

Hyperlocal news gaining popularity

Smaller newspapers are able to report on local events that other papers cannot

by Max Minogue

Local journalism has once again become influential for community residents as both a source of information and a source of community pride.

22nd Century Media is one company capitalizing on the trend as the parent company of seven local North Shore newspapers, from The Highland Park Landmark to The Wilmette Beacon.

Eric DeGrechie, the managing editor of The Wilmette Beacon, said, "Local journalism is essential to communicate with people. Larger publications don't report that much on communities."

DeGrechie explained that local journalism will not be dying anytime soon. "People will always seek out local news because it promotes a sense of community pride."

Chris Pullam, head editor of The Glenview Lantern (also owned by 22nd Century Media), agreed with DeGrechie. "Hyperlocal journalism is a better opportunity to get inside a community. Yes, the New York Times covers national articles, but they're covering larger trends. We're providing residents with information that might otherwise not be reported on," Pullam said.

According to the americanpresstitute.org, hyperlocal news is defined as "news sources that were started to cover a specific local geographic area in the United States". Without the high printing costs that usually limit publications from getting started, hyperlocal journalism can easily get its start as a solely digital-based news source.

This past year, a small-town, low-circulation newspaper even went on to win national recognition in the form of a Pulitzer.

While the Houston Chronicle and Washington Post were named finalists in the editorial category, the Pulitzer went to Art Cullen of The Storm Lake Times, of Storm Lake, Iowa.

In an editorial titled "Big, Bold, and Dead," Cullen highlighted the

problem of nitrate pollution caused by the agri-industrial complex, and he wrote in favor of defending Iowa's surface water: "The water works seeks regulation of drainage districts, which scares the bejeebers out of agri-industry."

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Despite The Storm Lake Times working with a staff of 10, and only having a circulation of a little more than 3,000, Cullen still managed to beat out national publications through his passionate editorial writing and deep understanding of local community issues.

Adrienne Fawcett, executive editor of DailyNorthShore.com and The North Shore Weekend, believes that this deep understanding is what gives local newspapers their power.

"The local newspaper is critical, because it is as much a part of its community as the people, institutions, and businesses it covers. The editors and reporters of The North Shore Weekend all live, work, own homes, and are raising families in towns on the North Shore. We know our communities well—and we care about them." Fawcett said.

Fawcett still maintains that there is minimal bias, despite living within the community that The North Shore Weekend reports on. "At The North Shore Weekend, there is no bias about local politics such as school boards, village boards, etc. We report on what's going on—we don't comment on it."

DeGrechie of The Beacon does say that living and working within the community can be a challenge. "It can be a challenge to stay unbiased, especially when you know everyone in the community and they can try to influence you. We still try to be fair, we always get interviews from both sides of the aisle."

As for modernizing local news,

DeGrechie believes that despite it taking time for the news-media to become current with technology, tech has finally been embraced. For DeGrechie and The Beacon, this means having an active twitter to get out breaking news, along with articles published online. "We have a weekly print model, so through social media we can still get news out in a quick fashion."

Pullam agrees, and does the same with The Lantern. "We stress getting new articles out as soon as possible. This is so that our residents are aware, but it also speaks to the competitive nature of journalism; if we don't report on it, the Chicago Tribune could pick it up."

In the end, Pullam believes local journalism plays a valuable role in a democracy educating local residents. "A hyperlocal newspaper educates residents so that they can make the best choices on local elections, which oftentimes affect individuals more than the national government. Local journalism holds these local politicians accountable."

Newspapers switch from paper to digital

Online papers offer faster updates on current events

by Maya Kowitz

In recent years most news outlets have implemented some form of the "print to digital" transformation, though readers have mixed ideas on the change.

Those who grew up prior to the birth of the internet may find it to be more habitual to pick up the newspaper and read it, versus opening up an app on their phone.

Kelly Bohling, the Marketing Coordinator for NBC Universal, explained that while she did grow up reading the newspaper, she prefers to get her news from the Internet or her Mobile device.

Many can relate to Bohling's fond memories before the Internet, "I would lounge around with my parents as they read the New York Times or the Wall Street Journal," she said.

Looking at how her parents have adapted to modern news outlets, Bohling believes that those who grew up reading newspapers will always continue with that habit. "I think the young generation now only knows digital news, so they will probably stick to that form and never give newspapers a chance."

Senior Ellen White is one of many students who prefer to receive their news through a mobile device.

"We always have our phones in our hands. It's more convenient to figure out what's going on in the world than bringing a newspaper with you or subscribing to a magazine."

Though she grew up reading the newspaper, Bohling claims she, too, prefers digital media.

"I am always on the go, moving from work, to the gym, to dinner. I rarely ever have time to sit down anymore and pick up a newspaper."

Bohling also finds that the transition from newspaper to digital media has increased her knowledge and

involvement with current events and trends.

"Downloading and having news apps on my phone that send me push alerts has allowed me to stay on top and up to date with my news," she said.

Senior Celeste Donnelly also said she prefers when her news is right in front of her. "I don't even like to look up stuff online," Donnelly said.

Donnelly uses the feature on Snapchat that allows her to see snippets of magazines and news articles right through the app. "When I'm bored or just curious, I'll go to Snapchat and look at Cosmopolitan, Dailymail or BuzzFeed."

Marie Dugo, Senior Marketing Manager for NBC, favors different aspects of both digital and traditional news. "There is a time and a place for each," Dugo said.

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Meanwhile in reference to digital media, Dugo stated the advantage that digital publications has in terms of its appeal to readers.

"The sheer volume of information available on the internet and the ability to have it all in one compact device."

Bohling finds that there is something to be said about the accuracy of printing press in comparison to digital media. Though digital news may be quicker and more efficient, there are faults that come to the fast-paced demands of the virtual world.

"Sometimes stories are published online so quickly that we don't get the entire story or know if all the facts are true," Bohler said.

With various newspapers and magazines already on the bandwagon of transitioning to online, Senior Jack Lauer said, "Within a decade or so, print newspapers will be a thing of the past."

Student newspapers mirror professional press trends

Readership, online use and participation vary by school

by Hannah Young

Due to journalism's recent decline, many high school's have adapted by publishing online to increase readership.

As one of the few weekly student newspapers, New Trier News and its staff of 20 seniors currently publishes an 8-page print newspaper but nearby high school newspapers differ greatly in both size and mode.

Wheeling High School's twelve person staff publishes once a month in print. Palatine, on the other hand, has a larger staff of 32 students and uses the online version exclusively.

While shifting print newspapers to online versions seems like a forward-thinking, beneficial change, in some cases, it proved the opposite.

William Fremd High School in Palatine moved online several years ago. However, since then, they haven't had as much readership. Due to this decrease in circulation, advisor Grant Dawson said they are trying to return to old-fashioned printed newspapers as it better connects with readers.

After observing the amount of newspaper readership at New Trier and the numerous papers seen in recycling bins, limiting it to online would only create even lower readership than it is now. Many may not go online on their own to get their newspapers.

"The internet is full of websites designed to grab our attention and distract us. NT News wouldn't stand the same chance as it does when it's spread around the school waiting for kids trying to kill time during passing periods," senior Kelly Zabors said.

Nonetheless, student newspapers are looking for fresh ways to attract more readers. According to Fremd advisor Sam Philips, their staff is working on creating an app that will reach a greater audience through no-

The image shows a sample of the Spokesman newspaper. The top section features a photo of a student in a purple tutu with the headline "Orchestra helps Stuff-A-Bus" and "pg 7". To the right, there's a "index" section listing various news items like "News • Turf affects graduation", "A&E • Holiday Extravaganza video", and "Sports • Girls basketball on Friday". Below the index is a large "Spokesman" logo with the website URL "www.wheelingspokesman.com". The main headline is "WHS to host research contest for first time". Below this, there are several smaller articles with photos and headlines, including "Wheeling plans bike paths, lanes" and "About Midwest Research Competition: Positive Impact".

Spokesman is Wheeling High School's student run newspaper | Spokesman

tifications and easy accessibility.

Hersey High School has also made efforts to improve its online presence by putting up sports updates, polls, slide shows, and recent tweets on their website.

Yet, Senior Danielle Erikson said, "To be honest, most students don't read the paper regularly. Readership is one of our weaknesses right now, and it's one thing we have to work on."

Unfortunately, a decrease in number of readers isn't the only challenge these student newspapers face as some staff sizes have dropped as well.

New Trier News' staff, which was at a high this year with 20 members, will be dropping down to around 12 people next year. Similarly, Prospect's newspaper staff has also decreased in the last few years. Student Jason Block claimed that AP courses where college credit is granted were more desirable to students than the journalism class.

According to the Chicago Tribune, there's been an apparent decrease in high school newspapers overall. In 1991, almost all Chicago public high schools surveyed in a Roosevelt University study had student-run newspapers. In 2006, only 60% had them.

Since then, these newspapers have gradually begun to shut down due to various reasons, mostly concerning cost and budget deficits.

In 2013, the New York Times reported that only 1 in 8 New York public high school had a newspaper.

Despite this journalism decline in high schools, NPR journalist Scott Simon continues to believe that the skills taught in those courses are crucial.

He said that journalism "uses an eye for detail to help illuminate a larger view. And even journalism that conveys an opinion strives to be fair. If school newspapers begin to disappear, I hope there are other ways for students to learn that."