability of news content.

For some publishers, being weekly is an editorial asset, enabling them to take a step back and report the news differently from those caught up in the cycle of daily publishing and around-the-clock updates on social media.

But the weekly publishing schedule, while identified as a strength, can also potentially leave outlets vulnerable. Al Cross, director of the Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues, explained how the News-Democrat & Leader—a bi-weekly paper in Russellville, Kentucky (population 7,037)—risked being left behind as audiences migrate to The Logan Journal, "an online newspaper," its Twitter bio notes, "that is devoted to bring you the stories quicker and better."¹²⁵

For daily papers, different challenges abound. Lou Brancaccio, emeritus editor of *The Columbian*, a seven-day-a-week publication in Vancouver, Washington, described a fast-moving environment where publishers can't afford to be late to a story. "The worst thing that can happen to a newspaper is that somebody reads some news from their Facebook friend, they go to *The Columbian* website to see if we have it, and we don't have it," he said.

In many cases, Brancaccio argued, the paper does have the story, but the reporter is waiting until it is complete before publishing. "That's old-school thinking," he said, leading him—and others—to encourage reporters to publish online when a story breaks, fleshing it out as further details emerge.

For many journalists that's a radically different approach from the way they have previously worked. But Brancaccio believes it's necessary for many outlets in this day and age. "The odds are somebody else has it," he said, "and if you don't get it up first, somebody else will."

Social media can, to some extent, act as a halfway house between these two scenarios for some weeklies, plugging the gaps between print runs.

Les Zaitz, a former investigative reporter for *The Oregonian* and publisher of the *Malheur Enterprise* in Vale, Oregon (population 1,838), covered the standoff at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge near Burns (population 2,738), a story which garnered national attention.¹²⁶¹²⁷¹²⁸

Zaitz said that due to the weekly publishing schedules of many small-market newspapers "social media is a vital information lifeline for these communities, or can be," adding: "I was frankly astonished in Burns as I did my reporting how my personal audience in Harney County and Burns grew by the hour because people were so starved for information, and they were served only by a weekly newspaper that could only come out once a week."

Weekly, small-market newspapers, like their daily and metro counterparts, understand that audience expectations around the availability of content is shifting. Although change may be coming more slowly, the external pressures which are reshaping the speed with which news and information is disseminated and consumed is coming their way.

The new model journalist

The journalism profession is changing rapidly.¹²⁹ As a result, the majority of newsrooms are unrecognizable from how they looked at the start of the new millennium.

Many journalists are now expected to demonstrate an ever-increasing range of skills, including: being able to write, shoot video, take photographs, input their copy into a content management system, identify pull-quotes, and produce social media content for a variety of platforms.

Newsrooms at small-market newspapers are not immune from these changes. In our 2016–17 survey of journalists at small-market newspapers, seventy percent of respondents told us they spent more time on digital-related output than they did two years ago, and nearly half (forty-six percent) said the number of stories they produce has increased in the past two years.¹³⁰

As newspapers have laid off personnel, remaining staff have—in many cases—needed to grow and develop their skillsets. In our interviews, editors described videographers who were being asked to learn photography (and vice versa), while many traditional beat reporters are required to write for the website, newsletters, live blogs, social channels, and the original print publication. Each of these channels requires the flexing of different writing muscles. Meanwhile, even the smallest outlets are embracing opportunities to shoot video and photographs for social, as well as broadcast on Facebook Live.

Because of this, new and emerging skillsets are being increasingly valued by newsrooms, with newsrooms restructuring to create audience teams¹³¹ and engagement specialists.¹³²

Lauren Gustus, the former executive editor at the Coloradoan in Fort Collins, Colorado, explained how her small newsroom (thirty to forty people) had been reconfigured to include a dedicated ten-person engagement team. Part of their charge, she explained, was “talking with readers across any of the platforms that we operate on and that our readers operate on.”

Others are following suit, although based on our conversations, the core skill requirements at small-market newspapers continue to be quite traditional and mainstream.

It will be interesting to see if these differences remain, or if emerging

skill areas will simply be absorbed into the tasks expected of journalists in the digital age. With many journalism schools beginning to teach or place greater emphasis on these emerging skills, the next generation may automatically bring these sensibilities to the newsroom as part of the perpetual evolution and transformation of journalistic practice that is happening across the industry.

Final thoughts on changing journalistic practice

As we have seen, journalism is an evolving profession. The pace and extent of this change varies from outlet to outlet, and many journalists may find this evolution rather daunting.

Nonetheless, as Margaret Sullivan famously said, “These days, being a journalist shares at least one quality with being a shark. If you’re not moving forward, it’s over.”¹³³

Small-market newsrooms across the country are moving forward by embracing social media and video, engaging with analytics and metrics tools, and reevaluating their publishing practices. These trends, and arguably the pace of change, show no signs of slowing.

Evolving Principles and Philosophies

Alongside changing revenue models and developing journalistic practices, some small-market newspapers are also responding to digital disruption by reevaluating their approach to local journalism. This goes beyond simply changing what they do, to embrace how and why they do it, too.

During our interviews, we heard about how some previously long-held journalistic tenets and behaviors were potentially being challenged, as local journalists put their profession under the microscope.

In this section we explore five of the most interesting ideas to emerge from our conversations.

The value and prominence of partnerships

Historically, the local newspaper industry has not been great at collaboration. According to Tom Glaisyer at the Democracy Fund, part of the reason

50 Local Journalism Survey

for this is that the sector has always been “rooted in a cultural independence.”

“Part of their strength was in being independent,” he said, but this is beginning to change.

Although this is unfamiliar territory for some publishers, there are some success stories. In addition, funders such as the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation and news incubators such as J-Lab¹³⁴ have often made partnerships between publishers a prerequisite for financial support.

“Everything we did in New Jersey was rooted in partnerships,” said the Democracy Fund’s Josh Stearns, who previously oversaw Local News Lab, an initiative from the Dodge Foundation to help local news sites develop new and sustainable business models. The nature of those partnerships included information sharing, joint ad sales networks, and collaborative reporting.¹³⁵

In Virginia, a partnership between the hyperlocal news website Charlottesville Tomorrow and newspaper The Daily Progress has resulted in over 2,000 stories written by Charlottesville Tomorrow staff published in the Progress. According to its website: “Charlottesville Tomorrow produces more than 50 percent of the newspaper’s content related to growth, development, education and local politics.”¹³⁶

As Brian Wheeler, executive director at Charlottesville Tomorrow, recounted to us:

In 2009, The Daily Progress newsroom had shrunk dramatically, from about forty-five people to about eighteen. The managing editor approached us. He was looking for other things they could have on their website . . . and they finally reached the point where they said, “We could do more in partnership with you than trying to work against you.”

So, the partnership was a simple one-page, back-and-front memorandum of understanding between myself and the editor. There were no lawyers involved. And it was, in 2009, the first of its kind in the country where a nonprofit was doing beat reporting for a daily newspaper.

At the present time examples like this are the exception rather than the rule, but they offer an interesting precedent that others can follow. Moving forward, we believe that small-market newspapers will increasingly see

the value that partnerships with local, regional, and national entities can potentially bring.

One area ripe for collaboration is greater links between local newsrooms and national nonprofits. As Jane Elizabeth, senior manager for the Accountability Journalism Program at the American Press Institute, reflected, partnerships between local news outlets and nonprofits like ProPublica and The Marshall Project would be especially beneficial. There are some national publications reaching out to local newsrooms, Elizabeth said, “but I sense that there’s hesitancy in the local newsrooms” that don’t always see how they would benefit. “I think that’s a big opportunity that a lot of local newsrooms are missing out on.”

In sum, although partnership requires a culture shift on both sides, it’s a direction many newsrooms are already heading in.

Engagement

Engagement was the media buzzword of 2016¹³⁷ and a key topic of conversation in our discussions with industry practitioners. There’s no standard definition of this term, although it’s a label which can be applied to a variety of offline and online publisher-audience relationships.

For many of our interviewees, their understanding of engagement goes beyond traditional measurements such as subscribers, unique users, or time on site. Instead, it’s part of a wider dynamic in which they are reassessing their journalistic role.

Some newsrooms are already recognizing that this relationship needs to be more two-way, going beyond historic norms. Engagement in this context is about more than just outreach. It involves active listening and more of a focus on impact.

J-Lab’s Jan Schaffer talked about the importance of small-market newspapers needing “to figure out how not just to cover community, but to build it as well.” That, Schaffer suggested, means papers listening to the community and looking to do more than just find a great quote or angle for a story. “The engagement that counts,” Schaffer said, is, “wow, we helped our community fix a problem, do something better. And I think that’s still a skill to be learned.”

This skillset requires a shift in approach and practice, but it is in line

52 Local Journalism Survey

with the “good neighbor” role that research has shown audiences value.^{138,139} We believe that engagement can be one of the ways in which small-market newspapers can reassert their relevance in the digital age.

As Lauren Gustus admitted, titles like the Coloradoan need to “demonstrate the value of a local news organization and that it goes beyond the printed product.” To help achieve this goal, she reconfigured her thirty-person newsroom to create a ten-person engagement team charged with finding opportunities to “further our relationship with our readers in a meaningful way.”

Events, putting community members on the editorial board, and engaging with readers on and off site across different digital platforms, are just some of the mechanisms the Coloradoan and others have deployed with this goal in mind.

Engagement strategies, both online and offline, also need to evolve and be refined. This is particularly true when it comes to social. Amalie Nash, at the Des Moines Register, highlighted Facebook and Snapchat as two examples of this digital dichotomy.

Noting that in the month prior to our interview, “We got fifty-three percent of our traffic from Facebook,” Nash nonetheless said her newsroom constantly debated where they should place their digital bets:

Snapchat is a great example of that. A lot of news organizations are putting strategy and time behind Snapchat, not making any money, not bringing anyone into your site because there’s no way to link or anything from it. Are you hoping the money follows, or are you doing it just because that’s where an audience that you’re to reach is, and you’re hoping they will hear our message and then come back to your site? What does success look like on a platform like that?

Others highlighted how their approach had changed over time, with the The Texas Tribune’s Emily Ramshaw noting that “two years ago we were streaming all of our own events live and on our website, and now we’re using Facebook [Live] to do the bulk of what we do.”

Opportunities for engagement, built around the inherent proximity to the audience which small-market newspapers enjoy, were among the key reasons why many of our interviewees were more optimistic about the fu-

ture than perhaps we had expected. These characteristics contributed to the contrasting opinions expressed by many about the future for metros.

As a former editor at a major metro and also a small-market newspaper reflected:

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

There are those kinds of opportunities in smaller newspapers that aren't there at larger ones. So, I think that forming that type of relationship with the community is still there in smaller papers. And I think it's more difficult in the metro markets.

Objectivity, advocacy, and solutions

Alongside a growing interest in the opportunities presented by partnerships and engagement, a number of interviewees also shared with us some of their evolving thoughts on their wider journalistic philosophy. These conversations touched on a number of issues including objectivity, advocacy, and the emergence of newer journalistic practices such as solutions journalism.¹⁴⁰

The physical closeness to their audience enjoyed by small-market newspapers has previously presented challenges for some journalists. One editor described how, in a bid to be detached and impartial, journalists can sometimes live “like a monk” outside of the newsroom.

Nowadays, there's an increasing sense that this level of abstinence and community celibacy isn't necessarily needed. Local journalists can still be active in their community and indeed advocate for it, several interviewees argued, without jeopardizing their journalistic integrity.

In keeping with this, we heard a growing recognition—and level of comfort—with the notion that local journalists are part of the community they are reporting on. They bump into readers while getting coffee, picking their kids up at school, or shopping for groceries.

“To pretend that you can't, or pretend that you don't live in the community that you cover, and that you're not affected by the events that you're reporting on, and that you have a stake in them, it's ludicrous,” argued Joel Christopher.

In the process of accepting the implications of this dynamic, small-market newspapers are finding they are able to open themselves up to newer ideas such as solutions journalism,¹⁴¹ by not just shining a light on problems, but on potential remedies, too.

The Seattle Times, with its Education Lab initiative,¹⁴² has been active in the solutions space for some time.¹⁴³ Others are following in its footsteps.¹⁴⁴

Under Joel Christopher's stewardship, for example, Gannett's ten Wisconsin papers embarked on "Kids in Crisis,"¹⁴⁵ a statewide examination of mental health issues related to children and teenagers. Alongside traditional reporting methods, the papers "advocated clearly and explicitly for changes that we think that need to be enacted in the state," Christopher recalled—an editorial approach which he believes is part of evolving journalistic practice at some local newspapers.

"Would we have done that ten years ago? Hell, no," he said. "I don't think we would've. I have no problem with [this]. I don't think it in any way changed [the] journalism because of fear of losing objectivity or becoming an advocate. I think it actually focused and strengthened the reporting."

Impact aside, Keith Hammonds, president and COO at the Solutions Journalism Network, also argued that this model can be more satisfying for reporters:

Reporters and editors in this project have discovered is that doing these deeper feature stories with a solution orientation . . . [are] also more meaningful to journalists. There is a manifest leap that you take from doing the rogue reporting on school boards and police blotter to doing a deeply reported piece that not only addresses concerns in the community, but attaches those concerns to pathways to constructive discussion.

Final thoughts on evolving principles and philosophies

Recognizing the opportunity for journalists and newspapers to have a wider impact on their community beyond just meeting their information needs is nothing new. But as local publications search for ways to find a renewed

(and commercially viable) purpose, such approaches may become increasingly important.

Local journalism has the potential to be a platform for the entire community. Partnerships, engagement, and content that reappraise the role and appropriateness of advocacy and objectivity are all contributing to the reinvigoration of local journalism. And they are doing so without losing sight of journalism's core values and purposes.

As Lauren Gustus at the Coloradoan noted:

The lens through which we view our work is: How do we contribute to making Fort Collins the place we all want to live? And that doesn't mean we don't get critical. We certainly do. Sometimes it's advocacy and sometimes it's, "We have twenty breweries in town. You should try these five this week."

In an age of increasingly polarized and bi-partisan politics, coupled with a deep distrust in the media by some constituencies, small-market newspapers may have to double-down on their community value—going beyond simply reporting the news—to ensure that their importance and impact is understood, valued, and paid for.

This means not just reporting on the here and now, but also thinking about how newspapers can contribute to a wider societal good. It's a role, our interviews suggest, that many local journalists are already exploring and thinking about.

Ten Key Takeaways: How Are Small-Market Newspapers Responding to Digital disruption?

Revenue

Small-market newspapers are still beholden to print, which typically accounts for seventy-five to eighty percent of revenue, but have slowly begun experimenting with a wide range of other income streams.

Alternative revenue sources include paywalls, events, media services, newsletters, and obituaries. Single-copy sales remain important for many smaller outlets.

Newspapers are also embracing opportunities to secure funding from other channels including foundations, crowdsourcing campaigns, eCommerce, and Google questionnaires. Financial success is likely to be reliant on a combination of these different revenue streams. Advertising alone is unlikely to suffice.

Digital

Small-market newspapers use social media, but there is some unease about this relationship, driven by uncertain revenue models and time constraints.

Metro and national newspapers have more runway with social and digital, due to larger reach and newsroom capacity, although they too are working with unproven business models in this space.

Video is a popular digital tool for small-market newspapers and one that journalists are keen to learn more about.

Distribution and Revenue models

The weekly publishing model allows newspapers the chance to take a step back and provide a different perspective on the news from local TV and daily newspapers. But the model faces challenges from shifting consumer

behavior as news habits increasingly become 24/7 with expectations of information immediacy.

The prominence and establishment of digital tools and audiences requires even small-market newspapers, and the journalists working within them, to continually expand their skillsets.

Given these production pressures, which typically play out against a background of reduced human resources, partnerships between local news organizations and other entities (ranging from NGOs to journalism schools and community partners) are more important than ever.

Moving beyond traditional models of reader engagement can help to retain and grow audiences, as well as unlock new revenue streams. From a storytelling perspective, this can mean reporting on solutions to issues rather than just reporting on the problems. It can also mean organizing paid and unpaid events that create opportunities for face-to-face engagement, and deepen relationships and help unlock new stories and sources in the process.

How Can Small-Market Newspapers Best Prepare for the Future?

The primary audience for this report is the local newspaper industry. Our intention, from the outset, was to produce insights, intelligence, and inspiration that might inform the work of local journalists, editors, and industry leaders.

With that in mind, based on our interviews and analysis, in this section we outline nine strategic priority areas for industry leaders, as local newspapers continue to respond to the ongoing challenges of digital disruption. The ability to address these challenges is dependent on a myriad of existing preconditions, including the working culture, ownership, structures, and business models found at different papers.

These considerations each play a role in the ability of a paper to pivot in a different direction. When assessing the health, vibrancy, and capacity for change of a small-market newspaper, it's important to understand the structure of their business model. It is with business models, therefore, that this section begins. The structure of a business is often the foundation from which everything else flows. This context needs to be appreciated before passing judgement on the health and vitality of any newspaper.

Factors such as ownership models, frequency of publication, and geographic location will vary from paper to paper. The experience of rural titles, for example, is often very different than their more urban counterparts in terms of competition and news plurality,¹⁴⁶ the size of the local ad market, and the penetration and availability of digital technologies.¹⁴⁷

Context: The Impact, Influence, and Importance of Business Models

In terms of many legacy outlets, editor-in-chief of The Texas Tribune, Emily Ramshaw observed that meeting the challenges of digital disruption is “like trying to turn a cruise liner.” These outlets often have deeply entrenched working practices and newsroom cultures, which can make it difficult for them to be fleet of foot.

Potential challenges for traditional operators to navigate include legacy costs such as trucks, printing presses, labor contracts, and large (often increasingly empty) buildings. Many of these outlets are also heavily union-

ized, which may impact their ability to pivot to digital or simply do things differently.

Digital-born outlets such as The Texas Tribune, Billy Penn, and smaller outlets such as Charlottesville Tomorrow don't have to contend with many of these same considerations. But they also have to build an audience, reputation, and advertiser base from scratch. That's not easy.

What this means is that you're not necessarily comparing like for like, and we're certainly not advocating that any one approach is better than the other. Rather, as we have argued throughout our research for this project, there is incredible diversity in this sector and one must consider the experience of small-market newspapers in a more nuanced manner.¹⁴⁸ The successes or failures of different local news outlets need to be placed in their full and proper context.

With that in mind, below is an overview of some of the key ways news organizations are responding to the business model challenges created by digital disruption. This context is important to understand when one is critical—or appreciative—of the way in which specific titles have responded to the challenges in front of them.

The experience of larger groups

Many larger newspaper chains continue to remain heavily tethered to their print product. This is not surprising given the proportion of revenue print continues to generate and the cultural legacy of print in shaping “group think.”

However, declining audiences and revenues mean that the infrastructure at most of these outlets needs to change if they are to be sustainable. This has typically meant layoffs,¹⁴⁹¹⁵⁰ centralization,¹⁵¹ selling off property,¹⁵² and changes in ownership¹⁵³ as different groups seek to crack the code of how to successfully run profitable newspaper chains in the twenty-first century.

For larger groups, centralization has unlocked benefits in terms of group ad buys, opportunities for corporate purchases and deployment of content management systems (CMS), metrics software and other expensive technological solutions, as well as the chance to share content across the group.

However, there are potential downsides, too, particularly in terms of a

loss of local control, oversight from people unfamiliar with an area (which has led to copy errors, several editors told us), and the risk of producing an homogeneous product.¹⁵⁴

Gerry O'Brien, editor of the Herald and News in Oregon's Klamath Falls (population 21,399)—part of the Pioneer News Group, which owns twenty-three daily and weekly newspapers in Washington, Idaho, Montana, Utah, and Oregon—gave us an honest assessment of this dynamic, saying, "Some of it's beneficial . . . it's a lot more efficient and it kind of forces you to hit your deadlines a little bit sooner in the day. But you kind of lose that local flavor, too, sometimes without a local paginator or copy editor."

Alongside criticism from some interviewees of these types of changes, which included the observation that many centralized functions were seldom resourced to cope with the volume of work expected/needed of them, others were critical about the profit levels being sought at commercially owned entities. Such outcomes, they suggested, could only be achieved at the cost of reduced investment or a further "hollowing out" of titles.

"They're not using the money to invest in anything else," argued Matt DeRienzo, who as executive director for LION represents the interests of the country's Local Independent Online News Publishers. The aim of these groups, he said, "is just to milk as much profit out of the franchise until it dies."

Of course, such a sentiment is not applicable everywhere, and commercial groups would no doubt contest this claim. Nonetheless, we noted different expectations at smaller, particularly family owned groups. In these settings, anticipated profit margins appear to be smaller and the success drivers are, perhaps, more complex and varied than they are at larger profit-driven entities responsible to shareholders.

This is not to say that larger publicly listed groups do not continue to do good journalistic work, they just operate in a different sphere than independent and family-owned titles. Their business model allows for centralization and group buys and sales, but also often comes with different expectations in terms of financial return.

Smaller groups and standalones

Given the challenging economics of the sector, there are those who expressed concern about the long-term well-being of smaller, independent news outlets. “I couldn’t be more worried for newsrooms that are on their own. I don’t know if that’s viable anymore,” said Joel Christopher, executive editor/vice president of news at the Courier-Journal in Louisville, Kentucky.

Christopher, who spoke to us while overseeing Gannett’s newspapers in Wisconsin, highlighted the challenge smaller newsrooms face in keeping on top of essential technological advances:

I think of a newsroom like some of our small ones, if those were a family-owned newspaper, they’d never be able to stay on top of the changes in technology that your newsroom has to be on top of to remain vital. So I think the network model is inevitable and necessary . . . I don’t think economically that there’s any model that exists anymore that would allow an individual newsroom in a small- or mid-size community to survive, even a metro, frankly, long term.

Others, such as Charlotte Agenda’s Ted Williams, noted the challenge for smaller outlets to produce major investigative journalism, given the lead time and cost associated with it. “That is one of the most difficult things to finance,” he conceded.

These are valid concerns. But there remains plenty of cases where smaller newspapers are producing quality reporting, as well as embracing technological innovation. In the past year, for example, The Storm Lake Times of Storm Lake, Iowa,, a twice-weekly paper with a staff of nine¹⁵⁵ won¹⁵⁶ the 2017 Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing.¹⁵⁷ On the innovation front, the Herald and News in Klamath Falls is experimenting with 360 video content¹⁵⁸ and Augmented Reality (AR),¹⁵⁹ while the Des Moines Register was an early virtual reality (VR) pioneer.¹⁶⁰ Other titles are being similar bold and impactful.¹⁶¹

One unequivocal benefit for many smaller outlets is that they often have more control over their look and feel, as well as their editorial vision, than their larger cousins.

Mark Zusman, editor and publisher of Willamette Week in Portland, Oregon, and co-founder of the City of Roses Newspaper Company¹⁶²

(which also owns the Santa Fe Reporter in New Mexico and Indy Week in The Triangle area of North Carolina) reflected on his own experience in this space, saying, “To the extent that we succeed, it’s because we recognize that those papers shouldn’t be cookie-cutter, identical replicas of what we have in Portland, but those papers have to be created, and formulated, and driven by the people who live and work in that market.”

In contrast, as one senior executive at a major group complained to us, “There’s a lot of those decisions that are being made for papers of this size thousands of miles away.”

We also found that smaller organizations are not necessarily disadvantaged in terms of ad buys either, an often cited benefit of being part of a larger chain.

One potential solution, as proselytized by Rusty Coats from the Local Media Consortium, is the networked model offered by his coalition.¹⁶³ With more than seventy-five company members representing 1,700-plus titles and board level input from senior executives at established local media operators such as the McClatchy Company, Lee Enterprises, Digital First Media, and others, this offers potential revenue and learning benefits for smaller publishers.

As Coats explained, “We have an exchange of our inventory that’s available to major buyers, like Honda, Disney—major brands who buy our non-locally sold inventory . . . With one buy, they can have access to upwards of two billion impressions . . . Think about the scale of that.”

Why your business model matters

It’s clear that both types of organization have their place in the local media landscape. Depending on which side of the fence you sit, there are strengths and weaknesses to these business models. We are not arguing that any one approach is better than the other.

All business models still have to contend with fundamental structural issues such as financial sustainability, capturing audience attention, and continued relevancy.

Moreover, a key challenge for both large and small news organizations remains having capacity to implement new ideas, coupled with the need

to determine whether the potential benefits merit the time and energies invested in making them work (if they work at all).

This means that businesses need to be able to try new ideas, and have both license to fail, and to fail fast. As The Dallas Morning News's Robyn Tomlin admitted, "Nobody wants to put all your eggs in one basket. But not to be trying and testing and learning is probably equally risky."

Nine Strategic Questions for Industry Leaders

In this section we outline some of the key questions leaders should be asking about their revenue and content strategies. This list is by no means exhaustive, but it draws on areas where small-market newspapers are best placed to reinvent and reinvigorate themselves.

1. How can you best focus on original reporting?

Given the changes seen across the industry in the past decade, including job losses, the shuttering of titles, and challenge of often needing to produce more with less, our interviewees were surprisingly optimistic about the future of local news and newspapers.

One reason for this was a recognition that, in many cases, the work local newspaper journalists produce is seldom replicated elsewhere. In addition, many local papers deliver value to their community that goes beyond mere content. Respondents to our 2016–17 survey observed, for example, that "a lot of people, a lot of non-newspaper people, take for granted the role that the newspaper plays in their community."

As we have previously observed, "Somewhere between forty-five percent and eighty-five percent of all original reporting is done by the newspaper and then picked up by other media. As Christopher Ali said when quoted in a recent article by Chris Sutcliffe, 'Well, the hyperlocal blogs will pick it up,' these blogs haven't been taking it all up and don't usually exist in smaller [or more disadvantaged] communities."¹⁶⁴

The volume and value of local reporting originating from papers remains incredibly important to the wider news ecosystem, a fact which funders

and polymakers should not overlook—indeed they need only look at media deserts to see the impact of their absence.¹⁶⁵

This impact offers potential cause for optimism, as does the notion espoused by Al Cross that “the kinds of things people get from a local newspaper are the kinds of things that people will continue to want one hundred years from now.” He continued, “What’s going on within my locality? What’s happening with my school system? What’s happening with my taxes? What’s happening with planning and zoning? What kind of businesses or jobs might we get? It’s only the local newspaper that is likely to be the consistently reliable source of that information.”

By focusing on creating content not provided elsewhere, local newspapers will be best placed to offer a proposition that audiences may be willing to pay for.

2. What is the master narrative of your community? Can you own it?

In almost every industry interview we conducted, participants admitted their newsrooms had shrunk in recent years. Yet, at the same time, in many cases the demands on those newsrooms had grown. One key reason for this is the need to produce content for digital channels. As a result, many journalists are producing more content than they were two to three years ago, with a sizable number also working longer hours.¹⁶⁶

Despite these challenges, most titles continue to take a “general store” approach to local news, endeavoring to maintain the same breadth (and depth) of coverage as they have in the past.

With often dramatically reduced resources, this is not always viable. We therefore encourage local newspapers to consider which beats they want to own, and which they want to approach differently, if at all.

As Billy Penn founder Jim Brady told us, in this day and age “you can do anything, but you cannot do everything.” Some outlets have begun to recognize this. For example, The Columbian in Vancouver, Washington, now uses wire services to cover basketballs games featuring the Portland Blazers, whereas in the past a dedicated staff reporter covered this beat. Other titles outlined how beats, such as the arts, had evolved to incor-

porate user-generated content, with the arts editor now often overseeing citizen reporters instead of paid journalists.

At a time where smaller newsrooms are the new normal, small-market newspapers need to change approach to reflect this resource-limited reality. That means determining which beats to own, and which beats must be dropped or produced differently. This also means deciding how much regional, national, and/or wire service news to carry, if any at all.

It is unique content which is most likely to ensure the continued prosperity and existence of local newspapers. Content from outside of the locality may continue to be useful to readers, but if it can be ascertained from a myriad of other sources then editors need to consider if this non-local content is the best use of their limited resources.

The challenges for newsrooms in this regard are threefold: bringing your remaining staff with you on this journey, communicating the rationale for changes to your audiences, and determining the best way to find what your “master narrative” should be.

3. What are the metrics telling you? To what extent does this matter?

Publications have access to a variety of tools which can help inform their digital output, including helping to define what the master narrative of their community may be. Analytics can also help determine which beats to potentially drop or refocus, as well as develop an understanding of what non-local content audiences are viewing.

This is obviously harder to replicate for the print product. And with print continuing to be the primary income source for most publishers, newspapers need to walk a tightrope between “respecting print, whilst growing digital.”¹⁶⁷

Nonetheless, tools ranging from Google Analytics to Chartbeat, Pars.ly, and Omniture can all play a role in helping newsrooms more effectively utilize their digital product. What these tools may tell you, however, is not necessarily what newsrooms want to hear. It may suggest that certain beats or types of stories are unpopular, and that fresh approaches to storytelling should be deployed.

Levi Pulkkinen, senior editor at Seattle PI, suggested this might mean

doing less incremental reporting, and reporting where “the newspaper isn’t this kind of serialized thing that you have to read everyday for it to make sense.” That should not be conflated with dumbing down.

Pulkkinen explained, “I think there’s a danger that as journalists, when we’re told that we need to care about metrics and we need to care about growing our uniques, getting that social engagement, there’s a danger that we write that off as just that we’re being told to do stupid things that people will share.”

He added, “People like smart things. Our experience has been that smart things do just fine. What doesn’t do well are boring things and uninteresting things.”

Newsrooms have access to more data than ever, but sometimes the conclusions from this can make for uncomfortable reading. Understanding which metrics matter, and what they are telling you, is a question that every newsroom needs to be asking more frequently.

4. Can partnerships help you deliver some of your goals?

Against a backdrop of dwindling resources, partnerships are already becoming increasingly important for many local newsrooms. In some rare occurrences, downsizing at a traditional paper can actually lead to innovative partnerships such as the one between the Daily Progress and the digitally native Charlottesville Tomorrow (Charlottesville, Virginia).

The role that thirteen journalism schools played in ProPublica’s Electionland initiative reporting on voter fraud¹⁶⁸ demonstrated the potential for mobilizing large numbers of J-Schools and students to support national organizations (like ProPublica) and their partners (such as NPR stations and the Gannett papers in the USA Today network). Although a highly complex project,¹⁶⁹ the model could be adapted for other events.

Partnerships can help maintain coverage levels in the face of diminishing newsrooms and support efforts to experiment with new content forms such as the AR and 360 video work¹⁷⁰ produced by Digital Media Design students at Klamath Community College, and then published by the Herald and News in Klamath Falls, Oregon. We have also seen partnerships support pan-group campaigns, like Gannett Wisconsin’s “Kids in Crisis” ini-

70 Local Journalism Survey

tiative, and create opportunities for local newspapers to join larger groups - via organizations such as the Local Media Alliance—when selling advertising inventory.

Although partnership work can be challenging, it can produce many potential benefits. Arguably, one of the best ways to overcome reticence in this space is to just get started. As Josh Stearns at the Democracy Fund reflected:

Once people start feeling that momentum, that critical mass, then they realize that there's people [who] shared [a] struggle with them and there's possibly shared solutions, and that becomes the foundation for possible collaborations and partnerships, and that strengthens them in general. You know, they're looking out for each other, they're keeping in touch, they're sharing information.

5. Do you have the right structure, staff, and skills mix?

Following an extensive period of buyouts and restructuring, last year The Dallas Morning News reorganized primarily around verticals, with the result being that fifty percent of the newsroom found itself in different jobs than they had the year before. “We redefined every single job,” said vice president and managing editor Robyn Tomlin, “and then we had everybody on staff reapply for jobs.”

The move reflected a recognition that to move forward the paper need a different emphasis. Following the restructure, there's now a dedicated team “that handles social, and newsletters, and the homepage, and all of the different distributed media platforms that we're experimenting with,” Tomlin said. “And we eliminated whole departments that we had. We added new ones. For instance, we did not previously have an audience team,” she added, noting that previously “audience development was nobody's full-time job.”

Other papers have undertaken similar steps, restructuring to ensure that new priorities, including engagement and work with distributed platforms, are given the resources they need to suit evolving needs and priorities.

Meanwhile, many of the new skills that newsrooms are looking for can be found among graduates and newer entrants to the industry.¹⁷¹ However,

attraction and retention is a challenge due to pay, fit with the communities you are based in (especially an issue for young people and those from diverse backgrounds), and newsroom culture.

6. Are you making the right tech calls?

The impact of the Facebook and Google duopoly on the news industry continues to be a hot topic.¹⁷² And while this remains important, news organizations need to also consider the impact of the next iteration of digital disruption.

Speaking at the Global Editors Network (GEN) Summit in Vienna this June, futurist Amy Webb suggested that “because we can’t anticipate what’s on the horizon, our brain goes into a direction that maybe is not the best for us, and certainly is not good for journalism.”¹⁷³

“New technology freaks us out,” Webb continued, but that doesn’t mean we can ignore it. The recent announcement that Google is working in the United Kingdom with the Press Association and Urbs Media, an automation software startup, to automate the writing of 30,000 local news stories a month¹⁷⁴¹⁷⁵ gives some indication of what might happen next. Whether this scares or excites you doesn’t matter. News outlets, including local providers, need to get their heads in the tech game.

The Dallas Morning News has used IP-tracking as a means to avoid having a “one-size-fits-all” paywall. As Tomlin explained, “If you are coming from an IP that is in the DFW/DMA (Dallas Fort Worth/Dallas Metropolitan Area), you can actually read more articles before you hit the meter, even though those people are the most likely to pay for the journalism we do.”

It’s easier to sell inventory against local audiences,¹⁷⁶ Tomlin contends, and this is the readership that the paper is most keen to develop and maintain a relationship with.

Meanwhile in 2016, Willamette Week of Portland, Oregon, became the first newspaper to license The Washington Post’s digital content management system (CMS), Arc.¹⁷⁷ Other papers, such as the Alaska Dispatch News and the Tampa Bay Times, followed.¹⁷⁸

The move, editor and publisher of Willamette Week Mark Zusman told us, came about by accident. “I just called up the Post and asked them.”

72 Local Journalism Survey

As Zusman conceded, “there were some challenges,” but this would be expected with any migration to a new CMS. “But all things considered, because we’ve done this before, it was a smoother transition than we’ve had in the past, and the result is well, well worth it. We now have a CMS that is flexible, fast, very intuitive, and our traffic is up as a consequence. So, we’re very happy with it.”

7. What opportunities for income diversification can you realize?

Most small-market newspapers will not be able to survive based on their traditional mix of subscriptions, advertising, and single-copy sales. Multiple income streams will be essential if outlets are to secure the stablest future possible.

“We’ve really tried to spread the love around,” said editor-in-chief of The Texas Tribune Emily Ramshaw, “so we’re not beholden to those single-source funding streams.” Other outlets, larger and smaller, have adopted similar strategies, pouring the profits from events, media services, and other activities into paying for local journalism.

Conversely, some titles have also recognized that they have unique content which potentially resonates beyond a local catchment area. One such example, identified by Christian Hendricks, corporate vice president of products, marketing, and innovation at McClatchy, is The State in South Carolina, which has featured a paid-for vertical around college sports,¹⁷⁹ including the University of South Carolina Gamecock football games.¹⁸⁰

As Hendricks acknowledged, this case study “points to a small newspaper allocating resources towards something in the marketplace that’s unique and they can actually cover very well, not just for the folks who live in the city or live in Columbia proper, or go to the university, but to global fans.”

It is unclear if this paywall is still in place, but the principle—developing paywalls for verticals with a wider geographic reach—is one other titles can potentially replicate and learn from.

8. How can you make time to experiment?

“Newspaper companies were never really thought of as spending a lot of time and effort on R&D,” said Willamette Week’s Zusman,. “And yet,

that's exactly what companies like ours need to do . . . There are a lot of opportunities to shift the business model. They take a little bit of time and a little bit of runway."

That license to experiment and invest in innovation could manifest itself in a number of different ways, from both technology to people. Robert York, publisher and editor-in-chief of *The Morning Call* in Allentown, Pennsylvania (part of tronc), offered some practical tips for media organizations to ensure that they are able to accommodate this approach. To do so, however, you need some headroom.

"My view is we really want everybody in our companies to be running at about eighty percent of capacity every day so that when we have new ideas we're not taking someone who's already at one hundred and ten-percent capacity and taking them up to one thirty."

Avoiding scope creep is essential, if you're to make this ambition a reality.

York, who previously spent twenty years in various roles at the San Diego Union Tribune, also shared our view on the importance of having a clear sense of what you will and will not do. With newsrooms often smaller than they were before, this sense of rationalization is important. "You just have to be willing to take a look and measure the actual value, both real and perceived by your audience, and decide to spend your time doing things that matter to them, and stop spending your time on stuff that they're not even looking at."

9. What can you do to stop talking your industry down?

A recurring theme in many conversations with industry practitioners, as well as our 2016–17 survey, was a need to change the conversation. If local newspapers keep talking about themselves as a "dying industry," then they risk creating this reality.

As Gannett's Joel Christopher told us: "I think we've had this self-fulfilling prophecy where we've told our readers that we're dying and therefore we're dispensable."

This doesn't mean that the economic realities the sector faces should be glossed over, but local newspapers need to do more to showcase and

74 Local Journalism Survey

reiterate the great work they're doing, as well as explain the tough choices and bumpy road ahead of them.

The industry is wounded, but not fatally so. It's time we started telling audiences that.

Ten Key Takeaways: How Can Small-Market Newspapers Best Prepare for the Future?

Business Models

Business models influence the ability of small-market newspapers to respond to digital disruption. Chain ownership can bring security and resources, but may also bring with it homogeneity and a lack of local autonomy. Independent and family ownership meanwhile potentially offer greater flexibility, but with more limited resources and institutional support.

At a time where many newsrooms are under pressure to produce more with less, partnerships can play a valuable role in helping with outreach, content, and product development. We expect partnerships to become a more prominent feature at small-market newspapers.

Original reporting may lie at the heart of potentially successful business models for small-market newspapers, due to the opportunity to provide valuable news and information which is not being replicated elsewhere. At a time of information overload, offering unique content may be the best way forward.

Aside from focusing on providing original reporting, it's likely that the revenue equation will only be successfully addressed if small-market newspapers actively diversify their income sources. All outlets need to be exploring these avenues.

Content

The local newspaper of tomorrow may have to look very different than the one of yesteryear. Due to diminished resources and competition from other information providers, small-market newspapers may need to be more selective in the beats they cover. It is in this context that we encourage outlets to define and own the “master narrative” of their community.

Analytics tools can be valuable for identifying audience passions and for

76 Local Journalism Survey

shaping coverage of certain stories and beats. However, the value and impact of local journalism can go beyond mere metrics. Therefore, while useful and informative, newsrooms should not be beholden to these tools as they do not tell the full story.

Making sense of metrics and producing content differently (with a narrower focus, but using a broader range of storytelling and distribution methods) means that newsrooms will need to continue to evolve in their thinking and practice. The structures, staff, and skills mix required to successfully execute this strategy will need to be regularly reassessed, as needs and priorities change and develop.

Technological bets will become increasingly important, due to their role in improving workflow and distribution. Key considerations for publishers include investments in Content Management Systems and other digital work tools, as well as which platforms they use to reach and engage with audiences.

Culture

Given all of the uncertainty that small-market newspapers and other media face, carving out time to experiment is vital. Adopting an entrepreneurial mindset, creating an environment which allows organizations to “fail fast,” but which also encourages testing new ideas (some of which may take off) will be important from both a content and revenue perspective. All newspapers, regardless of their size, need to adopt this mindset.

Small-market newspapers are operating in a difficult climate, but they’re not dead yet. In fact, they continue to provide considerable value to communities and the wider news ecology. We need to do a better job of telling this story, so that the impact and successes of small-market newspapers is better understood and heard. If we want audiences and policymakers to realize this, and to invest in the sector’s future, then telling them the the industry is moribund will not help.

Concluding Remarks

Digital disruption has transformed the media landscape over the past decade. As a result, the business models for most newspapers are very different than they were ten years ago. And if they're not, they will soon need to be.

Trends such as decreasing revenues from display sales, and an increasing proportion of revenue stemming from digital and emerging areas such as events, will continue. Moreover, the disruption we have seen will not cease; it will be a constant theme across the media landscape as new technologies such as augmented reality (AR), machine learning, artificial intelligence (AI), and analytics become more prominent and commonplace.¹⁸¹¹⁸²¹⁸³

Alongside these technological challenges and the continued disruption of the traditional business model for local newspapers, media outlets are competing for attention as never before. News, information, and entertainment sources are no longer scarce commodities. Again, this clock cannot be turned back.

As a result, if local media outlets want to reverse the revenue declines and declining (paying) audiences that many of them are experiencing, it is incumbent on them to work even harder to diversify their revenue base, and to find new ways to tell stories and engage communities. The future of small-market newspapers will depend on making the right strategic bets, and being open to the new content and revenue opportunities which may present themselves. We are optimistic about this, although we also recognize that there will continue to be pain and further adjustment as small-market newspapers continue find their way in this brave new digital world.

The prosperity of local journalism is likely to be reliant upon a broad, diverse revenue base, incorporating a mixture of traditional advertising (print/digital); physical sales and subscriptions; alternative income sources from new activity such as crowdfunding and membership schemes; and support from funders such as community foundations, NGOs, and statutory agencies.

It will also require small-market local newspapers, often the only source of original reporting in a community, to double down on offering unique content: news and information which is not replicated by other digital and traditional sources. In doing this, these outlets can offer distinctive content that some audiences, at least, will continue to pay for.

80 Local Journalism Survey

Small-market newspapers—by being bold, engaging, and offering content and information of value to their communities—can continue to be a monument to the past, present, and future of the areas they serve.

Their future is not certain, and the road ahead will continue to be rocky and unpredictable. But the foundations of small-market newspapers are more solid than some people, including local journalists and local audiences, may realize. If all news is local, then this sector will continue to matter for a long time to come.

This is a story we need to tell better. Alongside communicating more effectively to audiences (a group which includes readers, funders, and policymakers), the local newspaper sector also needs to tell its own story better to its peers. Our interviewees were consistently curious to hear about case studies and examples from other outlets across the country, suggesting a paucity of such content. We hope this study helps to plug some of that gap.

We share the cautious optimism about the future for small-market newspapers expressed by many of our interviewees.

We hope you do, too.

About the Authors

Damian Radcliffe is a professor of practice and the Carolyn S. Chambers Professor in Journalism at the University of Oregon; a Fellow of the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia University; an Honorary Research Fellow at Cardiff Universitys School of Journalism, Media, and Culture Studies; and a Fellow of the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce (RSA).

Prior to joining the University of Oregon in 2015, he spent twenty years working in the United Kingdom and the Middle East in local radio (including a multi-award-winning partnership between the NGO Volunteering Matters and the BBC English Regions), TV, digital media, and media regulation. Follow him on Twitter: @damianradcliffe

Dr. Christopher Ali is an assistant professor in the Department of Media Studies at the University of Virginia and a Fellow of the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia University. He joined the department in 2013, after completing his Ph.D. at the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania.

He is the author of *Media Localism: The Policies of Place* (University of Illinois Press, 2017). His next book, *Farm Fresh Spectrum: Rural Interventions in Media Policy*, is an investigation into the relationship between farming communities and communication policy in North America. Follow him on Twitter: @Ali_Christopher

Appendices

Appendix I: List of Interviewees

For this report, our research conclusions are grounded in the insights we gleaned from interviews with fifty-three industry leaders and experts. These were predominantly collected during the summer of 2016, with additional interviews taking place in the first half of 2017.

Although small-market newspapers are the primary research focus for this study, we spoke to newspapers and news outlets of varying sizes (including those outside of our small-market cohort) so that their experiences can inform and inspire readers of this report.

Interviewees represented a range of news operations and perspectives, including urban- and rural-focused outlets, commercial and nonprofit organizations, as well as new entrants and long-established players. We also spoke to funders, consultants, and academics who are all deeply steeped in this space.

Due to frequent turnover and changes in roles, titles, and affiliations, some of these will have changed since our interviews were conducted. As best as possible, we have sought to indicate this in the text, while also highlighting the affiliations of each interviewee at the time we spoke to them. The affiliations below relate to those at the time of interview, which we believe is important to understand the context of these invaluable contributions.

- Al Cross, University of Kentucky and Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues
- Amalia Nash, Des Moines Register (IA)
- Andrew Johnson, Dodge County Pionier (WI)
- Andy Putz, MinnPost (MN)
- Billy Coleburn, Blackstone Courier-Record (VA)
- Brian Wheeler, Charlottesville Tomorrow (VA)
- Caitlyn May, Cottage Grove Sentinel (OR)
- Christian Hendricks, McClatchy
- Emily Ramshaw, The Texas Tribune (TX)
- Eric Gordon, Emerson University
- Gerry O'Brien, Herald and News (OR)
- James Morehead, Google

86 Local Journalism Survey

- Jan Schaffer, J-Lab
- Jane Elizabeth, American Press Institute
- Jehangir Khattak, Center for Ethnic Media (NY)
- Jim Brady, Billy Penn (PA)
- Jim Simon, The Seattle Times (WA)
- Joel Christopher, Gannett Wisconsin (WI)
- Joel McNeece, Calhoun County Journal (MS)
- John Costa, Bend Bulletin (OR)
- Josh Stearns, Democracy Fund
- Joyce Terhaar, The Sacramento Bee (CA)
- Karen Penner, Center for Ethnic Media (NY)
- Keith Hammonds, Solutions Journalism Network
- Kevin Anderson, Independent Consultant (based in WI)
- Lauren Gustus, Coloradoan (CO)
- Laurenellen McCann, New America DC
- Lee Rainie, Pew Research Center
- Les Zaitz, The Oregonian (OR)
- Levi Pulkkinen, Seattle PI (WA)
- Liz Worthington, American Press Institute
- Logan Molen, The Register-Guard (OR)
- Lou Brancaccio, The Columbian (WA)
- Mark Zusman, Willamette Week (OR)
- Matt DeRienzo, Local Independent Online News Publishers (LION)
- Matt Powers, Washington University
- Michelle Ferrier, Ohio University
- Michelle McLellan, Creator of Michelle's List, Tow-Knight Center for Entrepreneurial Journalism
- Mike Barthel, Pew Research Center
- Mitch Ratchliffe, BIA Kelsey
- Morgan Holm, OPB (OR)
- Phil Napoli, Duke University
- Rick Edmonds, Poynter
- Rob Barrett, Hearst Newspapers
- Robert York, tronc
- Robyn Tomlin, The Dallas Morning News (TX)

- Rusty Coats, Local Media Consortium
- Sharon Chan, The Seattle Times (WA)
- Steve Waldman, Federal Communications Commission
- Ted Williams, Charlotte Agenda (NC)
- Tom Glaisyer, Democracy Fund
- Tom Grubisch, Street Fight
- Tom Slaughter, Inland Press

Appendix II: Interview Protocol

Preliminary Questions

For industry:

1. Tell us a little bit about the current status of your publication/group.

For experts:

1. Tell us a little bit about your involvement in local media, where your focus is, and why.

For all:

2. In your expert opinion, what is the state of the local newspaper industry in the United States?
3. What are the key challenges specifically facing rural, small, and medium-sized newspapers in the United States?
4. What are the key opportunities for rural, small, and medium-sized newspapers in the United States?

Best practice questions (Order can be flipped. Prompt for examples/specifics)

5. Do you know of any “success stories” involving small-market newspapers? We are interested in both business models and great journalism.
6. What “best practices” would you recommend for small-market newspapers seeking to better manage their digital and non-digital experiences?

Engagement

7. We hear a lot about the importance of engagement by both national and local media at present. What does engagement mean to you?
8. How can local media do this well? Do you have particular examples that you would like to share with us?

90 Local Journalism Survey

Policy/Intervention/Support

9. Assuming that local news is something we deem as necessary to survive, what interventions (policy, industry, civil society, etc.) what would you like to see done to strengthen local newspapers in the United States?

If required, use this space to also recap on strengths/weaknesses of industry.

Further Reading: Recent Research into Local Media and Newspapers

In addition to the academic work on local newspapers and local news more broadly, outside researchers from organizations like the Pew Center for Journalism Excellence, the Knight Foundation, the Federal Communications Commission, and others have all produced in-depth reports on the role and future of local news in American society.

While space limits what we can say of them, we have compiled an inventory of recent studies on local news, which we recommend reading:

Knight Commission (2009), “Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy.”

The report that launched interest in the information needs of communities. Among myriad findings, the key takeaway is that the digital age is not serving all communities equally in terms of local news and information.

New America Foundation (2010), “Information Community Case Studies”

Drawing inspiration from the Knight Commission Report, New America Foundation’s Media Policy Initiative set itself on conducting a series of “Community Information Case Studies,” investigating the local news ecosystems of five communities: Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota; Seattle, Washington; Washington, D.C.; Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina; and Scranton, Pennsylvania.

Exhaustive in its review, the authors investigated not only the traditional media voices in the community, but any voice delivering local news and information. This included print media, commercial broadcasting, public broadcasting, internet, social media, libraries, and local government websites. These findings were put into conversation with demographic and education information to address the question: do citizens and communities have all the information they want and need?

Federal Communications Commission (2011), “Information Needs of Communities”

92 Local Journalism Survey

Galvanized by Knight's report, the Federal Communications Commission conducted a thorough assessment of U.S. local news media. Culminating in "The Information Needs of Communities" (often referred to as the "Waldman Report") the FCC chronicled the changes in local news by medium (television, radio, print, web, mobile,) and also by cross currents (consumption practices, types of news, diversity).

The report noted the dramatic decline of legacy local news outlets and the corresponding gap in local news coverage, especially around what it called "accountability journalism." Digital journalism was not picking up the slack as was once hoped, it found. Digital media, the report suggested, had been both a blessing and curse to newspapers—allowing them to experiment with diverse ways of telling a story, but also placing them on the "hamster wheel" of constant production.

Pew Research Center (2011), "How People Learn about Their Local Community"

The Pew Foundation's report revealed that while newspapers currently remains a key destination for local news and information, most Americans would not miss it if it were to disappear.

The report was one of the first in the digital age to show an emerging generational gap in local news habits. Their research found that if an adult is over forty, then newspapers tend to remain the primary source for local news. If the adult is under forty, then the internet was likely to be the leading news source.

The report simultaneously demonstrates the ongoing decline of newspapers as a source of information, and hints at the emergence of trends—such as the growth of online news media—as a force to be reckoned with.

Communications Policy Research Network (2012), "Critical Information Needs of Communities"

A year after the publication of the Waldman Report, the FCC called for a report on the critical information needs of communities. A group of academics responded by producing a detailed literature review and report summarizing the types of information communities require. Namely: emergency

information, health, education, transportation, economic opportunities, environment, civic information, and political information.

Duke Reporters Lab (2014), “The Goat Must Be Fed: Why Digital Tools Are Missing in Most Newsrooms”

The focus with this report, and on the ones that followed, focused less on the overall health of the industry and more specifically on digital technologies, digital adoption, and sustainability. The authors found that the 24/7 news cycle (“feeding the goat”) inhibited editors from experimenting with new digital tools. Similarly, infrastructural and cultural barriers work in concert to stymie the adoption of low cost digital tools. Small newspapers, the study found, are less inclined than their larger counterparts to experiment with digital media.

Phil Napoli (2015), “Assessing the Health of Local Journalism Ecosystems”

While Duke focused on the tools of the trade, Phil Napoli and his team at Rutgers University revisited the questions about the information needs of communities—and the health of local media ecosystems—that were the hallmark of the Knight and FCC publications.

Their first report, on three ecosystems in New Jersey, endeavored to create and test a set of metrics to evaluate “the state of journalism in local communities.” They discovered that local news is often class-based. They concluded, in a finding which seems particularly resonant—and relevant—in the era of Trump’s America:

“Lower-income communities are dramatically underserved relative to wealthier communities, and in which lower-income communities receive the bulk of their news from a smaller range of sources” (page 6).

Pew Research Center (2015), “Local News in a Digital Age”

The Pew Research Center also adopted a case study-centric approach to its analysis of the news media ecosystems in Macon, Sioux City, and Denver. The findings suggest that the plurality of local news choices now available to many audiences diminishes the reliance on legacy media. But news consumers still turn to legacy outlets more than non-traditional outlets.

94 Local Journalism Survey

Specifically, local TV continues to command the greatest share of audience attention for local news and information.

Local News Lab (2016), “Lessons Learned from the Local News Lab”

Funded by the Dodge Foundation, the Local News Lab initiative fostered partnerships and experiments across New Jersey’s local news landscape, with a key focus on community engagement.

Key takeaways from these efforts included the potential for crowdsourcing (although caveated that this often only works for “one-off” projects), best practices for community engagement such as listening posts (which use cell phones to drive comments), and fostering a more networked ecosystem.

The report also mentioned the important role that philanthropic groups can potentially play in fostering—and supporting—a robust local news ecosystem.

Democracy Fund (2016), “Local News and Participation Map”

This project revisits the earlier themes around the information needs of communities, participation, and the relationship between local news and democracy, which dominated studies at the start of the decade.

Through its Local News & Participation Map, the project sought to visually chart the “dynamics influencing the public, news outlets, journalists, and others concerned with community information needs.”

Their interactive map allows users to click on a node (such as the “Engagement of the Public in Civic Affairs”) and find additional information such as factors that influence engagement, further research citations, and data.

Penelope Muse Abernathy (2016), “The Rise of a New Media Baron and the Emerging Threat of News Deserts”

Abernathy’s study focuses on the newest trend in newspaper ownership: hedge funds and trusts, and the growing concentration of the newspaper industry more generally.

A key finding here is that hedge fund owners are typically less engaged

with the local communities of the newspapers under their control and see them more as an investment to be bought and sold rather than a service.

Michele McLellan, Michele's List (ongoing)

Michele's List is a comprehensive repository of hyperlocal news sites across the country. Criteria for being listed are: content (original local news), practices, engagement, frequency, and sustainability.

Sites are searchable through a variety of filters and categories, allowing organizations to connect with one another, and providing researchers with an important database of hyperlocal news organizations.

Tow Center for Digital Journalism, Damian Radcliffe, Christopher Ali, Rosalind Donald, (2017), "Life at Small-Market Newspapers: Results from a Survey of Small-Market Newsrooms"

This study focuses on the use of digital tools and technology at small market newspapers.

Based on a survey with over 400 respondents representing small-market newspapers across the country, the authors found that digital engagement amongst these newspapers is far more complex than has previously given credit.

Penelope Muse Abernathy and the Center for Innovation and Sustainability in Local Media (UNC) (2017), "Thwarting the Emergence of News Deserts"

The newest report from Abernathy and her team at the Center for Innovation and Sustainability in Local Media focuses on the issue of news deserts—communities devoid of fresh local news and information. It is a collection of studies both updating their previous work and chronicling the role that local news media play in a variety of communities across the country.

Agora Journalism Center, Damian Radcliffe (2017), "Understanding Local News and Civic Engagement in the Pacific Northwest"

Focusing specifically on local news organizations based in the Pacific Northwest, this study highlights the reinvigoration of local journalism in the

96 Local Journalism Survey

region through innovative practices as well as digital—and real world—experiments with engagement.

Citations

1. Steven Waldman, "The Information Needs of Communities," Federal Communications Commission, 2011, <https://www.fcc.gov/document/information-needs-communities>.
2. Pew Research Center, "State of the News Media," Pew Research Center, 2017, <http://www.pewresearch.org/topics/state-of-the-news-media/>.
3. Stephanie Chen, "Newspapers Fold as Readers Defect and Economy Sours," CNN, 2009, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/US/03/19/newspaper.decline.layoff/index.html>.
4. Pew Research Center, "State of the News Media 2013," 2013, <http://www.pewresearch.org/topics/state-of-the-news-media/2013/>.
5. Christopher Ali Elihu Katz and Joohan Kim, *Echoes of Gabriel Tarde: What We Know Better or Different 100 Years Later* (Los Angeles: USC Annenberg Press, 2014), <https://books.google.com/books?id=aa6doAEACAAJ&dq=Echoes+of+Gabriel+Tarde&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjf9efz9NbVAhUEZCYKHdZFBfAQ6AEIKDAA>.
6. Robert E. Park, *The Immigrant Press and Its Control* (New York: Harper and Bros, 1922).
7. Morris Janowitz, *The Community Press in an Urban Setting: The Social Elements of Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952).
8. Jock Lauterer, *Community Journalism: Relentlessly Local* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2006).
9. Ibid.
10. Krissy Hess and Lisa Waller, *Local Journalism in a Digital World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
11. Herbert J. Gans, *Democracy and the News* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).
12. Steven Barnett, *Journalism, Democracy and the Public Interest: Rethinking Media Pluralism for the Digital Age* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Reuters Institute, 2009).
13. Ibid.
14. Penelope Muse Abernathy, *Saving Community Journalism: The Path to Profitability* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2014).
15. Jack M. McLeod et. al., "Community Integration, Local Media Use, and Democratic Processes," *Communication Research*, no. 2.0 (1996): 179-209, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/009365096023002002>.
16. Diatram A. Scheuefle Jack M. McLeod and Patricia Moy, "Community, Communication, and Participation: The Role of Mass Media and Interpersonal Discussion," *Political Communication*, no. 3.0 (1999): 330.0, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/105846099198659>.

100 Local Journalism Survey

17. Lee Shaker, "Dead Newspapers and Citizens' Civic Engagement," *Political Communication*, no. 1.0 (2014): 144.0, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10584609.2012.762817>.

18. Sam Schulhofer-Wohl Migueland Garrido, "Do Newspapers Matter? Short-Run and Long-Run Evidence from the Closure of the Cincinnati Post," Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, 2009, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w14817>.

19. Daniel Margolis, "Review of the Literature Regarding Critical Information Needs of the American Public," Communications Policy Research Network, 2012, <https://www.fcc.gov/news-events/blog/2012/07/25/review-literature-regarding-critical-information-needs-american-public>.

20. Abernathy, *Saving Community Journalism: The Path to Profitability*.

21. Lauterer, *Community Journalism: Relentlessly Local*.

22. Bernard Berelson, "What 'Missing the Newspaper' Means," *Communication Research*, 1948–1949, http://simson.net/ref/1948/What_missing_the_newspaper_means.pdf.

23. Hess and Waller, *Local Journalism in a Digital World*.

24. Phyllis Kaniss, *Making Local News* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

25. Jacqui Ewart, "Capturing the Heart of the Region—How Regional Media Defines a Community," *Transformations* (2000): 1–13, http://www.transformationsjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Transformations01_Ewart.pdf.

26. Irene Costera Meijer, "Democratizing Journalism? Realizing the Citizen's Agenda for Local News Media," *Journalism Studies*, no. 3.0 (2010): 327–342, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14616700903500256>.

27. Kristy Hess, "Breaking Boundaries: Recasting the 'Local' Newspaper as 'Geo-Social' News in a Digital Landscape," *Digital Journalism*, no. 1.0 (2013): 48–63, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/21670811.2012.714933>.

28. Ewart, "Capturing the Heart of the Region—How Regional Media Defines a Community."

29. J Hume, "Community Journalism and Community History," in *Foundations of Community Journalism*, ed. Bill Reader and eds. John A. Hatcher (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2012).

30. Bill Reader, "Community Journalism and Community History," in *Foundations of Community Journalism*, ed. Bill Reader and eds. John A. Hatcher (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2012).

31. Kaniss, *Making Local News*.

32. Hau Ling Cheng, "Constructing a Transnational, Multilocal Sense of Belonging: An Analysis of Ming Pao," *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, no. 2.0 (2005): 141–159, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0196859904273194?journalCode=jcia>.

33. Wan-Ying Lin and Hayeon Song, "Geo-Ethnic Storytelling: An Examination

of Ethnic Media Content in Contemporary Immigrant Communities,” *Journalism*, no. 3.0 (2006): 362–388, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249689807_Geo-ethnic_storytellingAn_examination_of_ethnic_media_content_in_contemporary_immigrant_communities1.

34. Maxwell McCombs Don Heider and Paula M. Poindexter, “What the Public Expects of Local News: Views on Public and Traditional Journalism,” *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, no. 4.0 (2005): 952–967, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/107769900508200412>.

35. Maxwell McCombs Paula M. Poindexter Don Heider, “Watchdog or Good Neighbor? The Public’s Expectations of Local News,” *International Journal of Press/Politics*, no. 1.0 (2006): 77–88, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1081180X05283795>.

36. David D. Kurpius, “Public Journalism and Commercial Local Television News,” *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, no. 2.0 (2000): 340–354, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/107769900007700208>.

37. Andrea Wenzel, “Engaging Communities Through Solutions Journalism,” Tow Center for Digital Journalism, 2016, <https://towcenter.org/new-report-engaging-communities-through-solutions-journalism-2/>.

38. Abernathy, *Saving Community Journalism: The Path to Profitability*.

39. Alex Jones, *Losing the News* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2009).

40. Journalism and Media Staff, “How News Happens,” Pew Research Center, 2010, <http://www.journalism.org/2010/01/11/how-news-happens/>.

41. R.K. Nielsen, “Local newspapers as keystone media,” in *Local Journalism: The Decline of Newspapers and the Rise of Digital Media*, ed. R Nielsen (London, United Kingdom: Rasmus Kleis Nielsen Tauris, 2015).

42. Jesse Holcomb Amy Mitchell and Rachel Weisel, “State of the News Media 2016,” Pew Research Center, 2016, <http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2016/06/30143308/state-of-the-news-media-report-2016-final.pdf>.

43. Rick Edmonds, “ASNE Stops Trying to Count Total Job Losses in American Newsrooms,” Poynter, 2016, <https://www.poynter.org/news/asne-stops-trying-count-total-job-losses-american-newsrooms>.

44. Amy Mitchell and Weisel, “State of the News Media 2016.”

45. Lauterer, *Community Journalism: Relentlessly Local*.

46. Adreana Young, “The Knight-Temple Table Stake Project Will Help Newsrooms Head Toward a Digital Future,” *Editor & Publisher*, 2016, <http://www.editorandpublisher.com/a-section/the-knight-temple-table-stake-project-will-help-newsrooms-head-toward-a-digital-future/>.

47. Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded The-*

ory: *Strategies for Qualitative Research* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1967).

48. Waldman, "The Information Needs of Communities."

49. Shannond Bond Matthew Garrahan and David Bond, "Newspaper Groups Join Forces to Deal with Facebook and Google," *Financial Times*, 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/3a03d584-657e-11e7-8526-7b38dcaef614>.

50. Philip M. Napoli et. al., 2015, <http://mpii.rutgers.edu/assessing-the-health-of-local-journalism-ecosystems/>.

51. The Media Deserts Project, <http://www.mediadeserts.com>.

52. Michele's List, <http://www.micheleslist.org/>, 2017.

53. Local News Lab, 2017, <https://localnewslab.org/>.

54. Josh Stearns and Teresa Gorman, "The Local Fix," Tiny Letter, <http://tinyletter.com/localfix/archive>.

55. *Columbia Journalism Review* Local News, https://www.cjr.org/local_news/.

56. Alessandro Portelli, "The Peculiarities of Oral History," *History Workshop Journal* (1981): 96–106, https://learn.gold.ac.uk/pluginfile.php/149949/mod_resource/content/0/Portelli_A_The_Peculiarities_of_Oral_History_.pdf.

57. C.W. Anderson, *Rebuilding the News: Metropolitan Journalism in the Digital Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013).

58. Robert McChesney, *Digital Disconnect* (New York: New Press, 2013).

59. Jahangi Karimi and Zhiping Walter, "The Role of Dyanmic Capabilities in Responding to Digital Disruption: A Factor-Based Study of the Newspaper Industry," *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 2015, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/07421222.2015.1029380?journalCode=mmis20>.

60. Tom Goodwin, "The Battle Is for the Customer Interface," TechCrunch, 2015, <https://techcrunch.com/2015/03/03/in-the-age-of-disintermediation-the-battle-is-all-for-the-customer-interface/>.

61. Amy Mitchell and Weisel, "State of the News Media 2016."

62. The Media Briefing, <https://www.themediabriefing.com/article/watch-retail-to-know-the-direction-of-local-media>.

63. Josh Stearns, "New Revenue for News," Medium, 2015, <https://medium.com/the-local-news-lab/new-revenue-for-news-52-ideas-to-support-local-journalism-1ee3720a7897>.

64. Molly de Aguiar and Josh Stearns, "Lessons from the Local News Lab-Part Two," The Local News Lab, 2016, <https://medium.com/the-local-news-lab/experimenting-with-new-business-models-for-local-news-2df83eb9a360>.

65. Mike Flacy, "Online Paywalls Are Becoming More Popular with Newspapers," Digital Trends, 2012, <https://www.digitaltrends.com/web/online-paywalls-are-becoming-more-popular-with-newspapers/>.

66. Staff, "Lee to Roll Out Paywalls by End of 2012," Net News Check, 2012,

<http://www.netnewscheck.com/article/17690/lee-to-roll-out-paywalls-by-end-of-2012>.

67. Lauren Indvik, "20% of Newspapers Now Have Online Paywalls," Mashable, 2012, <http://mashable.com/2012/08/28/us-newspapers-paywalls/#y4U7gM0oKmqB>.

68. Dan Monk, "Scripps Newspapers Adopting Paywalls," *Cincinnati Business Courier*, 2012, <https://www.bizjournals.com/cincinnati/blog/2012/11/scripps-newspapers-adopting-paywalls.html>.

69. Steve Buttry, "My Brief Take on Digital First's 'All-Access' Subscription Project," 2013, <https://stevebuttry.wordpress.com/2013/11/18/my-brief-take-on-digital-firsts-all-access-strategy/>.

70. Mathew Ingram, "John Paton Says What Most Media CEOs Won't about Paywalls—They Are a Short-Term Tactic at Best," 2013, <https://gigaom.com/2013/11/18/john-paton-says-what-most-media-ceos-wont-about-paywalls-they-are-a-short-term-tactic-at-best/>.

71. Ryan Chittum, "John Paton, the Gorbachev of Paywalls," *Columbia Journalism Review*, 2013, http://archives.cjr.org/the_audit/john_patons_digital_first_medi.php.

72. American Press Institute Alex T. Williams, <https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/author/alexwilliams/>.

73. Damian Radcliffe, "Key Insights into Newspaper Subscription Models in the U.S.," The Media Briefing, 2016, <https://www.themediabriefing.com/article/key-insights-into-newspaper-subscription-models-in-the-us>.

74. Joe Tone, "The Morning News Is 'Very Satisfied' with Year One of the Paywall. How 'Bout You?" *Dallas Observer*, 2012, <http://www.dallasobserver.com/news/the-morning-news-is-very-satisfied-with-year-one-of-the-paywall-how-bout-you-7107671>.

75. Damian Radcliffe and Christopher Ali, "If Small Newspapers Are Going to Survive, They'll Have to Be More Than Passive Observers to the News," Nieman Journalism Lab, 2017, <http://www.niemanlab.org/2017/02/if-small-newspapers-are-going-to-survive-theyll-have-to-be-more-than-passive-observers-to-the-news/>.

76. Sheryl Jean, "The Dallas Morning News to Launch New Premium Website for Subscribers," *The Dallas Morning News*, 2013, <http://www.dallasnews.com/business/business/2013/09/28/the-dallas-morning-news-to-launch-new-premium-website-for-subscribers>.

77. Brandon Formby, "Starting Today, DMN's Digital Readers Will See Limit on Free Articles," *The Dallas Morning News*, 2016, <https://www.dallasnews.com/business/business/2016/05/17/starting-today-dmns-prolific-digital-readers-will-see-limit-on-free-articles>.

78. Anna Clark, "Amid Big Changes in Philly Media, Startup Billy Penn Sticks

104 Local Journalism Survey

to Its Vision,” *Columbia Journalism Review*, 2016, https://www.cjr.org/united_states_project/billy_penn.php.

79. Michele’s List,

80. Local News Lab,

81. About Us, MinnPost, <https://www.minnpost.com/about>.

82. Member Benefits, MinnPost, <https://www.minnpost.com/support/member-benefits>.

83. Ken Doctor, “The Newsonomics of the New Chattanooga (Events) Choo-Choo,” 2013, <http://www.niemanlab.org/2013/09/the-newsonomics-of-the-new-chattanooga-events-choo-choo/>.

84. Daily Astorian Printing Company, EO Media Group, <http://eomediagroup.com/printing/>.

85. “Back to the Future—Email Newsletters as a Digital Channel for Journalism,” London School of Economics and Political Science/POLIS, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/Polis/documents/Back-to-the-future---Email-Newsletters-as-a-Digital-Channel-for-Journalism.pdf>.

86. Lucia Moses, “Email Newsletters Have a Measurement Problem,” Digiday, 2016, <https://digiday.com/media/email-newsletters-measurement-problem/>.

87. Lucia Moses, “Publishers Love Newsletters, but Grapple with the Underlying Tech,” 2017, <https://digiday.com/careers/publishers-love-newsletters-grapple-underlying-tech/>.

88. Josh Stearns, “Newsletters as News Products: A Guide for Local Newsrooms,” Local News Lab, <https://localnewslab.org/guide/newsletters/>.

89. Networked Journalism: About the Project, J Lab, <http://www.j-lab.org/projects/networked-journalism/>.

90. About Education Lab, *The Seattle Times*, <http://www.seattletimes.com/education-lab-about/>.

91. John Dunbar and Kytja Weir, “Center Awarded \$2.9 Million Grant for Coverage of State Government,” Center for Public Integrity, 2014, <https://www.publicintegrity.org/2014/07/25/15152/center-awarded-29-million-grant-coverage-state-government>.

92. Andrew Lapin, “MinnPost, Voice of San Diego Set High Membership Goals with Support from Knight,” *Current*, 2014, <https://current.org/2014/04/minnpost-voice-of-san-diego-set-high-membership-goals-with-support-from-knight/>.

93. “Announcing \$4.5 Million in New Grants,” Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, 2016, <http://www.grdodge.org/about-us/featured-news/announcing-our-second-grants-of-2016/>.

94. Khari Johnson, “Why Kickstarter Is Not the Entire Story of Crowdfunded Journalism,” Through the Cracks, 2016, <http://throughcracks.com/kickstarter-is-not-the-entire-story-of-crowdfunded-journalism/>.

95. Ayan Mittra, "T-Squared: We're Crowdfunding a Series on Police Shootings," *The Texas Tribune*, 2016, <https://www.texastribune.org/2016/06/21/t-squared-were-crowdfunding-series-police-shooting/>.
96. Evan Smith, "T-Squared: Help Us Hear More Voices from More Texans," 2016, <https://www.texastribune.org/2016/11/22/t-squared-how-you-can-help-us-hear-more-voices-mor/>.
97. Justin Ellis, "How Google Is Quietly Experimenting in New Ways for Readers to Access Publishers' Content," 2011, <http://www.niemanlab.org/2011/10/how-google-is-quietly-experimenting-in-new-ways-for-readers-to-access-publishers-content/>.
98. Ken Doctor, "The Newsonomics of Value Exchange and Google Surveys," *Nieman Journalism Lab*, 2013, <http://www.niemanlab.org/2013/05/the-newsonomics-of-value-exchange-and-google-surveys/>.
99. , *Herald and News*, <https://www.heraldandnews.com>.
100. *Blue Mountain Eagle*, Twitter, 2017, <https://twitter.com/myeaglenews>.
101. *Blue Mountain Eagle*, "Fire crews fight blaze in southern Grant County," 2016, http://www.bluemountaineagle.com/Local_News/20160609/fire-crews-fight-blaze-in-southern-grant-county.
102. Ibid.
103. *Blue Mountain Eagle Store*, 2017, http://eopubco.mycapture.com/mycapture/enlarge_remote.asp?source=&remoteimageid=17649212.
104. *EO Media Group*, LinkedIn, <https://www.linkedin.com/company/1923862/>.
105. *The Denver Post Store*, <http://www.denverpoststore.com/>.
106. , *The Seattle Times Store*, <https://company.seattletimes.com/store/>.
107. Damian Radcliffe, "Digital Tools, Active Communities," *TEDxReset*, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPIFR2fQe60>.
108. "The Total Audience Report," Nielsen, 2014, <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2014/the-total-audience-report.html>.
109. Jordan Crook and Anna Escher, "A Brief History of Snapchat," *TechCrunch*, 2015, <https://techcrunch.com/gallery/a-brief-history-of-snapchat/>.
110. Kurt Wagner, "Twitter Launches Livestreaming App Periscope—Its Own Version of Meerkat," 2015, <https://www.recode.net/2015/3/26/11560692/twitter-launches-livestreaming-app-periscope-its-own-version-of>.
111. Owen Williams, "Facebook Now Automatically Makes Collages of Your Photos, Adds Live Streaming for All," 2015, https://thenextweb.com/facebook/2015/12/03/facebook-now-automatically-makes-collages-of-your-photos-adds-live-streaming-for-all/#.tnw_cNX7ovVj.
112. Jr. Tom Huddleston, "Twitter Is Officially Shutting Down Vine Today," *Fortune*, 2017, <http://fortune.com/2017/01/17/twitter-shut-down-vine-tuesday/>.
113. Greg Kumparak, "Meerkat, Star App of 2015, Is Officially Dead," 2016, <https://techcrunch.com/2016/09/30/meerkat-star-of-2015-is-officially-dead/>.

106 Local Journalism Survey

114. American Fact Finder, given=US Census Bureau, giveni=U. C. B.,
115. Instagram @calhouncountyjournal, <https://www.instagram.com/calhouncountyjournal/>.
116. Nic Newman, "Digital News Report," Reuters Institute/University of Oxford, 2017, <http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/survey/2017/overview-key-findings-2017/>.
117. Tom Rosentiel et. al., "How People Learn about Their Local Community," Pew Research Center, 2011, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2011/09/26/how-people-learn-about-their-local-community/>.
118. Amy Mitchell et. al., "Pathways to News," Pew Research Center, 2016, <http://www.journalism.org/2016/07/07/pathways-to-news/>.
119. Newman, "Digital News Report."
120. Christopher; Donald Rosalind Radcliffe Damian; Ali, "Life at Small-Market Newspapers: Results from a Survey of Small Market Newsrooms," *Tow Center for Digital Journalism*, 1905, <https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/catalog/ac:8pk0p2ngft>.
121. Ibid.
122. Caitlin Petre, (2015), <https://doi.org/10.7916/D80293W1>.
123. Franklin Foer, "When Silicon Valley Took Over Journalism," *The Atlantic*, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/09/when-silicon-valley-took-over-journalism/534195/>.
124. Bill Adair Mark Stencel and Prashanth Kamalakanthan, "The Goat Must Be Fed: Why Digital Tools Are Missing in Most Newsrooms," Duke Reporter's Lab, 2014, <http://www.goatmustbefed.com/>.
125. The Logan Journal, Twitter, <https://twitter.com/loganjournal>.
126. Steve Almasy, "Ammon Bundy, 6 Others Acquitted in Oregon Standoff Trial," CNN, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/10/27/us/oregon-standoff-ammon-bundy-acquittal/index.html>.
127. Sam Levin, "Rebel Cowboys: How the Bundy Family Sparked a New Battle for the American West," *The Guardian*, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/aug/29/oregon-militia-standoff-bundy-family>.
128. Staff, "Oregon Standoff Leaders Acquitted Over Armed Protest," Al Jazeera, 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/10/oregon-standoff-leaders-acquitted-161028001052523.html>.
129. Benjamin Mullin, "Want to Get a Journalism Job? Here Are the Skills You Need, According to a New Report," Poynter, 2016, <https://www.poynter.org/news/want-get-journalism-job-here-are-skills-you-need-according-new-report>.
130. Radcliffe, "Life at Small-Market Newspapers: Results from a Survey of Small Market Newsrooms."
131. Damian Radcliffe, "Seven Lessons for Publishers from the Dallas Morning News," The Media Briefing, 2016, <https://www.themediabriefing.com/article/seven-lessons-for-publishers-from-the-dallas-morning-news>.

132. Julia Haslanger, "Part 3: What Does Being a Social Journalist Require?" Tow-Knight Center for Entrepreneurial Journalism, <http://towknight.org/research/social-journalism-who-what-when-how/part-3-what-does-being-a-social-journalist-require/>.
133. Margaret Sullivan, "Journalists? Like Sharks: If You're Not Moving Forward, It's Over," *Repubblica*, 2014, http://www.repubblica.it/cultura/2014/05/08/news/margaret_sullivan_international_journalism_festival-85541295/.
134. J-Lab About, <http://www.j-lab.org/about/>.
135. Molly de Aguiar and Josh Stearns, "Lessons Learned from the Local News Lab," Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, 2016, <https://speakerd.s3.amazonaws.com/presentations/794c0afd58b74377a581f83ece4c1499/DodgeLocalNewsLabLessonsLearned.pdf>.
136. Staff, "Brian Wheeler," Charlottesville Tomorrow, http://www.cvilletomorrow.org/authors/Brian_Wheeler/.
137. Damian Radcliffe, "Five Reasons Why Engagement Is So Hot Right Now," 2017, <https://www.themediabriefing.com/article/five-reasons-why-engagement-is-so-hot-right-now>.
138. Don Heider and Poindexter, "What the Public Expects of Local News: Views on Public and Traditional Journalism."
139. Paula M. Poindexter, "Watchdog or Good Neighbor? The Public's Expectations of Local News."
140. Wenzel, "Engaging Communities Through Solutions Journalism."
141. "," Solutions Journalism Network, <https://www.solutionsjournalism.org/>.
142. About Education Lab, *The Seattle Times*,
143. Kathy Best, "Shifting Our Focus from Problems in Education to Potential Fixes," *The Seattle Times*, 2013, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/shifting-our-focus-from-problems-in-education-to-potential-fixes-kathy-best/>.
144. Our Impact, Solutions Journalism, <https://www.solutionsjournalism.org/impact>.
145. Kids in Crisis, PostCrescent, <http://www.postcrescent.com/topic/c04d749c-4247-4a52-9d7f-0e9bd981482c/wisconsin-kids-in-crisis/>.
146. Stateside staff, "FCC Rules Changes Could Lead to Even Less Media Coverage of Rural Areas," Stateside, Michigan Radio, 2017, <http://michiganradio.org/post/fcc-rule-changes-could-lead-even-less-media-coverage-rural-areas>.
147. Andrew Perrin, "Digital Gap Between Rural and Nonrural America Persists," Pew Research Center, 2017, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/05/19/digital-gap-between-rural-and-nonrural-america-persists/>.
148. Damian Radcliffe Christopher Ali, "If Small Newspapers Are Going to Survive, They'll Have to Be More Than Passive Observers to the News," Nieman

108 Local Journalism Survey

Journalism Lab, 2017, <http://www.niemanlab.org/2017/02/if-small-newspapers-are-going-to-survive-theyll-have-to-be-more-than-passive-observers-to-the-news/>.

149. Matt DeRienzo, "Death by 1,000 Paper Cuts," Medium, 2017, <https://medium.com/@mattderlenzo/death-by-a-thousand-paper-cuts-415f4d26ef9f>.

150. ABC News, <http://abcnews.go.com/>.

151. Jim Falzone, "Production: Consolidation Is More Than about Cost Reduction," *Editor & Publisher*, 2015, <http://www.editorandpublisher.com/feature/production-consolidation-is-more-than-about-cost-reduction/>.

152. David L. Harris, "Another Boston-Area Newspaper Is Selling Off Its Real Estate," *Boston Business Journal*, 2017, <https://www.bizjournals.com/boston/news/2017/06/02/another-boston-area-newspaper-is-selling-off-its.html>.

153. Staff, "Berkshire Hathaway Unit Buys Virginia Newspaper," Reuters, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-berkshirehathaway-newspaper/berkshire-hathaway-unit-buys-virginia-newspaper-idUSKBN0UE1AM20151231>.

154. Kristen Hare, "This Week, USA Today Network Rolled Out Its Signature Blue Dot in Online Logos around the Country," Poynter, 2017, <https://www.poynter.org/news/week-usa-today-network-rolled-out-its-signature-blue-dot-online-logos-around-country>.

155. The Storm Lake Times Staff Members, <http://www.stormlake.com/content/staff-members>.

156. David Pitt, "Iowa Town's Editor Wins Pulitzer for Taking on Farm Groups," *U.S. News*, 2017, <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/iowa/articles/2017-04-10/editor-in-small-iowa-town-wins-editorial-writing-pulitzer>.

157. "Art Cullen of The Storm Lake Times, Storm Lake, IA," The Pulitzer Prizes, 2017, <http://www.pulitzer.org/winners/art-cullen>.

158. Klamath Community College Digital Media Design class et.al., "Klamath County Birdman 360," *Herald and News*, 2017, https://www.heraldandnews.com/klamath-county-birdman/youtube_e6678813-974b-53d9-98cc-0521a64f38a7.html.

159. Gerry O'Brien, "Restoration Celebration in 'Augmented Reality,'" *Herald and News*, 2016-04-26T00:00:00Z, https://www.heraldandnews.com/news/local_news/restoration-celebration-in-augmented-reality/article_02428d8e-4f53-511d-8e21-2a6d327a4449.html.

160. Harvest of Change, *The Des Moines Register*, <http://www.desmoinesregister.com/pages/interactives/harvest-of-change/>.

161. Subscribers, Local Matters, <http://us14.campaign-archive1.com/home/?u=e417ea0aa7f5255fb7fd59b38&id=f18c3fb248>.

162. City of Roses newspapers, Association of Alternative Newsmedia, <http://archive.altweeklies.com/aan/city-of-roses-newspapers/Company?oid=7677>.

163. A Strategic Partnership of Local Media Companies, Local Media Consortium, <http://www.localmediaconsortium.com/>.

164. Chris Sutcliffe, "When Are Newspapers Like Giraffes? The Future of Lo-

- cal Journalism,” The Media Briefing, 2017, <https://www.themediabriefing.com/article/the-future-of-us-local-newspapers>.
165. Tom Grubisich, “Despite Many New Local News Sites, Media Deserts’ Are a Stubborn Reality,” *Street Fight*, 2014, <http://streetfightmag.com/2014/06/26/despite-many-local-news-sites-media-deserts-are-a-stubborn-reality/>.
 166. Radcliffe, “Life at Small-Market Newspapers: Results from a Survey of Small Market Newsrooms.”
 167. Ibid.
 168. The Electionland Coalition, ProPublica, <https://projects.propublica.org/electionland/partners/>.
 169. Scott Klein, “Electionland: The Inside Story,” 2017, <https://www.propublica.org/article/electionland-the-inside-story>.
 170. et.al., “Klamath County Birdman 360.”
 171. Howard Finberg, “Journalism Needs the Right Skills to Survive,” Poynter, 2014, <https://www.poynter.org/news/journalism-needs-right-skills-survive>.
 172. Peter Houston, “Demonising the Duopoly Won’t Save Journalism,” The Media Briefing, 2017, <https://www.themediabriefing.com/article/demonising-the-duopoly-won-t-save-journalism>.
 173. Amy Webb, “From Storytelling to Storytooling,” Global Editors Network, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r11q0HYg6pk&feature=youtu.be>.
 174. April Glaser, “Google Is Funding a New Software Project That Will Automate Writing Local News,” Recode, 2017, <https://www.recode.net/2017/7/7/15937436/google-news-media-robots-automate-writing-local-news-stories>.
 175. RADAR (Round 3), Digital News Initiative, <https://digitalnewsinitiative.com/dni-projects/radar/>.
 176. Radcliffe, “Seven Lessons for Publishers from the Dallas Morning News.”
 177. Ken Doctor, “Newsonomics: The Washington Post Offers an Arc in the Storm,” Nieman Journalism Lab, 2015, <http://www.niemanlab.org/2015/10/newsonomics-the-washington-post-offers-an-arc-in-the-storm/>.
 178. Lukas I. Alpert, “Washington Post Looks to Publishing Platform as Growing Revenue Stream,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 2016, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/washington-post-looks-to-publishing-platform-as-growing-revenue-stream-1465383602>.
 179. The Big Spur, <http://247sports.com/college/south-carolina/Board/44/Contents/OT-Worth-paying-for-an-online-subscription-to-The-State-44824776>.
 180. The State, <http://www.thestate.com/sports/college/university-of-south-carolina/>.
 181. Mercedes Bunz, “How Journalists Can Use Augmented Reality,” *The Guardian*, 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/pda/2010/jan/06/journalism-augmented-reality>.
 182. Caleb Garling, “Virtual Reality, Empathy and the Next Journalism,” *Wired*,

110 Local Journalism Survey

2015, <https://www.wired.com/brandlab/2015/11/nonny-de-la-pena-virtual-reality-empathy-and-the-next-journalism/>.

183. Francesco Marconi and Alex Siegman, “A Day in the Life of a Journalist in 2027: Reporting Meets AI,” *Columbia Journalism Review*, 2017, <https://www.cjr.org/innovations/artificial-intelligence-journalism.php>.