

ABSTRACT

Title of thesis: PRE-INTERNET VERSUS POST-INTERNET NEWS
CONTENT: THE CASE OF THE CHATTANOOGA *TIMES* AND
TIMES FREE PRESS

Matthew David Wilson, Master of Arts, 2008

Thesis directed by: Professor Carl Sessions Stepp
Philip Merrill College of Journalism

This study examines the case of the 1986 *Chattanooga Times* and the 2006 *Chattanooga Times Free Press*, and aims to determine through systematic research how the content of that newspaper has changed between the pre-Internet and post-Internet eras. To answer those questions, the study measures six indicators of content: story length, links, graphical space, local coverage, types of stories and sectionalization. The data show that all those indicators have changed over the course of 20 years – some more dramatically than others – but generally in favor of busier, more "reader-friendly" content and less breaking news. In some cases the study suggests these changes tend to distinguish newspaper content from Internet content, while in others the change seems to make print news more like Internet news products.

PRE-INTERNET VERSUS POST-INTERNET NEWS CONTENT: THE CASE OF
THE CHATTANOOGA *TIMES* AND *TIMES FREE PRESS*

by

Matthew David Wilson

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Advisory Committee:

Professor Carl Sessions Stepp, Chair
Assistant Dean Steve Crane
Professor Christopher Hanson

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INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to answer several research questions which arise from prior assertions and research regarding the effects of a new medium like the Internet on established media, such as newspapers. To address those questions, this study is a pilot case study of the morning newspaper in the mid-size Tennessee city of Chattanooga. The study examines six 1986 editions of the *Chattanooga Times* and six 2006 editions of the *Chattanooga Times Free Press*, the newspaper that was created via a merger between the *Times* and its cross-town evening competitor, the *Free Press*, in 1998.¹ Clearly, factors such as the merger and other changes over the course of 20 years have had an impact on the newspaper's content, but through systematic research this study aims to discern whether the Internet has been a major factor in changes to print content.

The strategy of a case study of specific documents here is used to answer to the study's key research question: How has the content of the *Chattanooga Times Free Press* changed over a 20-year period in which the Internet went from virtually no public penetration to wide use? To find an answer, a case study is the best method, according to Yin:

“In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context.”²

The “real-life contexts” the study aims to examine are the pre-Internet and post-Internet news environments, which some analysts have said are eras akin to those before and after the advent of movable type.³ Abrahamson describes the advent of the Internet

1 *New York Times*. “Chattanooga Times is sold.”

2 Yin. *Case Study Research*. p. 1.

3 Newhagen and Levy. “Future.” p.12.

more specifically as "a world-historical event."⁴

But the Internet has reached a level of thorough public penetration at a rate more akin to television than the printing press. Like TV sets, Internet capability has come to more than half of the households in the United States within 15 years of its introduction as a mass media tool. Within 13 years from the introduction of standard picture resolution, televisions were in 54 percent of American homes.⁵ The Internet, originally developed as a military tool, was opened for commercial use in 1991. By 2006, 73 percent of American adults were Internet users.⁶

Thus, this study compares newspapers from about five years before the advent of the Internet as a commercially available medium with papers printed about 15 years into its wide availability, when most Americans had become regular users and were well aware of the Internet and its capabilities as a medium.

4 Abrahamson. "The Visible Hand." p. 17

5 University of Michigan Media History Project. www.mediahistory.umn.edu

6 Madden. "Internet penetration."

LITERATURE REVIEW

Media and audience

Research into mass media and its effects generally comes to little consensus as to what exactly the goals of mass media are or even a clear definition as to what mass media should be. It can be gleaned from the array of research on the topic, however, that mass media, at the very least, can be broadly defined as those media which do not seek a particular specialized audience but rather aim for a general readership or viewership from the population at large. While many mass media products do sometimes focus on one topic or idea (for instance, sports or music), those topics generally have mass appeal.

It is perhaps worthwhile to note the way in which a new medium becomes a mass medium. Clearly, not all media spread out to the masses and instead only harbor an appeal to a particular group with specific informational needs. Like other new technologies, the rise in popularity and ultimate pervasiveness of a new medium can most likely be explained via the so-called "diffusion of innovations" theory, which sets out the particular groups who adopt an innovation at particular times. A small group called "innovators" first tests the medium (and likely end up controlling it), followed by a group referred to as "early adopters." It is at this point that the medium succeeds or fails on a mass scale, depending on whether a group called the "early majority" takes hold. A "late majority" and "laggards" then follow.⁷ Factors such as the cost of the technology or whether a user can easily understand it make the difference between whether a majority adopts the innovation or those early adopters are the only group that catches on.

Dewar explains why a technology's mass appeal is important: "The eventual impact of a technology is at least weakly dependent on its ubiquity; the more widely

⁷ Rogers. *Diffusion*. p. 247

spread, the greater likelihood and magnitude of impact."⁸

Not all media are initially designed for a mass audience, some have argued. "Print media, though invented earlier, were essentially reinvented in the last 100 years to reach a mass audience," according to Hiebert.⁹ Standards like objectivity and a use of understandable language contributed to that mass appeal.

Schudson demonstrates the difference between how news is presented today compared to its more specialized slant 100 years ago:

As late as the 1890s, when a standard Republican paper covered a presidential election, it not only deplored and derided Democratic candidates in editorials but often just neglected to mention them in the news. In the days before opinion polling, the size of partisan rallies was taken as a proxy for likely electoral results. Republican rallies were described as 'monster meetings' while Democratic rallies were often not covered at all.¹⁰

The growth of newspapers into a mass medium changed the way news was presented, he goes on to say. "The newly articulate fairness doctrine was related to the sheer growth in newsgathering" during the 1920s, when journalists began developing more of a loyalty to their audience rather than their publishers, he writes.¹¹

But many researchers point out that to study journalism is not the same as simply looking at who the readership is or why and how certain media gain mass audiences. The meaning of what is being presented is just as important, if not more so, many argue. Historian James W. Carey even refers to studying journalism as a study of "cultural history."¹²

"When we study the history of journalism we are principally studying the way in

8 Dewar. "Information Age." p. 5

9 Hiebert. "Growing Power." p. 7.

10 Schudson. "Objectivity norm." p. 155.

11 Ibid. p. 161-162.

12 Carey. "Problem." p. 4.

which men in the past have grasped reality," he writes.¹³ "The press should be viewed as the embodiment of consciousness," he goes on to say. "Our histories in turn must unpack how a general cultural consciousness becomes institutionalized in the procedures for news gathering and reporting, forms of press organization, and definitions of rights and freedom."¹⁴

Dennis argues that it is difficult to decipher the real power of the media through the three main types of media research -- external, internal and criticism and analysis. The lack of an overarching theory for journalists makes generalizations about media content and effects hard to formulate, he writes.¹⁵

A brief history of mass media

Historians have set a number of different benchmarks for when the major changes in mass media have taken place. Fang sets out six different points at which information was revolutionized: the advent of writing and the alphabet; the printing press; the birth of affordable printing which led to mass media and newspapers; films and entertainment; the "toolshed home" of telephones, home mail delivery and VCRs; and what he dubs "the highway," which includes CD-ROM technology and the Internet.¹⁶

Others place the important milestones elsewhere. Dewar places the advent of the Internet among the two most important occurrences in all of media. "There has only been one comparable event in the history of communications -- the printing press," he writes.¹⁷

Cairncross places the biggest milestones of communication with at the advent of four technologies: the telegraph, the telephone, the television and the networked computer. In particular, she notes the impact of the telegraph and the World Wide Web.

13 Ibid. p. 5.

14 Ibid. p. 27

15 Dennis. *Reshaping*. p. 153.

16 Fang. *History*. 1997.

17 Dewar. "Information Age."

The electric telegraph burst upon the world as suddenly as the Internet has done, and was greeted with a similar mix of hype and gloom. In 1858 it took forty days for news of the Indian Mutiny to reach London; by 1870, several telegraph lines connected India to London and news of a problem with the tea harvest would affect London markets within hours.¹⁸

Bagdikian notes the importance of the telegraph as well: "In both Europe and the United States the telegraph did more than simply raise the quantity of information. It placed knowledge in new places under changed conditions. It bypassed traditional systems for controlling information."¹⁹

He describes "spasms of change in American society in the mid-1960s" came largely due to new forms of communication, as television had come to saturate American households. He compared the American cultural revolution to the Industrial Revolution of the mid-19th Century in Europe.²⁰

Likewise, Carey compares the advent of new technologies in the late 20th Century -- the Internet, easily accessible publishing tools, and the cellular phone -- to the Industrial Revolution. Those technologies are comparable to the steam engine, the telegraph and the spread of electricity itself, he says.²¹

Carey also differentiates between what he calls the "modern" and the "post-modern" eras of communication.

Roughly a hundred years ago the modern era of communications begins. A precise date is unnecessary but the decade of the 1890s can serve as the approximate moments when, in the United States, space and time were enclosed, when it became possible to think of the nation everywhere running on the same clock of awareness and existing within a homogeneous national space. This "communications revolution," presaged by the growth of the telegraph and the penny press in the decades before and after the Civil War, decisively began in the 1890s with the birth of the national magazine; the development of the modern, mass, urban newspaper; the domination of news dissemination by the wire

18 Cairncross. *Death*. p. 23.

19 Bagdikian. *Machines*. p. 6.

20 Ibid. p. 3.

21 Carey. *Communication*. 1989.

services; and the creation of early, primitive forms of electronic communication.²²

Carey places the start of the post-modern communication revolution in the 1970s, around the time of the development of satellite and cable television. The Internet is a step in that revolutionary process, he argues. Where the modern revolution had a nationalizing effect, the post-modern revolution has had a globalizing effect.²³ Cairncross describes the effects of television similarly: "The psychological impact was huge. This unprecedented new link between countries created a sense that the world's peoples belonged to a global, not merely local or national community."²⁴

Barnhurst and Nerone divide the history of the newspaper into four eras of design and content: printerly, partisan, Victorian and modern. They place the printerly era in the time period of the American Revolution and characterize it as bookish in appearance and reflecting the ideal of the "public sphere" in its stories. The partisan formation had a larger format and the labor that went into making it was more divided into certain jobs, reflecting the rise of a mass-market economy. The Victorian era featured more crowded front pages in the period of imperialism. The modern era has reflected monopoly capitalism with more bureaucratic production and expert explanation.²⁵

As newspapers became a medium that appealed to a larger audience, they began to compartmentalize their content, they write. "As newspapers grew longer, they divided internally into sections that further compartmentalized and labeled the news -- as frivolous (sports, women's concerns) or serious (the front page, the editorial page, the business section). Design features developed to signify these valuations."²⁶

The advent of radio in the 1920s and television in the mid-20th Century led to a

22 Carey. "Communication System." pp. 28-29.

23 Ibid. p. 34.

24 Cairncross. *Death*. p. 31.

25 Barnhurst and Nerone. *Form of News*. pp. 4-5.

26 Ibid. pp. 21-22.

wider audience for mass media messages, which had previously been dominated by print. In particular, television, which provides a visual image but does not require its viewers to be literate, brought mass media to an entirely new audience.²⁷

The effects of mass media

The chief argument in Marshall McLuhan's *The Medium is the Message* -- a book that paradoxically attempts to explain the power of moving images and sounds on the printed page -- states that the way that messages are presented to an audience, not the messages themselves, that shape common world views and conventional perspectives. "Societies have always been shaped more by the nature of the media by which men communicate rather than by the content of the communication."²⁸

Both McLuhan and Eisenstein argue that sea changes took place with the advent of the printing press, representing the shift from hearing being the chief sensory way that mankind perceived the world around him to visual stimuli becoming dominant. Eisenstein characterizes the change as a shift from "the age of the ear" to "the age of the eye."²⁹

Printed information, McLuhan argues, completely shifted the dynamics of how people interacted in society: "Like easel painting, the printed book added much to the new cult of individualism. The private, fixed point of view became possible and literacy conferred the power of detachment, non-involvement."³⁰

However, electronic information via radio and, more importantly, television, had an even stronger impact on how information was processed by creating a collective:

"Print technology created the public. Electric technology created the mass. The public

27 Noelle-Neuman. "Mass Media." pp. 153-154.

28 McLuhan and Fiore. *Medium*. p. 8.

29 Eisenstein. *Printing Press*. p. 41.

30 McLuhan and Fiore. *Medium*. 1967. p. 50.

consists of separate individuals walking around with separate, fixed points of view. The new technology demands that we abandon the luxury of this posture, this fragmentary outlook."³¹

Television is a medium that demands involvement and participation, McLuhan argues, even though it interrupts its own narrative with commercial breaks.³² Unlike print, it can provide exactly the same message to a group of people simultaneously, creating a more communal response. Hiebert discusses the idea of "cultivation analysis," which concludes that television has a cumulative effect that affects how people live and absorb information universally.³³ Noelle-Neumann describes the effect as almost hypnotism: "Through the spread of television, the influence of mass media has become stronger. Selective, supporting perception – the defensive mechanism by means of which people protect themselves against the change of their own attitudes – is more easily overcome."³⁴

Auslander describes the difference between print and television in very concrete terms -- where newspapers are chiefly concerned with the ideal of objectivity, television's major appeal comes from the appearance of what he terms "liveness." This stems, he argues, from television's basis in theater as opposed to print journalism's roots in literature. "Television's essential properties as a medium are immediacy and intimacy," he writes.³⁵

Kovach and Rosenstiel reject McLuhan's notion that the medium itself is the driving force behind meaning, using the recent evolution of the content of newspapers to demonstrate how an overhaul in content can cause a massive change in a medium's

31 Ibid. p. 68.

32 Ibid. p. 125.

33 Hiebert. "Growing." *Impact*. p. 8.

34 Noelle-Neuman. "Mass Media." pp. 153-154.

35 Auslander. *Liveness*. p. 15.

impact. "Journalism is in a state of disorientation, brought on by rapid technological change, declining market share, and growing pressure to operate with economic efficiency. In a sometimes desperate search to reclaim audience, the press has moved more toward sensationalism, entertainment and opinion," they write.³⁶

In what Kovach and Rosenstiel call a "post-O.J. media culture" (a reference to the highly publicized O.J. Simpson murder trial in the mid-1990s), they note that newspaper journalism has come to be a mixture of entertainment, infotainment, argument, analysis, tabloid and mainstream press. As a result, print media are viewed differently, not because the medium itself has changed but because of a change in what is printed.

Behavioral scientists go for a middle-road approach, describing the medium as an important filter through which content is presented. Graber focuses on what she calls the "latent meanings" of messages in news content, describing the general ideas presented through specific stories. As an example, she writes that a story with the manifest content of "man has landed on the moon" has a latent meaning of "science has triumphed."³⁷

How that latent meaning is framed via a medium is key to how the audience interprets the message, she writes. "When journalists choose content and frame it, they are constructing reality for their audiences, particularly when the story concerns unfamiliar matters and there is no easy way to test for its accuracy."³⁸ In particular, this is true for television, which has taken much of the process of digesting and interpreting news out of the hands of the audience with the use of pictures. Graber says that all news media, but particularly television, rely on schema -- societal pre-existing, shared notions - - to relay messages. It depends on the viewership having particular ideas -- for instance, that the United States is the most powerful country in the world or that democracy is the

36 Kovach and Rosenstiel. *Warp Speed*. p. 2.

37 Graber. "Content and Meaning." p. 144.

38 Ibid. p. 147.

best form of government -- for the messages it disperses to be understood.

Gramson dismisses the idea that news content can be studied by itself, and says that it cannot be known whether the medium or the message is the key to defining how meaning is derived: "Content analysis should be agnostic on the issue of how news is understood and recognize that this can only be learned by studying the audience."³⁹ However, if, as many have argued, audiences are swayed toward a particular meaning through the medium which they choose to view or read, then study of their reactions of content are likely colored by that guided perception and may not give a full picture of what the effects of the news content truly are. If this is the case, answering the question of whether meaning is embedded in content or is generated by the audience is a notably difficult task.

Levinson extends McLuhan's ideas on the importance of the medium to include what many agree is the most pervasive new medium, the Internet. He describes four distinct types of "acoustic space" in which information is presented, in opposition to simply the eras of the ear and the eye: unmediated hearing, radio, television and cyberspace.⁴⁰ Print is only a partial kind of acoustic space, he says, because it is simply a visual representation of what is heard in unmediated hearing. The Internet is a progression of McLuhan's idea of the "global village" created by television and radio, exemplified by the public consciousness in the early 1960s: "By 1960, John F. Kennedy was admired at least as much for what he looked like as what he said. And the admiration was more of fans for a movie-star than of children for a father."⁴¹

The main effect of the Internet, Levinson says, is its democratizing effect. Where television demands the participation of its viewers, the Internet actually demands that

39 Gramson. "News as Framing." p. 158.

40 Levinson. *Digital McLuhan*. p. 49.

41 Ibid. p. 67-68.

users create content.

The propelling of writing and other media into new prominence as content on the Internet has another profound democratizing consequence: unlike our experience with books, newspapers and magazines, which for all but a tiny fraction of the population has been a one-way engagement of reading and writing, the online experience is two-way, allowing readers to communicate via e-mail, bulletin board discussion, and all manner of annotation as they navigate the web.⁴²

Willis refers to the information that is gathered from the Internet as "turbonews," defining the term as "the vast masses of news and information that can now reach us at the speed of light."⁴³ The Internet, in his view, is a conflagration of previous media forms. "By changing media formats, we change the way information is gathered, presented, processed and quite possibly the way consumers are affected by it," he writes. "With turbonews, you take a product like a newspaper or magazine that relies on linear thinking and transmogrify it into what is essentially a nonlinear video program."⁴⁴

Newhagen and Levy buy into the interactivity argument as well, calling the network of "interconnected message sender/receiver nodes" discursive rather than didactic as television and newspapers have been in the past. "Newspaper and television production can be imagined as having an hour-glass shape: Large amounts of information flow through a narrow journalistic 'neck' and on to a mass of readers or viewers."⁴⁵ In contrast, the Internet is set up as a series of connections between different users, all of whom are creators and consumers. "The true power of the Internet resides in the way it is hooked up, that is, in its architecture. The flow of information through a network is nonlinear, and distributed across a vast number of sender-receiver nodes."⁴⁶

Kawamoto lists his own group of reasons for what set apart the Internet as a

42 Ibid. p. 38.

43 Willis, Jim. "Turbonews." p. 29.

44 Ibid. p. 30.

45 Newhagen and Levy. "Future." p. 9.

46 Ibid. p. 15.

media form: hypertextuality (linking and "layering" of information), interactivity (engaging user participation), nonlinearity (flexible ordering systems of information), multimedia (use of more than one type of media), convergence (melding together previously discrete practices and ideas), customization and personalization.⁴⁷ Manovich provides yet another set of principles of the new medium: numerical representation (all media objects are composed of digital code), modularity (objects are composed of pieces that can be disassembled and reassembled), automation (computers can do much of the creation work that humans once did), variability (numerous different versions of the same software/object), and transcoding (digitizing turns media objects into computer data rather than human information types).⁴⁸ Kawamoto seems more concerned with content, while Manovich seems to adhere to a more McLuhan-like contention that the workings of the medium itself is more important to the medium's impact.

No general consensus exists as to interactivity being the chief revolutionizing feature of the Internet. Indeed, though researchers such as Stovall emphasize "audience-generated news" via e-mail, polls, online chats and news personalization,⁴⁹ but others have called interactivity a "myth," given that digital objects cannot be touched or physically changed in the same way that a physical work is.⁵⁰ (Though it should be noted that "interactivity" in the context of the Internet generally refers to the ability to correspond with the generator of the content in a dialogue, not to manipulate the object itself.)

Maisel views the traditional interpretations of media as appealing to mass audiences as outmoded. In opposition to what he calls the traditional "two-stage theory"

47 Kawamoto. "Digital Journalism." p. 4.

48 Manovich. *The Language of New Media*.

49 Stovall. *Web Journalism*. pp. 42-43.

50 Manovich. *Language*. pp. 55-57.

of a pre-industrial period characterized by face-to-face interaction and an industrial period characterized by mass media, Maisel proposes a three-stage theory, which includes a post-industrial period that needs specialized information and media to accommodate the needs of service industries.

We must also abandon the outmoded view of the individual as simply a recipient of standardized messages emanating from the mass media, whose only recourse in self-expression is the primitive sound of his own voice in direct face-to-face interaction. Rather, we must begin to think of, and study, the individual in our society as a communicator having access to a very powerful set of media tools and as a recipient of a wide range of equally enriched communications directed to him by others.⁵¹

Certainly the Internet has provided the recipient with even more tools by which he can not only receive messages, but produce them himself. Whether the Internet could be considered the death knell of mass media and the beginning of a period of entirely specialized information is an important question that must be answered by future research. Willis predicts that specialized media may indeed be the future of communication:

Communication technologies may create a Tower of Babel in which everyone, instead of speaking the same cultural language, is speaking radically different languages and pursuing radically different interests. This scenario can already be seen in magazines, which have moved from general-interest, mass-circulation to narrow-interest, small-circulation products.⁵²

How new media have affected newspapers

Research into how certain mass media forms have affected competing media has tended to focus on competition. Just as historical arguments seem mostly to center on the dominant medium of a given time period, much of the research that has focused on specific media forms has tended to argue that said medium was the most dominant at some given time immediately following its invention. Likewise, the obsolescence or lack

51 Maisel. "Decline of Mass Media." pp. 169-170.

52 Willis, Jim. "Turbonews." *Impact*. p. 34.

of viability of older media, particularly newspapers, has been a popular topic among recent research. In essence, many have contended that it is difficult for media forms to co-exist, and much of what has been written conveys a fear surrounding an impending end to a particular format. McLuhan laments the fact that media with very different capabilities have to exist within the same space and present the same messages. "Our official culture is striving to force the new media to do the work of the old," he writes.⁵³

Most research has pitted the newspaper against whatever prevailing new media form has come onto the scene. Brown details the competition between radio and newspapers in the 1930s. Noting that radio was in direct competition with newspaper reporting, the Associated Press initially denied radio stations access to its wire reports during the 1932 presidential election and the following year, the American Newspaper Publishers Association voted to deny the sale of news material to radio networks. This led to what Brown calls the "Press-Radio War," which chiefly took place in court. Finally, December 1934 saw an agreement where the AP would give networks five-minute news reports. Neither side was satisfied with the agreement, however, and many stations broke off from the plan. It was not until the end of the decade that the ANPA agreed that radio reports were actually making more people interested in newspaper reporting, causing listeners to seek out more details.⁵⁴ The competitive, aggressive mindset was actually detrimental to both media, it seems.

Still, the idea of the dominant medium versus obsolete artifacts prevails. Newhagen and Nass characterize the match-up between television and newspapers as one of institutional credibility (newspapers) versus individual personalities (television). And, in the mid-1980s, surveys showed that individual personalities won out with the

⁵³ McLuhan. *Medium*. p. 94.

⁵⁴ Brown. pp. 136-138.

audience: "By 1984, respondents asked by the Roper organization which medium they would select when confronted with conflicting news reports chose television 46% of the time versus 22% for newspapers."⁵⁵

Nonetheless, Bagdikian makes an argument for institutional integrity and complexity of ideas, which came to print in the early 1800s with the metal rotary press.

The content of newspapers changed as their technology and cost changed. They had been for centuries establishmentarian. Their content had been heavily laden with theology and official edicts. The establishment press continued in the new era; but a large number of the new papers expressed new ideas from a previously inert or silent part of the population.⁵⁶

He describes television as attracting a "lower class" than newspapers, but also sees the pull of the medium because of its immediacy. "The acceleration of social reaction time is obvious. Within hours of the assassination of Martin Luther King there were riots and near-riots in over one hundred American cities."⁵⁷ Likewise, that immediacy also makes the information harder to control, he argues.

As many others, Bagdikian saw McLuhan's descriptions of the power of television as a prediction of the end of print as a viable medium. "At various times McLuhan and some of his collaborators have suggested that the new electronic communications already have started the death throes of publishing, that reading is declining, and the television generation has already begun to reject print."⁵⁸

This perceived decline caused by television has caused many, like Kovach and Rosenstiel, to claim that newspapers have made efforts to become more television-like, with colorful pictures and more "reader-friendly" content. This was not true of the advent of radio, they argue, because the period of the Great Depression led readers to seek out

55 Newhagen and Nass. "Evaluating Credibility." p. 277.

56 Bagdikian. *Machines*. p. 9.

57 Ibid. p. 14.

58 Ibid. p. 185.

more serious and knowledgeable news sources.

Television and the Internet, they argue, have led to the development of a "mixed media culture," which consists of five main characteristics: a never-ending news cycle that makes journalism less complete, sources having more power over journalists, the end of the existence of so-called news "gatekeepers" who decide what is news and what is not, argument overtaking reporting and a sensationalistic "blockbuster mentality." All of this has contributed to "the journalism of assertion," they claim.⁵⁹

The idea that newspapers are facing a crisis in the face of other media is a prevailing idea among many commentators. Underwood describes many of the changes that have gone into newspaper content in the hopes of competing with television and the Web.

In recent years, front pages with more 'points of entry' and 'scannable' news, marketing programs developed in tandem with the news department, and 'news-you-can-use' and reader-written features have proliferated. And yet there is no evidence that the focus on readers – and the fixation on the marketing and packaging and redesigns associated with it – has done anything to improve newspapers' prospects. Indeed, even the industry's own consultants now caution against expecting circulation growth from redesigns or the adoption of reader-driven marketing formulas.⁶⁰

Dennis describes a shift resulting from the mixed media culture of content -- special sections, more attractive graphic presentations, more feature material and brighter writing -- being created more for advertisers than for readers, in both television and newspapers. As others have argued, the end result is specialization, he says.

A reflective view of the dilemma...in all of broadcasting (and indeed, in all media) reveals a feverish competition for the audience in an age of great change. Like other 'products,' news programs and newspapers are marketed to maximize their audiences. Once seen as 'mass media,' reaching a large, undifferentiated audience, they now seek out particular readers and viewers and have moved from an economy based on the law of large numbers to a law of right numbers,

59 Kovach and Rosenstiel. *Warp Speed*. pp. 6-8.

60 Underwood,. "Identity Crisis." p. 25.

courtesy of demographics and market segmentation.⁶¹

Barnhurst and Nerone, however, reject the idea that television and other media have had any direct effect on the design of newspapers, calling the argument "unconvincing." Their research shows that the capacity of words on the front page of newspapers, as well as the number of front page items and stories, decreased markedly between 1885 and 1985. In 1885, there were around 12,000 words on the average front page. By 1985, there were only 4,000. The number of stories declined from 25 to five.⁶² Newspapers had achieved far greater uniformity by the 1970s as well, with six columns, lowercase headlines, a small story count, a modular layout (rectangular columns) and two or three front-page photographic or graphic illustrations. But this shift came from different industry standards, not technology, they argue.

"The key moment for the rise of modernism came not in the 1970s or the early 1980s but much earlier, during the period between the world wars," they write.⁶³ Rather than technological change signifying the shift in newspaper content, they argue that division of labor in the workplace, the decline of print news competition, modular layout, cultural changes and the rise of professionalism had the most effect.

Changes in the practice of news gathering and styles of news presentation marked the transition to modernism. Modern newspapers presumed a more autonomous reporting function, encouraging a stance of objectivity and expertise. Modern reporters, who as professionals are neither gentlemen or waged workers, took on the task of authoritatively classifying and prioritizing events.⁶⁴

Nonetheless, many arguments regarding the effects of the Internet on newspaper content have had a similar slant to the prevailing notions regarding television's effects.

Manovich describes entirely new expectations readers began to have for the page in the

61 Dennis. *Reshaping*. pp. 99-100.

62 Barnhurst and Nerone. *Form*. pp. 196-197.

63 Ibid. p. 21.

64 Ibid. p. 19.

late 1990s because of hypertextuality: "A typical Web page was conceptually similar to a newspaper page, which is also dominated by text, with photographs, drawings, tables, and graphs embedded in between, along with links to other pages in the newspaper."⁶⁵ In short, readers expect links.

Tewksbury and Althaus' study on the differences in retention between readers of a paper and online version of a newspaper provides one of the few empirical evaluations of the differences between the two media. Traditional news' selective procedures for choosing important news and presenting it is its most important value, they write: "News selection practices and procedures provide audiences with recognizable cues about the importance and meaning of issues, thereby helping to guide the news consumption process for many people."⁶⁶ The Internet's effects on news gatekeepers -- readers now have more choice in deciding what is important and what is not -- may be its greatest effects on news content, they argue.

Inasmuch as the traditional media represent a linear mode of news presentation, the new online services engender a parallel structure that gives consumers substantially more choice and control. Online services provide easy access to information that is often buried in the depths of traditional newspapers, and they frequently incorporate links between news items and related stories and Web sites.⁶⁷

Where the format of newspapers tends to leave all readers with the same impression of what is important, online news may lead to a readership with a broader, idiosyncratic knowledge base which individually focuses on particular types of stories or issues. Again, the specter of specialization: "Online newspapers appear to facilitate the matching of readers with topics that interest them."⁶⁸

Tewksbury and Althaus' study centered on readers' different interpretations of

65 Manovich. *Language*. p. 75.

66 Tewksbury and Althaus. "Differences in Knowledge Acquisition." p. 457.

67 Ibid. p. 458.

68 Ibid. p. 462.

news value from reading the print and online versions of the *New York Times*. They found that online readers were less likely to read international, national or political news (typical A section content) in the online version of the paper. In addition, they were less likely to recall public affairs news one week after reading stories (likely because those stories were on the front page of the print edition). Online readers ranked stories far differently from print readers in terms of their importance.

D'Haenens and Janowski's replication of Tewksbury and Althaus' study presents more of a mixed bag. In their study of two Dutch newspapers and the corresponding online versions, the two researchers found that, though the print versions of the newspapers had more stories and that readers tended to read more of the print editions, just as many readers recalled or fully read stories from the online paper as did the print edition.⁶⁹

Still, their replication does not address Tewksbury and Althaus' contention that the prevalence of Internet news is leading to a further fragmentation of news content. Indeed, several commentators have argued that news is bound to go in that very direction, and could shape how news professionals do their jobs: "Originating the proper set of inclusive yet discrete categories into which to place this multiplicity of information is difficult. Continuing to use these categories and refine them requires a high level of intelligence on the part of the editor."⁷⁰

Newhagen and Levy go on to hypothesize that several very basic tenets of newsgathering -- the burden of verification, institutional credibility -- could be changed by the Internet's node-receiver (not "hourglass") architecture. "The burden of verification

69 D'Haenens and Janowski. "Online and Print Newspapers." pp. 363-382.

70 Stovall. *Web Journalism*. p. 109.

may thus shift back to the audience,” they argue.⁷¹ The reader himself will have to seek out whether the information he is reading is accurate. Or perhaps Kovach and Rosenstiel would argue that the reader, engrossed in a mixed media culture, no longer cares about verification and prefers assertion and opinion. Whatever the case, credibility will be more centered in who is reading as well as who is reporting, say Newhagen and Levy:

“Judgments about credibility will have to be even more contextual and site specific.”⁷²

These new judgments are what the researchers dub a new “news literacy.”

This idea of a new news literacy feeds into McLuhan's ideal of the “tetrad,” which claims that only one medium dominates any given period of time, runs its course, and then flips or reverts to a new medium that actually reflects an old one. The key questions of the tetrad: What aspect of society or human life does it enhance or amplify? What aspect, in favor or high prominence before the arrival of the medium in question, does it eclipse or obsolesce? What does the medium retrieve or pull back to center stage from the shadows of obsolescence? And what does the medium reverse or flip into when it runs its course or been developed to its fullest potential? As an example, Levinson describes the radio, which amplifies the human voice, obsolesces print, retrieves the town crier and then reverses into television (which retrieves theater).⁷³ Of course, television has seemingly reversed into the Internet, which retrieves print all over again.

But Foster argues that the Internet has changed the entire paradigm of the old media exemplified by newspapers by creating a so-called “digital ripple effect.” Rather than fight against the onslaught of the new medium, the old media are forced to absorb its traits and adapt to it, he argues, through specialization, narrowing of focus and an ever-changing perspective of what an audience needs and wants:

71 Newhagen and Levy. “Future.” p. 17.

72 Ibid. p. 17.

73 Levinson. *Digital McLuhan*. p. 189.

The traditional media are converging with the digital media. This media adaptation constitutes an evolutionary change in the way messages are being sent and received....The digital ripple effect is a concept that embraces and is defined by this evolutionary perspective. The convergence is causing a ripple throughout the social, media and audience systems.⁷⁴

The future of newspapers as a medium

Kovach and Rosenstiel call the mixed media culture a "crisis of conviction" for traditional journalists. They argue that the answer is not change or accommodation, but adherence to journalistic values. "The antidote is a renewal of faith. It will require an intellectual vigor journalists have often lacked, and a tough self-confidence about sticking to guns that journalists have not often demonstrated."⁷⁵

Others predict that journalism is irrevocably changed, and that the only solution is to adapt. Pavlik notes that the computerization of print began with the advent of pagination -- "computerized page design and layout technologies" -- leading to streamlined production and reduced costs, but also to editors taking on the role of technological coordinator, leaving them less time to focus on content and style.⁷⁶ Other newsroom changes that could result from new technologies are already becoming apparent as well, he says: a possible redefinition of the news based on the development and availability of real-time information, a new definition of the journalist now that the editor and the manager are the same, a re-conception of the audience based on particular specialized interests, and the advent of news on demand.

The effects on traditional newspaper sections are beginning to show as well, says Kawamoto. With the advent of community Web portals like Craigslist, which provide readers with localized information and sellers and others with free way of distributing information, classified advertising faces obsolescence. "In response, some local

74 Foster. "Media System Dependency." p. 102.

75 Kovach and Rosenstiel. *Warp Speed*. p. 98.

76 Pavlik. *New Media Technology*. pp. 7-8.

newspaper Web sites began creating their own community Web sites, serving as a kind of portal for local arts and entertainment information, community and neighborhood news and organizations and links to jobs and other opportunities."⁷⁷

But even in the face of these gloom-and-doom predictions, commentators and researchers seem convinced that the newspaper will continue to have a place. In perhaps a repudiation of McLuhan, Bagdikian has no qualms with the idea of media co-existence. "If the new communications are designed to serve people in their family and community life, as well as national life, and if these local channels are to be truly open to all who wish to speak, it will require more than a few machines," he says.⁷⁸

Underwood argues that there will always been the need for gatekeepers. "As the explosion of information continues, there will be even more need for highly skilled journalists to root through it, filter out what's important, and help put it into perspective."⁷⁹

And Pavlik argues that adaptation and specialization are the key to the newspaper's (the old media's) survival, not a sign of its death throes.

Still, lessons from the past suggest that the old media will likely adapt to changes brought about by the development of new media technologies. Just as radio adapted to the introduction of television, one of the most likely changes is increased specialization. As new technologies have been introduced, old media have tended to adapt by identifying special interest, core audiences and targeting them.⁸⁰

The future of the Internet as a medium

The real impact and potential of the Internet as a (potentially mass) medium is still a question to be answered in both a practical and a research sense. Much of the commentary on the Internet's future has consisted so far of conjecture or questions. A

⁷⁷ Kawamoto. "Digital Journalism." p. 19.

⁷⁸ Bagdikian. *Machines*. p. 303.

⁷⁹ Underwood. *Impact*. p. 28.

⁸⁰ Pavlik. *New Media*. p. 55.

major question concerns exactly how the Internet will affect content: "Will new media just feed consumers what they want, or will they devote resources to investigations or serious topics that may have less popularity?"⁸¹

Perhaps even more pressing: Will the Internet ultimately fragment the news audience? Schneiderman's theory of the circles of relationship -- extending out from self to family and friends to colleagues and neighbors to citizens of a country or participants in a market⁸² -- seems to indicate a conflation of the theories of McLuhan and Maisel. Just as media forms have tended to revert back to earlier forms, perhaps mass media as a whole has reverted back from a focus on entire markets or nations onto the smaller subgroup of colleagues and neighbors. Just as Maisel theorized with the concept of the post-industrial communication, blogs and ideology-driven news Web sites certainly tend to focus on more fragmented, specialized audiences. Despite assertions, then, that the Internet has not signified the death of the newspaper, its effects on mass media as an enterprise may be more difficult to determine without empirical evaluation.

81 Stepp. "The New Journalist." p. 441.

82 Schneiderman. *Leonardo's Laptop*. p. 81.

METHODOLOGY

The six 1986 papers the study uses are from Monday, Aug. 18; Tuesday, Aug. 26; Wednesday, Sept. 3; Thursday, Sept. 11; Friday, Sept. 19; and Saturday, Sept. 27. The 2006 papers are from Monday, Aug. 21; Tuesday, Aug. 29; Wednesday, Sept. 6; Thursday, Sept. 14; Friday, Sept. 22; and Saturday, Sept. 30. None of the newspapers were published in the same week. This was to provide a snapshot of an "average" news week and avoid skewed data resulting from a particularly busy or unusual week.

To answer the subjective key research question, the study must find empirical, quantitative values showing the differences in content in the *Times* and *Times Free Press* in the pre-Internet and post-Internet eras. To do that, the main question must be broken into a number of sub-questions demonstrating the scope and depth of the content changes in the newspapers in the 20-year period and answer those questions with values quantifying news content.

The study supplements that data with interviews of the newspaper's publisher (Appendix A) and an editor (Appendix B) to determine how much the Internet has impacted changes in content.

Q1: Have stories increased or decreased in length?

For the first time, the Internet has provided publishers the ability to run news stories without space concerns, as Internet "space" is only limited by the amount of data that can be stored on a Web server. However, this new notion seemingly conflicts with the ongoing trend among publishers and editors provide readers with shorter, "scannable" news stories in the vein of *USA Today*, the national newspaper developed in 1982 as a more "reader-friendly" product meant to compete with television. This conflict is at the

heart of debate among publishers and editors regarding whether stories should be shorter and more scannable or longer and more thorough, taking advantage of the resources available on the Web.⁸³ Which all begs the question: Are stories getting longer, shorter or staying the same?

The answer to this question is found by measuring the median length of all the front-page and metro section front stories in the newspaper on a given day. To show variation in story length, the study will also find the difference in length between those two sections' longest and shortest stories. For a uniform count of story length, stories were measured in column inches in the standard six-column format. In instances where stories were laid out in formats other than six columns, those lengths were converted to the six-column standard. The 1986 papers were measured on microfilm but were sized to the standard size of a newspaper page (22 3/4 inches). The 2006 editions were measured using the print editions.

Q2: Has the newspaper created increased "linkability" within and between stories and features?

Many researchers who have attempted to determine the so-called essential properties of the Internet have posited that the key to the Internet medium is its ability to link so readily between documents. Aarseth argues that the so-called "cybertexts" of computer-based documents entirely shift the paradigm of what literature is: "The effort and energy demanded by the cybertext of its reader raise the stakes of interpretation to those of intervention."⁸⁴

Thus, the study aims to determine if traditional texts have changed to be more like

83 Keraghosian. "Size Matters."

84 Aarseth. *Cybertext*. p. 4.

the cybertexts Aarseth describes. Though readers cannot point and click on a link in a print newspaper, editors can find ways to nudge readers into other areas with boxes and notes suggesting a related story or an inside illustration. The study quantifies this phenomenon by taking counts of these links as seen on the newspaper's front page, excluding the skybox and contents, which are common to all 12 examined newspapers. The counts do not include any Internet links or URLs included in the 2006 papers.

Q3: Has the newspaper devoted more front-page space to visual cues, such as photographs or graphics?

Much as McLuhan describes the effects of television on how viewers absorb information, the Internet, with its colorful designs, computer-generated graphics and images has become another factor in the increased profile of imagery text-based documents.

As such, the study takes measurements of the column widths of the photographs on the newspapers' front pages to determine if more space is being devoted to the image as an eye-grabbing tool for readers who may be more accustomed to some illustrative accompaniment to go along with text-based information.

Q4: Does the newspaper provide more or less local coverage?

Researchers like Kawamoto have noted the localizing effects of the Internet, but mostly on advertising content. The study aims to answer whether the news content of newspapers has begun to lean more toward local coverage as well. With a post-television push toward national news in newspapers like *USA Today*, the pendulum may be swinging back toward local content.

The study quantifies this by categorizing the news stories in all the newspapers' sections. Stories with no datelines are considered "local." Stories with Tennessee datelines are "state" and datelines for cities within the newspaper's multi-county circulation area (including counties in Georgia) are "region." Other U.S. datelines are "national." Datelines outside the United States constitute "international" stories.

Q5: With a shortened news cycle, has the newspaper taken a more analysis and feature-style approach to news?

Kovach and Rosenstiel's idea of a "post-O.J. media culture" of non-stop news coverage on television has been exacerbated by the capability of Internet sites and bloggers to post new text-based news around the clock. Since newspapers like the *Times Free Press* still are published daily, their ability to break news in print has been diminished. Have those newspapers, then, moved to the Kovach and Rosenstiel scenario of bucking so-called "hard" news in favor of analysis and features?

The answer to this question comes from a content analysis of the lead sentences in the various stories on each newspaper front page. Hard news is categorized as stories that begin with explicative statements describing the main thrust of a news event and contain an attribution. These sentences preface the traditional "inverted pyramid" style of hard news writing.

Feature-style stories were categorized by a lead sentence either relating an anecdote or describing a subject (like a public figure). These could be full-on features (profiles of figures, stories about subjects) or news-features (news stories that read in a feature style). Analysis attempts to get to the heart of a news event's meaning and is written in the voice of a writer – that is, stories begin with and expound upon a statement

relating to the meaning of the event and is not attributed to an outside source. The study defines these stories as those which are not written in an expository or feature style, but instead is written in an explanatory or discursive manner.

Q6: Has the newspaper more distinctly categorized news into sections and sub-sections?

Pavlik and Dennis both argue that specialization in newspapers is becoming more prevalent. But how explicitly can that be determined?

The study looks for explicit specialization in the *Times* and *Times Free Press* through counts of sections and sub-sections. Any separate portion of the newspaper labeled with a letter (A, B, C, D) and a heading (sports, life) is defined as a section, while any portion with a heading (golf, movies) within a lettered section is considered a subsection. If a portion of the paper was not given an explicit label, it was not considered a section.

Just as newspaper Internet sites are often highly categorized, these counts may show a further leaning toward specialized news meant to appeal to specific readership groups and advertisers.

RESULTS

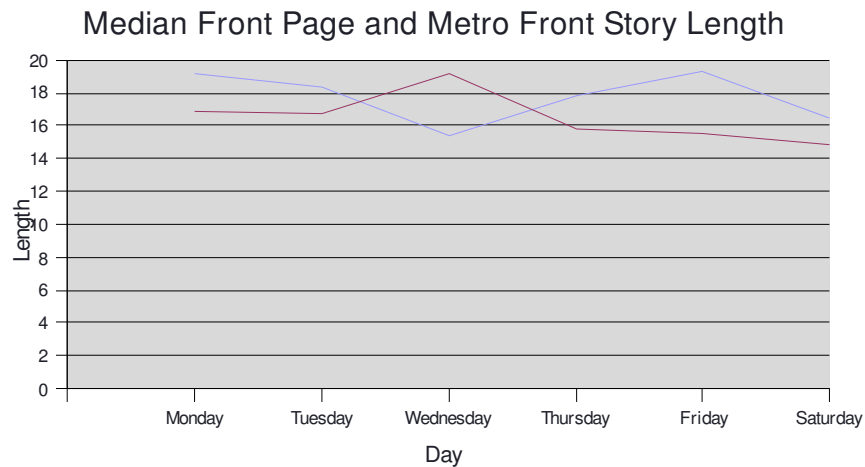
Q1: Have stories increased or decreased in length?

Only one *Chattanooga Times Free Press* in the study had a longer median front page/metro front story than the 1986 editions of the *Times*. But while the newer papers' stories tended to be generally shorter, one should note that both papers' median stories stayed within the range of about 15 inches to about 19 inches.

Table 1: Median Page A1 and Metro Front Story Length (in column inches)

	Chattanooga Times (1986)	Chattanooga Times Free Press (2006)
Monday	19.125	16.813 (12 stories)
Tuesday	18.375	16.75 (12 stories)
Wednesday	15.4	19.125 (9 stories)
Thursday	17.875	15.75 (11 stories)
Friday	19.25	15.5 (11 stories)
Saturday	16.5	14.875 (12 stories)

Figure 1



However, if one looks at the longest and shortest of the stories on a given day's paper, the findings show that there is far more variation in length in the 2006 papers than in the newspapers from 20 years prior. On four of the six days studied, the difference in length between the longest of the front page and metro front stories was 30 inches or

more in the 2006 paper, while the difference was 30 or more in only two of the 1986 papers.

Table 2: Front Page and Metro Front Story Length Range (in column inches)

	Chattanooga Times (1986)	Chattanooga Times Free Press (2006)
Monday	30.5	18.625
Tuesday	30.975	32.25
Wednesday	20.5	36.875
Thursday	16.563	46
Friday	13.843	21.5
Saturday	22.724	31.875

None of the papers in 2006 had a range of less than 20 inches, while two of the 1986 papers did. This can partially be explained by a layout difference. The newer papers generally all had longer "centerpiece" stories at the top and center of both sections, while the older papers did not use that design strategy.

According to former *Times* metro editor and current *Times Free Press* projects editor Dave Flessner, the trend of a larger gap between "centerpiece" stories and other news stories is likely to continue, in part because of the Internet's influence: "I think you'll see more shorter stories and more in-depth stories. The Internet can facilitate that so you don't have to put all the really long stuff or the supporting documentation in the paper."⁸⁵

Q2: Has the newspaper created increased "linkability" within and between stories and features?

Over the course of a the week, the 2006 *Times Free Press* had about 10 more "links" between its stories than the 1986 *Times*.

⁸⁵ Flessner, Dave. Personal interview. February 8, 2008.

Table 3: Front Page "Links"

	Chattanooga Times (1986)	Chattanooga Times Free Press (2006)
Monday	4	6
Tuesday	5	6
Wednesday	3	4
Thursday	2	5
Friday	4	5
Saturday	1	3
TOTAL	19	29

Every edition of the newer paper included more boxes referring readers to other stories or notes connecting features than the one from 20 years prior. The total increase was about 53 percent.

It is interesting to note that the element of linking stories was not something foreign to the 1986 newspaper, however. Clearly the idea of linking between stories was not something that was foreign to pre-Internet newspapers, and in fact was used with some frequency. On several of the days, the older paper only had one less link than its later counterpart.

Q3: Has the newspaper devoted more front-page space to visual cues, such as photographs or graphics?

The 2006 *Times Free Press* devoted well over twice as much space to photographs and graphics than did the 1986 *Times*. While the most space devoted to art in the earlier paper was 4.5 column widths, the newer paper at no point devoted less than six column widths to art elements. The increase from 22.3 to 48 column inches of art represents a 115 percent increase in space for photos and graphics.

Table 4: Total Art Element Space (by column width)

	Chattanooga Times (1986)	Chattanooga Times Free Press (2006)
Monday	3.4	6
Tuesday	3.5	10
Wednesday	4	8.5
Thursday	4.5	8.5
Friday	3.4	7
Saturday	4.5	6
TOTAL	22.3	48

The 2006 papers rarely had a front-page story that did not include some art element, even if just a half-column head shot of a prominent figure in the story. Likewise, the aforementioned "centerpiece" stories in the newer papers generally had three or four-column-width photos to go along with them, contributing greatly to the color on the front page. Conversely, the older papers had a tendency more toward text, with some stories having no art elements whatsoever. Often, top stories (which were often national stories) ran with only small photos.

Tom Griscom, *Times Free Press* executive editor and publisher, said he believes the Internet has been the biggest factor in changing newspapers over the past 10 years, but noted that other factors, such as the popularity of *USA Today*, has also had an impact on visuals:

I don't think that there's any doubt that USA Today introduced a larger emphasis on visuals. There's a reason the New York Times is called a gray lady. It took a while for color to ever show up in newspapers. Then everybody sort of rushed that way. I think USA Today was a framer of certain changes that focused on changing the print product.⁸⁶

Q4: Does the newspaper provide more or less local coverage?

The percentage of total stories in the newspapers that could be considered local in

⁸⁶ Griscom, Tom. Personal interview. January 22, 2008.

1986 and 2006 is nearly identical, at just over one-fourth of each newspaper's coverage. The more distinct difference between the two lies in state and regional coverage. In 1986, state and region coverage accounted for around 20 percent of the stories that appeared in the paper. Twenty years later, that number had jumped to about 27 percent.

That change seems to have come at the expense of national news. The increase in percentage points for state and local news between 1986 and 2006 (around seven) is almost exactly the decrease for national news.

International news accounted for only about 8 percent of coverage in both periods.

Figure 2

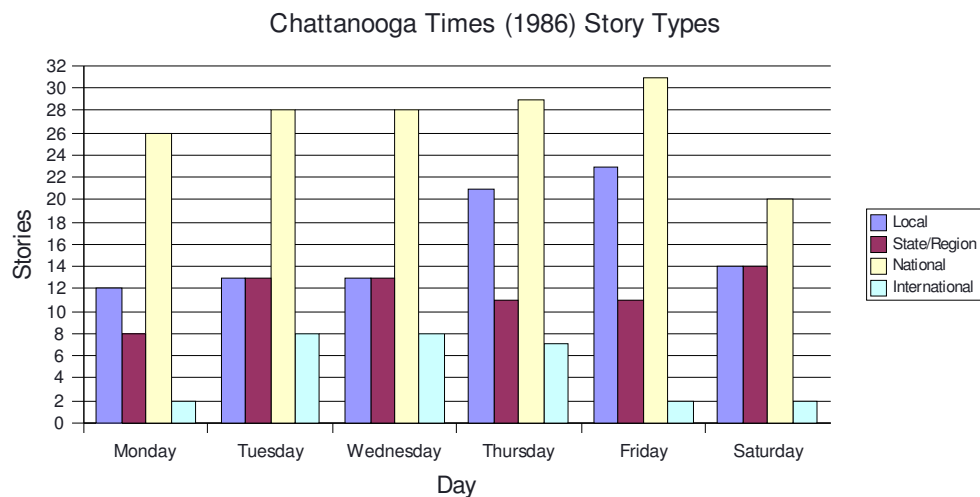


Figure 3

Chattanooga Times (1986) Story Type Breakdown

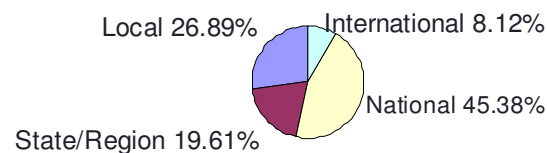


Figure 4

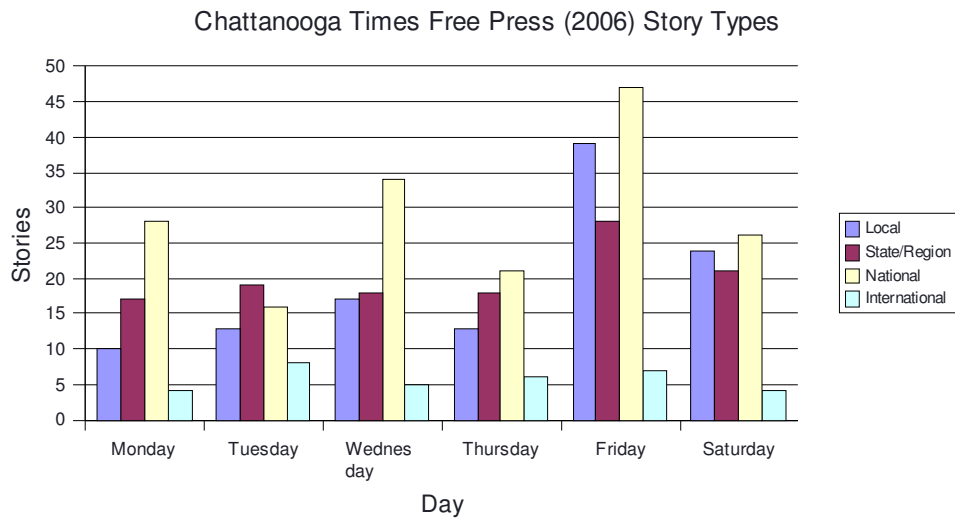
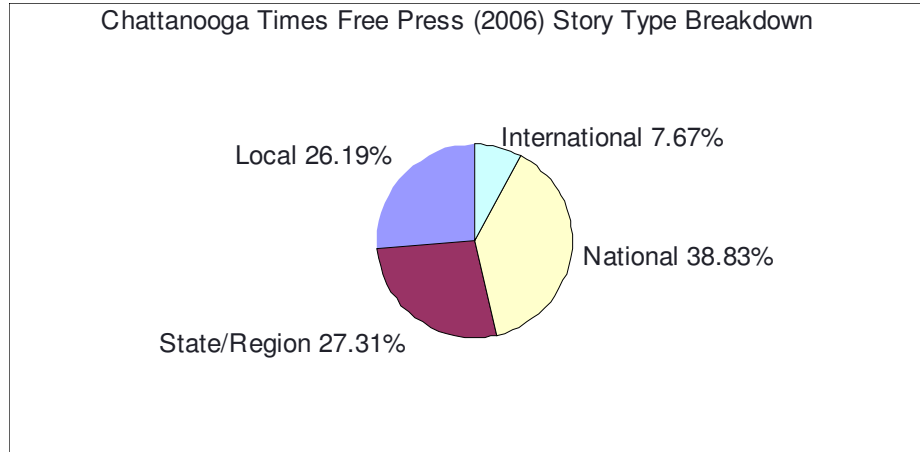


Figure 5



On a day-to-day basis, national stories dominated nearly every daily edition of the *Times* in 1986. In the 2006 editions, national news was the most prevalent type of story in the paper most days, though state and regional news did account for more stories on one day (Tuesday). International news was consistently the least prominent type of story in the newspapers of both years on all days.

Griscom says the Internet has been a major factor in a drive toward more local and regional news:

You have to step back and think, what is our franchise? And I think the Internet has helped us understand our franchise is not to have the same wire story that you can find anyplace else on what happened in Iraq on the front page of the *Times Free Press*. Our franchise is writing and telling stories that affect the people that read us every day.⁸⁷

Q5: With a shortened news cycle, has the newspaper taken a more analysis and feature-style approach to news?

The amount of so-called "hard news" on the front pages of the *Times* and *Times Free Press* fell rather substantially between 1986 and 2006. In 1986, about 84 percent of all the stories on the front page were breaking hard news stories. In 2006, that number was about 71 percent, a fall of about 13 percentage points.

That change comes along with an increase in feature-style stories. Where features and news-features made up only about 13 percent of the 1986 papers, those types of stories were just more than a quarter of the front-page stories in the 2006 editions.

Analysis stories made up about three percent of the stories in both periods' papers.

It is interesting to note that the newer paper often opted to completely forgo the traditional breaking news story in favor of a second-day style story. This could be because of a general assumption that most readers have already heard about a major news event (either on the Internet or on television) and the newspaper, rather than a news breaker, serves as a conduit for interesting stories about the people wrapped up in the previous day's events. Still, many stories, especially those having to do with local issues, continue to be written in the traditional "hard news" style.

⁸⁷ Griscom. Personal interview.

Figure 6

Front-Page Stories by News Content in the Chattanooga Times (1986)

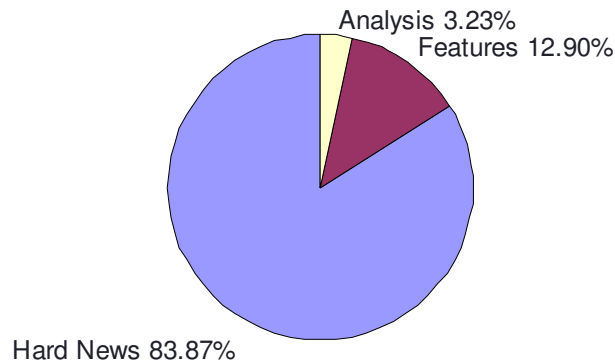
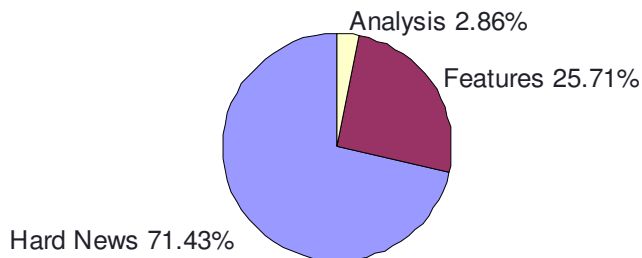


Figure 7

Front-Page Stories by News Content in the Chattanooga Times Free Press (2006)



Flessner argues that the Internet and other 24-hour media have contributed to the increase in features and decrease in “hard news:”

In addition to the Internet, you have the 24-hour cable outlets, which have given some people new venues that they can immediately go to. And people have been conditioned on that now so everybody knows about a major story before it occurs. The newspaper, it’s been decades since it’s been the primary news source. Now people are finding out a lot more before they read. Obviously, that makes the news product different.

Q6: Has the newspaper more distinctly categorized news into sections and sub-sections?

The week's worth of newspapers from 2006 was on the whole far more sectionalized than its 1986 counterpart. Where the five or so sections found in the 1986 papers were rarely subdivided into smaller subsections (four at most), the up to eight sections in the *Times Free Press* were subdivided into generally around 12 and up to 20 additional subsections. Each section, in general, had at least one labeled subsection in the newer papers.

Table 5: Newspaper Sections and Sub-Sections

	Chattanooga Times (1986)		Chattanooga Times Free Press (2006)	
	Sections	Sub-Sections	Sections	Sub-Sections
Monday	4	2	5	9
Tuesday	4	3	6	11
Wednesday	4	4	8	13
Thursday	7	2	7	12
Friday	6	3	8	20
Saturday	4	4	8	8
AVERAGE	4.83	3	7	12.17

Perhaps the most sectionalized portion of the 2006 papers was the sports sections, which went from a more standard collection of pages with sports stories organized thematically but without rigid categorization (except perhaps for local sports) in 1986 to specific pages for particular sports like college football and golf.

The A news section likewise became more sectionalized, including specific sections for national and international news, as well as a politics page.

Friday's outlier of 20 subsections in the 2006 editions is due in part to a highly specialized Weekend/entertainment section, which distinguishes between dining, movies, music and things to do around town. Though the 1986 Friday paper had a similar section,

it was not so subdivided.

Flessner says the increasing sectionalization is the result of a more specialized culture which has arisen, in part, as a result of the Internet's influence:

There's more splintering. With the Internet, there's not a coming together as a community. Not everybody watches the same thing. You can get more intense in what's local, too, or area of taste. That's a challenge for geographically oriented newspapers. Our franchise is a region, but if the world splinters into interests and you've got the dart world or the bowling world or the water skiing world, they don't have to go to their local newspaper if they're really into that, they can go to specialized Web sites.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Flessner. Personal interview.

CONCLUSIONS

Though it is difficult to generalize about newspapers on the whole from a case study of one week's editions, this pilot study can say with some certainty that the face of Chattanooga's morning paper has changed rather substantially between the pre-Internet and post-Internet eras. Median front-page and metro section stories have gotten slightly shorter but have increased in terms of range in length, more news space is now devoted to regional and state stories and less to national news, links between print stories and features have become more frequent, the paper has become more divided and subdivided, hard news stories have given way in part to feature-style stories and colorful photographs and graphics take up more area on the front page.

But can these changes be regarded as a response to what Kovach and Rosenstiel call journalism's "crisis of conviction" when it comes to the Internet? Perhaps the strongest connection the study can make is between the growth of the Internet and the increase in the percentage of column inches devoted to local and state news, partially because of what the newspaper's publisher, Tom Griscom, said in a recent column about the *Times Free Press's* Web site:

The connection between the newspaper and the Internet for us is a single word: local. The syndicated services such as The Associated Press supply external content. The local newspaper (Times Free Press) is where you read of the actions of the local school board or the recruitment of a new business or the success of a high school athlete.⁸⁹

In an interview, Griscom further expounded on that notion:

Today, I'm not sure that somebody cares that you have a bureau sitting in Cairo. But they do care if you were out there covering the landfill that's about to be put in somebody's backyard and the community's in an uproar. There are other niche publications and niche Web sites that are coming in and filling that void. Once you give it away, it's hard to get it back. There are a number of different outlets that can fill that void online. There may be one print newspaper, but there are lots

89 Griscom, Tom. "New Look."

of other ways to touch somebody when you use the Web.⁹⁰

This study can then conclude that the newspaper has made a conscious effort to shift focus more distinctly toward local and regional news in large part because of the Internet, as a contrast to the myriad online sources from which readers can obtain national or international news. But what of the other changes could one note?

The *Times Free Press's* efforts to provide both longer and shorter stories would seem to indicate a contradictory approach. It underscores attempts at providing added thoroughness (through the multiple sources and aim toward objectivity that has traditionally characterized newspapers since the early 20th Century), possibly as a counterpoint to material available on blogs, much of which comes from an ideological slant. Clearly, other ideologically based news media, such as talk radio, could also have an effect. The increase in length of some stories could also be seen as an attempt to compete with Internet news outlets' resource of unlimited space. Where much of the history of newspaper reporting has focused on tight, concise writing, this change could represent a shift toward providing more information and making the paper more Web-like. However, as Flessner says, the paper's own Internet resources allow for material that would have gone into print to instead be put on a Web site.

The increase in much shorter stories (many less than 10 inches long) points to a re-affirmation of the likely television-inspired idea of "reader friendliness" which assumes that readers prefer shorter stories. Likewise, it could be a move toward re-affirming the tenants of tighter, shorter writing as a repudiation of the tendencies of Web writing.

The increase in feature-style stories seems to be for the sake of creating a contrast

⁹⁰ Griscom. Personal interview.

between the Web and the print newspaper as well. Many analysts have pointed out that the newspaper in its current, daily form cannot compete with the immediacy of news sources on the Internet: "The public exodus from newspapers is not a rejection of paper, but an objection to using it for hard news and other utilitarian, quick-read content ... that gains little or nothing from arriving in that format."⁹¹ The *Times Free Press*'s publisher and editors have apparently come to a similar conclusion, lessening the proportion of breaking, hard news stories in favor of a feature style which highlights important people, places and events in the local area.

Concerning the links and increased space devoted to graphics and photos, it all seems to indicate a general brightening and busying of the front page to create a more "reader-friendly" newspaper, as Tewksbury and Althaus describe in their research. As newspapers continue to aim to compete with other media, the growing concern is a need to catch the eye of the reader and retain his or her interest in the story (and related stories) once the reader's eye is caught. This could also possibly explain why the *Times Free Press*'s front page as a general rule had more stories on the front page and metro front than the *Times* in 1986. Griscom explains this:

We default to say there's probably a reason to have more bulk on your front, meaning a larger story count, where people get a feel that there's a lot of substance in here and that front page is leading you inside, than to worry as much about story length and those stories jumping.

A Web site's managers can list as many links on the site's main page as they wish – including some of specialized appeal which may only be relevant to a small portion of the audience. Since publishers do not have that freedom in the print product, the key may instead be finding ways to call attention to stories inside (perhaps with a photo and a bit of "link" text to a story in another section).

91 Powers, William. "Hamlet's Blackberry." p. 55

The increased sectionalization and specialization of the paper seemingly has a similar purpose as the increase in front-page story content: to appeal to as many special-interest readers as possible. This could be viewed as newspapers taking on the challenge that Willis describes magazines taking on by becoming specialized publications. But rather than separating into a number of separate, special publications, the newspaper has instead sub-divided into sections and subsections which can be advertised to readers with those particular interests. One could also surmise that the increased number of sections is a reaction to the organization style of many Web sites, which tend to categorize information into tabbed sections divided by genres and sub-genres (or occasionally by geographic area).

In any case, these changes can certainly be viewed as old media adapting and absorbing the new, as Foster posits.

In light of this study's interviews with Tom Griscom and Dave Flessner, it is clear the *Times Free Press's* editorial staff made a conscious effort to change content based on the Internet's growing prevalence as a medium. The study can conclude there is at least a rough cause-effect relationship between the advent of the Web and some changes in the content in the newspaper's pages. Whether publishers and editors have made these efforts consciously or whether the changes have been more organic adaptations is more difficult to grasp, however. Likely, some changes, like increased photograph/graphic space, increased linking and more local focus are more immediately intentional, while story length differences, increased sectionalization and changes in types of stories have evolved over time as the face of the newspaper has shifted. Still, Griscom argues that most of the changes are intentional: "It's not so much organic. There are some things that do come organically. But a large part of it is we're changing the order of how a journalist

has been taught in school or in the workplace of how this all comes together.”⁹²

Limitations

While one can certainly draw some general conclusions about the state of newspapers from the data obtained in this study, made more relevant by a shared news environment in which all newspapers are experiencing the effects of the advent of the World Wide Web, there are a number of unresolved issues. First, it is difficult to say just how much of the changes the study has documented are a direct result of a sense of competition or a simple change in standards generated by the advent of the Internet or other factors such as talk radio, 24-hour cable news or *USA Today*. Though Tom Griscom argues that most of the changes to the *Times Free Press* in recent years are intentional, it is difficult to conclude whether the intentional decisions to make those changes at the time they were made were consciously driven by outside forces like the Internet. It is also hard to say whether stories have changed in length more as a reaction to changes perpetuated by a new Internet news model or are simply a result of an ever-changing news business. However, we can say with some certainty that the Internet has been a major factor for a number of changes in the *Times Free Press*, based on qualitative research.

Likewise, one cannot say that the single newspaper that was the focus of this pilot case study, an independently owned publication in the South which merged with its cross-town competitor about seven years prior, is necessarily typical of all newspapers in cities of similar size. Newspapers owned by large publishers such as McClatchy and Gannett may have taken an entirely different approach to the Internet’s influence, and every newspaper, regardless of ownership, tends to adhere to its own specific editorial

⁹² Griscom. Personal interview.

ethos. However, as previously mentioned, no newspaper is immune to the influence of the new medium of the Internet, and a newspaper with less corporate oversight or stockholder pressure may be more likely to make changes quickly.

One may not be able to definitively say that all newspapers are reacting to the Internet in the same way as the *Times Free Press*, but the study has at the very least suggested that they are assuredly reacting, and in something of a mixed fashion. While some changes seem to be centered in a process of making clear distinctions between print and the Web, others have seemed to be more focused on making the news available in print more similar to that which can be obtained on the Web.

Further Research

This pilot study could be viewed as a study of further quantitative and qualitative research into the topic of the Internet's effects on the content of newspapers.

In the immediate, it would be worthwhile to replicate this type of case study, a pilot study, for other, comparable newspapers to examine whether the conclusions here and the methods of those other papers are similar. Likewise, it would be telling to examine papers geared toward different audiences. Have national newspapers like the *New York Times* or the *Wall Street Journal* seen similar content changes since the advent of the Internet? What about newspapers that cover small cities or rural counties? Have they made efforts to change? How are the changes different?

Further study of other media, both in their effects and how they have been affected, may provide insight as well. A historical look at how television and radio changed newspaper content may give further clues as to why publishers and editors have reacted to the advent of the Internet as they have. Conversely, further study of the Internet's effects on media such as radio, television, magazines, film and other outlets

could perhaps provide a broader picture of the Web's overall effects on culture.

In addition, further, more qualitative research into the mindset of editors and publishers as they deal with the shifting news landscape could perhaps help explain the reasoning behind some of the changes the study has documented. Interviews and surveys of editors asking how they believe newspapers must cope with dwindling readership and a slipping grasp on breaking news would not only perhaps create additional fodder for academics to study, but also help publishers build a road map with which they can plunge forward into the post-Internet era of newspaper publishing. This type of research would show a more concrete connection between the advent of the Internet and changes in newspaper content, especially if editors and publishers can definitively say that they have seen through changes to their papers because of Internet influence.

Along those lines, another research possibility could be a comparison between newspaper editors' and publishers' suggestions for changes to print news and the print products themselves. How many of the quantitative changes to newspapers were planned? Did some of them manifest themselves organically? How much of the planned changes suggested by editors and publishers are becoming apparent in the print product?

Clearly, determining the mindset of the drivers of newspapers is a key step in further research into this topic.

But how can further quantitative research adequately and definitively determine the Internet's effects on one or more newspapers? This study looked only at two periods 20 years apart, defining those periods as pre-and-post-Internet. Perhaps it would be worthwhile to shorten the intervals. A study of how a newspaper has gradually changed, perhaps every two years, over the course of 20 years would demonstrate just how much the rising use of the Internet has accelerated certain changes which may have already

been in motion prior to the advent of the Internet medium. For instance, graphics and photos may have already been growing more prevalent in the pre-Internet era, but further study could find if the growth of the Internet has boosted their popularity.

No newspaper can exist in a vacuum, but it may be easier to separate some of this study's research questions from other factors to determine and measure Internet influence. One is sectionalization. Some newspaper sections are clearly in the paper for the sake of advertising needs, not any outside influence. If one could separate those sections out from other sections in the paper, that would eliminate one major factor that could muddy results. Another factor that may be easier to link to the Internet is local focus, since that appears to be the change editors and managers have most consciously made in response to the Web's prevalence.

Ultimately, research in this topic must reach beyond comparisons of the print newspaper product. While it is certainly worthwhile to study the differences between print newspapers in different eras, the newspaper of the post-Internet era does not represent a full news product. It would certainly be useful to research how Web sites and print newspapers complement each other. The developing relationship between print and Web products has assuredly affected news content on the whole.

APPENDIX A

Interview with Tom Griscom, executive editor and publisher, Chattanooga Times Free Press

Q: Describe your experience with the newspaper: What you did prior to becoming executive editor and publisher, when you came into your current position now and how you came to that point.

A: I spent, right out of college in 1971, the next seven years working at the Chattanooga Free Press as a journalist covering a number of beats, but on the reporter side, not on the editor side.

Then, for the next roughly 20 years, I was involved in communication, where I interfaced with journalists and worked on stories and things from that side, but was out of the business, per se, until I came back in 1999 after the papers had merged into the Times Free Press. I came in first as executive editor, then several years later had the publisher title added. That's kind of a quick snapshot.

Q: So you've been working with media that whole time.

A: Yeah, for roughly 36 years.

Q: Obviously, there's been a lot of work here developing a Web site for the Internet, but have you noticed any particular changes to the actual print product that's been put out since the rise of the Internet?

A: Let me give you a context point. When I left the profession in 1978, the Internet was not even out there. Nobody talked about it. It was all about that print product and what it produced. It clearly was a time where a lot of multi-newspaper towns were going away into single-newspaper towns. If you look back, there was not an appreciation for the monopoly that was created. It was, "You don't have a choice, we're going to give this to you and in a form that you've got to take it."

The Internet comes along in this time frame that you're talking about, but it wasn't that much different than business. Everybody said, "We've got to get on it." When the newspapers started, newspapers in Chattanooga got into it. All the content up there was free. Pretty basic, elementary in look and design and what you could do with it, but you just offered it up. Nobody really thought at that point about charging.

Now I'm going to jump you ahead. I wanted to give you that context, because that, really, to me was the world that we walked into. When the merger occurs, the Internet piece of our business was sort of there. Not a lot of attention paid to it, but it was something, again, that you were supposed to have. But I don't think anybody, Matt, had a notion of where it would fit in.

Then to your question. What I have seen over the past couple years is decisions made that it's online first and then everything else. It's a 180-degree reverse from the print product

driving everything. We had to change our attitude. But I also believe the notion that one first and then everything else follows is still a mistake. I think platforms and information dissemination work basically side-by-side. You're thinking about the best way to get something out.

What the print product, as it's evolved for us, has allowed us to do, is we can build something that we know has got an Internet capability, but we start in print. It keeps the paper cleaner, fresher and more viable. Also, as attention gets driven to the Internet site, it's cheaper, people think, and you can add fewer resources (in print). The big driver, the big horse, for all major newspaper chains is that print product.

If that is the case, why would you allow it sit there, and come close in many cases, to withering on the vine? It looks old, it doesn't look like it's been updated, it really has no personality in many cases. What was really sort of the emblem of a community, which was a print newspaper, starts sliding away. In my opinion, that too is a mistake.

That print product has got to remain viable, because we're still touching a lot of people. If the story selection's good, if the appearance brings you into it, all those pieces of it, which means you do not allow it to become stagnant. You keep looking for minor changes, minor tweaks.

I'm not talking about revising it all. A couple years ago, there was a study that said if you put a Texas hold 'em poker story in the middle of the paper, everybody will come read it. And I saw that research and said, "What are you going to do tomorrow?" That's not what it's all about. It's not a gotcha kind of thing. It's about consistency.

The Internet changes dynamically all the time. Why can't you do the same thing with the print product, and change it, not as frequently, but keep it updated? When it reaches to that readership that you have out there, and then you offer them another alternative, that's how we've looked at it and what we're trying to do.

Q: What are some of the specific changes as far as the stories that are in the paper, how those stories are written, the length of the stories, the artistic or visual things that go along with the stories?

A: Let me give you the visual cues first. If you sit there and you realize that when people see a newspaper in a traditional box or in a rack in the store, you see the top half, you look at all the entry points. You're more focused on the photographs, the headlines, the teases, the colors. You go from virtually no color to pastels. Things like this that you learn and know are a little easier on the eye.

You go for stronger words, more action in the words. You think about the story or the page in the overall context rather than individual little slices of life.

You link the products back and forth. You don't think, the print product can do this and I've got this online and multimedia type platforms and they can only go this way. You put in drivers for audio, for video, so if I've got a story and you've got a cue in there that says there's audio with this, not only do you read the print product, but I get you to go to

the Web site. And those hits on the Web site, those are real readers.

Then you sit down and you have to talk about how the story's told. One of the editors here said to me one day, "Well, I'm not a visual person." I said, "Well, why not?" And they said, "You're left handed," talking about me, "and I'm a right-handed person so I'm not visual." So I said, "Yes you do." To them, they thought being visual meant standing in front of a TV camera or something.

And I said, "If you tell a good story, it creates a visual image in somebody's mind. If that image doesn't get created, then they're not going to read that story. If you've got all these bells and whistles pushing somebody online, they're not going to go do it. I hope you never say to somebody again that 'I'm not visual.' Because as a communicator you are."

And that means you want people, as they sit down and write stories, to think, what's the image you're trying to create? That image may be different in the reader's mind. That's OK.

It's been fair criticism for years, and again, I think this goes back to the we own the community so we think nobody can compete with us (mentality), to give me a story that's 24 hours old, just because you think, well, we're a record. We are. But I'm not going to spend the time to update it to give you a second-day lede.

The Internet, and things we do online, force you to stay current, to make sure your print product is as current as it can be. Granted, there's a point every night where you know the deadline hits and the presses turn on. You can't keep updating the print product. You can update it online. But what you can do is, if you had a story that happened at 10 o'clock in the morning and this paper isn't going to be printed until 12 or 12:30 the next morning, you can come back and say, "What else has changed here?" That, I think, is one of the real pluses.

The last thing is this: You have to step back and think, what is our franchise? And I think the Internet has helped us understand our franchise is not to have the same wire story that you can find anyplace else on what happened in Iraq on the front page of the Times Free Press. Our franchise is writing and telling stories that affect the people that read us every day.

You're going to find all the national and international news, but not necessarily on the front. The Internet helped us understand some of that, why you come in.

You've got an economic set of issues now that are developing and rather than taking the story that says the stock market went down 400 points -- we have that story -- you take that story and say, what do analysts and others who live here, how do people who invest in stocks, real people, how's it affect them? Are they afraid? Where are they going?

That's the kind of story that touches the readers of our newspaper. That, to me, is the type of storytelling you will not find anyplace else. But it makes that connection back to your own community. That's where I think the key still is.

Q: It's a local focus.

A: Sure it is. It's local/regional. But not to the point where it's the chicken dinner circuit anymore. You're not going back and doing all the grips and grins. You can put those online.

But it is asking yourself, why does somebody want to read the Times Free Press? Why would you spend the time to do it? The answer to me was, if somebody travels, they say, "I want to buy the newspaper to see what's going on in the community." If that's right, which I think it is, you don't buy the newspaper in this community to say, "Oh my gosh, George Bush is in Iraq," and it's in the center of the newspaper. You buy this newspaper because it tells you what's happening with the people that live here and what's going on here. You feel like you've got a better understanding of this community.

You look at the overall paper and you think it's an educated population if they read it, because there's breadth and depth to what they're getting.

Q: How typical among newspapers of similar size and maybe larger do you think the shift toward more local focus is?

A: I think people know you've got to do it. I think the execution is less than dynamic.

One of the changes with the large, large newspaper chains is the notion of one size fits all. There's one group of newspapers where you can go to almost any city where they own the property and it looks just like the one in the previous city you were in. Same goes online.

I think one of the latitudes we have as being a privately held newspaper is that we were allowed by our owner to figure out what works in this community. What he's doing in Little Rock, Arkansas is not what we ought to be doing in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

You'll hear people, Matt, always talking about "hyper-local." We ought to have that stuck on the wall someplace, we ought to be hyper-local. You look at their product and the section that's the skinniest is the local section in their print product. They've got this A section, where it's, we've told advertisers over the years, you want to be in the A section. I look at that A section and I might as well be reading the New York Times, which I think is the national newspaper in this country. But what does it have to do with this medium, and in some cases, large city?

And so, it's backing the words up when you tell somebody we're really going to cover this community. I think it is very difficult, because there are great newspapers in America, and there are newspapers that have walls stacked with plaques, and I applaud them, because they've done good work, but as times have changed, I'm not sure they've been able to change and say that, yeah, maybe 10, 15, 20 years ago, I needed a bureau in whatever foreign city.

Today, I'm not sure that somebody cares that you have a bureau sitting in Cairo. But they do care if you were out there covering the landfill that's about to be put in somebody's

backyard and the community's in an uproar.

There are other niche publications and niche Web sites that are coming in and filling that void. Once you give it away, it's hard to get it back. There are a number of different outlets that can fill that void online. There may be one print newspaper, but there are lots of other ways to touch somebody when you use the Web.

Q: How much do you think the changes to the print newspaper are intentional and planned? Or is there an organic growth going on there? Or is it a little of both?

A: I think most of those are intentionally planned.

I'll share with you one of the bigger frustrations I have, but I'm not sure if it's true or not. Everybody says, and it goes back to the USA Today model back in 1982, shorter is better and you don't have to jump.

I wrestle with that one, because I'm not sure that's right. To not have the story jump, it's so surface written. Five or six inches in a news story of importance isn't much. But if I don't want stories to jump, I either have the option of writing them that short or I put less on my front.

And we default to say there's probably a reason to have more bulk on your front, meaning a larger story count, where people get a feel that there's a lot of substance in here and that front page is leading you inside, than to worry as much about story length and those stories jumping. But I don't know the answer to that.

I have not seen any data to date that says if I could every day not jump a story, my circulation is going to go up X. It's just one of those myths that's out there.

But to your question, one of the hardest parts with turning a media ship is that journalists work on deadlines. That's how we're programmed to do it. We've worked off a system where a press starts, and dadgummit, it better start on time because if it doesn't, then the papers don't get out to the carrier on time and then they're late and then you get all these phone calls.

And deadlines force you to do certain things in certain ways. What we've done over the past couple of years is we've broken into that norm and changed it. And it's been a struggle for many of us who are boomers because we're used to doing it this way. But I also think it's not as easy for the younger people, too. Because they come through having done certain things and we get them programmed, think this way, this way, this way.

Now, all of a sudden we say, OK, now in addition to the story, do you have audio? Did you think of a video opportunity? What about a slideshow? We're going to turn comments on. What do you need to do with that if anything?

There's so many other little add-ons. You get a story, and hey, quickly call in a little 30 to 60 word update, to get you ready for the second-day lede to go in print. All those are changes and when you look at it, singularly none of them seem that important. But that's

a huge number of changes for people who work on deadlines.

It's not so much organic. There are some things that do come organically. But a large part of it is we're changing the order of how a journalist has been taught in school or in the workplace of how this all comes together.

Q: Over the past 20 to 25 years, there have been a lot of factors that could come into play in changing the content of a newspaper: USA Today, TV, talk radio. How much of the content changes would you ascribe to the rise of the Internet? Would you say it is the biggest factor?

A: I think it'd be fair to say it's the biggest factor in the past 10 years.

I think you've listed the other ones. I don't think that there's any doubt that USA Today introduced a larger emphasis on visuals. There's a reason the New York Times is called a gray lady. It took a while for color to ever show up in newspapers. Then everybody sort of rushed that way. I think USA Today was a framer of certain changes that focused on changing the print product.

The next really dramatic shift, because it forced you to think whether you would ever buy another press or not, is in the circulation system of the newspaper, the most antiquated next to the post office. But you're challenging people's values and what they're taught.

You find a lot of people in this industry who have never done anything else in their life except work at a newspaper. I've had the chance to do multiple things and I think each one of them taught me something new and different to take on the next one.

You also find people today faced with the changes going on in the industry who are saying, well, those of you who are on the editorial side, you're all for the Internet because it's like the second coming of the JOA. Under joint operating agreements, all the back-room operations get put together in one, it's the editorial department that stays separate. They say, you guys'll be fine with the Internet, because you're still going to be here, you've got to produce content.

You can rattle off all the people who can say woe is me, but why not step back and say, why don't we re-think the model? Why don't we figure out where there's room for all the things we're doing?

It took us the longest time as an industry to go to ABC and say, let's talk readership, not just circulation numbers. Let's look at the people coming online and say, these are readers. Why don't we count them? But it took a long time to get that changed, because it was, I'm giving up one more shred that says it's all about the print product rather than opening up and welcoming all the other facets where we can touch somebody's life.

Those changes are going to be there. Those resistances to change are going to be there. I do worry that some people may be rushing so far down the other path that may be leaving behind what I still think is a very viable part of this business. I think there are going to be people who want to read. They may read it differently, in a different format.

But I don't think everybody five years, ten years from now, will be holding up a computer screen or look at a computer screen to look at what's going on.

There's still a reason and a need for some people to say, "I like to have it so I can pick it up, fold it up, look at it, but I also like to have it so I can get away from a computer monitor where I do most of my business every day."

APPENDIX B

Interview with Dave Flessner, projects editor, Chattanooga Times Free Press

Q: How long have you been with the paper and in what capacity have you been employed at the Chattanooga Times and Times Free press?

A: I came to the Chattanooga Times in October of 1980 as a business writer. I worked most of the time as a business writer. I did cover the Hamilton County beat for a little while. I was an assistant city editor for a couple years. I was city editor for three years. Then we had a team concept where I was the money team editor for three years. In the '80s, I was primarily a reporter, then in the '90s, I was either an editor or an editor-slash-reporter.

I guess I've got 27 years as a whole of experience. In 1999, it was a merged paper.

Q: And then in '99...

A: When the paper merged, I was hired here as one of the business editors. Most of that, they consolidated into one person but for a lot of reasons they just kept both of us. We took on different of roles so it matched pretty well. So I've been mainly a business editor, a reporter, an assistant city editor, city editor, and now I'm, the title is project editor, though it's mostly reporting.

Q: Over that time, what are a couple things you've seen change as far as how the paper is organized, how stories are written, how things in the paper are linked?

A: There's been a continual proliferation of media outlets.

The two papers were extremely competitive, particularly in the '80s and the '90s, the Times in the morning and the Free Press in the afternoon. Up until 1980, before they had a joint operating agreement, actually I wasn't here, but they both had Sunday papers. They very much competed for stories. The major competition you had, mainly, was the other paper. Our adrenaline sort of focused on beating the other paper.

For instance, (former Free Press reporter) John Wilson, who became a part of the merged paper, started (Chattanooga.com, a Web site that competes with the Times Free Press), because he became so frustrated somewhat by the new ownership, but mainly because he felt that he didn't have anyone to compete against anymore.

Guys like John Wilson actually went out and created a Web site so he had somebody to compete against.

We saw television as something of a competitor. But when I first came here, the Wall Street Journal wasn't always delivered daily, or oftentimes it was mailed in. You couldn't always get that reliably right away in the morning. USA Today came in and the Atlanta Constitution came in a little bit, but at one point there was just the two strong dailies.

In any event, even by 1986, the competition was certainly the other paper for us. And a recognition that television was out there, radio out there, the breaking kind of stuff.

Q: But not a Web site.

A: Exactly. There was no Web presence, obviously, at all. You know, when the Web started, early on, it was just kind of a way to promote our print product. We didn't seize the Web as quickly as some people did. Now, it's totally different.

Anyway, it made your whole focus one edition at night, doing everything you could to get the most complete story or get ahead of the Free Press the next day. That was the timeliness of it, to make sure you get as much of the story as you could before the afternoon paper came out the next day.

A lot of days, we'd be working to 8 or 8:30 at night. It seems like, the copy editors, we taxed them a little more. But there wasn't any other deadline. There was just that one deadline every day.

I should say there were some times in the '90s where we did some partnerships with Channel 9 and we gradually started working on some of those aspects, mainly as a way to promote ourselves and they us in a competitive situation. Fundamentally, it was just a way to maintain our franchise against the Free Press.

Even though there was a joint operating agreement where we shared the business side of the house, there was this extraordinary competition on the editorial side. But that was the competition that was considered the other major news source. Television and radio was out there and we were aware of that, but there was no Internet presence at all.

So, now, everybody comes back and files, if it's any kind of story at all, immediately and focuses on the Internet, getting the immediate story out there now. It's a breaking story, almost like a broadcast story.

I worked in radio when I was in college for a while. It was a much more immediate medium. I was attracted to that, just because it was kind of fun to be in that much more immediate turnaround kind of thing.

I happened to actually interview in Nebraska at a radio station and the very polite radio station guy listened to all my tapes, and this is not a joke either. The radio station guy said, "Dave, I've listened to all your tapes, and we do own a newspaper, too, actually." I went and talked to the newspaper guy and they hired me. This was back in 1978, I guess.

I kind of had an interest in radio but I realized quickly that newspapers could do so much more depth and it was more intriguing to me to do more than a three-paragraph radio story. But now, we've sort of come full circle. I almost feel like I'm writing those radio stories again. Not necessarily broadcast style, but you've got to write a quick story there.

It's a definite advantage, because you can try to get out there and still try to be first on the Internet and then you can also do something more in-depth for later. In some ways, we've

got the best of the broadcast world now that we didn't have before. It was always frustrating when you would get something early in the day as a morning newspaper, and you couldn't go to press until that night. You'd say, "I've got this first!" and yet, everyone's going to know it in two hours.

Q: Do you think that, by virtue of the fact that the Web provides an outlet for breaking news, that stories in the print newspaper are a little less inclined toward breaking news and lean more towards what's next or analysis?

A: I think it's going to go more and more that way. Different papers are approaching it and we're approaching it. The idea is that people have already found out about it.

The thing is, CNN only came about 20 years ago, too. There was no 24-hour newspapers or 24-hour broadcasts, which really had an impact in terms of national coverage. Now, you think about it, there was only Nightline at night and the 6:30 news or something. But if you were at home at 8 o'clock, nobody was going to be broadcasting, even if an earthquake occurred or something like that.

In addition to the Internet, you have the 24-hour cable outlets, which have given some people new venues that they can immediately go to. And people have been conditioned on that now so everybody knows about a major story before it occurs. The newspaper, it's been decades since it's been the primary news source. Now people are finding out a lot more before they read. Obviously, that makes the news product different.

I think, here, what we've done is two things. We've tried to write more from the second-day perspective, and secondly we've really focused more on our local franchise, the idea being that national stuff they're going to get from other outlets. So it's made us more local, which is kind of ironic since the Free Press was sort of born as a big, local community newspaper. It did an extraordinary job with a lot of community news and photographs and things like that.

I think that's what a lot of newspapers are being led back to, the things they can do to be unique and distinctive, because the thing about the Internet is you can go anywhere for news. So you're not the only funnel. We don't control that channel into people's houses. If you want to know about some outbreak in India, we're not going to deliver it to them on their steps first. You've got the Internet, you've got radio...

Q: You can get an AP story anywhere.

A: Exactly.

So there's that focus. And then the other thing, too, in terms of project reporting, the advantage, too, is we can supplement information so much more. We don't have to kill as many trees to get all the detail readers want.

We probably haven't mined recently that as much as we can, but I think that's a real strength. There's this layering of news that I think is coming, where people can find quick hits and things. The print thing may just be a guide to all the quick news you want,

but if you want more news, that's the beauty of the Internet. You can go as deep as you want and have as much as you want.

Q: The old space confines aren't there.

A: Right.

Q: Speaking of space, do you think there's a particular trend toward how long stories are meant to be?

A: The Times and the Free Press have enjoyed some of the biggest news holes of newspapers of this size almost anywhere. So for big stories, they have probably killed a lot of trees, as it were.

Our ratio of ad to news content has been, traditionally, 35 to 40 percent instead of the 60 to 70 percent that's the industry norm. We've enjoyed this big news hole. The down side of it is it's probably hasn't forced us to be as judicious with space as we'd otherwise be.

On the other hand, there's been a desire to make stories shorter. I think our challenge is to sort of go deep and brief. Because a certain amount of people want news quickly they can read. I think a lot of papers have gone to where they don't jump their front page. We haven't done that.

A lot of people want news quickly, but a lot of people want more in-depth news. We did some focus groups back in the '90s when I was still city editor and it was fascinating to hear people say, "I don't have time to read the newspaper, but I want more in the newspaper." People are conflicted by that. If they're really interested in something, they want as much as you can give. If they're not interested, they don't want it at all.

Q: What I've tended to find, in terms of story length, is that in general stories have shortened, but the range between the longest story and the shortest story in the paper is much bigger.

A: I think we have a lot more to do in that regard. We probably ought to have more shorter stories and more in-depth stories. It's interesting, USA Today always has a focal story on each section front, and for a while, they had it that every other story didn't jump. People want quick things that don't jump and that they don't have to follow to the jump but they may want one thing that there's some more depth on.

I think you'll see more shorter stories and more in-depth stories. The Internet can facilitate that so you don't have to put all the really long stuff or the supporting documentation in the paper.

Q: As someone who has edited a section, do you think the paper has become more sectionalized?

A: The attempt is sort of to appeal to different reader interests. I think we, as a society, are a little bit different than we were 30, 40, 50 years ago. I think we've been conditioned

through MTV and the Internet to do more at once.

For whatever reason, there seems to be a shorter attention span. People want things very quickly and they want to go exactly to what they want to do. I think papers are realizing that. What you're seeing is that more and more papers are going to have specialized product and ultimately you're going to get the newspaper you want. Customize your paper.

Even since the merger here, we are putting out an arts publication. We're putting out community news oriented toward particular neighborhoods. The Knoxville News-Sentinel puts out every month a business publication just tailored towards people in business. We've got more special sections we've added, some to cater to advertising needs, but some for people to focus on.

There's more splintering. With the Internet, there's not a coming together as a community. Not everybody watches the same thing. You can get more intense in what's local, too, or area of taste.

That's a challenge for geographically oriented newspapers. Our franchise is a region, but if the world splinters into interests and you've got the dart world or the bowling world or the water skiing world, they don't have to go to their local newspaper if they're really into that, they can go to specialized Web sites.

We've got more competition now than we ever did even though we're the only daily newspaper in town.

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