Jack Durkin

Mr. Tom Milbourn

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Print Journalism in the modern era

Print Journalism has been around since the 17th century when in Europe the first newspapers were distributed. The world has changed greatly since then and with this change so has Print Journalism. Print Journalism is a broad topic and the focus of this essay will be on newspapers and how newspapers are in the modern day. Many people say that newspapers are a dying breed and while there is some truth to this, the real rate of decline of newspapers is exaggerated yet it is rising. With this impending decline, many newspapers have found innovative ways to present their news in this modern era that we are living in. This innovation is helping a lot of papers stay competitive and surviving in this market of media. But with this innovation there is some behind the scenes turmoil in the world of newspapers with corporate buyouts to mass layoffs.

There are a multitude of reasons why Newspapers are declining and starting to fade out. One of the simplest reasons is that all one has to do to find the news is just search online for breaking news or the topic that interests them. This is a very fast way and convenient way of receiving news instead of waiting a whole day in the case of newspapers. Another thing contributing towards the demise of newspapers is social media. Apps such as Twitter and Facebook offer real-time news breaking sources. One can follow the story as its breaking and get even the minor details that newspapers would possibly leave out. Also all news networks such as

CNN, Fox News, CNBC, etc. are also a reason for this decline. These networks talk about a variety of topics on these shows and again it can be real-time info. It seems that one of the reasons that newspapers are dying out is because of streamlining news entities and the fact that it can be easier to receive news through these more modern ways.

The Newspaper industry has been taking a hit since the early to mid 1990s. According to The Washington Post, weekday print circulation has fallen from almost 60 Million in 1994 to 35 Million in 2018. This is a decline of almost 25 million. To put this in perspective, the population of Wisconsin is 5.814 million. 25 million is a huge number in regards to this business. With the decline in circulation has also came the decline of Ad revenue. Ad revenue played a huge part in these newspapers finances and was a key part of how they made money. The revenue fell from 65 Billion Dollars to less than 19 Billion Dollars in 2016. This isn't even the final declining statistic, in the same article it was noted that Newsroom employment has dropped nearly 40 percent since 1994. One would think that with these dramatic declines and such, that Newspapers would come up with new ways to appeal to their audience and generate more revenue. Which the newspapers did come up with new ways, such as digital subscriptions and other ways of generating advertising revenue. These ways however have failed for two of the biggest newspapers in the United States; The New York Times and The Washington Post. While in the past few years it was noted that these two Papers digital subscriptions have had a pretty big rise, it has not been a big enough rise to make even for the losses they have endured in the past decade. Pew Research showed that even Papers that have gravitated towards a more digital news subscriptions have not been immune to layoffs and revenue loss, 14 percent of these organizations went through a series of layoffs.

With these revenue losses, one can expect more layoffs in the Newspaper industry. As they are trying to close their budget deficit. USA Today brings about an interesting statistic.

"About 1 in 4 American newspapers did layoffs in 2018 as they continue to grapple with declining revenue amid the rise of online news, smartphones and social media."(USA Today)

The Pew Research Center showed that in 2017 and 2018 about 1 in 10 Newspapers they tracked had layoffs in both these years. This here exemplifies the seriousness and dire situation of the Newspaper industry in the modern age. Even with local papers, this subscription based content has not worked well for them, even though the content would be more "Local-Centric". As we talked about before the Advertising took a hit as well that has been hard to recover from. Broken down from The Pew Research Center between 2000 to 2018 is some important statistics.

- Newspapers lost 57 percent of their advertising Revenue and advertising in general
- Newspaper Circulation revenue has dropped 49%, nearly half of Newspapers nationwide circulation.

The advertising decline has been attributed towards the success of Google and Facebook and other Companies/Apps that are similar. These advertisements are much more user oriented with the use of cookies and other software like that. This advertisement revenue was always a key source of revenue that helped the revenue stay stable without having to rely on layoffs or other means of subscription based content.

It was shown that many of the papers that are going through these layoffs are Mid-Market Newspapers. These are publications that have a sunday circulation between 100,000 to 249,000. Another thing that is occurring is papers are buying out other papers. This can cause a consolidation in which entire papers shut down or some just have the same news all around. These buyouts also are used for lower operating costs and staff reduction.

2019 has been a bad year all around for the News industry. Even digital media companies are experiencing trouble, not just newspapers.

“Between January and May this year, approximately 3,000 people working in the news industry were laid off or offered a buyout.”(Columbia Journalism Review)

It is noted that that the national unemployment rate is at an all time low but 2019 is on rate to be the worst year for news industry careers since 2009, which was the Great Recession. While this has been foreseen and on decline, layoffs are now happening monthly.

In regards to consolidation and buyouts, this is really slimming down newsrooms. This is what is happening especially in local newsrooms. A Washington Post article gives a very nice and in depth look at how these corporation buyouts are causing issues in regards to news gathering. In Nashville, The Gannett Company owns the daily newspaper there. When Gannett first bought the paper there were two papers in the town. These papers merged and the staff combined, they started with about 180 people in the newsroom. Now they are at about 70 people in the newsroom. This causes some concern as Nashville proper has grown more than 20 percent in population and the Nashville Metro area has grown around 50 percent.

Gannett has imposed these layoffs in other growing markets that they have a stake in as well. It was noted that many Advertising and other positions are farmed out to a centralized location somewhere more often than not far away from the media market. Hypothetically speaking here, if someone wanted to place an ad in let’s say here in Green Bay, they would most likely be talking to someone whose office is in New York City. This right here could cause issues because if you had Ad sales reps located in your offices, they know the pulse of the city better than someone sitting in an office in Midtown Manhattan.

Back to the case of Nashville, Gannett was buying out smaller papers around the Nashville area and they either shut them down or gave them bare-bones operations. This causes problems as some big issues were going unreported at the time, such as two major local healthcare operators merging. It is said that these corporate buyouts are alienating the core readers and longtime followers. The changes that are happening are that they are reducing the amount of pages, getting rid of different features and columns and moving up deadlines. The problem with moving up deadlines is that anything that happens after Six in the evening will go unreported. This causes major issues as many major stories can occur during the evening hours.

“Moving up deadlines so that virtually nothing that happens after 6 p.m. makes the next day’s paper. That includes sports scores, city council meetings and major news. When Nashville holds local elections this year, those results won’t make it into print for two days.” (The Washington Post)

With these problems that are occuring in the Print Media industry, one would think that the industry is at the point of an ultimate meltdown and while it may really seem like this is the case, Newspapers are coming up with new and improved ways to regain their revenue as well as bringing back customers and circulation, even if it means electronic circulation. Many news sites are starting to offer subscriptions to news content or other means of gathering and attracting new customers.

“News sites are increasingly looking at readers as a source of revenue, said Kennedy. For instance, email newsletters have emerged as a way of bringing important stories to the readers inbox. That helps encourage them to subscribe. It also reduces readers reliance on social media platforms, like Facebook." (Storybench, Northeastern University)

An interesting point brought up in this article was that it is believed that Millenials are less opposed to buying news subscriptions because they already pay for things like Apple Music, Spotify and Netflix. People still need to get their news somehow and from a news organization is the best way. Especially news organizations that are basically local-centric so they fill the niche for more local news instead of having national organizations dominate the news.

"Quality news is not cheap, and an industry that gives away its content is simply cannibalising its ability to produce good reporting." (BBC News)

That quote is coming from arguably one of the most successful and powerful Media Executives in the world, Rupert Murdoch. In that article he talks about how the end of the free news era is coming to an end, that was ten years ago in August of 2009 but more and more are these subscription news services becoming popular. He really did have a point as many of these subscription services offer in depth local reporting as well as good investigations into many things. He also countered that quote by saying essentially they would make their content better and different than all of the other competitors. In this day and age people are valuing the importance of unbiased media and more often these news subscriptions are unbiased as they are there for the people in a sense of informing them on the important stuff without all of the spin on it.

Print Media organizations are also starting to increasingly rely on social media sites to help convey and circulate their news. From twitter to facebook this is how they are "printing" their stories. As people in this digital era want news faster and more efficient, they rely on social media and online to fulfill this need. The use of social media can help consumers view scenes of stories almost immediately as a reporter gets there.

"The Guardian even makes use of an Instagram picture from the account of a Russian user who died in the crash. Interestingly a new feature added by the web is the ability to request the reader to share stories. While it would have been impossible to ask readers to share a printed newspaper before the digital age, it is now common practice to place Facebook, Twitter or Pinterest sharing buttons at the bottom of an article." (Medium)

This is causing more and more people to be able to view the news as it is becoming viral, via the instant option to share the story or article. This is a huge factor in this day and age as people will be able to view a story within an hour of it breaking rather than having to wait until the next morning or even a couple days in some drastic cases.

"Even if social networking is primarily a place for meeting friends, it has a growing news media value." (Medium)

It was said that since social media has become more and more popular, this has caused the reading habits for consumers to change as well as the ways the consumer wants to receive the information. People want their information fast and efficient.

Professional Source Interview

The subject of this interview is Erika Ditzman. Erika is the Co-Editor In Chief of the St. Norbert Times, in addition to this she also has experience working in other outlets such as the North Wind Journal which is a publication here on campus, as well as a number of off-campus publications. Her expertise brings a unique look into the challenges that both big publications such as the Press-Gazette are enduring as well as smaller more niche publications such as the St.

Norbert Times. In addition to the challenges that the print media industry is facing she also shows us how the industry is evolving in this digital era as well as talking about the future of the industry.

1. What is the future of the newspaper industry?

The future of the newspaper industry is definitely moving away from physical print and toward online media. Online media is much more timely and can be easily accessed by millions of viewers with just the touch of a button. Physical print, on the other hand, takes more money, time and effort for a significantly smaller audience.

2. With going with the future, are they using their tried and true methods or are they using other methods?

As we move forward, the newspaper industry is slowly but surely moving away from their tried and true methods to social media and online media platforms. For the SNC Times, we have experimented with Facebook to reach our greatest audience, posting information regarding the Bruess controversy and receiving sometimes almost 5,000 views. Furthermore, using other social media outlets, such as Instagram or Twitter, can also be used to get out concise information. See the SNC Twitter and Facebook page for examples.

3. If so, what are some of these new methods?

See above. Kind of wound it into #2

4. How is circulation of newspapers, is it a steady decline or a stagnant/staying even?

The circulation of newspapers, from personal experience, is on the decline. For the SNC Times, we have experienced budget cuts that have required fewer physical copies to be printed. For local news outlets such as the Press Gazette, it's all about demand. Most people nowadays are no longer willing to pay the extra buck for the newspapers when they can just access the complete text online.

5. In your words, how do you think the next say ten years will be for the newspaper industry?

In 10 years, I anticipate that the newspaper industry will be located completely online.

After interview Erika, it was truly interesting to see how the print media industry is evolving from an insiders perspective. One who has not worked in the print media industry would not know how the industry is doing today, especially publications that are important parts of people's daily lives. As Erika said the SNC Times Facebook and Twitter are bringing a unique take into the world of print media. While they still are offering links to their stories, they are also posting content that is unique to those respective social media platforms, such as pictures, videos and documents that otherwise could not be viewed on a printed newspaper. It was also interesting to learn that the St. Norbert College Times is facing issues as well in regards to budget cuts. One doesn’t really think that the whole print media dying thing would touch a college newspaper but as we found out in this interview, it sure is. She brought up that people are no longer willing to pay for the newspaper but they will access it online, this goes hand in hand with the subscription based news content that media organizations are rolling out and starting to push.

In this essay it was talked about how the Print Media industry has been struggling through various means since the early to mid 1990s. The Print Media industry has been hit with layoffs that are occurring monthly. These layoffs are not just hitting smaller papers, they are hitting national papers as well as big city, big market papers. It was noted that in 2018 nearly 1 in 4 newspapers across the Nation experienced layoffs, that is an enormous number. Along with layoffs are the corporate buyouts. These corporate buyouts can affect newspapers as well as consumers in a multitude of ways. Some of the effects include layoffs, less tools to utilize, investigation departments shuttered as well as local-centric news taking the backburner. With these corporate buyouts many papers lost their local luster. As many as 4 different papers were rolled into one publication and many topics that were important in those other papers were not even mentioned in the one "combined" paper. With these challenges the newspaper industry has started to adapt. News organizations are using apps like Facebook and Twitter to show their stories as well as conveying the news in a different manner such as real-time reporting. Many organizations are also offering subscription based content, this at times gives readers higher quality content as well as localized reporting. In addition to these two investigative reporting has been thriving in the subscribed content. As one can see the Print Media industry has been on a decline, however it is exaggerated at times. With this decline, one can see the turmoil and issues that Print Media companies are facing. At the same time, these companies are coming up with new and improved ways to try and raise revenue, gain readership and adapt to today's digital age as well as prepare for the future.

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