College Media

REVIEW

RESEARCH ANNUAL

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Editor's Note

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Being a newspaper adviser, I had mixed thoughts when I learned in 2011—prior to becoming editor—that *College Media Review* was moving to an online-only format. Seeing how some college publications have embraced the web and the benefits of more storytelling options and a faster publication and distribution cycle, I was looking forward to the new possibilities. But, being a researcher and someone who has survived the promotion and tenure hurdles, I knew that an online-only format could have many disadvantages, most notably the potential loss of credibility for research articles in the eyes of those P&T committees. That would be bad for both the College Media Association members publishing in the journal and the journal itself, since the journal could consequently receive fewer quality submissions as authors sought more traditional print outlets for their work.

Recognizing the value of print for scholars, the CMA Board voted last year to create a Research Annual to highlight the peer-reviewed articles published every year. This volume, which includes all of the research articles since the journal went online in the fall of 2011, is the first of what will hopefully be many Research Annuals. While this edition is being distributed in January, future editions will be sent to members in early fall and contain research articles published online during the previous academic year.

The creation of a Research Annual has two other benefits besides adding credibility, promoting research among members and increasing the readership of that research:

1)   The addition of downloadable PDF files when articles are published. Because we will be putting all the research articles into the Annual, we'll be creating the Annual as we go, laying out the articles in PDF form at the initial time of publication in *CMR* so readers can both scroll through the article or download the PDF (and so authors can immediately print off a professional-looking copy if they need it for an annual review or P&T packet). We've already done that for the articles in this Annual, going back and adding in PDF links on the CMR website (www.cmreview.org).

2)   The revision of the Ken Nordin Research Award. Previously, the award was given to the top paper presented at the fall convention. The problem was that that paper might not have been the best paper on college media presented or published that year, especially given the strength of the papers accepted for the CMA slot at the Association of Educators of Journalism and Mass Communication conference. Now that we have a Research Annual, it makes sense to give the award honoring former Research Chair Ken Nordin, who passed away in 2005, to the top paper published in the Research Annual that year (http://www.collegemedia.org/awards/ken_nordin_award/). This 2011-2013 volume contains the last two Nordin winners from the fall conventions, while the Research Annual published this fall will include a winner chosen by the *College Media Review* Editorial Board from among the articles published in *CMR*.

As you read through the articles in this inaugural issue, I hope you are able to find some information that is valuable to you in your role on student media. It's that practicality of research that drew me to *CMR* and led me to accept CMA past president Dave Swartzlander's offer (with only minimal arm twisting!) to edit the journal. If you haven't already read Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver's article online, do it now: it is a gold mine that provides answers to about half of the questions posed on the CMA listserv. The article written by Lisa Lyon Payne, the new Research Chair for CMA, is also very useful in understanding how the liberal arts environ-

ment affects college publications. Holly-Katharine Johnson, the 2012 Nordin Award winner, has an excellent article about viral college media content and how to handle the problems that may arise when content from your publication goes viral. The next article by lead author Cliff Brockman on the Pacemaker winners provides a snapshot of what the cream of the crop newspapers are doing online, while Sonya DiPalma and Michael Gouge delve more specifically into how one newspaper has been affected by the digital transformation in the industry. Lei Xie and James Simon focused their research on media advisory boards, surveying all 600+ members of the College Media Association. Douglas Swanson also employed survey methodology in his examination of how peer-to-peer mentoring is effective in college media. Alexa Capeloto's excellent dissection of privitization of facets of public universities is a must-read for all public school media advisers. All good stuff.

In addition to reading the research, I give you one more task: consider conducting research yourself and submitting your work to *College Media Review*. There are so many interesting topics to cover in college media, and there has been precious little qualitative and quantitative research done in this field. More than ever, we need to have a better grasp as a body of advisers how our field is changing.

Finally, I want to give thanks for everyone who has played a role in making this Research Annual possible. I'd like to thank the Board for providing the financial support, the national office for handling the printing and distribution logistics and the reviewers for evaluating and helping improve these articles. Thanks also go to my two *Griffon News* editor-in-chiefs whom I converted into editorial assistants to help out with laying out the journal: Dave Hon and Katelyn Canon. And, of course, a huge thanks goes out to the *CMR* Editors: Managing Editor Debbie Landis for her continued work on the "popular" articles for the journal, Bill Neville, who has worked wonders with the *CMR* website and Associate Editor Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver, who has been instrumental in working with the research submissions.

Still in Growth Mode

Newspaper revenues, salaried positions grow; Online editions expand as well

Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver
Florida International University

Introduction

College and university student newspapers have long been positioned as training grounds for the professional press, modeling them in many aspects.

The newspaper business has faced financial challenges and technological change. So too have student newspapers wrestled with some of the same issues. This study was designed to look at how college and university student newspapers and online editions have fared in these economic times, and how they have also met some of the same challenges as their professional counterparts. Results show that total operating budgets and the number of salaried staff have increased. More papers report revenue from advertising, the first step to gaining greater independence and professionalism. In addition, the student press has welcomed technology and created and expanded online editions.

Methodology

In an effort to report on and provide comprehensive data on salaries and benefit packages for students working on college and university newspapers across the United States, in the spring and summer of 2011, surveys were sent via Qualtrics to 580 active College Media Association adviser/members; 219 responses (37.8 percent) were received.

In order to track trends over time, this survey replicated one sent out in the spring of 2007 using a similar target audience of active CMA members as well as student newspapers listed in the 2006 Editor and Publisher Yearbook. The resulting article was published in the Spring 2008 issue of College Media Review. Initially, the current survey was also sent to the college and university newspapers listed in the Editor and Publisher Yearbook as well, but responses were very limited. Therefore, they were eliminated and the survey was re-sent only to CMA members. Cross tabulations were run on all salient aspects to provide a full picture of staff salaries and newspaper finances and demographics. Comparisons were also made to data from 2007 to illustrate changes over that period.

Since the last survey was conducted four years prior, online editions of college and university newspapers have increased. Therefore, this survey included a number of extra questions dealing with online newspapers, including budgets, sources of revenue, role of advertising and frequency of information updates.

Demographics of respondents

Nearly half those responding (47.9 percent) are from four-year public colleges, and slightly more than one-third (34.9 percent) are from four-year private schools. Two-year

public colleges account for 17.2 percent; there were no respondents from two-year private institutions.

Respondents represent 45 states and the District of Columbia. Texas had the most respondents with 17, followed by Pennsylvania with 14, Illinois and North Carolina with 13 each and Georgia with 11.

The highest percentage of colleges and universities represented (40.4 percent) have 1,001-7,500 students; 23.8 percent enroll 7,501-15,000, and 34.3 percent have 15,001 or more students. Five schools have 1,000 or fewer enrolled.

More college or university newspapers (45.1 percent) publish weekly than any other frequency; 17.4 percent publish daily. Those publishing alternate weeks account for 15 percent, while those coming out twice a week number 8.5 percent; those three times a week represent 2.3 percent, and those monthly, 11.7 percent.

Papers published weekly show the largest increase in number from 2007 figures, with 40.5 percent falling into that category at that time; those publishing alternate weeks decreased from 22.9 percent. Dailies increased from 14.6 percent; those publishing twice weekly increased from 7.6 percent, and monthlies remained constant.

Most daily newspapers (83.8 percent) are at four-year public colleges; the rest are at four year private schools. Dailies account for nearly one third (30.7 percent) of public college newspapers, but only 8 percent of private school newspapers.

Most of those publishing twice weekly are at four-year public colleges (77.8 percent), where they account for 13.9 percent of the papers. The rest of the twice-weekly papers are at four-year private colleges, where they comprise 5.3 percent of papers. All three-times-a-week papers are at four-year public universities; they account for 5 percent of the papers published there.

At four-year public colleges, 41.6 percent of papers are weeklies, while at four-year private schools, 64 percent fall into that category. Weeklies comprise 16.2 percent of papers at two-year public institutions, a significant decrease from 23 percent in 2007.

Alternate week papers tend to be the predominant type of publication at two-year public colleges (51.4 percent), a significant increase from 41.9 percent in 2007; 13.3 percent of four-year private school papers, a substantial decrease from 28.1 percent in the last survey, and 13.3 percent of four-year public college papers, an increase from 2007, also fall into this category.

Of all monthly papers, nearly half (48 percent) are found at two-year public colleges, where more than one half (51.4 percent) are published monthly, a substantial increase from one third in 2007. At four-year private schools, 9.3 percent are published monthly, an increase of 2 percent from 2007; six four-year public institutions have monthly newspapers.

Newspaper size

Newspapers continue to move to a broadsheet format, with 49.8 percent reporting that size in 2011 as compared to 43 percent in the last survey and 35.5 percent in the 1999 questionnaire.

Four-year public colleges and universities have continued to take the lead in printing broadsheet papers, with 57.8 percent reporting that format. At private four-year institutions, 40.8 percent are broadsheets, a significant increase from 2007 (29.2 percent). Most

two-year public college papers are tabloids (55.6 percent), a decrease from 72.6 percent in 2007, illustrating more of shift to broadsheet there, too. Daily newspapers have the highest percentage (70.6 percent) of broadsheet formats, followed by those publishing twice a week (61.1 percent) and weekly (47.4).

More newspapers (32.4 percent) average eight pages than any other size, an increase from 27.7 percent in 2007. Twelve-page papers come next with 28.6 percent, a slight decrease from 29.4 percent in 2007, and then 16 pages (18.1 percent), comparable to the last survey. The percentage of those publishing 24 or more pages (7.1 percent) is comparable to 2007; another 11.9 percent publish 20 pages.

More broadsheet papers (46.6 percent) have eight pages than any other number; 29.1 percent have 12 pages, 10.7 percent print 20, and 2.9 percent have 24 or more. Tabloids are typically 12 pages (27.6 percent), with 26.7 percent of schools printing 16, and 19 percent printing eight. Only 11.4 percent have 24 or more.

At two-year public colleges, most papers are eight (35.1 percent) or 12 (22.3 percent) pages; 21.6 percent print 16 pages, and two schools publish 24 or more. At four-year public colleges, one-third print eight pages and one-third, 12; both are increases from one-fourth each in the 2007 survey. Twenty-page papers are found in 13.5 percent of all schools, and 3 percent print 24 or more; the latter is a sharp decrease from 10.9 percent in 2007. At four-year private institutions, 27.8 percent publish eight pages and one-fourth 12; 8.3 percent average 20, and 13.9 percent print 24 or more.

Newspaper budgets

Overall, newspaper operating budgets have grown. More newspapers (59.1 percent) have budgets exceeding $50,000 annually in 2011 than in 2007 (45.2 percent), and more than one-third (35.8 percent) have annual budgets exceeding $100,000, an increase from 28.1 percent in 2007. Twelve schools report budgets of more than $1 million, a decrease from 16 schools in 2007, and six report $750,001 to $1 million, a decrease from nine in the previous survey. Three-fourths of the former are at four-year public colleges, as are all of the latter except one, which is at a four-year private college. In 2007, only one private four-year college had a budget exceeding $1 million. In this survey, three do. Only 8 percent of college papers have budgets of $10,000 or less, a decrease from 15.9 percent in 2007.

One-third of four-year public college papers have annual budgets of $100,001-$500,000, an increase from 28.9 percent in 2007, while 43.2 percent have less than $100,000, comparable to 2007. More than one half (58.2 percent) of papers at four-year private colleges have budgets of $50,000 or less, a decrease from 68.8 percent in 2007, and 6.9 percent exceed $250,000. At two-year public institutions, nearly half (47.2 percent) report budgets of $25,000 or less, a significant decrease from 68.5 percent in the last survey. No two-year college budget exceeds $250,000. (See Table 1)

In addition to the growth in budgets, advertising as a major source of funding for college newspapers has also increased since the 2007 survey. General college and university funding has decreased, and student activity fee funding has remained flat. The larger growth in advertising enables greater financial independence for college and university newspapers.

TABLE 1 Newspaper Operating Budgets by Type of Institution				
TOTAL BUDGET	PERCENT OF TOTAL FOR ALL SCHOOLS	FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC	FOUR-YEAR PRIVATE	TWO-YEAR PUBLIC
$1,000-10,000	8.0	1.0	12.2	19.4
$10,001-25,000	18.4	11.8	23.0	27.8
$25,001-50,000	16.5	10.8	23.0	19.4
$50,001-75,000	10.4	3.9	16.2	16.7
$75,001-100,000	10.8	15.7	8.1	2.8
$100,001-250,000	15.6	19.6	10.8	13.9
$250,000-500,000	7.1	13.7	1.4	0
$500,001-750,000	4.7	9.8	0	0
$750,001-1,000,000	2.8	4.9	1.4	0
$1,000,001 or more	5.7	8.8	4.1	0

NOTE: Figures represent percent of total for that type of institution

Most newspapers (86 percent) receive funding from advertising, up from 81.5 percent in 2007, but the amount generated by advertising has slightly decreased. More than half (53.7) percent) receive 50 percent or more from this source, comparable to 2007. Only a few (7 percent or 15 schools) are funded totally by advertising, down slightly from 8.9 percent in 2007. Nearly all these, 86.7 percent or 13 schools, are at four-year public colleges, and the other two, four-year private schools. Of these 15 colleges, 13 have operating budgets of $100,001 or more, and five have $500,001 or more.

Of the 12 college newspapers reporting budgets of more than $1 million, three are totally supported through advertising sales. Five dailies also report being totally supported by advertising. More than half the four-year public school papers (60.3 percent) are funded 50 percent or more from advertising; this is a substantial decrease from 73.6 percent in 2007. The same is true for 21.3 percent of four-year private colleges, a sharp decrease from 41.7 percent in 2007, and 19.5 percent of two-year institutions, also a significant decrease from 33.8 percent in the last survey.

The next most common funding source is student activity fees with 53.5 percent of papers reporting these subsidies, comparable to 2007. More than one-third (38.6 percent) of college papers receive half or more of their funding from these fees, up from 34.2 percent in 2007. Eleven papers are totally funded by activity fees, down five from 2007. Two are at four-year public colleges, eight at four-year private schools and one at a two-year public institution. Two college papers totally funded by activity fees have budgets exceeding $100,000. Nearly half (43.2 percent) of the two-year public college papers receive half or more of their funding from activity fees, an increase from 39.2 percent in 2007. So do 38.9 percent of four-year public schools, an increase from 30.2 percent in 2007, and 36 percent

of four-year private institutions, comparable to 2007.

General college funds subsidize 31.6 percent of college newspapers, a decrease from 37.4 percent in 2007; 21.2 percent receive half or more of their funds from this source, a sharp decrease from 31.1 percent in 2007, and 15 papers receive their entire budget from general college funds, half of the number in 2007. Of those 15 papers, seven are at four-year private colleges, seven at two-year public schools and one at a four-year public institution. Only one paper totally subsidized by these funds has a budget exceeding $100,000. A significant number of four-year private college papers (38.1 percent) receive half or more of their budgets from this source, a slight decrease from 41.7 percent in the last survey, as do those at 36.1 percent of two-year public colleges, down from 47.3 percent in 2007. Only 4 percent of papers at four-year public institutions fall into this category, a decrease from 9.3 in 2007.

Subscription sales provide funding for 10.8 percent of college newspapers, a decrease from 12.6 percent in 2007. Most report only 1 to 10 percent of funding from subscriptions.

TABLE 2 Salaries Per Month by Position							
POSITION	% SALARIED	$1-$100	$101-$250	$251-$500	$501-$750	$751-$1,000	$1,001 or MORE
Editor	81.4	3.4	16.7	23.0	18.6	11.8	7.8
Managing/Associate Editor	68.2	8.6	16.7	20.7	13.6	7.1	1.5
News Editor	67.7	8.5	21.9	22.9	9.0	5.5	0
Sports Editor	65.2	9.0	20.4	22.4	9.5	4.0	0
Features/Ent. Editor	67	9.4	22.7	22.7	8.9	3.4	0
Campus/Assignment Editor	38.3	6.4	14.9	11.7	3.7	1.6	0
Copy Editor	63.1	11.6	24.2	19.2	5.6	2.5	0
Editorial Page Editor	48.4	8.3	17.2	14.6	6.8	1.6	0
Online Editor	59.7	7.5	20.9	15.7	8.2	7.5	0
Reporters	42.6	20.8	12.2	8.6	.5	.5	0
Photo Editor	64.3	9.5	22.1	20.1	7.5	5.0	0
Photographer	49.0	*	*	*	*	*	*
Advertising Manager	67.2	9.2	14.9	15.9	10.3	8.2	8.7
Business Manager	37.6	6.9	12.2	10.1	3.2	2.1	3.2
Classified Ad Manager	14.8	1.1	5.0	3.9	1.1	1.7	0
Advertising Sales Rep**	40.8	6.7	11.2	14.5	3.4	2.2	2.8

Note: Figures represent percent of total for that position in all institutions
* Most photographers are paid on a per-picture basis
** Represents salaries only

Five papers list 20-50 percent of funding from this source, while none report more than half.

Several listed endowments, scholarships, interest and investments under "other" sources of funding, but none were substantial.

Editorial salaries

A majority of student newspaper editors, reporters and photographers are paid for their work. The percentage of editors and staff on all levels who are paid has increased from the last survey in 2007, even though the amount they are paid for their work has not in all cases increased. (See Table 2 and Table 3).

Most (81.4 percent) editors/editors-in chief receive salaries, an increase from 74.4 per-

TABLE 3 Salaried Positions by Type of Institution				
POSITION	PERCENT OF TOTAL FOR ALL SCHOOLS	FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC	FOUR-YEAR PRIVATE	TWO-YEAR PUBLIC
Editor	81.4	89.9	62	63
Managing/Associate Editor	68.2	78	57.6	61
News Editor	67.7	85.7	52.2	47.2
Sports Editor	65.2	86.9	48.5	36.1
Features/Ent. Editor	67	85.9	48.5	50
Campus/Assignment Editor	38.3	50	33.3	15.2
Copy Editor	63.1	83.5	53.8	25
Editorial Page Editor	48.4	66	36.5	20.6
Online Editor	59.7	67.6	52.2	50
Reporters	42.6	60	31.3	17
Photo Editor	64.3	80.6	52.3	41.7
Photographer	49	65.3	37.3	27.8
Advertising Manager	67.2	77.7	59.1	54.3
Business Manager	37.6	42.6	40	18.8
Classified Ad Manager	14.3	16.7	11.9	3.3
Advertising Sales Rep	40.8	57	36.1	6.3
NOTE: Figures represent percent of total for that position at each type of institution				

cent in 2007. Of those receiving salaries, more than half (53 percent) receive $500 or less per month, a decrease from 57.3 percent in 2007. Sixteen editors earn $1,001 or more, a decrease from 19 in 2007.

Two daily editors are not paid; of the remainder, none receives less than $250 a month. Nearly one third (32.4 percent) receive $251-$750; 29.7 percent receive $751-$1,000, and 24.3 percent, more than $1,000. At weeklies, nearly one fourth (22.2 percent) of editors are not paid; of those paid, one fourth receive $250 or less, and 48.8 percent receive $500 or less. Four editors are paid more than $1,000 a month.

At monthly papers, 44 percent are not paid; of those receiving salaries, all but three earn $500 or less.

Of those top editors who are paid, more than three-fourths (76 percent) of those at four-year private college newspapers, more than one-third (37 percent) at four-year public schools, and nearly two-thirds at two-year colleges (63 percent) receive $500 or less a month. One-third (34.8 percent) of four-year public and 12 percent of four-year private college editors, as well as 11.1 percent of two-year public school editors, are paid $751 or more; 13.5 percent of four-year public school editors are paid more than $1,000, as are eight four-year private college editors.

However, 37 percent of two-year college editors receive no salaries, down from half in 2007. The same is true for 38 percent of four-year private college and 10.1 percent of four-year public institution editors; both are increases over 2007.

More than two-thirds (68.2 percent) of managing/associate editors receive salaries, an

increase from 62.9 percent in 2007; of those paid, one-fourth receive $250 or less per month, a decrease from 37 percent in 2007. In addition, 2.2 percent earn $1,001 or more, while nearly another third (30.4 percent) earn $251-$500, the highest frequency.

Of the daily managing editors, 16.2 percent are not paid; of those who are paid, one-third (32.3 percent) are paid $101-$500 and 38.7 percent, $751-1,001 or more. At weekly papers, more than one-third (36 percent) do not pay managing editors; of those receiving salaries, more than half (52.6 percent) are paid $250 or less, and 22.8 percent, $251-$500. Slightly less than half (41 percent) the managing editors at monthly newspapers are paid, an increase from 32.4 percent in 2007; of those who receive salaries, two-thirds are paid $250 or less.

Of those managing editors who are paid, 58 percent at four-year private colleges, as well as 41 percent of those at two-year public colleges, and one-fourth at four-year public colleges, receive $250 or less a month; all are increases from 2007. Only 18.7 percent of four-year public college editors and 8 percent of editors at four-year private institutions are paid more than $750. Three managing editors at four-year public schools receive more than $1,000.

On the reverse side, 39 percent of two-year public college managing editors receive no salaries, a sharp decline from two-thirds in 2007; 42.4 percent of four-year private college managing editors receive no salaries, comparable to 2007, and 22 percent of those at four-year public schools are not paid, an increase from 16.3 percent in the last survey.

More than two-thirds (67.7 percent) of news editors also receive salaries, a sharp increase from 58.5 percent in 2007. Of those paid, 45 percent receive $250 a month or less and 21.3 percent receive $501 or more, both comparable to the last survey.

A high percentage of news editors in all institutions receive $250 or less a month; that is true at 71.4 percent of four-year private schools, nearly half (41.2 percent) of two-year public institutions and more than one-third (35.7 percent) of four-year public colleges.

At daily papers, only four news editors are not paid; of those at dailies who receive salaries, 27.3 percent are paid $251-$500, and 24.2 percent are paid more than $750. Nearly one-third (31.5 percent) of news editors at weekly papers are not paid; of those receiving salaries, two-thirds are paid $250 or less. At monthly papers, More than three-fourths (78.3 percent) are not paid; of those receiving salaries, 60 percent receive $250 or less.

Nearly two-thirds (65.2 percent) of sports editors are paid salaries, a slight increase from 61.9 percent in 2007; of those paid, 45 percent receive $250 or less a month, a decrease from half in 2007, and 20.6 percent earn $501-$1,000 monthly, an increase from 16.8 percent in the last survey. However, 13.7 percent are paid $100 or less, and 6.1 percent earn $750-$1,000.

Three sports editors at daily newspapers are not paid; 60.6 percent of those who are paid receive $251-$750 a month, and 18.2 percent receive more than that. Nearly two-thirds (64.4 percent) of sports editors at weeklies are paid; of those, 65.5 percent receive $250 or less, and 12.1 percent earn more than $500 a month. On monthly publications, most (82.6 percent) sports editors are not paid. Of those who are, three-fourths receive $100 or less.

Of sports editors who are paid, more than three-fourths (77 percent) of two-year public college editors receive $250 or less a month, as do 90.6 percent of four-year private and three-fourths of four-year public school editors; all are increases over 2007. One sports

editor at a two-year public school, two at four-year private colleges, and five of those at four-year public colleges earn more than $750.

Of all features/entertainment editors, two-thirds are salaried, an increase from 62 percent in 2007; 47.8 percent of those receive $250 or less a month, while 18.5 percent receive $501 or more. Four of the daily features editors are not paid; of those who are paid, nearly two-thirds (60.6 percent) receive $251-$750. Seven editors receive $751-$1,000; none receives more than $1,000. More than two-thirds (68.3 percent) of features editors at weekly papers receive $250 or less, while two earn $751 or more. Only 17.4 percent of monthly features editors are paid; most receive $100 or less.

At four-year private colleges, more than two-thirds of features editors (69.6 percent) receive $250 or less. The same is true of one-third of two-year public school editors and 42.4 percent of those at four-year public colleges. On the other hand, 22.2 percent of features editors at two-year public colleges, 21.2 percent at four-year public institutions and 9 percent at four-year private schools are paid $501-1000.

Far fewer campus/assignment editors (38.3 percent) receive salaries, an increase from 28.2 percent in 2007. Of those who are salaried, more than half (55.6 percent) receive $250 or less a month, an increase from 42.4 percent, and 16.7 percent receive $100 or less; the latter is a decrease from 18.8 percent in 2007. Conversely, 13.9 percent receive $501-$1,000, a decrease from 17.6 percent in the last survey. At dailies, nearly two-thirds (61.8 percent) of campus editors are paid, and nearly two-thirds (61.9 percent) of those receive $251-$750. At weeklies, 37.6 percent are paid; most (81.3 percent) receive $250 or less. Only three monthly campus editors are salaried; all receive $100 or less.

At two-year public colleges, only 15.2 percent of campus editors are paid; of those, 40 percent receive $100 or less, an increase from 30 percent in 2007. One third of editors at four-year private schools are paid; of those receiving salaries, 76.2 percent are paid $250 or less. The situation at four-year public institutions is slightly better, with half receiving salaries; however, 47.8 percent of those receive $250 or less, an increase from 32.7 in 2007, and 19.6 percent receive more than $750.

More than two-thirds (63.1 percent) of the copy editors receive salaries, a significant increase from 53.2 percent in 2007; of those paid, more than one half (56.8 percent) receive $250 or less monthly, a slight decrease from 59.4 percent in 2007. Only 12.8 percent earn $501-$1,000, and none earns more than $1,000.

Most (94.6 percent) of the copy editors at daily newspapers are paid. Nearly one half of those (48.6 percent) receive $251-$750. Nearly two-thirds (63.2 percent) of the weekly copy editors are paid, with 76.4 percent receiving $250 or less. Only 18.2 percent of the copy editors at monthlies receive salaries; most earn $100 or less.

Only one-fourth of copy editors at two-year public colleges are paid, with 44.4 percent receiving $250 or less monthly; two are paid $501-$750. At four-year private colleges, 53.8 percent receive salaries. Of those, nearly three-fourths (71.4 percent) are paid $250 or less, while one receives $750-$1,000. More than three-fourths (83.5 percent) at four-year public colleges are paid; 52 percent receive $250 or less, and 14.8 percent are paid more than $500.

Slightly fewer than half (48.4 percent) of editorial page editors receive salaries, com-

parable to 2007. More than half (52.7 percent) of these individuals receive $250 or less a month and 17.2 percent receive $501 or more; both are comparable to the last survey. Of the editorial page editors at dailies, 77.1 percent are paid; two-thirds of those receive $251-$750, a decrease from 82.9 percent in 2007, and two are paid more than $750. At weeklies, 44.7 percent of editors receive salaries; of these, most (84.2 percent) are paid $250 or less, an increase from 69 percent in 2007. Only 13.6 percent of monthly editorial page editors are paid; none receives more than $100 a month.

More than half of the 20.6 percent of editorial page editors at two-year schools receive $100 or less monthly. More than one-third (36.5 percent) of these editors at four-year private colleges receive salaries, a decrease from 41.7 percent in 2007, and of those who are paid, nearly three-fourths (73.9 percent) receive $250 or less. At four-year public institutions, two-thirds are paid; of these, 44.4 percent receive $250 or less, and 20.6 earn $500 or more, comparable to the last survey.

Nearly half (42.6 percent) of all college newspaper reporters are paid, an increase from 35.5 percent in 2007; nearly half of those (48.8 percent) make $100 or less a month. Two schools report paying reporters more than $500 a month.

At dailies, more than half (54.1 percent) are paid, a decrease from 63.6 percent in 2007. Of these, 70 percent receive $250 or less a month, an increase from 53.6 percent in 2007; none earn more than $500. At weeklies, 40 percent of reporters are paid, an increase from 30.3 percent in 2007; 53 percent of those receive $100 or less. Of the 16 percent at monthly newspapers who are paid, an increase from 11.6 percent in the last survey, half earn $100 or less.

At two-year public schools, most (83 percent) reporters receive no pay; of those who do, half receive $250 or less monthly. At four-year private colleges, nearly one-third (31.3 percent) of reporters are paid, nearly double the number in the last survey. Of those, more than half (52.3 percent) receive $100 or less, fewer than 68.8 percent in 2007. At four-year public institutions, 60 percent of reporters receive salaries; most (80.7 percent) are paid $250 or less, an increase from three-fourths in 2007.

Photo editors fare better than many other editors, with nearly two-thirds (64.3 percent) salaried, an increase from 59.5 percent in 2007. Half receive $250 or less a month, comparable to 2007. Of the 10 photo editors who are paid $751-1000, seven are at four-year public colleges.

At daily newspapers, nearly all (94.6 percent) photo editors are paid, an increase from 81.2 percent in 2007, with nearly half receiving more than $500 a month. At weeklies, more than half (59.6 percent) receive salaries; 70 percent of those paid receive $250 or less. At monthly newspapers, of the 22.7 percent who receive salaries, 80 percent are paid $100 or less.

Nearly half (41.7 percent) the two-year public college photo editors are not paid, an increase from 35.1 percent in 2007; of those paid, more than one-third receive $250 or less monthly, down from 69.2 percent in 2007. Another 46.7 percent receive $251-$500. At four-year private colleges, more than half (52.3 percent) receive salaries; of those, two-thirds are paid $250 or less. Of the photo editors at four-year public institutions, 80.6 percent receive salaries, with 44.3 percent being paid $250 or less, and 24.1 percent receiving more than $500. Seven earn more than $750.

Nearly half (49 percent) the photographers are paid, a substantial increase from 35 percent in 2007; most common (30.9 percent) is payment of $10.01 or more per published photo, followed by 19.6 percent who are paid $5.01-$10 per usable photo and 10.3 percent, $1-$5 per usable photo. Others listed payments per month ranging from $35 to $220; an hourly wage, generally $8.50 per hour; and scholarships. Two-thirds of photographers are paid at dailies and weeklies; $10.01 or more a published photo is most common. At weeklies, 46 percent are paid, and $1-$5 per usable photo is usual. At monthlies, only 16.7 percent are paid, and $1-$5 per usable photo is the norm.

At two-year colleges, more than one-third of the photographers are paid, and $10.01 or more per published photo is most frequent. At four-year private colleges slightly more than one-third are paid, and $5.01-$10 per usable photo is the norm. At four-year public schools, two-thirds of photographers receive compensation, with $10.01 or more paid per published photo.

Business salaries

Salaries of students on the business side are comparable to those on the editorial side, both in the percentage of those paid, which has generally increased, and the amount they receive, which has generally decreased. More than two-thirds (67.2 percent) of advertising managers receive salaries, an increase from 61.3 percent in 2007; of those paid, 35.9 percent receive $250 or less, a decrease from 39.1 percent in 2007. However, a higher percentage (40.5) receive $500 or more a month.

Most (83.3 percent) daily newspapers pay salaries to advertising managers, an increase from three-fourths in 2007. Slightly less than one-third (30 percent) pay more than $1,000, and fewer yet (23.3 percent) pay $500 or less a month. More than two-thirds (67.4 percent) of the weeklies pay salaries, an increase from 58.7 percent in 2007; of those, nearly half (48.3 percent) pay $250 or less per month, and 12.1 percent pay more than $1,000. Only 28.6 percent of monthlies pay advertising managers, and only one of those pays more than $500.

At two-year public colleges, more than half (54.3 percent) the advertising managers receive salaries, an increase from 43.2 percent in 2007; slightly more than half (52.6 percent) receive $250 or less and one receives more than $1000. At four-year private schools, 59.1 percent are paid salaries, an increase from 56.3 percent in 2007; 41 percent are paid $250 or less, and 12.8 percent receive more than $1,000. More than three-quarters (77 percent) of advertising managers at four-year public colleges are salaried, a slight increase from 2007. More than half (52.1 percent) receive $501 or more and 15.1 percent receive $1,001 or more a month.

Fewer business managers (37.6 percent) are paid than advertising managers, comparable to 2007; half of those paid receive $250 or less a month, and 22.5 percent receive more than $500, a decrease from 44 percent in 2007. Only 8.5 percent are paid more than $1,000, a significant decrease from 23.9 percent in the last survey. Of the one-third of daily business managers who are paid, nearly half (45.5 percent) make more than $750, a significant decrease from 70 percent in the last survey; 27.3 percent earn $1,001 or more, also a significant decrease from 55 percent in 2007. At weeklies, 44.7 percent are paid, with most (81.6

percent) receiving $500 or less. Of the 23.8 percent of monthly papers that pay business managers, a large increase from 8.8 percent in 2007, all receive $250 or less.

Only 18.8 percent of two-year public college business managers are paid; of those, all receive $250 or less. At four-year private schools, 40 percent are paid, up from 36.5 percent in 2007; of those, more than half (56 percent) receive $250 or less. Nearly one half (42.6 percent) of the four-year public college business managers are paid, with 27.5 percent receiving more than $500, a sharp decrease from 58.7 percent in 2007, and 10 percent being paid more than $1,000 a month.

Classified ad sales managers are paid less than any editorial or managerial slot, with only 14.8 percent salaried, comparable to 2007. More than three-fourths (78.3 percent) of these individuals are paid $500 or less monthly, and 13 percent receive $1,001 or more. Nearly one-fourth (23.4 percent) of classified ad sales managers at dailies are salaried. Three of these managers receive more than $1,000 a month, and nearly two-thirds (62.5 percent) are paid $500 or less.

Advertising sales representatives are paid at 40.8 percent of colleges and universities; of those, 46.4 percent earn $250 or less. Another 20.5 percent receive more than $500, and five individuals make more than $1,000.

At most (83.9 percent) dailies, advertising sales representatives are paid, a significantly higher number than 47.7 percent in 2007; 15.4 percent make more than $1,000 a month, and half receive $251-$500. At weekly newspapers, 40.5 percent are paid; more than two-thirds (68.8 percent) of these reps are paid $250 or less, and one receives more than $1,000. At monthly papers, none of these reps are paid.

At four-year private colleges, 36.1 percent of ad sales reps are paid; of those, 59.1 percent receive $250 or less, and one receives $1,000 or more. At four-year public institutions, more than half (57 percent) receive salaries; nearly three-fourths (71.4 percent) are paid $500 or less, and 8.2 percent receive more than $1,000 a month. Only 6.3 percent of two-year public college sales representatives are paid; all receive $500 or less.

More than one-third (36.5 percent) of advertising sales representatives receive 6-10 percent commissions, the most frequent method of payment; 1-5 percent commission ranks next for 20.5 percent, followed by 11-15 percent commission for 12.2 percent of reps, and 16-20 percent for 10.3 percent; 7.1 percent receive an hourly wage, and 6.4 percent are paid an hourly wage plus commission.

At four-year public colleges, a 6-10 percent commission is most common for nearly half the respondents; this is followed by an 11-15 percent commission at 18 percent of these schools. At four-year private institutions, one-third pay a 6-10 percent commission, followed by a 1-5 percent commission for 31.9 percent of reps.

Two-year public college papers most often pay a 1-5 percent commission (31.3 percent); another 30 percent pay 16-20 percent. More than half (54.8 percent) the dailies pay a 6-10 percent commission, followed by 16.1 percent which pay hourly wage plus commission. More than one-third (36.1 percent) of weeklies also pay 6-10 percent commissions; and 19.4 percent, 1-5 percent. At monthlies, 6l.5 percent pay 1-5 percent, and 16-20 percent is paid to 23.1 percent.

Online Editions

Nearly all (94.5 percent) colleges and universities publish an online edition of the newspaper, and nearly half (44.2 percent) update them daily. More than one-third (36.3 percent) update weekly, followed by twice weekly (9.5 percent) and alternate weeks (8.4 percent).

Most (85.7 percent) online editions use 76 to 100 percent of the articles and stories from the print version of their paper; 7.9 percent use 51 to 75 percent, and 3.2 percent use none of that content. At four-year public colleges, 57.3 percent update daily, followed by one-fourth who do so weekly. At four-year private schools, 39.4 percent update daily and 45.5 percent weekly, while at two-year public institutions, 53.6 percent update weekly and one-fourth, alternate weeks.

With regard to total operating budgets for the online edition, three-fourths (76 percent) report $5,000 or less annually; 8.9 percent have $5,001-$10,000, and 6.7 percent, $30,000 or more. At two-year public institutions, 92.6 percent have $5,000 or less; 67 percent of four-year public colleges report the same, although 7.8 percent have $30,000 or more. Nearly three-fourths (71 percent) of four-year private schools report budgets of $5,000 or less, and 8.1 percent report $30,000 or more.

More than one-third (36.8 percent) of the online editions receive funding from advertising, with 41.9 percent of those being supported totally by this source; 43 percent of four-year public colleges fall into this category, as do 44.4 percent of four-year private school editions and one two-year public institution.

Most (84 percent) run banner ads. Nearly half (42.1 percent) charge $1-$100 for this type of ad, followed by 26.3 percent who charge $101-$250, and 22.8 percent who ask $251-$500; 8.8 percent charge more than $500.

Only 26.2 percent receive student activity fees for online editions; of those, more than half (56.6 percent) are totally funded from this source. Fewer online editions (21.3 percent) are supported by college and university funds; of these, nearly two-thirds (62.8 percent) are totally supported in this manner. Other funding includes the following: agreements with College Publisher, part of newspaper budget and student government.

Sixty percent of newspaper operations do not have a different editor for the online edition from the print version. Of those which have a separate editor, more than half use the title of online editor, while 15 percent use web master. Under the "other" category, seven listed web editor, while individual mentions included web director, multimedia editor/coordinator, online manager/managing editor and web news coordinator.

More than half (59.7 percent) the online editors are paid, an increase of 10 percent from 2007. Of these, 47.5 percent are paid $250 or less, a decrease from 60.8 percent in the last survey; 12.5 percent receive more than $750, double that of 2007. More than three-fourths (78.9 percent) of the online editors at daily newspapers are paid; 28.9 percent earn $251-$500, and 42.2 percent receive more than $500 a month. Nearly half (42.9 percent) the online editors at weeklies are paid; of those, nearly three-fourths (71.4 percent) are paid $250 or less. No monthly online editors are paid.

Two-thirds of online editors at four-year public colleges are paid, a decrease from 73.6 percent in 2007; of those, more than one-third (39.1 percent) receive $250 or less, and 8.8 percent are paid more than $750. More than one-half (52.2 percent) these editors at four-year private institutions receive salaries, an increase from 38.5 percent in 2007; nearly

three-fourths (70.8 percent) receive $250 or less. At two-year public colleges, half are paid, an increase from 20.3 percent in 2007; one-third receive $250 or less.

Course credit

A number of schools offer student editors course credit in a variety of options, but all papers have shown decreases from the last survey in 2007. Slightly more than one-fourth (26 percent) of editors/editors-in chief receive course credit, a decrease from 31.9 percent in 2007; of those, most (81.1 percent) receive 1-3 semester hours. With respect to dailies, only one offers 4-6 credits, a decrease from 13.6 percent in 2007. Nearly half (44 percent) the monthlies, a decrease from 47.1 percent in the last survey, also offer credit, as do 28.4 percent of weeklies, a decrease from 35.2 percent in 2007. Two-year colleges are most likely to offer credit (45.9 percent), a decrease from 48.6 percent in 2007, followed by four-year private colleges (27.5 percent), a decrease from 35.4 percent, and four-year public schools (17.3 percent), a decrease from 21.1 percent. Most common are 1 to 3 semester hours.

Other editorial positions have fewer individuals receiving credits: 23.1 percent, managing editors; 24.8 percent, news editors; 24.5 percent, sports editors; 24.5 percent, features/entertainment editors; 18.1 percent, campus/assignments editors; 24.4 percent, copy editors; 22.5 percent, editorial page editors; 20.7 percent, online editors; and 26.2 percent, photo editors. Reporters fare better, with 35.4 percent receiving credit. All are decreases from 2007.

On the business side, the percentages are even smaller: 21 percent, advertising managers; 15.3 percent, business managers; and 7.2 percent, classified ad managers.

In almost all cases on both the editorial and business sides, whenever credit is offered, it is 1 to 3 credits per semester. This is more common at two-year colleges and on monthly and alternate weeks newspapers.

Very few papers offer tuition waivers. They are most common for editors/editors-in-chief, (14.1 percent), and less frequent for other editors as follows: managing/associate editors, 8.2 percent; news editors, 5.9 percent; sports editors, 6.4 percent; features editors, 5 percent; campus/assignment editors, 2.7 percent; copy editors, 4.6 percent; editorial page editors, 5.5 percent; photo editors, 6.4 percent; reporters, 2.3 percent; and photographers, 1.4 percent. On the business side, waivers are more common for advertising managers, 4.6 percent, followed by business managers, 2.3 percent; and classified ad managers and ad sales reps, .9 percent each.

In the final analysis

Major professional newspapers in communities across the country are faced with challenges and uncertainty: circulations are declining; revenue is down, particularly from advertising; and staff layoffs are commonplace.

However, at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, college and university student newspapers appear to have met many of the challenges they have faced and made some progress.

With regard to the all-too-critical issue of finances, operating budgets have increased across the board from the last survey in 2007. More budgets exceed $50,000 and a sub-

stantial number exceed $100,000. Advertising revenue provides income for an increased number of newspapers, ensuring more substantial independence from reliance on institutional funding. Support from student activity fees has increased slightly, while college and university funding has decreased.

In addition, a majority of editors, reporters and photographers are paid, exceeding the percentage in the last survey. However, even though more staffers are paid, salaries have not increased noticeably.

All types of papers except alternate weeks editions publish more frequently, but papers print eight pages more frequently than 12, a change from 2007 when 12 pages were the norm.

One of the most significant changes is evident in online editions. Nearly all papers publish online, and most update daily. In addition, most of these publications are supported by advertising rather than by other sources. The growth of online since 2007 has been rapid.

The 2007 survey concluded that "a full complement of adequately compensated editors and managers, as well as an adequate budget to support a campus paper that meets the needs of its community, is critical to ensure the stability and success of the media operation." This conclusion is as valid today and, indeed, progress has been made since 2007 toward these goals. Even with the economy and the challenges facing professional media, college and university student media have evolved and are meeting the challenges they

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Black and White and Still Read All Over

An Examination of the State of College Newspapers in a Turbulent Time

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Abstract

This paper provides an initial investigation of the current state of the college newspapers among liberal arts schools in the southeast. An online survey using both open and closed-ended questions examines variables such as method and frequency of publication, use of advertising and online presence. Only 37.5% of respondents reported having a journalism program at their institution, and those who contributed to the student newspaper came from majors ranging from biology to philosophy. While a full 100% of respondents reported having advertising in their college newspapers, about one-third of respondents reported they did not have an online edition of the paper. Most publications were fewer than 10 pages and did have a faculty adviser to the publication. Of the schools that participated, a majority said there is no class credit associated with their publications. Also of interest, just more than half of respondents stated staff writers receive some form of compensation for their contributions to the publication; where this compensation comes from varies.

Introduction

What do Twitter, the iPad and a campus newspaper have in common? Current literature suggests that all three are a preferred communication choice for many of today's college students (The Washington Times, March 8, 2012). Despite the slow and agonizing decline of traditional newspapers, research indicates that even in this modern, wireless world of communication, many college students gravitate toward the print version of their campus newspaper over an electronic version. Additionally, despite the woes of the traditional news daily, many student newspapers appear to be weathering the storm with fewer economic troubles (Keller 2008, Supiano 2012).

In addition to the documented decline of the traditional daily newspaper, enrollment in journalism programs has also suffered a decline. Percentages of students in journalism programs have dropped 6.6% since as recently as 2007 (Vlad, Becker, and Kazragis 2011, 300-301). This holds true despite an overall increase by 2% in all mass communication programs. Additionally, some scholars have suggested that daily print newspapers may cease to exist altogether within a decade (Zerba 2011, 597). While readership studies suggest that college students are averse to reading a daily print newspaper, their campus newspaper appears to be an exception. Some possible reasons for this phenomenon are the direct relevance of a college newspaper, the free price tag, and the notion that a college campus is one of the few remaining places with high pedestrian traffic and large amounts of leisure time (Jackson 2012).

If the newspaper industry and journalism in higher education are both experiencing turbulent times, but the college newspaper is "humming along," (Keller 2008) this presents a critical

need to examine the role of the college newspaper medium to better understand this interesting intersection of variables in a time of massive industry change.

This paper provides an initial investigation of the current state of the college newspaper among liberal arts schools in the Southeast. It specifically looks at variables like method and frequency of publication, use of advertising and online presence.

College newspapers and the Internet. There is no question that the Internet is dominating other older, less electronically-inclined media in many aspects. However, this trend is relatively recent for college newspapers. A little over one-third of college newspapers in the Editor and Publisher Yearbook did not even have a website in 2007 (Brockman, Bergland and Hon, 2011). Yet, an online presence is largely assumed for today's major college media. The Internet can be used via cell phone, computer or music player. It has taken portability to an entirely new level. In the digital age, the so-called "dreamer generation" has made it increasingly difficult for older media to keep up (Zerba 2011, 597). Althuas and Tewksbury (2000) suggest that the Internet has actually become an inextricable part of the fabric of the lives of college students and their means for accessing information. An examination of the role of student newspapers is of critical importance now because today's college students are the first true "Internet generation" (Diddi & Larosse 2006, 197).

The Internet is presently the dominant media and dominant source for news for many. It prescribes something few other media can offer, personalization. Internet news is constantly updated and just a click away, instant gratification to soothe the impatient, news-hungry soul. Though this may be true, few newspapers are published solely online. While a third of college newspapers exist only in print form, this means there's a remaining two thirds who've made the transition to the Internet, maintaining both a print and an online edition.

A recent study of student news websites in the Pacemaker's Winners Circle found that WordPress is the most common content management system, replacing College Publisher, which is no longer offered for free (Brockman, Bergland and Hon 2011). WordPress and College Publisher are content management Internet hosts for college newspapers. College Publisher provides web hosting in exchange for revenue generated from selling ad space on the websites. College Publisher's staff is available to newsrooms 24 hours a day to answer all web issues for less than web design-savvy college journalists (Truong 2010). Colleges are now offering courses in new media and online journalism separately from regular journalism courses. Program coordinators are re-evaluating the line between journalism and web development (Parry 2011). College Publisher can cost as much as $2,000 a year (Parry 2011). Domain names and running a website can be pricey for those who choose to create and design their own pages, so many of them are taking full advantage of advertising revenue.

According to Nick Summers of Newsweek, "premier college dailies" are now indistinguishable from real, professional papers. Some college papers are as long as 26 pages with full-color spreads. Putting out huge editions gets easier when advertisers unreservedly lust after your readers. The college demographic is as sweet as it gets: by definition young and educated, they're savvy, brand¬ conscious and wield $41 billion in discretionary spending power (Summers 2005).

College newspapers and advertising. Information on the how the downturn in advertising has affected college newspapers is not as grim as that for the newspaper industry on the whole. College newspapers enjoyed a 15% increase in advertising revenue in 2007, while print advertising revenue for commercial newspapers fell 9% (Keller 2008). This does not mean college newspapers are entirely unaffected, however. But the overall financial outlook for campus newspapers appears to be bucking the industry trend. Online advertising revenue is more difficult to grow, experts say, because the readership is more broad: alumni, parents, board

members. This readership is less interesting to the local businesses who buy the bulk of print advertisements (Supiano 2012). Some suggest that as the trend toward online newspapers continues, the college newspapers will not be immune to this threat and may begin to suffer from advertising revenue loss as well.

College newspapers and change. With many variables surrounding the college newspaper industry in a state of flux, new strategies are emerging to maintain fiscal solvency. Oklahoma State University's Daily O'Collegian newspaper has decided to take a different route for generating revenue. In January 2011, the campus paper began charging a $10/year access fee for readers outside a 25-mile radius of the college campus. TheO'Collegian has a print circulation of 10,000, with 25% of its readership being affected by the new fees. The campus paper expects to reach professors, alumni, parents, and future students, many of whom are outside the 25-mile radius and would be required to pay for readership (Parry 2011).

The University of Georgia's The Red & Black has recently reduced its print frequency from five days a week out of financial need (Morales 2012). And the University of Virginia's The Cavalier Daily has announced it will no longer publish in print on Fridays. Both publications have announced an increase in emphasis on online news (Supiano 2012).

Need for study

As college budgets continue to tighten, college newspapers are increasingly seeking alternate ways to adjust to the needs of the climate (Matheny 2012). This unique intersection of industry variables creates a critical need to examine the current state of the college newspaper. Critics have lamented the dearth of scholarship addressing college newspapers (Brockman, Bergland and Hon 2011). This paper is an initial examination intended for descriptive purposes. It will provide a snapshot of the variables currently affecting college newspapers. Because of the exploratory nature of this study, the sample is limited and the responses include both quantitative and qualitative data. It is intended as an initial examination of how colleges run and maintain their college newspapers. Are they online? Are they completely student-run? What news do the publications cover? Which majors are writing for the newspaper? The research objectives for this study are as follows:

1. To determine the method(s), frequency and length of publication.
2. To determine what role the paper plays and its significance to the campus community.
3. To determine whether the paper plays any role off campus in the surrounding community.
4. To identify the paper's content and the news it includes and excludes.
5. To identify the extent to which the newspapers include advertising
6. To examine the role and scope of an online presence of the newspaper

Method

Sample: Because of the deliberate focus on premiere, liberal arts institutions in the southeast, Phi Beta Kappa's website, www.pbk.org, was used to determine the sample for this study. From that point, the researchers visited each institution's website for the email of the editor-in-chief for each campus publication. There are 280 PBK chapters, which PBK divides into seven districts: New England, Middle Atlantic, East Central, North Central, South Atlantic, South Central and Western. This study surveyed only Phi Beta Kappa schools from the South Atlantic district.

This district is composed of 51 PBK schools. The survey was sent to 51 schools, and three of them were returned via failure to deliver notifications. Sixteen institutions responded, yielding a 33% response rate. This response rate may be attributed to the fact the survey was sent

out late into the spring semester, while students are busy with exams and finishing various assignments.

Questionnaire

The survey was sent out via email, Monday, May 2, 2011 to the editors ¬in-chief of Phi Beta Kappa institutions in the South Atlantic Region. The email included a brief explanation of the study and a link to the survey, formatted by and hosted at SurveyMonkey.com. A reminder email was sent out Wednesday, May 4, 2011. In the initial email, sample members were notified that the survey would only be available for completion through the night of Friday, May 6, 2011. The survey was closed at midnight.

The survey was available for completion for five days. In those five days, 16 responses were collected, equaling a third of those sampled. Those who responded became eligible to win a $50 Visa gift card, to be mailed to the winner. The winner was randomly selected and notified Monday, May 9, 2011. SurveyMonkey.com was used for constructing, administering and collecting data for the questionnaire issued via email.

The questionnaire was composed of 25 questions in a variety of formats. Questions formats included multiple choice, short answer, semantic differential and Likert scale. The questions were assembled in three parts.

The first part was designed to gather demographic data on the institution being surveyed. Whether the school is public or private, campus population and the percentage of residential students were among the questions asked. Respondents were also asked to check which programs of study the school offers, including Journalism, English, Business, Creative Writing, Education, New Media and others.

The second part addressed the school's newspaper. This included questions about frequency of publication, length of the publication, presence of advertising, number of advertisements per issue, level of adviser involvement, extent of non-campus news coverage, whether students outside of journalism contribute to the paper, the sections included in the newspaper, whether newspaper staff is paid and presence of an online edition.

The final section specifically addressed online publications. Questions addressed how often the online content is updated, whether archived material was available online, who updates the online content and whether a web hosting site is used. Data were collected and processed initially by SurveyMonkey.com. and were further analyzed using Microsoft Excel.

Results

Campus Demographics. Of the sixteen participants, 56.2% were members of public institutions. Campus populations were divided with 43.8% less than 2,500 students and 43.8% with student populations of 10,000 or more.

A second key demographic was the percentage of residents who presumably have easier, quicker access to campus publications in their print format versus commuters. Only 6.3% said their campus populations were 0- 20% residential, with 12.5% claiming 20-40% was residential; 31.3% claimed 40-60% was residential, 12.5% claimed 60-80% was residential and 37.5% claimed residents made up 80-100% of the student population.

The last question of this section asked participants about the academic programs offered at their institution. A list of programs was given, and respondents were asked to check all that were offered. It was made clear to participants that while some programs encompass others, (e.g. a communications department may include media studies and/or journalism), they were only to check those specifically offered at their college. This question examined how many

schools offer journalism and like fields as a background for questions later in the survey regarding newsroom makeup. It was found that only 37.5% of institutions surveyed offer a Journalism program. Other results include the following
- 68.8% offer Communications or Media Studies
- 50% of the institutions offer Public Relations
- 31.3% offer Professional Writing
- 18.8% offer New Media.

The most popular programs of study were English at 100%, Art at 93.8%, and Computer Science or Programming at 87.5%.

Campus newspapers. The second part of the questionnaire examined the institutions' publications. The first questions asked about the frequency of print publication. The responses were almost evenly divided, with 26.7% responding daily, 26.7% weekly and 26.7% bi-weekly. Only 13.2% responded yes to a monthly publication. An "other" category was given as an option, under which one participant responded stating their newspaper was published in print twice weekly and online daily.

Respondents were asked about the length of their publications; 53.8% responded their papers were fewer than 10 pages, and 33.3% said 10-15 pages, while 12% reported publications longer than 15 pages.

Respondents were asked about the frequency of advertisements in their print publications. One hundred percent of participants responded "yes" to using advertising. Additionally, participants were asked to estimate the number of ads per edition. Forty percent responded there were 5-10 ads in every print edition, while 33.3% claimed to have fewer than five. Only 13.3% claimed to have more than 20 ads per print edition.

The next section of this survey had several short answer questions. The first asked participants about faculty involvement: is there an adviser to their publication, and does that person have trained journalism experience? The majority (62.5%) of respondents said their student newspaper does have a faculty adviser. Of these responses, six said their advisers are trained in journalism, having worked for major papers. The remaining four responded that the advisor's role was limited or merely there for the business aspect. One participant said, "We are an independent company that does not employ university personnel. We have a faculty liaison adviser that attends business meetings, but has no editorial significance."

Respondents were asked an open-ended question to assess to what extent non-campus news was included in the school newspaper. The majority of publications only covered national news when it could be reported from an angle that applied to students. For example, one respondent said, "Non-campus news is only included if it can be localized." Another wrote, "Non-campus news is included if there's a campus response that deserves coverage, like fundraising for the Haiti earthquake." One respondent noted including a new Global section in the newspaper. They wrote, "It appears in every issue, and highlights Goucher's study abroad requirements as well as includes international news articles," One participant answered saying their publication was the only one in town, so their news extended beyond the campus and to local members of the community and would include anything that could affect the town. Another respondent said they are the paper of record for the county.

Question 10 was an open response question. It asked participants if many students from majors outside journalism participate in the student newspaper? If so, which majors contribute? Only one respondent said their staff was comprised only of journalism majors. In fact, five replied that their institution did not have a journalism major, so all of the contributors were non- journalism majors. Ten respondents indicated they draw from a broad range of student majors for their newspaper staff. Some of the specific majors listed were English, Philosophy,

Economics, Political Science, Biology, Computer Science, American Studies and International Affairs.

Participants were asked to select from a list all sections covered by their publication. Most common sections reported are news, arts and entertainment, opinions, sports, letters to the editor and features. Least common sections are business, off-campus news, national news and weather.

It was found that 81.25% of respondents' institutions do not offer a course coinciding with participation in the student paper. Furthermore, 50% of participants' institutions pay at least a portion of their news teams.

Online Editions

The final section of the survey asked questions about online editions of the newspaper. Eleven of the 16 participants have online editions of their papers and were eligible to fill out this section of the questionnaire. Put another way, 31% of respondents did not have an online edition of their newspaper.

When asked how often newsrooms updated their online content, 45.5% said they updated it daily. The remaining 54.5% percent was split evenly between updating their content every few hours, weekly, and only as the print edition came out. Furthermore, 100% of participants reported that archives were available online.

Respondents were also asked who manages the online content. This was asked as an open-ended response, to which respondents gave a variety of answers. The most popular response was editors were responsible for updating content in coordination with an online editor. Other responses included a multimedia editor, a technology manager and the editor in chief.

When asked if the newspaper uses a web-hosting site like College Publisher for its online publication, respondents provided open-ended answers indicating the majority use either WordPress or College Publisher. One respondent reported using Gryphon/Detroit Softworks, and one uses a private server.

Discussion

This study offers a glimpse of a unique subset of college media. The liberal arts institution seeks to impart broad general knowledge to its students, while student newspapers offer the ability to use that broad knowledge base in a professional or journalistic capacity. Likewise, only 37.5% of respondents in this study reported having a journalism program at their institution, and those who contributed to the student newspaper came from majors ranging from biology to philosophy. This broad range of academic backgrounds suggests a richness in the perspectives of these student publications. The content of the newspapers also varied, with some publications serving as the sole news source for the community outside the campus, while others only included news specifically relating to the campus community.

In other ways, the student newspapers from this study resemble the more traditional college publication model. A full 100% of respondents reported having advertising in their college newspapers, reinforcing the need for the bread and butter of the publication. The majority said they run five to 10 ads every edition. College-aged students represent a large portion of discretionary spending lusted for by advertisers. This is no less true today and in the environment of the liberal arts institution.

A mixed picture of the use of technology emerged with almost one-third of respondents reporting they did not have an online edition of the paper. Of those who do offer an online version, more than half of respondents do not report to update the content daily. It appears that

in this particular environment, little has changed since a half-decade ago when Bergland, Hon, Noe and Hartigan (2008) reported a little more than a third of college newspapers did not have an online presence. Today's Internet generation appears to be cleaving to the traditional print form of the student newspaper. This may be true, in part, because of the difficulty student newspapers have experienced in developing a strong advertising base for the online version of the publication. With the broader readership of the online newspaper comes the difficulty in convincing advertisers to invest in the medium.

Most publications were fewer than 10 pages and did have a faculty adviser to the publication. Of the schools that participated, a majority said there is no class credit associated with their publications. Also of interest, just more than half of respondents stated staff writers receive some form of compensation for their contributions to the publication; where this compensation comes from varies.

Limitations

Since the sample for this study was small, inferential tests of broader significance based on the responses here cannot be generalized to other populations. Although the data reported here apply only to the liberal arts institutions in this study, the results are of conceptual significance. Little current research exists on the issues studied here, and it is important to use these findings as a starting point for a conversation about the state of college newspapers in the midst of such a rapidly transforming environment. By starting with studies such as this, we can better understand the field of student newspapers in the midst of a sea of change within the newspaper industry.

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Contagion: Viral Articles in Student Media

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Abstract

How does the viral media phenomenon add complexities to the obligations of student journalism and what demands does it place on student reporters and on college media advisers? To get at that question we must first establish a working definition of "viral article" as applied to online content, and then try to understand what kinds of articles go viral and why. Case studies will point up the benefits and the problematic outcomes of viral student reporting, allowing for a detailed analysis of the strategies college media advisers can use to assist students in anticipating and handling viral content.

Introduction

The modern day viral media phenomenon is both misunderstood and under theorized. As a culture we have grown so accustomed to the proliferation of viral events that we treat them as if they are inevitable, yet so unpredictable and short lived as to be unimportant. However, it is in the interest of media professionals to tangle with the cultural significance of the viral phenomenon if only because, sooner or later, we are likely to encounter it in our own newsrooms. If we have not personally created viral content, we probably know someone who has, for as random as viral stories may seem, they are not rare. Trivializing viral events sets us up to be repeatedly blindsided by their impact. Furthermore, as student journalists create a significant portion of the news content that goes viral, anyone associated with student media has all the more reason to understand the peculiar obligations viral incidents present. This paper engages questions about what goes viral and why, what sorts of outcomes can be expected from a viral event and how best to prepare for them. I will argue that student journalists are in a position to anticipate what stories might go viral, and that their media advisers can help them manage viral events successfully, so as to avoid harmful repercussions and contribute meaningful reporting to a broad audience.

Because of the lack of direct research in this area, this paper necessarily draws on work from tangential fields such as memetics, epidemiology, sociology and cultural anthropology to substantiate its claims. In many cases, terms borrowed from those disciplines, such as "meme" and "innovation," are treated as close cousins of "viral content" and are considered roughly interchangeable for our purposes. Interviews with student reporters and media advisers who have direct experience creating and managing viral content are offered to ground the discussion in the practical realm. It should also be noted that, for the purposes of this discussion, what will be treated as "viral" in the Internet sense is not based on a mathematical equation of x reads or hits over x hours, as these numbers are fundamentally arbitrary. The real question is relative saturation within the target population, be it local or global. Student reporting, which is hyper-local by nature, may go viral within its community or at the national level. The analysis presented here is relevant in either case.

Methodology

The methodology used in this paper is essentially qualitative with some statistics provided as points of departure for future research. Thirty-four sample viral articles were analyzed to produce the conclusions presented in this paper. The articles were gathered first by interviewing students at the March 2012 College Media Association (CMA) conference in New York City, then by posting a request to the CMA listserv and finally by reading PBS.org's MediaShift blog. In the course of interviewing five advisers and nine students who had overseen or created viral content for their college papers, additional viral articles were mentioned and slowly a list began to form. Participants self-selected based on interest, but represented both two and four year colleges of varying sizes. In the interest of full disclosure it must be noted that four of the 34 samples were written by staffers at the student newspaper I advise, The College VOICE, over the course of the last three years. However, to prevent any possible bias, these four were removed whenever statistics were calculated; they were simply a starting point that prompted my interest in the subject and anecdotal touchstones that spurred my analysis. To be considered "viral student media" for the purposes of this paper, each sample had to have been created by a registered student for distribution through a college news outlet associated with their two or four-year not-for-profit college or university (independent papers and blogs were included so long as they were directly affiliated with a college or university system). Twenty-seven of the pieces were articles, and many of those articles included photographs. Two pieces were editorial cartoons, three were stand-alone photos, one was a tweet (the Joe Paterno death tweet from Onward State) and one –which is discussed in detail—was a series of linked articles and multimedia content that went viral and stayed so for more than two weeks. The submissions came from colleges of varying sizes and publication frequencies, making it difficult to create any standard measurement for virality; however, each piece had to meet one of the following criteria:

• The piece was picked up or referenced by three or more regional mainstream media outlets
• The piece was picked up by one or more national media outlets
• For colleges with fewer than 10,000 full-time students: the piece generated at least one hundred comments online within the first week of publication (comments were considered valid if they appeared on Facebook, Twitter or in the comments panel of the article itself)
• For colleges with more than 10,000 full-time students the piece generated at least 400 comments within the first week of publication
• The article was shared or liked more than 500 times on Facebook or retweeted more than 500 times

In many cases advisers volunteered the number of reads or page views an article received, but they were not asked to furnish private analytics data. Instead, these claims were verified by observing the number of links, comments, retweets, likes and shares. Some viral content was excluded, such as resumes and video and blog content that was not linked to a student news outlet.

Towards a Definition of "Viral"

Wherever it appears, the term "viral" seems to have negative connotations. In the field of epidemiology—to sum up Stedman's Medical Dictionary entry—viral describes a phenomenon in which a minute organism colonizes a living host and spreads rapidly to a broader population. Philosophers use the term to denote a kind of moral or intellectual corruption and the term derives from the Latin word for poison. The associations are to sickness, moral turpitude

and death.

Some media theorists have tried to re-inflect the term "viral," but with limited success. The third Futures of Entertainment (FoE) conference, held at MIT in November of 2008, sponsored by the Creative Culture Consortium, was led by Henry Jenkins, a media scholar at MIT who wrote the book Convergence Culture (2006). In Jenkins's opening keynote he "critiqu[ed] the blanket usage of the term 'viral media' in journalism, industry, and the academy...Instead, Jenkins argued, we should think of these media forms...as 'spreadable media,' emphasizing the actions of the media creators and sharers, rather than their passivity as suggested by the metaphor of the virus" (Kompare 2008).

Jenkins is right in that the agency of content creators should not be ignored, but the defining element of a viral event is its inability to be contained or controlled. Moreover, his emphasis on the creation of the content runs counter to fact that almost no one seems to know that they are creating viral content when they are doing so, and fewer still ever set out to do so. To be an unwitting creator is little agency indeed. To use the term "spreadable" is to extract the negative connotation of "viral" when, in fact, we do have a negative view of the viral event precisely because hosting something over which we have no control is highly unsettling.

What Goes Viral and Why?

However, while we apply the anxiety-laden term "viral" to fast moving Internet content, at the same time we dismiss it like a seasonal cold. Douglas Rushkoff, in his book Media Virus: Hidden Agendas in Popular Culture (1996), takes aim at mainstream news sources and cautions against a dismissive attitude toward their alternative. He writes:

Our formerly investigative mainstream "news" programs like "60 Minutes" or "Dateline" appear restrained and toothless in comparison to our more delightfully irresponsible outlets. How better to see what the heartland of America looks like than barging in unannounced with the camera crew from "Cops"—and how better to evaluate the role of drugs and alcohol in contributing to domestic violence, robbery and homicide? (3)

Although Rushkoff was writing before the advent of the modern day viral Internet phenomenon, his perspective still holds. He asks us to think differently about the usefulness of what are essentially viral elements of popular culture. He encourages us to see merit in some of the more quotidian elements of our society and to grapple with their meaning in our lives. Rushkoff goes on to say:

Media events...titillate us for a reason...The imagery has emerged from the psychic shadows -- it is not controlling us any more than our dreams do, but neither can we attempt to control it without suffering the consequences...If we embrace the seeming darkness of the dream, and attempt to reckon with its messengers, we stand a chance of learning a lot more about ourselves in the process (3).

One of the key contentions of this paper is that viral content doesn't just well up out of nowhere; instead, as Rushkoff suggests, it emerges "from the psychic shadows," It is the result of complex creative forces ricocheting off the cultural subconscious.

In his seminal work, The Hero With a Thousand Faces (1949), Joseph Campbell writes, "Throughout the inhabited world, in all times and under every circumstance, myths of man have flourished...It would not be too much to say that myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into the human cultural manifestation" (1). Borrowing from mythic analysis might seem counterintuitive in that myths, by their nature, are enduring and viral stories are fleeting. But viral stories are essentially myths dressed in modern clothing. They tap into the same human dramas that inspired the ancient Greeks,

they rely on the same archetypal figures and plots of heroism, tragedy and comedy that have sustained literature and history. Their brevity has mainly to do with our newfound ability to create, circulate and consume stories about ourselves very, very quickly, but make no mistake: they are the same stories.

The success of each iteration of an archetypal story is, however, entirely determined by its ability to tap into the particular anxieties and fixations of the day. Take, for example, the narrative of the abducted child, one that appears again and again across cultures and throughout history. In 2007 the story of little Madeleine McCann went viral. McCann, a four-year-old British girl, was on holiday in Spain, with her parents and twin siblings, when she was abducted out of the hotel room while she lay napping. The parents had left the children asleep in the hotel as they ate a meal at a restaurant just 130 yards away (this distance was emphasized in all the media coverage). This is a tale that taps into all our modern anxieties about parenting. A brief scan of parenting books demonstrates our current attitude toward children. This is the era of attachment parenting, of bullying laws and home schooling. The McCann story is told as a cautionary tale about the self-indulgent parents who had a dinner without the kids and how that indulgence resulted in their failure to protect the blonde and cherubic Madeleine.

We find the same story told again in the trial of Casey Anthony three years later, but now the drama has been heightened. Unlike the McCann parents, who were upbraided for their negligence but still treated as victims, Anthony is the explicit villain. In the new narrative, Anthony's indulgence is not a simple afternoon lunch but evenings spent partying with friends. The remains of Anthony's three-year-old daughter Caylee were found in the woods behind her house, months after the child had been reported missing. The allegation is that the mother killed the daughter because she preferred a frivolous life of clubbing. Many of the details of the story would have appealed to baser human instincts in any era: the description of child's decomposed remains, her bones gnawed on by animals, and the forensic entomologist—straight out The Silence of the Lambs—who was brought in to analyze flesh-eating fly larva.

Consider these two versions of the abducted child story in comparison to biblical ones that emphasize, above all else, the affront of having one's personal property taken away. Although there is plenty of parental love in the Bible, the biblical attachment to the child bears little resemblance to our modern approach. Even the tale of the Lindbergh baby has a wholly different tenor; it features class and money, and hinges on anxieties about a boogey man, a crazed and greedy German with homicidal intent, something that resonated particularly well in 1932.

In the article "The Effect of Memes, Truthiness and Wikiality on Public Knowledge" (Black 2007) the author contends "every successful media event has what journalists call the hook— the one meme of information that makes the story newsworthy and sustains the attention of the public" (5). Having examined 34 examples of viral student media created in the last three years, four archetypal narratives appear to be in heavy circulation at the moment: the story of the fallen woman, the story of the murdered child, the story of God's wrath expressed through natural disaster and the story of the ruler who abuses his power. If, in the course of constructing one of these ancient narratives, an article uses a humorous or brazen tone and infuses radical views on gender, sexuality, race, religion or class, so much the better in terms of its viral capacity.

Against this backdrop we can see how student media fits into the discussion. Mark Mayfield, the adviser to The Crimson White, the student newspaper of The University of Alabama, said he felt that the Internet "levels the playing field," giving student journalists as much chance for their work to go viral as the work of reporters at mainstream outlets. I would argue that student journalists are actually better poised to construct genuine viral news content than any other group. Certainly the popularity of a story may be pushed through the dominant media chan-

nels. These are stories that are marketed for the intention of becoming popular, but we don't say, for example, that a story has gone viral if The New York Times has published it and it has therefore received thousands of reads. What mainstream media outlets do increasingly is report on things after they've gone viral, like the massively viral KONY2012 video. The mainstream did not originate the story that there was an African dictator who needed to be captured, but they later reported on the fact that people were taken in by the video in astounding numbers.

There are a several reasons why student reporters are the ones most apt to create serious viral news. One reason is practical; current college students have broad Internet access, they understand the uses of social media (the engine beneath every viral story), and they are accustomed to adopting new software innovations that allow them to construct and post content effectively. Beyond simply having the tools necessary to post the content, something mainstream outlets also have, college students' youth gives them a significant advantage in intuiting the topics that will catch the cultural imagination. As students enter college they undergo a natural shift in perspective that moves them beyond the self and family orientation of childhood to the national and global outlook of adulthood. At this point they are not set in their views, and their academic work requires them to think critically and ask important questions about society and culture and their place in it. Rushkoff writes, "Media viruses spread rapidly if they provoke our interest, and their success is dependent on the particular strengths and weaknesses of the host organism, popular culture" (10). Unencumbered by many of the financial responsibilities of adulthood, college students have been the leading consumers and arbiters of modern popular culture since at least the 1950s. They exist in a swirling vortex of academic and social ideas, popular culture and youthful energy that allows them to pick up on the current cultural zeitgeist without any particular effort. Moreover, unlike their counterparts in the mainstream media, they are not—under the best circumstances—shackled by the obligation to self-censor in order to avoid offending a conservative audience or alienating advertisers. They can therefore be brash and take real creative risks; such risk taking is fundamental to the viral mechanism.

A typical example of a predictably viral student article is "How do I even begin to explain this" (2011), an anonymous first-person account by an Orthodox Jewish student expressing regret over a one-night stand. It ran in The YU Beacon, the student newspaper at Yeshiva University in New York City. The explicit confessional employs all the techniques of melodrama and taps into the full prurient potential of the fallen woman narrative. The article went viral from New York to Jerusalem and unleashed a firestorm of criticism that ultimately prompted the paper's news editor and co-editor in chief to quit.

Another recent example is the case of the muscle-bound cheerleader. Here the photo that ran with the article was of particular importance, as is often the case with viral content. It played up the contrasting traits of the heavily muscled but traditionally attractive Anna Watson. The picture helped propel the University of Georgia's independent newspaper The Red & Black's article "Cheerleader not defined by physique" (Glaser 2012), to 500,000 reads in a week. With the Republican primaries in full swing, Watson's religious convictions likely added to the draw, particularly among Christian conservatives. One commenter, who used the Internet handle TruthLove, said of Watson's image, "She's beautiful, cares about her health and most importantly, she loves Jesus Christ. Anna, may God bless you with much success and your heart's desires. IN JESUS NAME." To this a second response, by someone referring to him or herself as Sanity Calling, read, "Obviously, Jesus may have some issues with her though. To allow a woman to do that to her body is a crime." Bitter, polarized comments of this sort are typical for viral content. One begins to see why the association of the term "viral" with moral turpitude makes sense in this context, as moral anxiety is a driving force beneath much viral content.

The Trouble With Going Viral: What are the Results?

Once a story goes viral there is no controlling it, and the consequences, even under the best of circumstances, can be vexing. There are two fundamental problems: backlash and erosion. Of the 34 examples of viral student content that were examined for this paper, roughly 50% triggered a juggernaut of vitriolic responses directed primarily at the author, but sometimes at the editor in chief, the newspaper or the media adviser. Another 20% prompted a contentious mix of positive and negative commentary. In at least seven of these cases the student who created the content quit his or her school paper, and four of those seven students actually changed their majors from journalism, communications or new media to something else. The repercussions may be dreadful for the students personally, but even more detrimental to the community at large. As stated earlier, student papers are one of the last places where serious issues can be taken up without fear of reprisal from a parent company or block of advertisers. If student newspapers become fearful and silent, then society as a whole will suffer.

The story of Lisa Khoury, the 2011-2012 news editor for the University at Buffalo's independent newspaper, The Spectrum, gives another clear example of the ambushing effect that going viral can have on students. Like many college newspapers, The Spectrum frequently takes a topic of some controversy and presents opposing views on that topic. On January 28, 2012, Khoury took the "no tattoos" side of the tattoo debate in an article titled "Why put a bumper sticker on a Ferrari?" Among other things, Khoury wrote, "An elegant woman does not vandalize the temple she has been blessed with as her body. She appreciates it. She flaunts it. She's not happy with it? She goes to the gym. She dresses it up in lavish, fun, trendy clothes, enjoying trips to the mall with her girlfriends." Khoury's article was forceful, glib, perhaps offensive, but that does not explain the incredible response. In 48 hours Khoury's article got 25,000 online reads and elicited hundreds of hate-filled comments, Facebook posts, tweets and emails.

Here's a sample of the 900+ comments that were posted in response to Khoury's tattoo article: "I would like to apologise for whoever brought you up (I imagine it was a shallow, vapid excuse for a human being who you call your mother) who made you think that a tattoo'd body is something to regard with revulsion..." (Bridgman). This responsewas one of the mildest. Another person commented, apparently refering to a photo of Khoury posted along side her article, "Lisa. Not to sound like a dick, but you are NOT a Ferrari. You are, at best, a 2003 Dodge Caravan" (Bice). Many of the comments Khoury received are too offensive to be reprinted here.

Hate mail is a fact of life for any college media outlet that goes beyond public relations style reporting, but receiving 900 pieces of it in less than two days requires more than a thick skin. Khoury's media adviser, Jody Kleinberg Bheil, responded to questions from other advisers about Khoury's article on the College Media Association's listserv saying, "What might they do differently? Pay more attention to everything they write, knowing it might not just get read within our university context, but also beyond. The wording of her original piece was awkward and came off to many as judgmental" (3 February, 2012).

In one-on-one interviews with several media advisers whose papers had recently produced viral content, they echoed Kleinberg Bheil's sentiment that students must learn to respect the broad reach of the Internet. As Barbara Allen, the media adviser at the Daily O'Collegian, the independent student newspaper at the University of Oklahoma put it, "How else are they going to learn that the Internet is ubiquitous if they don't screw up on the Internet?" But my research suggests that most student journalists faced with such a massive negative reaction simply leave their papers (notably, Lisa Khoury has continued to write throughout the semester). This is not necessarily because they are weak willed or not serious about journalism, but more likely because managing the negative reaction depletes resources needed for academic and

other duties. Those who do remain may become more judicious in their writing and reporting, but potentially more hesitant to cover important topics as well.

One example of the chilling effect that going viral can have on student media comes from The Daily O'Collegian. The students ran what became a locally viral article penned by freshman Paige Howell. In it she described a new strip club, The Blue Diamond Cabaret, that had opened near the college's campus and which was co-owned by an OSU alum. The piece employed a humorous tone, opening with the line: "Jerry and Amber Elledge have made bare breasts their business" (2012). Howell included information such as, "In addition to owning the club, Jerry said he participates in the Toys for Tots programs, as well as hosting pole dancing exercise classes on Wednesdays from 2-4 p.m." It was not the content of Howell's article but the headline, "Diamond in the muff," that inspired most of the controversy that followed, including a letter of condemnation signed by many of the professors at OSU's School of Media and Strategic Communications. The letter accused the writer of the "Diamond in the muff" headline—who was not, in fact, the article's author, Paige Howell--of failing to uphold sections of the Society of Professional Journalists code of ethics that say journalists should "show good taste" and avoid "pandering to lurid curiosity." The letter called the headline a "sophomoric attempt at humor" and said it "undermine[d] the credibility of everyone associated with The Daily O'Collegian." The article came out on a Tuesday; by Friday the entire opinions page was dedicated to it. There was the letter from the professors, an editorial and a column reacting to the letter, two student responses that criticized the negative reaction of the campus community, and an article by the editor in chief upbraiding those who had "harassed" Paige Howell by calling her a "embarrassment to OSU." Howell ended up leaving the paper, but even those who stayed behind were affected. Barbara Allen, the O'Colly's adviser, explained that after "Diamond in the muff" the staffers joked routinely about "pushing the envelope" with their reporting, but their subsequent stories rarely did so. Viral articles can inspire healthy caution on the part of reporters, but can also inspire self-censorship.

Beyond demonstrating the effects of viral backlash, "Diamond in the muff" also offers up a concrete example of the second key problem with viral content: erosion. One of the most interesting notes on that Friday opinion page read, "Just because every other newspaper in Oklahoma has embraced the religious right doesn't mean the O'Colly has to follow suit" (Becker 2012). Allen agreed that being in the American Bible Belt likely played a role in the story going viral, but that the situation was more complex in that the animus came from multiple directions. Religious conservatives attacked the headline for moral reasons, while progressive feminists attacked it on political grounds. She noted that the real issues contained in the article, the questions it raised about sexuality and sexual exploitation became completely obscured by the kerfuffle over the headline.

As stories wind their way around the Internet, the nuances get shaved off and in many cases the story becomes symbolic of something entirely different from what it was originally about: "ideas are shared from one person to another, each person being a generation, in the hopes that the best ideas will prevail" (Black 2007). But these "best ideas" may not, in fact, be accurate or good ideas: "as the meme spreads the odds increase that someone will make a creative leap" (5). Howell's strip club story encountered such a creative leap. Instead of inspiring a discussion about the social issues surrounding the proliferation of strip clubs, it became a discussion about journalistic professionalism and taste in headline writing. It is easy to see how student reporters can become disenchanted and disengaged if they feel their thoughtful stories may be transformed in such a way.

What Can be Done to Make Viral Stories Meaningful and Avoid the Pitfalls of Going Viral?

Having explored the viral disasters, it is worth noting that there are instances of student articles going viral because they are well-written, newsworthy and thorough. In such cases the content is almost always attached to a major, unexpected event such as a natural disaster, murder or suicide. These types of viral articles are the rarest, accounting for only 11% of the articles examined for this paper. They are also the only ones that the research suggests can help their creators land jobs out of college. All five students interviewed for this paper who had been primary contributors on successful viral event stories landed jobs straight out of college. They emphasized their work on those stories to prospective employers and all said they felt their viral effort helped them get the job. It should be noted, however, that while these types of viral stories fall directly into familiar archetypal narratives, they differ from other virals in that they lack the factor of controversy. For example, in December of 2011 the Collegiate Times at Virginia Tech provided comprehensive multimedia coverage of a gunman on the loose on their campus. The story was picked up nationally, but all comments were supportive. Reporters who are covering viral events such as shootings and disasters are more likely to be distracted from their work by requests from mainstream affiliates to use portions of their reporting, than by mobs of hate mail writers. The viral event reporter is therefore positioned as a hero, while the creators of other viral content may well be cast as villains no matter how important or newsworthy their topic.

Naturally student reporters hope to work on stories of great scale and human significance, but it is impossible to predict when an event like a natural disaster will occur. It is, however, possible to put an apparatus into place that can facilitate effective coverage when a major incident does arise. One of the most highly-regarded viral student media efforts comes from The University of Alabama's student newspaper, The Crimson White. Following a devastating tornado strike that hit practically on top of their campus in late April of 2011 (the effects were so severe the school ended the semester early and sent everyone home), they commenced two weeks of solid coverage. Under the direction of then Editor in Chief Victor Luckerson, The Crimson White innovated a mutli-platform technique in which they posted dozens of linked articles, created hundreds of photo and video packages, provided interactive graphics with real-time application and used a live Twitter feed both to receive and convey crucial information about things like what streets were without power.

PBS's MediaShift blog said of The Crimson White coverage, "Among its most viral efforts was a Google map providing a geographic breakdown of everything tornado-related, including the path it took, the lives it claimed, the communities it affected, the buildings it leveled, and the volunteer opportunities available to help locals lessen its impact" (Reimold 2012). Mark Mayfield, The Crimson White's adviser, explained that part of the students' success in covering the tornado, beside their endless tenacity, was that they had established an initiative to connect to the community via social media long before the storm hit. As a result, they were ready to use Twitter and Facebook to gather information as well as report it. When asked what other student reporters could do to prepare for going viral, Luckerson said, "Despite the fact that it is rare to go viral, prepare as if it isn't."

Advisers can prepare student reporters by asking them to brainstorm approaches for handling both negative and positive viral events well before they occur. They should be encouraged to consider and apply strategies that can be put into place beforehand—such as Alabama's social media outreach program—so they are well positioned to cover a viral event when it strikes. There are also some failsafes that can be activated to avoid generating negative responses to viral

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content. First, thoughtful packaging of content for online consumption is one way to prevent certain viral disasters. In the case of Khoury's tattoo article the students placed note at the top of the online column indicating it was part of a point-counterpoint debate and linking to its sister article, but as web design is becoming more and more sophisticated it is possible to keep the two articles side by side online as they would have appeared in print. Although the text of the article would have remained the same, keeping the articles together might have avoided stripping the article of some of its context, which in turn could have at least dulled the Internet's roar. Another basic guard against having articles go viral in the first place is to encourage long-form journalism. In Everett Rogers's book The Diffusions of Innovations he notes that too much complexity slows an innovation's transmission (1983, 67). Here we can reasonably exchange his term "innovation" for "viral content." Even the most staunch investigative reporting enthusiast would be hard pressed to name a single article from ProPublica that has gone viral. Reporters can also keep a lookout for the viral stories that tap into hot button social issues and archetypal narratives, and use thoughtful editing to avoid setting off a massive negative response.

On the other hand, sometimes there is a newsworthy event that will inevitably set off a maelstrom and must still be reported. One example of this is a 2008 story from The Prospector at The University of Texas at El Paso in which they reported on the fact that the newly nominated homecoming queen, April S. Dominguez, had to resign because she had violated the morals clause of the post; she had once worked as a stripper at a local venue known as Jaguar's Gold Club. The Prospector took heavy criticism for reporting the reason for Dominguez's resignation. In one letter to the editor they were deemed hypocrites because they had run a half page ad for The Red Parrot, a competitor to Jaguar's Gold Club, in an issue the month before.

The difficulty for reporters and advisers alike is that the psychological sucker-punch of condemnation may cause paralysis at first. Five days after her first tattoo column went viral, Khoury wrote a second article entitled "The day I met the Internet." In it she apologized to tattoo lovers for offending them but tried to defend herself against some of the more degrading and specious comments. By then, however, the damage was done; fewer people read the follow-up but of those who did, many still posted scathing remarks that proclaimed her apology insincere. Dan Reimold likens a reporter's instinctive response to a deluge of negative feedback to Elisabeth Kubler-Ross's five stages of grieving, in which the initial response is denial, followed closely by anger. When a student reporter has just received 900 hate emails, writing a level-headed correction, clarification or apology may test his or her psychological limits.

Despite the challenge of formulating a response under pressure, corrections, at least, have to be made immediately. For example, The Crimson White had to run a correction during the course of their tornado coverage when reporters incorrectly tweeted the number of college students who had been killed by the twister. They quickly removed the tweet and noted the error. They were fortunate that the correction circulated nearly as fast as the error. But many students are not so lucky, like the reporters at Onward State, the newspaper of Penn State, who tweeted football legend Joe Paterno's death before he actually died. The tweet was picked up by CBSSports.com. Onward State's Managing Editor Devon Edwards resigned over the incident, saying, according the Los Angeles Times, "In this day and age, getting [a story] first often conflicts with getting it right, but our intention was never to fall into that chasm." In his book Thought Contagion: How Belief Spreads Through Society, Aaron Lynch writes: "If an idea seems well founded to most people exposed to it, the nonhosts tend to adopt it, and hosts tend to retain it...Of course, what is widely perceived to be cogent is frequently different from the truth" (1996, 7-8). In the case of the Paterno death tweet, it seemed entirely cogent to readers as the coach was known to be seriously ill and his death was imminent. Several advisers

who were interviewed for this paper said the amount of time a reporter has to correct viral information before serious damage is done can be counted in minutes, usually less than an hour.

Beyond corrections, occasionally student reporters are obliged to run apologies, but most often when they receive a deluge of criticism as a result of a viral story, students want to respond with a defense. Such responses almost always end badly, escalating rather than diffusing the controversy. Several advisers contacted in the course of researching this paper said their editorial boards had enacted policies prohibiting student reporters from engaging their critics through social media, editorials or comment panels. Students may find it easier not to have a kneejerk reaction if responding in general is simply out of bounds.

Conclusion

Student journalists' brave reporting, energy and sense of the social and cultural issues of the day are what make their stories compelling. Knowingly or intuitively they use archetypal narratives to convey the news, often with great success. But part of the reason why people may be quick to write off viral student media as insignificant likely has to do with the fact that the proportion of viral student content that goes viral for good reasons—like being well crafted, hard-hitting and timely—is currently small compared to the student generated viral content that is offensive or ill-conceived. Media advisers can help reverse these proportions if they encourage student reporters to discuss and plan for the complex obligations going viral presents.

The following is a summary of the basic strategies advisers and student reporters can employ that the evidence suggests can be most effective for handling and anticipating viral content:

1.   ASSUME VIRAL STORIES ARE INEVITABLE – College students should be made aware that as a group they have the tools and intuitive skills that, in combination, often inspire them to create viral content, wittingly or unwittingly.

2.   SET PLANS IN PLACE BEFORE A VIRAL EVENT OCCURS – Two plans are needed.

a.   Plan 1 –The first plan is one for handling or preventing the fallout associated with articles that go viral in such a way that they inspire a deluge of negative feedback. This plan must include, within the regular workflow, an editorial mechanism that separates articles that may go viral needlessly (because they are offensive or poorly conceived) from articles that will go viral because the content is highly controversial but highly newsworthy. Someone must be in charge of evaluating the content's viral capacity; this person must know what archetypes to watch for and what sorts of cultural issues will inspire intense focus. For articles that are too newsworthy not to run, clear policies must be established for how the newsroom will handle the hostility that will inevitably follow.

b.   Plan 2 – The second plan is one that prepares for viral events such as natural disasters and violent crimes on or near their campus. Students must consider how these stories are best conveyed and then work to build the resources needed to provide effective coverage. Their viral emergency kit must include the capacity for every reporter to shoot and edit basic video packages, create photo slide shows and envision or create useful interactive graphics. A strong social media outreach program is also crucial and must be established beforehand.

3.   AVOID STRIPPING CONTEXT BETWEEN PRINT AND WEB –Some college newsrooms are now web only, but for those that print much of their content first and then put it on the web, it is crucial to do so thoughtfully, using every available tool to keep articles from losing their context. Some examples include running point-counter point articles side by side, never leaving behind the infographics that appeared in print and using extra features such as video and audio to provide depth and clarification that might otherwise be lost.

4.   LEARN THE LIFE CYCLE OF VIRAL CONTENT –Student journalists need to know how fast they must react when information that goes viral is inaccurate and be able to write a concise and effective correction. They must also understand that viral content faces problems of erosion and that the best way to keep their work from being retrofitted with other people's agendas is to write nuanced long-form stories that are unlikely to go viral in the first place.

5.   STRESS THE NEED TO CONTINUE REPORTING AFTER A STORY GOES VIRAL –Student reporters must be made aware of how significant their edgy, risk-taking reporting is to maintaining a civilized and informed society, and be encouraged to weather viral storms and keep on reporting so that freedom of the press and free speech are not chilled.

The college newsroom is one of the most vibrant and exciting places on any campus; helping students understand their obligations as potential creators of viral content may allow them to do their work more effectively and with greater confidence.

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Pacemakers Winners Circle

A Study of Multimedia, Interactivity and Content Management Systems at Top Student Newspaper Websites

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Overview

In many ways, the situation today at college newspapers is a magnified version of the spectrum found at their commercial counterparts, in terms of both print and online. On one end of that spectrum, many college newspapers face severe obstacles with a lack of adequate financial resources, because of both budget cuts and declining ad revenue—to the point that some are going online-only. In addition, many college newspapers often have a staff that may not be very experienced or very well trained. For these newspapers, like many small weekly commercial newspapers, just putting out a print product is a challenge, and they are lucky if they are also able to just dump their content online. But, on the other end of the spectrum, some college newsrooms are full of enthusiastic and technologically savvy students who are not constrained by print-centric readers, editors and publishers and "we've always done it this way" attitudes. These publications are able to go beyond even what many of their most enterprising commercial newspaper peers are doing online.

Our goal was to study college newspapers that were doing things well, to look at these cream of the crop newspapers and examine their processes, technology and decisions. Our hope was that in doing such a study of award-winning online newspapers, other college (and even commercial) newspapers could have a better understanding of what they might do to improve and better serve their readers.

The plight of the first category of newspapers can be clearly seen in one very telling statistic: a little over one-third of the college newspapers listed in the Editor and Publisher Yearbook did not even have a functional website in a 2007 study (Bergland and Hon 2009). That number though is significantly higher than the figure for professional weekly newspapers, which had 27 percent without websites (Fuller 2010). While every newspaper's situation is different, hopefully this content analysis of the multimedia, interactive and distribution features of these websites, coupled with information about publishing processes and especially Content Management Systems (CMS) gained through interviews, will give other newspapers some ideas that might work within their particular situation.

Literature review

To be frank, there has not been much scholarship that has addressed online college newspa-

pers, nor have there been many studies that deal with content management systems of college or commercial newspapers, in spite of the huge role that a CMS plays in the day-to-day operations of a newspaper. There have been some articles that have dealt with features of college newspaper websites, dating back to 1999, when Bruce Garrison outlined components that college newspaper websites should have, such as fresh content, "searchability" and interactivity (Garrison 1999). Subsequent essays by Garrison in College Media Review provided an overview of convergent journalism experiments in commercial newspapers (Summer 2000)and the literature in the field (Fall 2001) and audio and video streaming for college newspapers (Fall 2000). A later Garrison article detailed the strengths of leading commercial newspapers that college newspapers could emulate (Spring 2003). However, actual research on online college newspapers has been scarce. One research project was conducted by Reimold, who studied the online-only magazine he advised (Spring 2008). Another notable exception is Adams and Bodle (Fall 2001), although they focused more on readability levels of writing rather than components of online websites. Another research study that did focus more on features of college websites was done by Bergland and Hon (2009). Using a random sampling of over 350 newspapers, the pair looked at the presence of various multimedia and interactive newspapers, finding that 30 percent used College Publisher, 35 percent used some other content management system and 36 percent had no functioning website at all. Murley and Carroll (2007) also looked at multimedia and interactivity on college websites in their unpublished survey of College Media Advisers solicited through the organization's listserv. But, no studies have yet been done that have more than tangentially touched on Content Management Systems, although there have been a few non-research articles that have addressed that issue in the past two years. Two important ones were published in College Media Review in 2009, in the spring and summer issues. In the first, "College newspapers face a world of changes and choices in charting their online pathway," author Brady Tuefel discussed some of the major options and interviews college advisers, publication managers, students and College Publisher officials face in providing an overview of the choices some universities are making. He noted that half of the 14 Online Pacemaker winners in 2007 were using College Publisher. In a follow-up article in the summer, "Selecting the right Content Management System," Colin Quarello provides more specifics, outlining the pros and cons of the five main Content Management Systems: College Publisher, Drupal, Movable Type, WordPress and Joomla, with a few words added about those schools that create their own CMS. Of course, the dominant player, as noted in the Tuefel and Bergland and Hon (2009) articles, is College Publisher. According to their promotional materials, over 600 newspapers are currently part of the College Media Network, which was just purchased by Access Network Company (Access Network Company 2011).

One downside of the proliferation of the College Publisher CMS is that many of the websites across the country look largely the same, as Michael Koretzky laments in his Huffington Post blog with the telling title, "College Journalists are Good at Consuming Multimedia but Bad at Making It. Why?" Koretzky states that many of even the top entries in the 2009 Society for Professional Journalists college Mark of Excellence competition were mediocre. He comments that "Most of the stories on these sites are mere 'shovelware,' meaning print articles are tossed online without much thought. Or pictures, graphics, or video. What's so weirdly depressing is that I've seen many of these newspapers in print — and they kick ass. From the design to the writing to the photography, you can tell talented students sweat and bled for their paper dreams. Their print editions have verve. Their online editions have templates."

Of course, templates are better than nothing, which is what many college newspapers have. Bryan Murley in a blog on PBS's Media Shift, criticizes the many college papers who have not embraced the Web and cites the Bergland and Hon study which found that more than a third

of the randomly sampled Editor and Publisher college newspapers did not have a website.

In the commercial newspaper realm, there have been many, many studies of newspapers and their switch to convergence, ranging from ethnographic studies to more quantitative studies of the features of websites such as Greer and Messing (2004) and more recently, the Bivings Group's analysis of the top 100 circulation newspapers (2006) and Russial's analysis of newspapers with over 30,000 circulation (2009). These studies do have some bearing on various aspects of this research project, as will be discussed later. However, many of the studies have focused on larger newspapers, often far beyond the circulation of most college newspapers. As a result, it is not surprising that the choice of content management systems is not a subject of their studies. For one, many of the newspapers are owned by chains, and the individual newspaper usually does not have any choice in the CMS it uses; it uses the same basic CMS that the other newspapers in the chain have used, since the parent company has typically expended a great amount of resources in buying/creating a proprietary CMS for all of its newspapers to use. Going with the same CMS leads to cost savings in terms of economies of scale, support costs and systems and training. In addition, the largest newspapers not part of a chain often also have the resources to design their own CMS, rather than choose an out-of-the-box model. Smaller, community newspapers, unfortunately, have received much less academic scrutiny. Those studies that have looked at smaller newspapers don't often focus on the online element, and those that do have not addressed the CMS issue. For example, even in a 2011 issue of Newspaper Research Journal devoted to community newspapers (including two articles devoted to online aspects of community newspapers), there is no mention made of Content Management Systems. Again, for those newspapers that are parts of chains, there is often no choice in the matter of CMS. But for independent/family-owned papers, CMS selection is very important, especially because there are often very limited resources and very little expertise at these publications. Staffs are often small and overworked, and the hit counts typically don't justify expending a great amount of time and resources in creating a first-rate website. As a result, some of these small, sometimes family-owned newspapers turn to options such as TownNews, a customizable CMS system similar in some ways to College Publisher. In fact, several college newspapers, both big and small, have dropped College Publisher or other CMS's to use TownNews. According to Town News college representative Paul Wilson, 28 college newspapers are currently with TownNews and using their BLOX CMS (including Pacemaker winner Iowa State, one of the first college sites to use TownNews), with about 10 more under contract and ready to launch soon (Wilson 2011).

Regardless, the Content Management System is very important for college publications. They don't have a chain relationship with other newspapers, so there is the benefit of having choice in the CMS. But, there is also a great deal of turnover, with the best students leaving often after one to four years on the newspaper, which makes training of staff and tailoring the CMS to fit the publication an ongoing struggle. In addition, except at the largest newspapers, college newspapers haven't gotten the hit counts or the online-only ad revenue to put a lot of time and resources into creating or customizing a CMS. That leaves them with limited choices, which will be explained in the next section.

Methodology

Before beginning our study in 2009, we had to find answers to several important questions: How would we select the "best" newspapers to study? What website features would we look for? What was the best means for finding out information about the CMS's used and the decisions made by the newspapers? To create a method for finding out the answers to those

questions, we built upon the research methods and findings of the college and commercial newspaper studies mentioned above, as well as some studies that we've integrated into the discussion below.

Selection of newspapers

Because "good" and "best" are very subjective terms, we chose to evaluate newspapers that had already been named superior by other groups. While there are numerous journalism contests, one of the biggest and most prestigious is the Pacemaker award, which is given to the very best publications by the Associated Collegiate Press, an 80-year-old organization that boasts 20,000 students affiliated with its member schools. One of the Pacemaker categories is "Online," a general excellence category. The Online Pacemakers have been in existence for 10 years and were preceded by the ACP "Best of the Net" competition, which goes back to 1995, nearly the beginning of online collegiate journalism. Over 200 newspapers submitted entries in 2009 and 2010. According to the ACP website, "Awards will be based on design, ease of navigation, writing and editing, graphics and interactivity."

Because the number of winners was small, we elected to use two years of winners and to examine the winners in the Four-year Daily and Four-year Non-daily categories (those categories have since changed to Large School and Small School). We evaluated the winners each year shortly after they were announced. In 2009, there were five winners in the Daily category and 10 in the Non-Daily (Appendix A). In 2010, there were 11 Large School Online Pacemaker winners, 10 Small Schoolwinners and one Online-only winner (although one of the Small School winners, the Daily Gazette, should have been classified as Online-only). (Appendix B.) We excluded the two junior college online winners, reasoning that they did not have the same student resources as the others. There was also one website, the Black & Magenta at Muskingum University, which was inoperable. This gave us a total of 18 websites for our 2010 analysis.

Website features

An important part of our study was to look at what features the award-winning newspapers had on their websites. In deciding how to analyze features on the sites, we looked at other studies of commercial newspapers. One of the two main methods for researching features of websites is to do surveys of editors/publishers, a technique used by Russial (2009) and Greer and Messing (2004), who studied daily newspapers in the U.S. The other method for analyzing newspaper websites is to use observation, data coding for the presence of these features on the actual websites. Some examples of this include a two-pass system (looking at the websites on two different occasions) employed by Hashim, Hasan and Sinnepan (2007) in their study of Australian newspapers and one-pass systems used in studying the top 100-circulation newspapers (Bivings Group 2006), U.S. weeklies (Fuller 2010), Canada's daily newspapers (Sparks, Young and Darnell 2006) and the aforementioned Bergland and Hon study of college newspapers (2009). We chose to use a one-pass observational analysis. We had 35 categories that we coded for in three main areas: Multimedia (audio, video, photogalleries, audio slideshows, etc), Interactivity (polls, interactive graphics, comments at the ends of articles, forums, reader blogs, etc.) and Distribution (PDFs, searchable archives, the ability to email an article to a friend, etc). Different from any of these studies was the addition of a few new categories: Facebook, Twitter and Content Management System. Essentially, a rater evaluated each 2009 and 2010 winner shortly after they were selected, looking deep inside the pages and coding for the presence or absence of each feature. The advantage of this method over a survey method (like that used by Russial) is that it is not subject to reporting/remembering errors, nor are there the problems of low response rates and surveys not being returned. The disadvantage is

that this system provides a snapshot, or an "any given day" evaluation. So, while multimedia and interactive features are often set into their own category and have a shelf/site life of several days or weeks, this methodological approach might result in not coding for the presence of, say, interactive graphics, when at some point during the year the site might have had an interactive graphic.

Decision-making processes

To obtain more in-depth and qualitative data about the processes and factors that went into decision making about aspects of the websites, we also conducted interviews with representatives of the Pacemaker award winners. Those interviewed included advisers, editors-in-chief and Web editors, depending on who was most knowledgeable about the website. Based on the literature and test pilots, we developed four principle research questions:

RQ1: What multimedia features are present in award winning websites?

RQ2: What content management systems are college media using?

RQ3: What advantages or disadvantages are there in these content management systems?

RQ4: What impact does the choice of content management have on multimedia features on the website?

RQ5: How do the features of these websites compare to a nationwide study of a few years earlier?

We used these principle questions to develop 36 specific questions (Appendix C) including some close-ended questions (such as the number of page views and unique visitors), some Likert-scale questions (such as judging their satisfaction with their current CMS) and several open-ended questions (such as their procedures for posting articles and reasons for choosing their CMS). These 20-30 minute phone interviews were conducted in the late winter and spring of 2011.

This multi-modal methodological proved to be very effective in producing not only some solid numbers about the features of the cream-of-the-crop publications and what they are doing (and perhaps what other newspapers could/should be doing to be considered among the best), but also insights into some of the decisions that they have made and how they run their operations to create award-winning online sites.

Results

Content Management Systems

All of the sites use Content Management Systems (CMS) to run their websites and upload content to the sites. There has been a considerable shift in the CMS used by the 2010 winners. WordPress (WP) is the leading system among the 18 websites we surveyed in 2010 with 50 percent using it. In 2009, only 6 percent used WordPress. In 2010, 33 percent of the sites were "homegrown" (HG) systems students built themselves, compared to 48 percent the year before. About 1 percent used College Publisher (CP) in 2010 compared to 31 percent in 2009. One percent of the 2010 winners used another system while in 2009 that number was 14 percent.

We asked the interviewees for the reasons they were using their current CMS. Here is a representative sampling of their comments:

Personal interest of editors. (WP)

Short learning curve, popular. (WP)

User friendly, wide choice of plug-ins. (WP)

University switched to WordPress and offered server space and technical support. Student

familiar with it helped build site. Highly recommended. Simple and quick to use. (WP)

Personal preference of editors that took on the project. (CP)

Flexibility. (Homegrown)

Selling and placing ads is ridiculously easy. (TownNews)

We have a lot of ability to do the things we want to do. (Joomla)

In a related question, we wanted to know what advisers/editors thought were the advantages to their current CMS. Again, a sampling of their comments:

Looks good, staff preference. (WP)

Ease of uploading. (WP)

Ease of use, lots of plug-ins, free. (WP)

Free, ease of use, features. (WP)

Good educational tool, can update stuff, simple, self-explanatory, can change things. (WP)

Easy to learn and use. (CP)

Flexible, easier to do different things if you have a programmer. (HG)

Can tweak it at any time, however we want. (HG)

Can modify it, ability to do almost anything we need it to do. (HG)

Ability to monetize, create new ways of getting revenue from advertisers. Important that we control the method and revenue stream. (HG)

Advisers said there were also disadvantages to their CMS:

Harder to train staff. (WP)

Some limitations to templates. (WP)

Have to work within the constraints of the system. Previous editor thought it was a disadvantage because he wanted to work with code. (WP)

It is relatively "idiot proof," but it's unwieldy when we want to change the layout of the pages. (WP)

Loss of control over design, features and ad revenue. (CP)

Very difficult to change things. (CP)

Annoying to have to go through tech people to make changes. (CP)

Advertising structure is convoluted and doesn't work well with a school our size. (CP)

Need a programmer (developer has graduated). (HG)

Very expensive and hard to maintain. (HG)

College Publisher was the predominant CMS (other than home grown systems) used by the Pacemaker winners in 2009 but not in 2010. We wanted to know why newspapers were not choosing to use CP.

"Didn't keep up with the times." (Mirror)

"Advertising restrictions were a big one and we didn't like their templates." (The Ithacan Online)

"We outgrew them. And, CP took over the primary advertising spots and it was hard to grow." (College Heights Herald)

"We would never go with College Publisher. Never. We would not relinquish control. We do not allow anyone to sell advertising except us." (Kansan.com)

"It doesn't fit our needs and especially the advertising and the way the whole system works is not a good fit for us." (The Daily Gazette)

"Other CMS didn't do what we wanted, so we custom designed one." (The Phoenix)

"With College Publisher there was only so much you can do with it. We didn't have time or expertise to do something more with it, it wasn't very dynamic." (The Red and Black)

"We Beta tested CP 5, and did not find it intuitive or simple to change. It had unsophisticated design aspects. I didn't think customer support was as good as it needed to be. Not a

true vendor relationship. We really had no revenue opportunity, since they took the top banner ads." (KentNewsNet.com)

   "Never considered it, didn't know it (CP) existed." (Megaphone)

Website features

Multimedia Features

   Multimedia is one key component of top-notch websites, providing material that is not able to be viewed in print. All of the Pacemaker winners provided at least one form of multimedia and most had several forms. Eighty-nine percent provided their own video in 2010, up slightly from 2009. (None used AP video or video from other outside sources.) All of the sites provided photo galleries of some sort in 2010, up from 87 percent in 2009. In 2010 almost half, 44 percent, had audio slideshows with music or voice-over, down from 60 percent the previous year. There were a few, 17 percent in 2010, which had interactive graphics, most often using Flash. That was considerably lower than the 53 percent that had them the year before. A third, 33 percent, offered audio only, such as music or interview clips in 2010. In 2009, it was 47 percent.

   More telling than the 2009-2010 comparisons, however, is the differences between these award-winning newspaper sites and the overall figures for college newspapers. The Bergland and Hon study, conducted in 2008, using a virtually identical methodology and almost all of the same categories, found dramatically less multimedia being used at college newspapers as a whole. For example, the use of video, hovering around 90 percent for the award-winning newspapers, was a paltry 10 percent in Bergland and Hon's 2008 random sampling of nearly 400 college newspapers (margin of error +/- 4.5 percent). Even factoring out the newspapers in their study that didn't have any website (roughly one third), the percent of college newspaper websites with video was 16 percent, less than one-fifth the frequency of the Pacemaker winners. Not surprisingly, the other multimedia categories show similar discrepancies between the overall college newspaper numbers and the newspaper websites that won awards. The award-winning sites were nearly five times as likely to have photo galleries and 10 times as likely to have audio and audio slideshows. The most complex and therefore most infrequent multimedia element—interactive graphics, which often employ Flash—are almost nonexistent in college newspapers as a whole (1 percent) but relatively frequent in the top college news sites.

Reader interactivity

   Several of the websites provided interactive features allowing users and content providers a way to express their views.

   About half, 44 percent, had blogs written by reporters and editors in 2010. In 2009 it was 73 percent. None had blogs or forums for readers in 2010, but 13 percent had them in 2009. All of the sites had a section at the end of articles where users could write comments in both years. In 2010, 3 percent offered reader polls, down considerably from 47 percent the year before, perhaps a byproduct of several of them moving away from College Publisher, which has polls built into its CMS. Two of the sites offered a way to email the editor and one had a way to email the reporter who wrote an article. Once again, as expected, there is a huge gap between what is being done at the award-winning sites and at college newspaper websites as a whole. The winning sites were much more likely to have comments and reader and editor blogs, from two to five times higher than the overall newspaper results in the Bergland and Hon study conducted in 2008. Curiously, however, the average of the 2009 and 2010 winners in the categories of the ability to email a reporter and email/type a letter to the editor is actually

less than the overall newspapers.

Reader Popularity

Readers did have ways to see which items on the sites were the most popular. Nearly half, 44 percent had a "most viewed" or "most emailed" feature in 2010, up from 33 percent in 2009. There was a big change in sites that had a link to external ranking/recommended sites, such as Reddit, Digg or Facebook. In 2010 it was 83 percent as compared to zero the year before.

Marketing

A number of the websites used various means to "push" content to potential users.

All of the 2010 websites had RSS feeds, Facebook pages and Twitter accounts. Those numbers reflected the growing popularity of these features. In 2009, 60 percent had RSS feeds, 87 percent had Facebook pages and 73 percent had Twitter accounts. This compares to 25 percent for all college newspapers in the Bergland and Hon study.

About half, 56 percent, required a free registration as a way to help track traffic to the website in 2010. That number is almost the same as 2009 when it was 57 percent, and much higher than the 2008 overall college newspaper figure of 16 percent.

One had a mobile device alert feature in 2010. In 2009 it was zero.

None sent out email digests with links to stories in 2010. In 2009 there was one.

Many of the sites, 78 percent, had "email to a friend" links. (We did not check this in 2009.)
Alternative formats

Several of the websites provided alternative formats for viewers.

Users could view PDFs of the front page or the entire paper on 33 percent of the sites in 2010, up from 27 percent the year before. The 2008 Bergland/Hon study was a little more than half that, with 19 percent of overall newspapers offering a PDF version of the paper.

There were links to an electronic version of the paper on 33 percent of the sites in 2010. That was up from 20 percent in 2009.

Operation of websites

All of the online sites were updated regularly. Procedures for updating and posting materials varied somewhat, but all the sites required that material go through an editing process before it was posted. None of the sites allowed reporters to directly post their stories or other material.

Here are a few representative comments about website operation:

"The print version is compiled on Tuesday night and shoveled online the next morning. Last year, we had a staff of four motivated editors who would look at the print story and size it up for use of multimedia efforts. The students looked at it as the different journalism animal it is. Last year it was updated six times a week, but those students graduated and the site is updated less frequently. (Mirror)

"Desk editors create shells. After stories are finalized, Web editors paste and publish into the shells." (The Daily Northwestern)

"Reporters email editors who upload, then another editor looks at it and clicks publish. Some reporters have the ability to upload, then the editor comes in and reads it, and another editor publishes it. (The Red and Black)

"Everything goes through a traditional editing process, the managing editor or editor-in-chief approves the material and then the section editors post the stories. Blogs are not pre-approved, although comments are." (The Ithacan Online)

"Copy editors look stories over and then a 'sender-editor' actually posts the stories. There is

no formalized process for multi-media posting." (The Daily Gazette)

"Contents are shoveled to the website." (The Phoenix)

The Web editor does the posting. The Web editor had at least one other role with the paper. Reporters are not allowed to post." (Megaphone)

"Stories are posted by one of four 'executives' after stories are edited. All reporters' work must be seen by at least four people." (TommieMedia)

Many of the sites posted stories before they were published in their college newspapers, and naturally the two stand-alone sites with no newspaper affiliation (The Daily Herald and TommieMedia) did not have to worry about whether their stories were posted before being printed. Many other newspapers, such as the Mirror post stories that won't fit into the print edition of the paper. "I tell the students a prospective employer might be more impressed with an online clipping than a print clipping," James Simon, adviser to the Mirror, said. The Ithacan Online updates sports scores and analysis frequently. The Red and Black at the University of Georgia publishes a significant amount of online-only stories. Ed Morales, the Red and Black adviser, commented, "About 20-25 percent of our stories are online only, and we'd like to inch that up. There's not always enough room in the paper."

Only one of the sites did not have unique Web content. The unique content of the other websites included video, slideshows, blogs and commenting sections. A few of the sites used their websites to produce multimedia packages. For example, in February 2011, The Daily Northwestern extensively covered another college's attempts to curb freshmen drinking. Their multimedia package included text, video, a podcast, a map and graphics. For students at Michigan State, extending beyond just print is a "mindset," adviser Omar Sofradzija said. "We have not viewed web and print as separate. We encourage the idea that it's not about writing stories, but doing stories in the best medium possible. We're a news organization—print is primary and legacy, but we're doing all media. It's a mindset, and we've had success with that."

Unique Web content didn't always attract users though. Simon said they tried using only video for their online stories and didn't get many hits for the video. "In the classroom, we instruct students that print is dying and people go online for their news. But it's a tradition for students to pick up the newspaper and get their (campus) news," Simon said. "There's a disconnect about what we teach in the classroom from the reality of the newspaper."

Staffing

Most of the websites affiliated with student newspapers had staff dedicated solely to their websites.

The average online-only staff at the smaller papers is just under three people, from a low of zero at the Megaphone to a high of nine at The Ithacan Online. At the larger newspapers, the number was significantly higher, with as many as 30 people on the online staff at Kent State. Staffing at the online only sites was, as might be expected, considerably higher. The Daily Gazette had 20 online only staff members and five multimedia editors. TommieMedia had 45 online-only staff members and 15 multimedia editors.

All of the websites paid their personnel, but the amounts varied widely. Here a few examples:

$40 per week. (Mirror)

$800 per quarter for the managing editor. (The Daily Northwestern)

Editors received a small stipend. (The Ithacan Online)

Editors: $300 per semester; reporters and photographers: $100 per semester. (The Daily Gazette)

$8.80 per hour. (The Phoenix)

$7.55 per hour. (Megaphone)

Director: $3,000 per semester; three managers: $1,550 per semester; 11 other staffers: $750 per semester. (TommieMedia)

$10-12 per hour (mndaily.com)

$7.50 per hour (Kansan.com)

The higher rate of pay for the University of Minnesota website was not surprising, given that their online advertising income was $100,000 in the previous year ($1.8 million total in advertising revenue). The Kansan.com likewise earned $100,000 in online advertising last year.

Hosting

Three of the smaller newspaper sites were hosted on the college server, the rest were hosted on independent servers, while all of the larger schools used independent servers. Yearly costs for the websites (server space, domain name, etc.) averaged $185 per year for the sites. Hosting costs ranged from zero to about $500.

Length of time online

Most of the websites had been online for a number of years with the average at 11 years. That ranged from a high of 20 years for the University of Minnesota (the first collegiate paper in the nation to go online) to two years for TommieMedia.

Conclusions and key findings

Content Management Systems

As noted in the results, in 2010 nearly half of the sites used WordPress as their content management system compared to 6 percent the year before and only two sites used College Publisher in 2010 compared to 31 percent in 2009. We were not surprised at the increase in WordPress-based sites. The survey along with anecdotal evidence, primarily discussions at college media conferences, suggested that there is a movement to WordPress. It would seem logical that more sites will make a switch from College Publisher to another CMS since College Publisher, which was free, began charging almost $2,000 a year this year ($995 for no tech support, $1,995 with tech support) (College Publisher 2011). College Publisher does offer an option to manage and host sites using WordPress. It will be interesting to see how many takers CP gets at an annual cost of $4,500 for that option.

It will be interesting, too, to see how many college newspapers migrate to commercial newspaper options that have developed recently. Some of those options include TownNews/Blox, which already has numerous college clients (charging $150-$5,000 per month to newspapers), Zope, used by the 450 Gatehouse newspapers ($150 and up), Matchbin ($5,000) and Adqic ($200 to several thousand per month, plus setup costs of $2,500 to $50,000) (Local Media Insider 2010)

Another important finding from our research is that nearly a third of the 2010 award-winning sites used a CMS that their own developers built (down from 48 percent the year before). As advisers noted, developing their own CMS allowed them to tailor their sites to their own situations. However, as they also said, this can be problematic in maintaining the site as the students familiar with the system graduate and new students who may not know the system are forced to take over.

Features

There were a few surprises among the features that the websites offered. As we expected, a high number of them, 89 percent in 2010, have video. We were surprised however that the number wasn't 100 percent since so much emphasis is placed on video. Almost all professional newspaper websites have video, even if it's only material from a point-and-shoot video camera. It's relatively easy to edit video using iMovie, Moviemaker or other software and then upload the video to YouTube. However, while we had expected 100 percent, the 89 percent figure is still dramatically higher than the 10 percent found in the Bergland and Hon 2008 survey of college newspapers. As we expected, still images are an important part of the student sites as all of them have a slide show of some kind.

Also surprising was the declining number of blogs. Again, a great deal of emphasis is placed on blogs by the professional media, yet only about half the sites had blogs, and they were for editors and reporters only. That too may be a function of the student management nature of these websites. Blogs take a good deal of work to keep up, and most students are already over-loaded with other activities and may not have enough time to devote to blogging.

Only three percent of the sites offered reader surveys, down considerably from 47 percent the year before. Both numbers seem low since these are easy to do with free software available on the Internet and people like to take polls, as demonstrated by the professional media websites.

With all of these results it is important to look at the features of these award-winning websites in relation to what other newspapers are doing. It's clear from the 2008 data in the Bergland and Hon study that the top sites are much more likely in almost all of the categories to have more of the interactive, multimedia, and distribution features that help make a site better.

Trends to watch

As college budgets become tighter and news consumer habits change, it will be important to keep an eye on how student news is delivered. We found two interesting examples of stand-alone student media websites and a third that is still publishing a newspaper but has experimented with an online-only edition.

The University of St. Thomas launched TommieMedia in the fall of 2009. The university discontinued its student newspaper and its weekly student cable TV newscast in favor of the new website. Few students were picking up the newspaper anymore, Kristi Bunton, chair of the Journalism and Communications Department, said. Instead, "we try to simulate a real-world experience," Bunton said. They do so by operating a website that features text, photos, video, webcasts and sports shows. TommieMedia has six advisers. "It's very hands-on for the advisers as they look for teachable moments," Bunton said.

Another stand-alone website has been around much longer and is part of an interesting story at Swarthmore College. The Daily Gazette was started by students in 1996. There is no adviser and the site is independent of the college except for website hosting fees that the college pays out of student activity fees. The rest of the operating budget, including small stipends for the editorial staff, is from advertising revenue. There is also a weekly student newspaper, The Phoenix, with its own website (which also won a 2010 Pacemaker Award) at Swarthmore but the two media do not collaborate, Dougal Sutherland, The Daily Gazette's editor-in-chief, said. The two media may cover the same event when "big things happen" Sutherland said but generally cover different stories. The two media are organized differently. "They have a much more hierarchal structure. We're a flatter structure. We have more casual reporters who will do a couple of things during the month," he said. Sutherland and Camilla Rider, editor of The Phoenix, said there has been talk at different times in the past about sharing information or

coordinating coverage but it hasn't happened.

There was one other example that may be an indicator of future trends. The Megaphone at Southwestern University exhausted its printing budget near the end of the 2010 school year and published its final two editions online only. Adviser Bob Bednar said it could be a foreshadowing. "We are watching the tealeaves and we could move the whole paper online eventually," Bednar said. There has been some discussion, but it hasn't seriously been considered yet, he said. "But if we lose some of our budget, then clearly that would happen," Bednar said.

Limitations of the study

As noted earlier, the sample size was small, 15 in 2009 and 18 in 2010, but because these are the best online sites as judged by the ACP we thought they provided a valid sample. In addition, we contacted the appropriate people at all of the websites and conducted phone interviews with closed and open ended questions. We were able to glean information from the interviews that we felt further mitigated concerns about the sample size.

Also as noted in the methodology section, there was one Pacemaker winner we were unable to gather data on. The Black & Magenta website at Muskingum University in New Concord, Ohio, was inoperative (we tried it on several occasions). We were also unable to reach the adviser despite repeated efforts by phone and email.

There is one other notable limitation, caused by the ACP's system of selecting Online Pacemaker winners. The websites are judged in March and April but the winners are not announced until late October. Because of that lag time, students who worked on the winning websites may have graduated and been replaced by students who may have made changes in the website after they were judged. Chances that there were major changes during that time however were probably minimal and we are confident that the websites we surveyed were essentially in the same condition as when the judges selected them as winners. There is no way around this limitation since we could not begin work until the winners were announced.

Suggestions for future study

The online news world is changing at a rapid pace. For example, only a few years ago social media such as Twitter and Facebook were not a part of news media websites. Now, every site, including the student sites in our study, has links to its social media. Use of video by newspaper sites is also relatively new in the past few years, as are reporter blogs, RSS feeds and many other interactive features.

It would be interesting to repeat this study in the next couple of years to measure the changes in features and how student newspapers are using their websites. Repeating the study could also measure the changing CMS landscape. Finally, it would be worthwhile to see whether more colleges and universities abandon their printed newspapers in favor of online-only editions as costs escalate and student consumer habits continue to evolve.

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2009 ACP Pacemaker Winners

Four-year Daily Newspaper
dennews.com, Eastern Illinois Univ., Charleston, Ill.
iowastatedaily.com, Iowa State Univ., Ames, Iowa
Kansan.com, Univ. of Kansas, Lawrence, Kan.
KentNewsNet.com, Kent State Univ., Kent, Ohio
OUDaily.com, Univ. of Oklahoma, Norman, Okla.

Four-year Non-daily Newspaper
The Signal, Ouachita Baptist Univ., Arkadelphia, Ark.
The Orion, California State Univ., Chico, Chico, Calif.
The State Hornet, Sacramento State Univ., Sacramento, Calif.
Golden Gate [X]press, San Francisco State Univ., San Francisco, Calif.
The Circuit, Wartburg College, Waverly, Iowa
Tulane Hullabaloo, Tulane Univ., New Orleans, La.
The Maneater, Univ. of Missouri, Columbia, Mo.
The Whit Online, Rowan Univ., Glassboro, N.J.
The Temple News, Temple Univ., Philadelphia, Pa.
Whitworthian, Whitworth Univ., Spokane, Wash.

2010 ACP Pacemaker Winners

Large-school Newspaper
The State Press, Arizona State Univ., Tempe, Ariz.
UATRAV.COM, Univ. of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Ark.
Mustang Daily, California Polytechnic State Univ., San Luis Obispo, Calif.
gwhatchet.com, George Washington Univ., Washington, D.C.
The Red & Black, Univ. of Georgia, Athens, Ga.
The Daily Illini, Univ. of Illinois, Champaign, Ill.
idsnews.com, Indiana Univ., Bloomington, Ind.
Kansan.com, Univ. of Kansas, Lawrence, Kan.
College Heights Herald, Western Kentucky Univ., Bowling Green, Ky.
mndaily.com, Univ. of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minn.
The Daily Targum, Rutgers Univ., New Brunswick, N.J.

Small-school Newspaper
Mirror, Fairfield Univ., Fairfield, Conn.
The Daily Northwestern, Northwestern Univ., Evanston, Ill.
Lions' Roar Online, Normandale CC, Bloomington, Minn.
The Ithacan Online, Ithaca College, Ithaca, N.Y.
Black & Magenta, Muskingum Univ., New Concord, Ohio
The Daily Gazette, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pa.
The Phoenix, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pa.
Megaphone, Southwestern Univ., Georgetown, Texas

Online-only
  TommieMedia.com, Univ. of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minn.

ACP Online Pacemaker Winners Study

Close-ended questions:
  1) University size:
  2) Print circulation:
  3) Frequency of print publication:
  4) Number of majors in your department:
  5) Does your school have a broadcast major/minor/sequence?
  6) Convergence major/minor/sequence?
  7) Number of total staff on newspaper:
  8) Number of online-only staff:
  9) Number of web/multimedia editors:
  10) Credit granted for working on the website? (newspaper?)
  11) Working on website required for major?
  12) Total number of hits per month:
  13) Unique visitors per month:
  14) Is there a link from the college/university main page?
  15) Is your site hosted on the institution's server or an independent server?
  16) Yearly cost of the site (server space, domain name, etc):
  17) Does university have a TV broadcast? If so, is there a separate website for TV?
  18) Number of years site has been up:
  19) Current CMS:
  20) Number of years you've been with this CMS:
  21) Prior CMS's used?

Open-Ended/Likert-Scale Questions
  1) How often is website updated: (> once a day, daily, more than once a week, weekly, <weekly)
  2) Pay of web personnel?
  3) How/why did you choose your current CMS?
  4) How satisfied are you with your CMS? (Not at all Somewhat   Mostly satisfied Very satisfied)
  5) Are you considering switching CMS? If so, to what and why?
  6) What are the advantages you see in your current CMS?
  7) Disadvantages in your current CMS?
  8) If not with College Publisher, why not?
  9) Describe process/procedures/personnel for posting stories, graphics and MM to your website.
  10) Describe your online site's cooperation with other campus media.
  11) Future changes to site?
  12) Do you post online only stories?
  13) Other unique content?
  14) Do you post stories before they are published in the print edition, after, or what?
  15) Other things you would like to say about your website or CMS?

About the Authors

Dr. Bob Bergland is professor of journalism and integrated media at Missouri Western State University, where he advises the newspaper and teaches graduate and undergraduate classes in print and convergent journalism. He has given numerous presentations and has published articles in the area of convergent journalism and journalism curricula. Bergland, who attended Millikin University as an undergraduate and Purdue University as a graduate student, has worked for five newspapers, most recently the Grand Forks Herald in 2006.

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Media advisory board — friend or foe?
Student Media Advisers Give High marks for Priorities, Performance of Publication Boards

Lei Xie and James Simon
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Abstract

College journalists often have their work evaluated by campus Media Advisory Boards. Student editors complain some boards have used their oversight role to censor or indirectly exert control over the print or broadcast product. This exploratory study seeks to determine how often Media Advisory Boards exist and what factors correlate with a school having such a board. This study, based on a national survey of members of the College Media Advisers organization (N = 157), is designed to provide baseline data on such questions as how boards differ in title and size, what characteristics of a school help explain differences in the composition of a board, and what are the most common functions of a board. The results can be useful to schools considering creation of such a board, to schools examining the operations of their current board, and to various constituencies – student editors, journalism faculty, administrators – involved with the student press.

When publisher Joseph Pulitzer suggested creating the first collegiate school of journalism in the 1890s, he battled with Columbia University officials over a proposed advisory board for the school. The disagreement delayed the project, and while Pulitzer endowed the journalism school with $2 million, he died before the school could open (O'Dell, 1936). The dispute was the first of many conflicts regarding college administrators, campus journalism, and advisory boards. In the ensuing 100-plus years, problems continued as more journalism programs were created, student newspapers and broadcast operations followed, and schools worked to find a balance between respecting the First Amendment tradition of the press and the desire of colleges to protect their reputation and manage themselves successfully. Many colleges and universities responded by creating Publication Advisory Boards, often composed of administrators, faculty advisers to the media, other faculty members, student editors, students at large, and professional journalists from the local community, to provide a variety of perspectives on such issues. As broadcast operations grew on many campuses, the boards were sometimes reconstituted as Media Advisory Boards.

This study focuses exclusively on Media Advisory Boards, albeit from solely an adviser's perspective. In the 21st century, how often do Media Advisory Boards exist, and what factors correlate with a school having or not having such a board? How do they differ in such characteristics as title and size? What characteristics of a school help explain differences in the composition of a board? What are the most common functions of a board, and do they differ from what the adviser sees as the ideal? Are advisers satisfied with board performance; do they feel administrators exert too much influence on boards? This study, based on interviews with CMA members, is designed to provide baseline data on such questions. Such an exploratory study can be of use to schools considering creation of such a board, to schools examining the operations of their current board, and to various constituencies — student editors, journalism faculty, administrators – involved with the student press.

Litany of complaints

Many campus editors have complained publicly about their Media Advisory Board, and some have turned to the Student Press Law Center for help. In the past decade, SPLC issued dozens of reports on issues involving student media and advisory boards (Student Press Law Center, 2009). The issues have ranged from whether a board should be created to whether administrators have used it improperly:

When officials at Utica College in New York proposed forming an oversight board for the student newspaper, the five top editors and the faculty adviser all resigned (Student Press Law Center, 2003c).

Boston College tried to place stipulations on its contract for office space with The Heights student newspaper in 2003, mandating the establishment of "an 'active advisory board' made up of Boston College faculty and staff, including at least one administrator." Student editors said it was an attack on their independence (Student Press Law Center, 2003a).

Student journalists brought a First Amendment lawsuit against Ocean County College officials in New Jersey after a woman was fired from her position as faculty adviser to the school newspaper. A settlement mandated creation of a Student Media Advisory Board; the board was to include leaders of the campus student media, local media professionals, faculty advisers, and student body representatives (Ingram, 2010).

At Fairfield University in Connecticut, where the authors of this study are employed, the school created a newspaper advisory board in 2009 to help deal with such issues as a student protest regarding a newspaper column on "The Walk of Shame" (Keister, 2009).

Disputes involving advisory boards continued into 2011. In Virginia, administrators at Christopher Newport University were criticized for trying to undercut the authority of the seven-year-old Student Media Board that oversees budgeting for the newspaper, radio station, and fine arts magazines. Student editors said the administration wanted to end the print edition of the newspaper because of investigative stories that put the school in a negative light (Shalash, 2011). At the University of Texas—Tyler, the sudden firing of the longtime adviser to the Patriot Talon newspaper prompted the school's Student Media Advisory Board to investigate her claim that she was ordered to "tell the students what to write" (Zweifler, 2011).

These varied cases show how some schools, when faced with a modern-day problem regarding the student press, often turn to their Media Advisory Board – or create one should emergency arise. Once created, the board can serve many different purposes — some to the benefit of the student press, some to its potential detriment (Summarized by Click, 1993; Ingelhart, 1993; for a more recent, brief summary, see Turner, 2008).

Despite their widespread use – and widespread complaints about them – Media Advisory Boards have rarely been the main focal point of academic research. William Click devoted a chapter to the boards in his seminal "Governing College Student Publications" (1993), but the material is descriptive and anecdotal, and there is no evidence of a formal study. More often, we have only the individual accounts of problems on a given campus, scattered references in academic research that focuses primarily on other topics, but no comprehensive look.

Academe and advisory boards

The student Media Advisory Boards under discussion here, which often include off-campus members, can be seen as part of a broader effort by colleges and universities to use professionals in the community to bridge the gap between academicians and practitioners (Teitel, 1995). Teitel said interest in such advisory boards and committees comes as "the scope of demands

and expectations for responsiveness and accountability has increased, requiring greater inter-action with the world outside the ivory tower" (p. 59). Business schools routinely create de-partmental advisory councils in an effort to keep their curriculum relevant to the needs of the workforce (Kress and Wendell, 1993). For example, one business program formed a Technical Communication Advisory Board, consisting of faculty, students, and outsider advisers, to give advice on course offerings and recruiting students (Dorazio, 1996).

In journalism and mass communication, a 1994 study of 163 JMC programs found 51.5 percent had a "(m)edia advisory board or board of visitors that includes industry professionals" (Self, 1994).   Ten years later, Henderson surveyed 61 JMC programs with current or former departmental advisory boards. She reported interest in academic advisory boards in general had "recently experienced something of a resurgence. … (Y)et, for all their rapid growth, very little has been written about them" (p. 60). She included a list of areas where boards have in-teracted with students, and one area was "student newspaper procedures" (Henderson, 2004). Pullen (2005), saying that "doing more with less" is expected today in academe (p. 27), argued that creating an advisory board was one way to help build healthy JMC programs and deal with growing enrollments. More recently, a 2011 national survey of JMC departments found that many do use journalism professionals on advisory boards. These professionals can serve as auditors of academic programs and provide feedback on recruiting students and individual courses. But the researchers also found some programs have been reluctant to take advantage of what they called "renown-gown" resources like using local journalists on an advisory board (Benigni, Ferguson & McGee, 2011, p. 54).

While several national studies have looked at JMC programs that use advisory boards, there is an absence of studies on the narrower category of student Media Advisory Boards designed to help the campus press.

A free press? Or at the pleasure of the president?

Creation of an advisory board for campus newspapers, television stations, and other news outlets often depends, in part, on the administrative and legal structure under which the stu-dent news outlet(s) operate on a campus. The three traditional structures have not changed in past decades (Duscha and Fisher, 1973; also see summary by Brandon, 2001).

First, the news operation can be under the direct control of the administration or faculty; for example, at a community college, a student newspaper can be the product of a journalism class workshop in which the professor is the sole adviser. The college president is often the legal publisher. This direct control model was more the norm a half a century ago; a 1952 study found 59.8 percent of the non-accredited journalism programs exercised "close supervision" of a paper's editorial content; among accredited programs, 24 percent used close supervision (Bert, 1952).

A second structure allows the news outlet to operate in a semi-autonomous state; the student organization often receives free office space and can receive administration or student govern-ment funding. Instead of any prior review of published material, student editors often work with an advisory board to obtain feedback after publication. The board, itself, is often the official publisher.

The third structure calls for the student organization to be totally independent of university influence. Several studies have found a very small number of college newspapers meet the criteria for being totally independent of university funding and other ties; the criteria can run up to 26 different indicators (Inglehart, 1993; Yam, 2008; Bodle, 1997). The second and third models are closer to the ideal as outlined in the Code of Ethics of the College Media Advisers, which emphasizes ethical prohibitions against administration or faculty interference in content

(College Media Advisers).

Legal distinctions about the student press at public schools versus private schools also help determine the structure that governs a student medium. Public schools are government-run, and the U.S. Constitution places curbs on the government's ability to censor. The president of a private college can exert far more direct control over the student press, including the ability to mandate an advisory board, because the 14th amendment offers all private entities the ability to curb free expression (Lisosky, 2010). The Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier decision by the Supreme Court in 1988 gave high school administrators the right to censor school papers, and student editors have worried that it could be interpreted as allowing all college administrators to do the same, whether in a public or private school. Hosty v. Carter followed in 2005, saying Hazelwood had raised so many questions that it was no longer clear what freedoms college media enjoyed (Butzow, 2008). Student electronic media on campus have traditionally enjoyed even less legal protection, despite calls for comparable rights (Kleiman, 1996).

The role of any advisory board also is complicated by a lack of agreement among campus actors on the primary role of the student press. Brandon (2001) summarizes many of the traditional roles. To the student journalist, the function of the student press may be to obtain experience that can lead to a journalism job. Many students also want to experience such journalistic values as advocating for justice and providing a voice for the voiceless. To a faculty member, the campus media are places where students can be taught writing and editing and/or management and sales skills (Brandon, 2001).

As far back as 1965, Mencher warned that to an administrator, a campus newspaper or television news operation can seem more of a "public relations arm" than a "laboratory of life" (p. 216). His account of college editors being "removed from office by outraged college authorities. 'They were jeopardizing the good name of the institution'" (p. 216) echoes the more recent controversies detailed at the start of this study.

Advisory boards in the last 20 years

The one comprehensive look at how media boards operate comes from William Click in his Governing College Student Publications (first published in 1980 and revised in 1993). In a chapter entitled "Boards of Student Publications," Click outlined the most common responsibilities and authority of a board; typical membership; and board size, selection, and composition. Instead of collecting data from a formal survey of colleges, Click wrote in the preface to the 1993 edition:

…[G]overning documents and structures for college student publications were collected from institutions of all types around the country and analyzed for typical and significant points. This resulting monograph illustrates several approaches to governing student publications and reflects the knowledge and thinking of the writer. (p. viii)

Other information on Media Advisory Boards is limited to responses to scattered questions in broader academic studies. For example, a 2009 study of college advisers by Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver and Ronald E. Spielberger asked what university body was technically the "publisher" of the student newspaper. The Publications/Media Board was the publisher at 34.5 percent of four-year public schools and at much lower percentages at private (12.1 percent) and two-year colleges (3.2 percent). They also looked at where student media were positioned in college administrative structures; most media organizations reported to Student Affairs or an academic department, and virtually none of them actually reported to a Media Board (Kopenhaver and Spielberger, 2009). The authors also conducted a broad 1989 study of independent college papers that included several questions on advisory boards, such as whether a board existed, whether it selects the editor-in-chief, and whom the board reports to (Kopenhaver and

Spielberger, 1989).

Research Questions

The lack of research that focuses primarily on the Media Advisory Boards has limited our understanding of how often they exist, where they exist, and how they operate. Therefore, this study asks:

RQ1: At what types of schools are Media Advisory Boards most likely to exist, and what characteristics of a school strongly correlate with their existence?

RQ2: How do Media Advisory Boards differ in terms of title, size, hierarchical position within a school, and formality of operation?

RQ3: What does the composition of media boards look like and what characteristics of schools help explain the compositional differences of the boards?

RQ4: From the perspective of the faculty media adviser, what are the key functions of advisory boards and how are the functions prioritized compared to the advisers' expectations?

The value of Media Advisory Boards seems to lie in the role of the beholder. Many of the bulleted student grievances cited at the start of this study complained about boards being heavy-handed in selecting editors and approving budgets.

Yet a survey of the chairs of six Media Advisory Boards stressed their boards' understanding for and respect of the free press tradition of student journalism (Student Press Law Center, 2003a). Click said having a media board approve a student newspaper's budget can benefit students, and he suggested that student newspapers educate their boards about student journalists' rights (Student Press Law Center, 2003a). Kopenhaver, who has conducted several annual surveys of faculty media advisers, said, "A good student media board will protect the student newspaper. It will be kind of the buffer if the administration tries to do something in regards to the paper" (Yam, 2008).

Given the diverse views, this study also asks:

RQ5: How satisfied are advisers with the performance of the Media Advisory Board?

RQ6: What characteristics of the school and of the adviser correlate with higher satisfaction of media board performance?

Method

The term Media Advisory Board is used broadly, throughout, to capture endless variations in board titles, as discussed later in the results. This study uses the term, "student media," to describe student efforts to provide news coverage of activities on campus through college newspapers, magazines, television stations, and radio stations. The analysis refers to print, broadcast and Internet student news outlets unless stated otherwise.

The unit of analysis in this study is the college Media Advisory Board; researchers sought to focus both on schools with and without such a board in an effort to gauge what factors correlate with the existence of such a board. Researchers believed the media adviser at each campus would be the most reliable source of information about the Media Advisory Board at that campus; therefore, a survey instrument was constructed and sent to all members of the College Media Advisers organization. CMA, formerly known as the National Council of College Publication Advisers, was established in 1956 and is the best known association of U.S. college media advisers.

CMA provided a mailing list for its 641 current members. After eliminating entries with missing or false e-mail addresses, all 621 remaining names were checked individually against

duplicates. To raise awareness, we notified CMA members of the upcoming survey via the organization's listserv, in hopes of raising awareness. A nationwide, online survey invitation was sent out in June 2011 with (1) a letter, explaining the purpose of the study and promising anonymity, (2) a promise to send the survey results to participating advisers, and (3) a unique hyperlink that allowed only the e-mail recipient to fill out the online survey. Three weeks later, reminder e-mails were sent to those who had not yet responded.

We received 168 responses, which were then screened to ensure that no more than one person represented a particular school. During data cleaning, we eliminated 11 data points, as they either missed a majority of the questions or provided multiple numbers that defied face validity. This left us with a final sample of 157 complete responses, yielding a response rate of 25.3 percent. Only six advisers reported their school had a second Media Advisory Board, usually for a different medium. Data on the second board was not included due to the small number of cases. One of the authors of this study completed a survey to include data on that writer's school.

The sample characteristics paralleled the population parameters of the college media advisers on two key variables. Some 68 percent of the CMA population worked at public colleges and universities, compared to 66.0 percent of the survey's sample. Eighty-one percent of the CMA population worked at a four-year school, compared to 84 percent of the survey respondents. The results were important since the researchers expected the type of school (public vs. private, four-year vs. two-year) would help explain some of the variance in issues, such as whether a school had a Media Advisory Board.

A strength of the study was that a substantial percentage of respondents (39.5 percent) reported they did not have a Media Advisory Board at their school, allowing the researchers to compare the characteristics of schools with a board and those without.

The survey used multivariate analysis to see what independent variables could help predict the existence of such a board. Information on other organizational issues also was collected such as the board title, its composition, where it was located in the academic organization chart when the board was created, and whether it had any bylaws.

Advisers then were asked about the current functions of their board. In creating the survey instrument, researchers consulted with more than 30 mission statements of Media Advisory Boards to be sure that these functions listed were representative. The functions range from "selecting Editor-in-Chief/Station manager or other top positions" to "integrating journalism curriculum." Respondents rated each function based on a scale of one (not important at all) to five (extremely important). The study also examined possible discrepancies between advisers' perceived importance of board functions and how they, personally, would prioritize the board's functions.

Results

A majority (60.5 percent) of those responding (n = 157) reported their schools had a Media Advisory Board. There was a wide range of time frames as to when boards were established. Seventeen percent of schools with boards reported they have been in existence for five years or less. The average (median) age of a board was 25 years. But there was a large amount of variance; almost half of the schools – 48.3 percent – reported their board has been in existence for 20 years or more.

The researchers also analyzed advisory boards based on the type of college media with which the boards were affiliated. Two primary models emerged. In the first, schools used an advisory board for the school newspaper and, in some cases, various other print activities (which could include the yearbook, a general interest magazine, and/or a literary magazine). A majority

of the respondents (48 of the 97 schools, or 52 percent), said they used this approach; 29 of the 48 focused solely on the campus newspaper. The second model focused on a combined board for both broadcast and print activities; 39 schools, or 42 percent, used this approach. Six schools reported using separate boards for individual student media activities. (They are reported separately here, but also could be listed under both print and broadcast.) A final four schools reported a board dealing with just broadcast media.

The heavier focus on print may be due to the respondents being drawn from the membership of CMA, which started out as a publications-only advisers' group.

In RQ1, we asked about the types of schools at which Media Advisory Boards are most likely to exist, and what characteristics of a school help explain the differences. As Table 2 shows, regional differences were significant (χ^2 = 9.56, df = 3, p = .02; Cramer's V = .25). Nearly three

Print media (newspaper alone and/or with yearbook, magazine, literary magazine)	48 (52%)
Both broadcast and print media	39 (42%)
Broadcast media (TV and/or radio)	4 (4%)
Separate board for each medium	6 (2%)
Total	97 (100%)

Note: Print media category includes 29 boards that deal only with newspapers.

quarters (73.2 percent) of Southern schools had a board, while their Western counterparts were more likely than others not to have one (40 percent).

We also found a significant difference associated with the type of school. Only about one of three two-year schools (34.6 percent) reported having a board. Conversely, almost two out of three four-year institutions (65.6 percent) featured advisory boards. The overall statistical model confirmed the differences (χ^2 = 8.74, df = 1, p = .00; Cramer's V = .24).

Enrollment size and legal status of the school did not correlate strongly with the presence of a media board. Public colleges were no more likely to embrace or reject media boards than their private counterparts, and the presence of the board was similarly distributed across small, medium, and large institutions.

RQ2 asked how Media Advisory Boards differed in terms of size, title, location within the university and formality of operation. Sizes of media boards varied considerably from 3 to 43 members, with an average size of 12 members. Sizes of the boards did not vary significantly across some key school characteristics, such as public vs. private, two-year vs. four-year, size, enrollment, and region.

As shown in Table 3, there was, nonetheless, a great variety in the titles of the media or pub-

		No Board (row %)	Board (row %)	Total (row %)
Region				
	West	12 (60.0%)	8 (40%)	20 (100%)
	Midwest	21 (38.2%)	34 (61.8%)	55 (100%)
	Northeast	14 (53.8%)	12 (46.2%)	26 (100%)
	South	15 (26.8%)	41 (73.2%)	56 (100%)
	$\chi 2$=9.56, df=3, p=.02*; Cramer's V=.25, p=.02			
Legal Status				
	Public	42 (40.4%)	62 (59.6%)	104 (100%)
	Private	20 (37.7%)	33 (62.3%)	53 (100%)
	$\chi 2$=.10, df=1, p=.75; Cramer's V=.03, p=.75			
Year				
	Two-year	17 (65.4%)	9 (34.6%)	26 (100%)
	Four-year	45 (34.4%)	86 (65.6%)	131 (100%)
	$\chi 2$=8.74, df=1, p=.00**; Cramer's V=.24, p=.00			
Size				
	Small	22 (43.1%)	29 (56.9%)	51 (100%)
	Medium	22 (40.7%)	32 (59.3%)	54 (100%)
	Large	18 (34.6%)	34 (65.4%)	52 (100%)
	$\chi 2$=.83, df=2, p=.66; Cramer's V=.07, p=.66			
Total		62 (39.5%)	95 (60.5%)	157 (100%)

Notes:
1. Sizes of schools were determined by three ranges of percentiles of enrollment.
    0 < small <33 percentile (4500 students)
    33 < medium < 66 percentile (19000 students)
    66< large < 100 percentile (30000 students)
2. Regions were divided according to the U.S. Census's "Regions and Divisions of the United States" (http://www.census.gov/geo/www/us_regdiv.pdf)
3. *p < .05; **p < .01

39 mentions	Student Media Board; Student Media Advisory Board; Media Board; Student Media Advisory Committee; Student Media Committee; Media Advisory Board; Campus Media Committee; College Media Board; Media Board of Directors; Media Corp. Board of Directors; Media Student Council; Student Media Council; Student Media Board of Directors; Journalism and Mass Communication Media Board
35 mentions	Publication Board; Student Publications Board; Student Publications Committee; Daily Publication Board; Board of Publications; Board of Student Publications; Publications Committee; Publications Committee of the Faculty Student Association; Student Publications Advisory Board Committee
9 mentions	Advisory Board; Board of Advisers; News Advisory Board; Mass Communication Advisory Board; Newspaper Advisory Board; Editorial Advisory Board
3 mentions	Board of Directors
2 mentions	Board of Student Communications

Notes: All titles with two or more entries are listed in descending order of frequency. Any specific mention of a news organization in a title (e.g., "Mirror Advisory Board") has been deleted and the remaining part of the title is listed (Advisory Board).

lication advisory boards. After removing the name of any specific student organization, there were 42 different titles reported. After condensing, most centered on such common terms as "media" (39 mentions), "publication" (35 mentions) and "advisory board" (9 mentions).

In terms of an organizational chart, the boards were located in a wide variety of areas. Some 31.6 percent of boards were located in Student Affairs, 16.8 percent in Academic Affairs, and the others were described as "independent," were located in an academic department, or were in a variety of settings. In terms of their formality of operation, 76 percent reported operating under a set of bylaws. Sixty-eight percent took minutes at meetings.

RQ3 inquired into the composition of Media Advisory Boards and what characteristics of schools helped explain the compositional differences of the board. Figure 1 details the proportions of groups commonly found on advisory boards. Student journalists (20 percent) and faculty (20 percent) were most heavily represented, followed by representatives of the student body (19 percent). In contrast, administrators (11 percent) and student government (6 percent) representatives were much less visible in board composition.

Given the average board has 12 members, a typical board might have two to three members who are student journalists, two additional students, one to two administrators, one to two formal advisers, two (additional) faculty members, one media professional and another, varied member, such as a student government representative. There was no significant difference in board composition across two- and four-year schools or in composition across regions.

The researchers also focused on whether two school characteristics – public vs. private status or size – made any differences in terms of board composition. Two factorial ANOVA analyses (Table 4) confirmed effects of both characteristics. First, advisers ($F = 19.69$, $df = 1/92$, $p = .00$) and student journalists ($F = 4.53$, $df = 1/92$, $p = .04$) were more likely to be found on the boards at private schools than they are at public schools, along with representatives of the student body ($F = 9.11$, $df = 1/92$, $p = .00$).

Second, both student reporters ($F = 3.35$, $df = 1/92$, $p = .04$) and advisers ($F = 25.06$, $df = 1/92$, $p = .00$) were much less likely to be included on boards in larger schools than were they in smaller ones. For example, advisers only accounted for 5.9 percent of board membership in large colleges but more than four times more (24.4 percent) in small colleges. Student journalists in small schools took up an average 25.8 percent of seats on boards, compared to
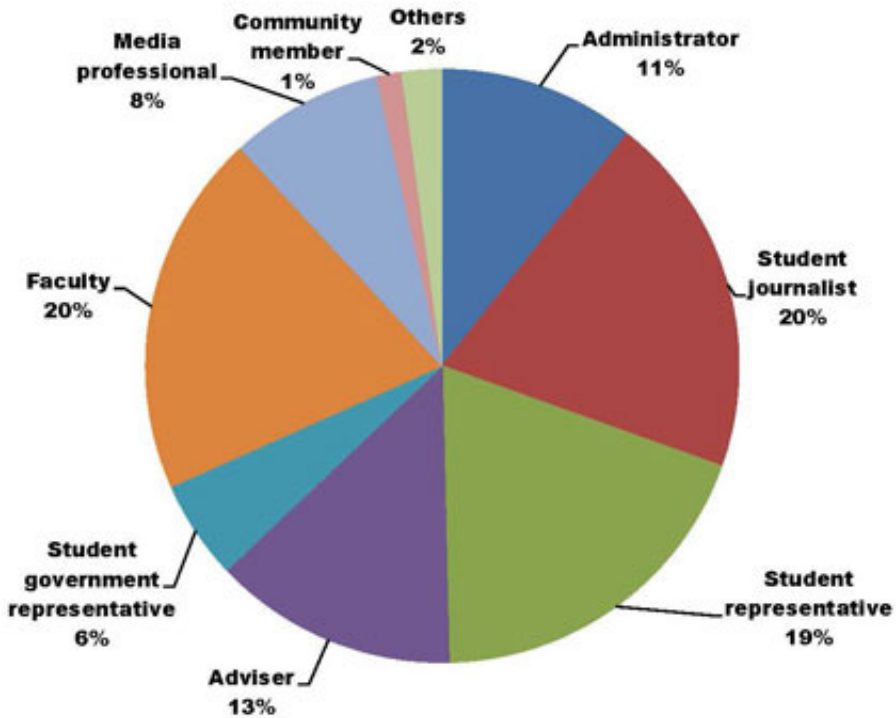
medium-sized (20.35 percent) and large (14.12 percent) schools. Larger schools, however, do show a stronger presence of student body representatives (large, 25.63 percent; medium, 22.36 percent; small, 8.14 percent).

RQ4 investigates the kinds of key functions commonly served by advisory boards (e.g., select student media leaders, serve as a bridge with administrators, offer post-publication critiques) and how those functions are prioritized in the boards' work against advisers' expectations.

The researchers employed 11 items to measure functions of media boards. They asked advisers the operational importance of each function the board carries out. Then advisers were asked, in an idealized world, how important they would consider each function. Answers ranged from a high of 5 (extremely important) to a low of 1 (not important at all).

Two sets of mean scores were tabulated for both operational and adviser-valued importance (see the second and fifth column in Table 5). After rank ordering the scores separately, it was found that "elect EIC/Station Manager or other top positions," "defend student media if content is challenged," and "serve as a neutral sounding board if content is challenged" were the top three functions in terms of both operational and adviser-valued importance. Consistency was also found in some of the lower-ranked functions. For instance, the boards took an insignificant role in "supervising the adviser," "selecting other staff leaders," and "previewing content before release," as advisers desired.

Next, the researchers subtracted operational importance from adviser-valued importance, hoping to find out how advisers' ideals deviated from the real world. A paired t-test revealed several interesting patterns. Advisers desired for the board to take an even more active role in

	Public vs. Private				School Size				
	Public (Mean%)	Private (Mean%)	F (1/92)	p	Small (Mean%)	Medium (Mean%)	Large (Mean%)	F (1/92)	p
Administration	8.73	14.22	3.36	.070	15.19	8.29	8.85	2.39	.097
Student journalist	16.93	25.25	4.53	.036*	25.76a	20.35	14.12b	3.35	.039*
Student representative	23.14	11.55	9.11	.003**	8.14b	22.36a	25.63a	8.97	.000**
Adviser	9.39	20.88	19.69	.000**	24.43a	11.00b	5.90c	25.06	.000**
Student govmnt representative	6.28	3.79	3.112	.081	4.76	4.43	6.82	1.16	.317
Faculty	21.24	16.98	1.98	.163	15.38	20.86	22.57	2.26	.110
Media professionals	10.24	4.76	3.19	.078	4.28	9.52	10.74	1.72	.185
Community members	1.56	0.97	.248	.620	.69	.63	2.6	1.41	.249
Others	2.49	1.60	.35	.556	1.38	2.31	2.77	.32	.730

Note:
1. *p < .05; **p <.01
2. Due to unequal group sample sizes, the Games-Howell post-hoc test was chosen to adjust for homogeneity of variances assumption violation.
3. Superscripts "a" and "b" represent grouping of means generated by the Games-Howell post-hoc test. Within rows, means labeled "a" are significantly higher than those labeled "b", which subsequently are significantly higher than those labeled "c".

"defending student media if content is challenged" (t = -6.96, df = 94, p = .00), and "serving as a neutral sounding board if content is challenged" (t = 5.05, df = 94, p = .00), albeit both functions are already top priorities of the board, as described earlier. Moreover, functions including "serving as a bridge between the student media and administration" (t = -3.66, df = 94, p = .00), "integrating the journalism curriculum" (t = -3.30, df = 94, p = .00), and "providing ideas for media content" (t = -2.67, df = 94, p = .01) need more attention from the board, advisers indicated. Even though "previewing content before release" was the least important function in most boards (Mean = 1.85, SD = 1.01), it could be argued that advisers wanted to see an even lesser role of the board (t = 2.16, df = 94, p = .033) in prepublication. For two additional items – "provide ideas for media content" and "preview content" – the gaps between reality and advisers' ideals may not be significantly wide in a practical sense due to their small effect sizes (Cohen's d = .23 and .12, respectively) near or below .20, as defined by Cohen (1988).

RQ5 dealt with how satisfied advisers were with the performance of the Media Advisory Board. Advisers were asked to agree or disagree with specific statements about the operation of advisory boards. Most statements were cast in a positive frame and asked advisers to judge their own boards against an ideal situation, from a journalism point of view. Answers ranged from a high of 5 (strongly agree) to a low of 1 (strongly disagree).

For the first five indicators, a majority of advisers said they agreed with the positive statements about board performance. For example, they see their board as understanding that some student errors are part of the learning process (77 percent agreed) and that the board is supportive of a watchdog role for the student media (63 percent). A majority said they were satisfied with the advisory board (63 percent) and that it has had a positive impact on the student organization it oversees (62 percent). A narrow majority (51 percent) said the board is effective in its oversight role.

Less than a majority (24 percent) agreed with the statement with the board can supply con-

	Operational Importance			Adviser-Valued Importance			Mean Differences		
	Mean (N=95)	SD	Rank	Mean (N=95)	SD	Rank	t (df=94)	Sig. (2-tailed)	Cohen's d
Defend student media if content is challenged	3.09	1.38	3	3.95	1.25	2	-6.962	0.000**	.65
Serve as a neutral sounding board if content is challenged	3.11	1.40	2	3.67	1.37	3	-5.046	0.000**	.41
Serve as a bridge between the student media and administration	2.94	1.40	4	3.41	1.48	4	-3.659	0.000**	.32
Integrate the journalism curriculum	2.00	1.04	9	2.34	1.23	8	-3.297	0.001**	.30
Provide ideas for media content	2.12	1.13	7	2.40	1.27	6	-2.668	0.009**	.23
Preview content before release	1.85	1.01	11	1.73	1.03	11	2.162	0.033*	.12
Give suggestions to improve workflow and production	2.36	1.25	5	2.57	1.30	5	-1.865	0.065	
Select other staff leaders	1.99	1.18	10	1.91	1.17	10	1.238	0.219	
Select EIC/Station Manager or other top positions	4.22	1.38	1	4.16	1.40	1	1.029	0.306	
Critique content after release	2.08	1.16	8	2.17	1.25	9	0.917	0.362	
Supervise the adviser	2.27	1.33	6	2.37	1.43	7	-0.904	0.368	

Notes:
1. *p < .05; **p <.01.
2. Ranks are based on a descending order of means.
3. The 5-point scale ranges from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (extremely important)

tinuity at down times for the student organization. Only 23 percent agreed that they would recommend changes to the board's operation. Only 5 percent agreed the board would prefer the student organization to be more of a positive public relations tool for the administration.

In a final effort to gauge adviser satisfaction with board performance, advisers were asked how they would "rate the influence of the administration on the board's operation." Only 4 percent said the administration was "very influential," an additional 4 percent said it was "influential" and 31 percent said it was "somewhat influential." The majority, 61 percent, agreed that the administration was "not influential at all." Therefore, despite the many conflicts involving board operation, as reported to SPLC and elsewhere, advisers were generally positive when asked about the performance of their own board.

In answering RQ6, we focused on what characteristics of the school and of the adviser correlate with higher satisfaction of media board performance. We used hierarchical regression to test if perceived influence of administration, school characteristics (size, public-vs.-private, two- vs. four-year, and region), and demographics of the adviser (age, education, years of advising at current school, years of student media advising, years of media experience) explained satisfaction. The model was significant in explaining 27 percent of the variability of satisfaction, $R^2 = .27$, adj. $R^2 = .14$. Perceived influence of administration alone accounted for 15 percent of the variability of satisfaction ($t = -3.87$, $p = .00$) and was the only variable

with significant predictive power (see Table 7), indicating that when advisers perceive lower influence of the administration on the media board, they are more likely to be satisfied with the board's performance.

Discussion

There has been considerable scholarly interest in the issue of campus media censorship (for example, see Butzow, 2008; Lisosky, 2010; LoMonte, 2011a, 2011b; Peltz-Steeler, 2001; Student Press Law Center, 2009; Yam, 2008). But not much inquiry had been done in examining advisory boards – the "mediator" between student media and administration. This study has bridged the gap by offering both a broad view and microscopic view of college Media Advisory Boards across the United States. Several patterns emerged from the data.

First, the researchers observed both similarities and differences in terms of some basic characteristics of advisory boards. Having an established advisory board seems to be a common practice at U.S. colleges and perhaps more common than it was in the past. Looking back at Self's (1994) finding that half of JMC colleges reportedly had advisory boards in the early 1990s, we now have a majority of schools that responded that have a board (60.5 percent). As described by Henderson (2004), there has been a resurgence of interest in advisory boards; 44.8 percent of those in this study's sample were established after Self's study in 1994.

The sizes and titles of the boards showed considerable diversity across the sample. Even though this study found the average board size of 12 members, a number slightly higher than what Click (1993) recommends, the size of each board varied from school to school, covering a spectrum from three members to 43 members (SD = 5.76). The variety of board titles perhaps responds not only to the variety of schools but also to the arrival of online media forms.

Second, advisers had a clear expectation that one of the primary roles of advisory boards should be to serve as a buffer between administration and student media should friction arise, rather than controlling the media in editorial or managerial terms. Advisers in this study reported that most advisory boards did a satisfactory job of serving as a neutral sounding board or even a defender of student media if content is challenged. In fact, the researchers were pleased to see similarity between how advisers rank current board functions and how advisers would rank these board functions in a perfect world.

The finding has largely dismissed the enduring concern, at least for these schools, as raised by Mencher back in 1965, that advisory boards could turn student media into "public relations arm" rather than a "laboratory of life." Only 5 percent of the advisers in this study would describe their advisory boards as public relations arms of the administration. However, the finding does not offer any permanent peace of mind, because the advisers also pointed out room for improvement and suggested that media boards should more aggressively pursue their buffering roles.

Third, board membership was well-balanced overall with some differences across school types. Here we borrow Click's (1993) "lay vs. expert" model to understand a healthy board composition. Click maintained that a balanced board would have a balanced number of both expert members "with training and expertise in journalism, law and business" and lay members "who represent leaders in general and who may be uninformed" about journalism and publishing businesses (p. 18). We understand the balance as a structure to avoid elitism, a possible product of an expert-dominated board, as well as to avoid predominantly layman decision-making, which might lead to the disregard of journalistic practices and conventions.

This study found almost a tie among the three largest groups: student journalists (20 percent), study body representatives (19 percent), and faculty (20 percent). Student representatives speak for the majority of readers, or laymen; student journalists are the largest group of

journalism practitioners, or experts; and faculty can be both laymen and experts, average readers with the perspectives of educators, or experts who give professional advice.

Private and public schools tended to have different preferences in assembling media boards. Private institutions seemed to value expert members more than their public counterparts by including higher numbers of journalists and advisers. Due to less First Amendment protection in private schools (Lisosky, 2010), a heavier presence of experts may help counterbalance a more perceivable influence from the administration. Public schools, where the First Amendment exerts its full power, tend to have a much higher percentage of student representatives. By giving the laymen, namely the students, more voice in the media board, public schools seem to have a distinct way of balancing the power of the press without the administration being directly involved in the editorial business.

Fourth, we were surprised to see a high rate of satisfaction with the Media Advisory Boards' performances. According to the advisers, media boards were good at "understanding that some student errors are part of the learning process," "appreciating the watchdog role that a student media organization can assume," and having "a positive impact" on the student media. As mentioned earlier, the high satisfaction seems to be a result of a low perceived influence of the administration. Again, this finding is inconsistent with potential critics' apocalyptic concerns about suppressive media boards.

Rather, with low administrative influence accompanying more trust among members and better performance, a virtuous cycle seems to be in place. Media boards, however, still need to be more helpful in dealing with quality dips due to graduation and other logistic reasons.

The literature warns many things might go wrong since the board is handling a variety of delicate issues. Surprisingly, this study suggests that potentially controversial board issues such as defending student media, serving as a bridge between student media and administration, trying to mandate pre-publication review and supervising the adviser, most likely do not go wrong, at least in the eyes of the advisers.

This study has several limitations that can circumscribe the generalizability of the results. Rather than all the college media advisers in the United States, the surveyed population was confined to the members of College Media Advisers. The sample was drawn online on a voluntary basis, a method used for many web-based surveys. The evaluative responses came solely from advisers; their visions of how a media board should work may differ significantly from those of other key players.

We hope that this study has provided foundational, benchmark data. Future researchers will benefit when they revisit such issues and study how the college media adapt to increasingly heterogeneous campuses and fast-evolving technologies. Other research methods could be used, including in-depth interviews and focus groups, to probe into the micro-mechanics of the boards. Additional work could be done on the frequency of board meetings, the determination of voting vs. non-voting board members, and how schools wrestle with the legal definition of "publisher."

Acknowledgement

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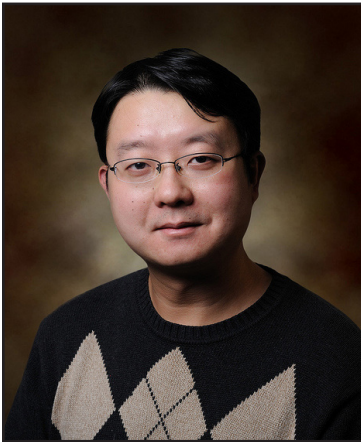
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Adapting to the Changing Media Landscape
The Story of The Blue Banner

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Abstract

This paper chronicles the obstacles encountered by the advisor and staff of a small college news-paper attempting to make the paradigm shift from a traditional weekly college newspaper to a multiplatform system. The traditional college print newspaper runs the risk of becoming antiquated as more young adults seek news from digital and social media platforms (Hubbard 2011; Beaujon 2012; The demographic 2012). Within this case study, the authors discuss the growing need for academic departments to abandon "silos" within mass communication in order to embrace the mul-tiplatform approach to reporting and the strategic use of social networks to attract a college audience. While college students embrace social networks as the primary fountain of knowledge, the adviser and staff question how best to achieve a social identity for their college newspaper.

Introduction

For generations, working on the college newspaper was a training ground for aspiring jour-nalists and editors. The skills learned on campus translated directly to entry-level positions that graduates enthusiastically filled. Cuts in newsroom staff have meant increased opportunities for college interns who often find themselves in the role of teacher for less technology savvy reporters (Thornton 2011). Increasingly newspapers seek interns possessing web and multi-media skills as well as strong writing skills (Wenger 2011). Keeping pace with the dramatic changes experienced in newsrooms across the country presents a challenge for college newspa-pers, particularly college newspapers at small colleges.

The traditional college print newspaper runs the risk of becoming antiquated as more young adults seek news from digital and social media platforms (Hubbard 2011; Beaujon 2012; The demographic 2012). Aspiring journalists need to be content-driven, producing copy for print as well as for social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook (Hubbard 2011). Journalists compete with the everyday person who is both a media producer and consumer (Buckingham, Harvey and Sefton-Green 1999; Jenkins 2006). This paper examines the transformation of The Blue Banner, the student newspaper at the University of North Carolina Asheville, from print to a multimedia format.

Conceptual framework
The Role of the Newspaper

The role of the newspaper in society has always been multifaceted. A newspaper is foremost a conduit between citizens and their government; next it informs a society about itself, pro-vides a necessary means for challenging authority and seeking accountability and serves as a form of entertainment (Rusbridger 2005). Historically, the content and style of print news

have been driven by technology. Technological determinism, the concept that new technology influences economy and culture, has been evidenced from the advent of mass circulation to dominant headlines from the local perspective to computer-assisted reporting (Pavlik 2000, Boczkowski 2004, Franklin 2008). The characteristics of print news have forever changed; the saying "putting the newspaper to bed" has been antiquated since news deadlines became rolling; print news is now a second-line product (Hall 2008). Additionally, newspaper readers are also online newspaper contributors who seek to learn the opinions of other readers on various topics (Hall 2008).

College students are less likely to read newspapers than older people and less likely to watch network news (Diddi and LaRose 2006, Trends 2012). However, students have shown an allegiance to their college newspaper over a free, regional daily newspaper (Collins and Armstrong 2008). Whether on a college campus or within a city, readers possess a stronger relationship with print news for a sense of their community (Mersey 2009).

Adopting new technology

For many seasoned professional journalists, newsroom changes aren't about adapting from print journalism to online journalism, but more so the shift in journalism philosophy that impedes their acceptance of online news strategies often referred to as watered-down journalism (Reinardy 2010; Thornton 2011). Although triggered by technological developments, adoption processes are shaped by organizational structure, work practices and representation of users (Boczkowski 2004). Organizational development theory (Lewin 1947) posits that a series of time-ordered events must typically occur in order to adopt a new process – preparing for change, implementing change and creating acceptance of the change – in order to return to a state of normalcy.

Technology enables communication while embedding social and cultural practices (Jenkins 2006). With Web 2.0, the journalism community witnessed the rise of social media and the continued decline in the social status of print journalism, which seemed incongruent given that online news sites have increasingly been considered an "inferior good" to the "normal good" of print news (Chyi and Lewis 2009, p. 48; Russial 2009). Journalists today are cross-platform content providers (Franklin 2008). Faculty across the nation struggle to fill the gap between academia and the media profession as the profession favors skills courses and academia favor conceptual ones (Dickson and Brandon 2002). Academics are constantly reminded not to teach to the media platform, but to encourage better journalism (Franklin 2008). However, the ability to write for multiple platforms must be coupled with a foundation in basic journalism skills (Pierce and Miller 2007).

The Pew Research Center's biennial survey found 50 percent of Americans follow news on a digital device rather than a newspaper or a radio station (Beaujon 2012; Trends 2012). College graduates are more likely than those with less education to use a smartphone for following news (The demographics 2012). Nearly 25 percent of 19-to-25-year-olds follows news on a social media platform (Digital 2013).

As college-aged adults increasingly embrace social networks as the primary fountain of knowledge, perhaps then college newspapers should progress into this realm (The demographics 2012). Diffusion of innovations theory posits that individuals adapt to technology when the advantages of the new device offset those of the familiar device; the new device becomes increasingly more user friendly and produces real or observable results (Rogers 1995). Therefore, if college students aren't reading a print newspaper now, they most likely never will (Diddi and LaRose 2006).

The Transformation of The Blue Banner

Background

The University of North Carolina Asheville is a small liberal arts school in the mountains of western North Carolina with an approximate enrollment of 3,700 undergraduate students. The adviser for The Blue Banner is also a lecturer within the Department of Mass Communication. The department was formed in the early 1980s and, like many journalism programs, originated from within the Department of Language and Literature.

During the mid 1980s, The Blue Banner converted from a tabloid to a broadsheet format in an effort to counter the prevailing view of tabloids as the supermarket purveyors of sensational journalism.

Figure 1: The Blue Banner's early roots began as a tabloid, and converted to a broadsheet in the mid-1980s.

The new, more "newsy" paper was well received among faculty as advancing the program's devotion to student development and skill building. The campus administration was, and remains, a generous supporter of the publication with student fee money.

Two notable shifts ensued in the new millennium – a new faculty adviser and Web 2.0. The new adviser was adept in newsroom practices and an award-winning newspaper designer and editor, while the previous adviser's roots were steeped in scholarship and the conceptual underpinnings of media.

Web 2.0 facilitated the rise of multimedia journalism that eventually superseded print. Traditionally print journalism had been favored over visuals; visuals were perceived as a technical skill set rather than as a primary mode of communication (Abraham, 2002). Internet-based news sites required news staff possessing technical computer skills in order to incorporate the integral components of digital journalism – immediacy, interactivity, and multimedia (Harper 1996).

Tabloid versus broadsheet

Keeping with the broadsheet format while improving the overall design of The Blue Banner increased readership for a while.

Figure 2: The Blue Banner's last years as a broadsheet, 2007 and 2008.

As experienced by print media nationwide, readership and advertisers continued to dwindle in The Blue Banner as consumers increasingly moved online for their news, as evidenced by increased web traffic and social media followers. In 2009, the staff reverted to the tabloid format in hopes of boosting readership. Using Garcia's "Impact of the Compact" (2005) as an impetus, student editors used the layout and design class to design a prototype tabloid paper. Nearly two decades later, the stigma of a tabloid format no longer remained. Garcia's research shows tabloids — or compacts — are favored by younger readers, tend to be more successful when distributed for free, and have a more appealing and personal content. Garcia's (2005) findings meshed perfectly with The Blue Banner's college audience – smaller and livelier content equated to increased readership for The Blue Banner.

The print run increased from 1,500 papers to 2,000 with fewer returns from the racks piling up in the student publication's office. While the staff recorded no hard data, they noted fewer leftover issues. The problem of reader apathy seemed temporarily under control, but not for long. Readership of college newspapers is seemingly sporadic (Collins and Armstrong 2008).

Web 2.0, social media, and smartphones

During the mid 2000s, The Blue Banner staff implemented a companion website to its print edition with the online version updated after the paper went to press. Requiring computer skills not taught in the department, the site often went neglected – like many newspaper sites – as only a promotional item for the print product.

Figure 3: During the spring 2009 semester, The Blue Banner reverted to the tabloid format.

Meanwhile, Facebook, a social network created by Harvard undergraduate Mark Zucker-berg, began to attract college students across the nation. By 2006, Facebook was mainstream, and by 2009 the smartphone had taken social networking mobile. At the start of the new de-cade, more people visited Facebook than the most popular search engine, Google (Dougherty 2010). Within mass communication classes, the adviser asked students if they read the print edition or the online edition of the student newspaper. The majority of students reported read-ing The Blue Banner online.

The college newspaper, historically a diversion for students to read between classes, seemed doomed by advancing technology and changing reader habits. Even the mass communica-tion students who produced The Blue Banner admitted they didn't read the paper; they only glanced to see if their content made it through the editing process. Rare efforts by enthusiastic students produced the occasional audio interview posted on the newspaper's website, or a so-cial network status post or tweet, but this was just an aside to the weekly goal of putting out a print product. The student newspaper, left unappreciated in the lobby rack, needed a profound transformation.

Transforming The Blue Banner, one more time

In late 2009, the student newspaper joined the Asheville Citizen-Times as a participant in the Western North Carolina Local Information Cooperative (WNC LINC). The Citizen-Times, a Gannett-owned newspaper, received a grant to join the Networked Journalism Proj-ect sponsored by American University's J-Lab Institute and funded by the Knight Foundation. The project intended to partner a select number of community news and information websites

across the region. The goals of this one-year, grant-funded project were to develop a collaborative model to offer news and information to western North Carolina's varied readers, increase web traffic and engagement among readers for network partners, and explore how the collaboration could be expanded and/or sustained over time.

The group also included websites by local people on varied community interests including a historic neighborhood association, local merchants group, a parenting website and a trio of college newspapers from the area. From its website, the Citizen-Times carried links to The Blue Banner and often ran the students' articles with the local news headlines. The partnership resulted in more web traffic and a more diverse audience for The Blue Banner. Unfortunately the web traffic data were lost when the newspaper staff changed website providers.

Figure 4: The Blue Banner website traffic increased in both fall 2010 and spring 2011 as a result of the Western North Carolina Local Information Cooperative.

In exchange, The Blue Banner's website shared an RSS widget that updated headlines from the WNC LINC partners: The Artful Parent, Ask Asheville, The Montford Neighborhood Association, The Tuckasegee Reader and college newspapers from Western Carolina University, Mars Hill College and Appalachian State University. This helped drive readers from one site to another. The Blue Banner staff viewed the project as a success since it raised the profile of the student newspaper from just a newsletter about the university to a truly independent voice of the community, covering varied issues of interest for both college students and Asheville-area residents.

New media, new methods

The partnership with the Western North Carolina Local Information Cooperative revealed the changes taking place in the newspaper industry. Some of these changes seem shocking: Reporters immediately post stories, photos and video directly to the newspaper's website and social media platforms – and consequently to the public – without prior review by a series of

copy editors or other managerial oversight. Rapid response, immediate reader gratification and the word-of-mouth attributes of social media were undeniably necessary for any newspaper's survival. Editing occurred on the fly – fixing errors, updating information, adding photos and video as they become available. Through social media, journalists are maintaining their role in the agenda setting process (McCombs and Shaw 1972) as well as strengthening the concept of uses and gratifications (Katz 1974).

College newspapers must continue to adapt because the success of student reporters in the job market depends upon their ability to adapt a variety of skills for a variety of platforms (Fonteno 2009; Hubbard 2011). In the spring semester of 2011, UNC Asheville's Department of Mass Communication's faculty revamped its curriculum to stress student-learning outcomes
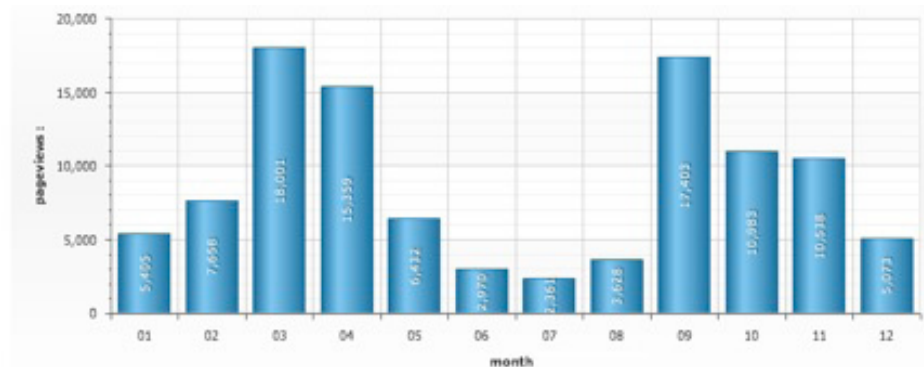

Figure 5: 2010 page views for The Blue Banner online edition trumped the popularity of the printed tabloid.

(SLOs) and updated course offerings. The department's SLOs guide course content and syllabi by focusing on areas of student learning such as critical thinking, engaging in lifelong learning, community outreach and mastery of theoretical, legal and practical underpinnings of mass communication.

In light of these goals, the department undertook a rededication to the core mission of the student newspaper – providing objective, credible and newsworthy information to the student body, the faculty and staff and the wider university community — regardless of traditional formats. Instead of treating social networks as a mere pastime or entertainment, the staff purposefully shared links to the online articles of The Blue Banner on their personal Facebook and Twitter accounts. The social network's wallposts attracted new readers to the college newspaper. Alumni could see links to articles shared by their former professors and classmates. Undergraduates and faculty now read stories online, and Facebook's "like" function opened the door to a larger network of friends. This culminated into a boost in traffic to The Blue Banner's website.

In the year before launching the social media campaign, the website consistently registered a significantly higher number of page views than the number of printed editions of the paper. For the Spring 2010 semester, The Blue Banner website had 52,855 page views, but only 24,000 printed copies (2,000 issues per run x 12 weeks) circulated on campus. For Fall 2010, the page views were 47,625. Even during the summer months, when The Blue Banner was

inactive, the website drew 6,331 hits. Of course, these numbers don't represent individual readers. Editors and others checking on the upload of material account for some of these page views. However, allowing for 100 hits by staff members during the four months of the semester or approximately 12,000 hits, this leaves 40,000 page views by readers now connected to our small liberal arts university.
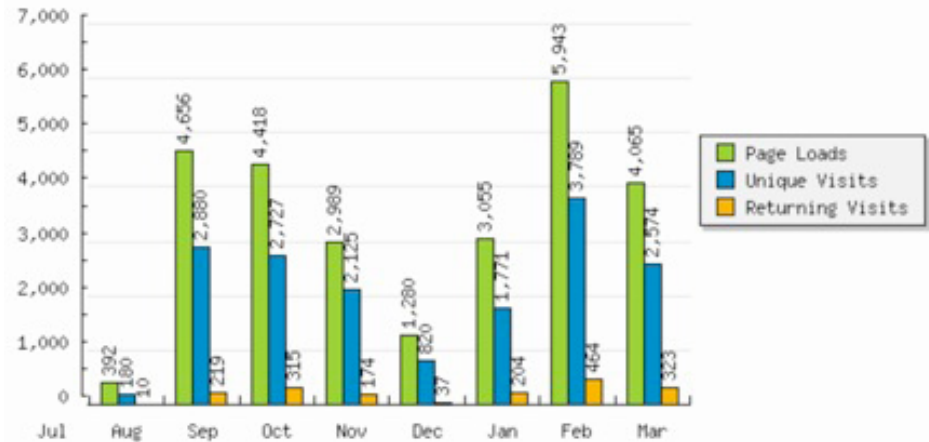

Figure 6: Unique page visits and page loads for The Blue Banner from August 2012 through March 2013.

The Blue Banner changed website providers for the fall of 2012. A new design and new analytics provided a glimpse into online readership trends. From August 2012 to March 2013, the paper's webpage had 16,866 unique visits and 26,798 total page loads. The unique visitors represent more than double the total monthly printed copies of the newspaper. Given that the editors typically report an average of about half of the papers return unread, this is strong evidence that online readers are the paper's biggest audience.

The Blue Banner's Facebook page has 501 "likes" as of March 2013. The numbers from this social media page reveal some demographic details. As expected, the average Facebook visitor is college aged. Followers are mostly female (63.7%), which is not out of line with the university's student body (56% female).

The reach of the Facebook page, how many views directly on the Facebook "wall," peaked in early March 2013 at nearly 3,000 but slumped due largely to fewer status posts by the student editors.

More to come

The Pew Center's The State of the News Media 2013 revealed 39 percent of survey respondents followed news online or from a mobile device. The adoption of tablet computers by adults increased to 31 percent – nearly four times the rate of adoption reported in 2011. Increasingly, tablet and smartphone users access news on these devices daily. In addition to increased use of mobile devices for following the news, almost 25 percent of 18-to-25-year-olds received their news from family and friends through social media platforms. No longer is media consumption and production relegated to the home or office; no longer is a newspaper the primary means for following local news. Finally, the study found that adults who consume local news via tablet or smartphones are disproportionately young, affluent, highly educated

and reside in non-rural communities. These characteristics are similar to the population of a college environment.
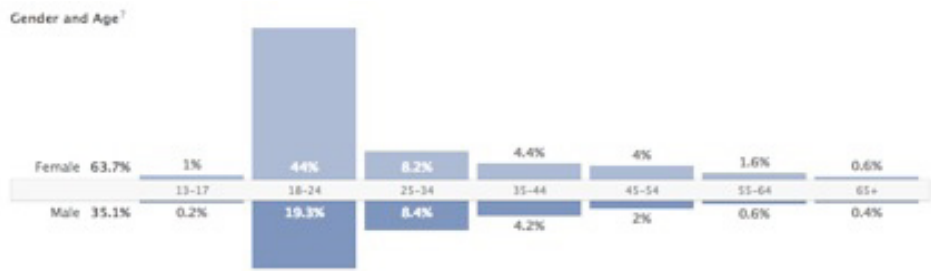

Figure 7: The gender and age of The Blue Banner's online readers closely parallels the demographics of the university's student body.

To address these changes, the staff of The Blue Banner were encouraged to view the printed newspaper as more of a promotional product to drive readers to the website. In addition, the staff needed to refocus their advertising efforts to online. Historically, print advertising revenue had exceeded online advertising revenue, but this was no longer the norm. Advertisers wanted the visibility social media offered. While advertising revenue is not the primary funding model for The Blue Banner, it is still necessary given that university funding remains unchanged since 2001.
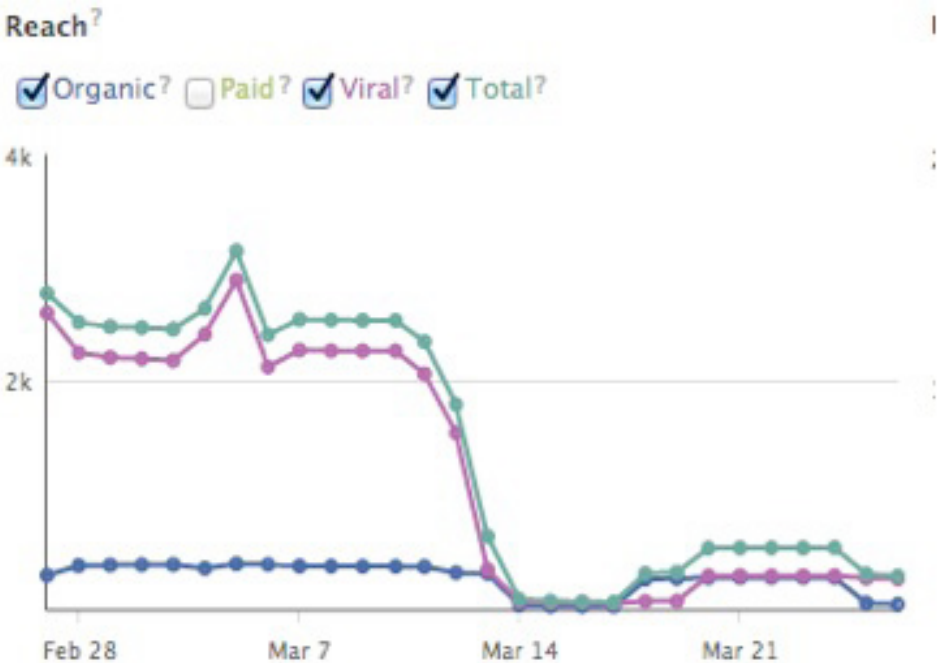

Figure 8: The Blue Banner's reach on Facebook. The organic numbers denote the views directly on the newspaper's page. The viral numbers are the views generated from shares.

For the 2011-2012 academic year, The Blue Banner struggled with technical difficulties – advertising revenue, staff changes – particularly the change in webmaster, a new Internet service provider, and implementation of Quick Response (QR) codes. For a college student QR codes may be the key to connecting with The Blue Banner online. As the 2012-2013 academic year is underway, the newspaper's reach grows online with 627 followers on Twitter and 439 likes on Facebook. Clearly, more redesign is on the horizon.

The Blue Banner has experienced tremendous transformations in a relatively short amount of time. The college tabloid newspaper has become a visual showpiece, providing compelling images, interesting headlines, and attractive layouts to entice a casual passerby to retrieve it from the rack.
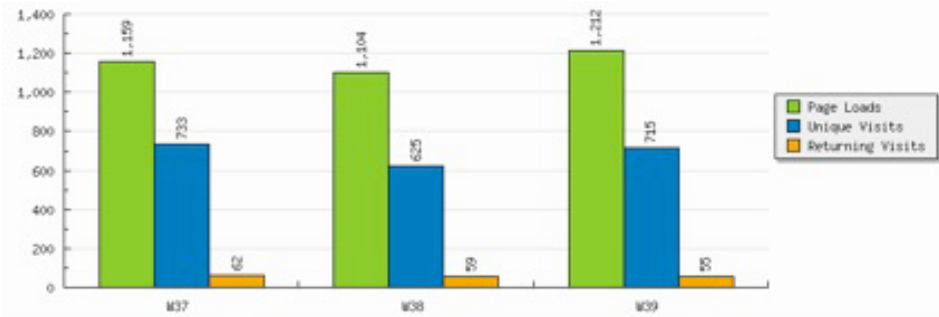

Figure 9: Weekly page loads, unique visits, and return visits for The Blue Banner for September 2012.

Discussion

This paper describes how the advisor and the staff of The Blue Banner continue to adapt to the changing newspaper landscape. Many factors influence readership on a college campus and therefore each advisor and staff will need to tailor how they choose to utilize social media platforms based upon the needs of their readership.

Should print go away?

Inevitably people ask about the future of the newspaper. The answer for mainstream corporate-owned newspapers is much more complex than for a small, liberal arts college newspaper. As McLuhan noted, "Media are often put out before they are thought out" (as cited in Thorburn and Jenkins 2003, p.4). Technological advancements may drive competition, but endangered technology becomes more highly valued (Thorburn and Jenkins 2003). Television didn't eradicate radio; we just don't tune in for fictional dramas or adventure serials anymore. Delivery technologies change, but old media and emerging media still coexist (Jenkins 2006). The printed college newspaper still has its place.

The Silos

Advisers who assist their newspaper staff in adapting to how we access the news by finding ways to coexist with and complement social media may be better prepared for the job market (Fonteno 2009; Hubbard 2011). The 2013 State of the Media report finds adults increasingly shifting to tablet computers and web-enabled smartphones to follow news. The technology changes may be easier to accomplish than the changing of minds. Academia, much like the newspaper industry, stands on tradition and a centuries-old sense of apprenticeship. Therefore, the most substantial barrier to adopting a multiplatform approach to the college newspaper

may be in the classroom (Artwick 2002). Often referred to as "silos" in academia, areas of mass communication tend to be taught independently from one another – print, broadcast, public relations, and advertising. A print journalist today must also understand the broadcast component of a news story in order to produce a short webcast on a tight deadline to accompany the online and print content. Content is king. Pierce and Miller (2007) found computer skills and online writing have risen in level of importance among a survey of U.S. newspaper editors, particularly more so for larger newspapers.

Some other barriers to teaching journalism are inherent within the technology. Traditionally, journalists work in large teams, but digital technology tends to "individualize the process of production" requiring a need for reflection, deliberation and dialogue (Buckingham, Harvey and Sefton-Green 1999, p. 16). Newsrooms function as a group, and a news staff learns through osmosis; an established newsroom influences the behavior of new, younger staff (Breed 1955; Reinardy 2010). Nonetheless, the adoption of cross-platform reporting doesn't appear to have eroded the ability of students to develop specialized skills and critical thinking through conflict resolution.

The path behind us may offer little help in navigating the one ahead in this new world of rapid response where word-of-mouth is paramount. One goal within our Department of Mass Communication is to erode the invisible barriers between the areas of concentration: journalism, public relations, advertising and video production. These concentrations coexist within the profession even though curriculums often divide them into organized tracks. Instead of showing up to write a story for The Blue Banner, student reporters will find themselves capturing and editing stories TV-news style, creating a longer, thematic pieces or simply capturing interesting bits of visual campus life.

Directions for future research

Students continue to favor the group dynamic of the college newsroom. And although they are digital natives, they do not instinctively think of the strategic uses of social media. Video clips, tweets, posts, pins and podcasts of interviews have become part of the basic journalism skill set.

Schudson (2000) posited that the academy should focus more on the consequences of technology transformation of news production. Cary (2009) recognized the need to assess the ramification on the academy as the preference for online communication increases. A review of the literature suggests both are needed when exploring what mediates the student journalists' adoption of the latest technology and the latest platforms, into the college newsroom.

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Peer-to-peer Mentoring Works in the College Newsroom

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Abstract

The positive impacts of workplace mentoring have been observed in the professional world and extensively documented in the literature. However, very little research has addressed the use of mentoring in academic environments, and no published studies address use of peer-to-peer mentoring within college media. This small study shows mentoring is used in a variety of different student media workplace skill areas, and that students find it overwhelmingly successful. Many students prefer peer-to-peer mentoring to instruction from faculty or professional staff. Peer-to-peer mentoring has the potential to reduce the burdens felt by faculty and staff in a time of diminishing resources in higher education. Further research is strongly recommended, in an effort to learn more about how mentoring can support the education of students working in college media.

Use of peer-to-peer mentoring in the college student media workplace

These are difficult times for students, faculty, and staff in higher education. Colleges and universities are straining to hold on to resources and preserve curriculum integrity amid strong student enrollment demand and frequent budget cuts (Hersch & Merrow, 2005; Axtell, 2003). In the communication disciplines, faculty hiring slowed in 2007-2008, even as a record number of communication-related degrees were awarded (Becker, Vlad, Desnoes, & Olin, 2009). Rapid technological change continues to present new demands on the communication subject areas and those who work with students in college media.

Clearly, academic programs have to find ways to do more with less, especially in regard to guiding students in the use of new media technology. One possibility for easing some of the burden would be increased use of student peer-to-peer mentoring – particularly in college student newspapers, broadcast facilities, and student-run advertising and public relations agencies.

Peer-to-peer mentoring allows the opportunity for students, working together, to train each other to master technical skills within student-run media. Creating situations in which students can work together to learn technical skills could free faculty and professional staff to focus more of their time and attention on helping students gain philosophical and concept knowledge.

Mentoring is commonly used in other academic disciplines and in the business workplace, and there is an extensive body of literature including descriptive and experimental studies addressing its impact. Mentoring has been shown to speed the acquisition of knowledge, build interpersonal and organizational trust, and enhance workplace morale.

While anecdotal evidence reflects that use of peer-to-peer mentoring is widespread within college student media, there has been a great neglect of the subject within existing scholarly and academic literature. An extensive literature review found no published studies addressing the general use of mentoring within the communication disciplines, or the specific use of peer-to-peer mentoring within the college media workplace.

This study serves as an initial effort to document use of peer-to-peer mentoring and some of its impacts. The study gathered information directly from students about the different media workplaces where peer-to-peer mentoring was used, the skill sets involved, and the perception of mentoring's effectiveness. The study did not focus on the integration of mentoring with the curriculum, although academic units could certainly use the findings here as a starting point from which to consider a formal application of peer-to-peer mentoring to support workplace and/ or learning goals.

Literature review

In the workplace, people develop strong interpersonal relationships when they engage with each other to clearly communicate about workplace tasks (Wigington, 2008). Organizationally, institutions that want to experience productivity and success must first have "a foundation of effective communication practices" (Gillis, 2007, p. 28) that employees agree upon and share. Use of mentoring in the workplace can help initiate and develop these individual and organizational strengths.

By definition, mentoring is a situation in which a worker "helps a protégé or mentoree become more professionally competent" (Cotugna & Vickery, 1998, p. 1166). Mentoring can support general business or organizational understandings as well as specific job completion skills.

Mentoring can greatly reduce workplace role ambiguity (Gentry & Shanock, 2008; Viator, 2000) and provide valuable information about workplace expectations (McCormack, 2010; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1993). It allows dissemination of information that might otherwise not be shared among co-workers (Guiniven, 2008). Mentoring can lead to development of "personal influence" that has been found to increase worker job satisfaction (White, Vane, & Stafford, 2010, p. 79). Personal influence is a significant force in the workplace, because employees who are "in the know" are more likely to feel respected and less likely to "spread rumors" about the organization (White, Vane, & Stafford, 2010, p. 80, 69).

Mentoring can pair senior and subordinate workers so that the senior worker trains the less-experienced employee (Corney & du Plessis, 2010). Or, in reverse mentoring, a junior employee can provide training for a senior staff member (Pyle, 2005). Workers who are peers – meaning they are on the same level in the hierarchy – can also engage in mentoring. Peer-to-peer mentoring relationships tend to be less threatening because workers can get feedback on their job performance from others who do not have influence over career progress (Peroune, 2007). Kepcher argued that the most valuable benefit of any kind of mentorship is the partnership with a co-worker who will provide accountability and perspective on tasks to be completed. "This is a favor even the brightest of us can't do for ourselves," she said (2011, para. 4).

The use of mentoring in the collegiate environment has received limited attention from researchers. Past studies have often focused on mentoring as a component of teacher training (Lai, 2010; McCann & Johannessen, 2009; Leh, 2005), or mentorship in freshman "first year experience" courses (Hall & Jaugietis, 2011; Colvin & Ashman, 2010). Other research has addressed theoretical concepts that relate to motivational influences on mentorship (Jarvela, 2011) or ethical guidelines for establishment of mentorship programs (Rhodes, Liang, &Spen-

cer, 2009).

Deutsch and Spencer (2009) reviewed literature about youth mentoring and acknowledged there have been "multiple calls" for research on mentoring in higher education. They urged for scholars to document "the conditions under which mentoring is likely to be helpful, and not harmful" (2009, p. 65-66).

Peer-to-peer mentoring would seen to be an ideal strategy to use with workers from the millennial generation, the demographic category representing people who came of age around the year 2000. This generational group makes up a large proportion of today's college students and presents a unique set of challenges (Evans, Schmalz, Gainer, & Snider, 2010; Epstein & Howes, 2006). Sometimes, older employers and educators have unfairly characterized this generation as lazy, ignorant, or lacking in communication skills (Teicher, 2010). It could very well be that students of this generational group just need a different structure in which to learn new tasks. Peer-to-peer mentoring within the college media environment might offer such a structure.

The present study was undertaken in order that we might develop some initial conclusions that would be immediately valuable to faculty and professional staff members who teach students in the college media workplace. It is also hoped that the research will might begin the process of inquiry and discussion in this subject area that is timely and relevant in our field.

Research questions

Three research questions were posed to guide this inquiry. Because there has been no previous investigation of peer-to-peer mentoring among students in the college media workplace, the questions are modest in scope.

RQ1: To what extent are students who work in college student media engaged in peer-to-peer mentoring?

RQ2: How are peer-to-peer mentoring relationships structured within the college student media workplace, and how are results of mentoring relationships evaluated?

RQ3: To what extent do student workers perceive benefit from peer-to-peer mentoring in terms of acquisition of knowledge, job skills, and workplace norms?

Methodology

This research was designed to gather data about peer-to-peer mentoring from college students who would have directly experienced such mentoring or witnessed it used with others in the college-media workplace. The most efficient way to gather this data was to contact students via e-mail and present an online survey instrument.

Questions for the instrument were modeled after those used in other surveys of mentoring practices (Avery, Tonidandel, & Phillips, 2008; Viator, 2001; Cotugna & Vickery, 1998). The researcher's university human subjects committee approved the instrument and administration procedures.

To assemble a population for sample, the researcher accessed the College Media Advisors 'List of Media Operations' online directory (http://www.collegemedia.org/view/college_list). Each of the linked CMA member websites was viewed for the purpose of gathering e-mail addresses of students working in college media. E-mail addresses collected included the media entity's general e-mail box address, the e-mail address for the highest-ranking student staff member (e.g. Editor in Chief), and every other student staff member e-mail address that could be located in a staff directory or 'about us' page.

In total, 1,334 e-mail addresses were collected from 242 college student media websites. On April 7, 2011, a survey invitation was sent to each e-mail address. The e-mail contained a hy-

perlink to be used to access the approved survey instrument. On April 19, a similar follow-up reminder was sent. After each e-mailing, approximately 50 e-mails were returned as undeliverable. A total of 144 respondents accessed the online survey. The instrument contained initial filtering questions to exclude respondents who indicated that they were not presently working in a college media workplace. As a result of the initial filtering, 24 respondents were excluded, leaving a sample population of 120 respondents. This reflects a response rate of 9%.

Results

Most respondents identified as female (68%). More than two-thirds of respondents identified as undergraduate juniors or seniors (76%). Respondents were evenly divided in terms of their college-media workplace experience. Half of all respondents reported two or more years of experience in college student media work (50%), and an identical proportion of respondents reported less than two years of experience.

A majority of respondents described their workplace as a student newspaper or magazine (77%). Smaller numbers of respondents reported working in a campus radio station (14%), television station (4%), or other media-related entity (4%).

RQ1: To what extent are students who work in college student media engaged in peer-to-peer mentoring?

Respondents were presented with a definition of peer-to-peer mentoring. Among all respondents, about two-thirds were familiar with the concept (60%) but more than half reported no personal involvement in it (52%).

Then, respondents were asked if peer-to-peer mentoring was used in their workplace. Most respondents answered that they "did not know" (44%). A slightly smaller number answered in the affirmative (41%). Fourteen percent indicated that peer-to-peer mentoring was not used in their college media workplace.

Because most respondents indicated that peer-to-peer mentoring was either not used in their media workplace – or if it was, they had no knowledge of it – a much smaller number of respondents were allowed to proceed to additional questions contained in the instrument. In total, 48 respondents who indicated that peer-to-peer mentoring was used in their workplace were then asked how mentoring techniques were used.

The respondents were presented with ten skill sets commonly included in workplace mentoring programs. Respondents were asked to identify the skill sets targeted by peer-to-peer mentoring in their media workplace. Results are shown in Figure 1. Respondents were asked to characterize success in each area. In total, 46% of respondents rated the impact of mentoring in the ten areas as "successful or very successful."

RQ2: How are peer-to-peer mentoring relationships structured within the college student media workplace, and how are results of mentoring relationships evaluated?

Among respondents who indicated peer-to-peer mentoring was used in their media workplace, most noted that mentoring was applied in an "informal and unstructured" way (51%), as opposed to a "structured, organized system of training" (36 %), or a system in which faculty assess and / or match students needing guidance (12 %).

The majority of respondents (74 %) indicated that there was no measurement program to document the success of peer-to-peer mentoring, or if there was a measurement program they were not familiar with it. Twenty three percent indicated a quantitative or qualitative measurement program was in effect.

Respondents were asked who is responsible for assessing the results of peer-to-peer mentoring. Almost half (48%) indicated the responsibility lies with a senior member of the student

staff. A lesser number of respondents (36%) indicated there appears to be no assessment plan in place. Twenty one percent indicated identified a faculty or professional staff member as responsible. The remaining respondents (18%) said that individual workers are responsible for assessing their own success.

RQ3: To what extent do student workers perceive benefit from peer-to-peer mentoring in

Figure 1

Workplace skill sets addressed by peer-to-peer mentoring

(n = 33 respondents)

	Percentage of respondents who observed peer-to-peer mentoring in this skill set
Development of writing, editing, reporting and/ or interview skills.	84
General workplace expectations and policies.	66
Development of website design of management skills.	54
Training with computer software (e.g., word processing or spreadsheets).	48
Training with broadcast technology (e.g., cameras, microphones, lighting).	42
Working with clients or advertisers.	36
Training with computer hardware (e.g., computers printers, or file servers)	30
Training with broadcast editing.	27
Publication or distribution (e.g., newspaper printing or delivery)	21
Event planning	15

terms of acquisition of knowledge, job skills, and workplace norms?

Students overwhelmingly reported positive experiences as a result of peer-to-peer mentoring. In fact, there was strong indication that in some respects students may prefer it to traditional instructional methods. Among those who had participated in peer-to-peer mentoring,

48% indicated they would rather learn new skills from a peer as opposed to learning from a faculty or professional staff member. Forty-two percent claimed their student peer mentor was "more helpful than a faculty or professional staff member would have been."

Among respondents who had participated in peer-to-peer mentoring, 90% said they would recommend it to other students working in college media. Respondents recognized both personal and professional benefits from mentoring. Figure 2 identifies respondents' level of agree-

Figure 2

Respondents' agreement with statements about benefits of peer-to-peer mentoring

(n = 33 respondents)

	Agree or strongly agree
Peer-to-peer mentoring made me more productive in my job.	90
Peer-to-peer mentoring was a valuable use of my time.	87
Peer-to-peer mentoring allowed me to make new friends.	81
Peer-to-peer mentoring improved my understanding of the college media workplace.	81
Peer-to-peer mentoring allowed me to make new friends.	80
Peer-to-peer mentoring gave me important workplace knowledge I will need after graduation.	78
Peer-to-peer mentoring allowed me to learn things I might not have learned any other way.	75
In my organization, people who have used peer-to-peer mentoring are more productive.	72
My peer-to-peer mentoring experience met or exceeded my expectations for professional growth.	71
Peer-to-peer mentoring doesn't just work for people with lots of friends.	69
I feel less intimidated about new ideas because of my peer-to-peer mentoring experience.	60

Negative polarity questions from original instrument reversed here for ease of comparison and review.

ment to a series of statements focusing on specific benefits of the mentoring relationship.

At the end of the instrument, a set of open-ended questions allowed respondents to offer their opinion about successful use of peer-to-peer mentoring. More than half the respondents offered comments. The comments are insightful and echo the conclusions of scholars who have studied the impact of mentoring.

Several students noted the importance of being personally motivated to learn:

• "I think that it is important that the mentee wants to learn. There is definitely a certain type of motivated personalities at our student newspaper because they are the people who seek help when they need it."

• "People want to see you're inspired to work otherwise they are less likely to take the time to help you."

• "I highly recommend it; our student newspaper is entirely student-run, and I think there is a lot of pride inherent in figuring out how to do something with your peers instead of being told how to do it by a faculty member. It also allows for greater creativity since each new generation is learning different things and learning differently–there's a higher turnover of ideas."

Others noted the importance of interpersonal skills in a mentoring relationship:

• "Be willing to share your time with the peer you are mentoring; take a step back to see their perspective as they learn."

• "I believe there has to be some amount of give-and-take from both sides. The mentor must also be helpful and educated themselves on the skills they are trying to teach."

Several respondents' recommendations dealt with the strategic aspects of a mentoring relationship:

• "Offer multiple trainings and make them submit a reflection of their training experience, including how the training applies to the current job and possibly in their future outside of Student Media."

• "Have a structured peer-to-peer mentoring program in the future with requirements for the younger person to have to complete by the end of it. You need to provide a structure so that everybody gets something out of the program."

• "Follow-up is key; if you establish a relationship with a younger staff member and let it fall off after they become better acquainted to Student Media, they tend to start slipping in their learning experience."

Limitations

Despite the researcher's best efforts to secure respondent participation, the study is limited by its small sample size. It is unwise to make many broad, sweeping conclusions about the totality of the college media workplace, based on the small number of students who participated in this study. However, given that no published studies could be found that in any way address the use of peer-to-peer mentoring within the college media workplace, this research has merit as a 'first step' toward the development of such knowledge.

College Media Advisers is the preeminent professional organization for faculty and professional staff members involved with college media. The CMA's directory was the ideal place to identify students who would most likely have involvement with mentoring, and participate in a survey about it. Although a diligent effort was made to identify student workers, several methodological challenges immediately became evident. Some college media websites did not list any e-mail addresses. Others used a web-based form as the only contact mode. Others directed visitors to a blog. One could easily get the impression that some CMA member media

entities wish to avoid interaction with those who visit their websites.

It is difficult to determine a "best" time to extend a survey to college students. It was felt that a survey late in the academic year would be most reasonable, in that it would allow students who were new to the college media environment time to reflect on their mentoring experience during the year. A survey administration in April was chosen so that students could get the invitation late in the academic year, after spring break and before final exams. The percentage of survey invitations returned undeliverable (4%) did not seem excessive. However, the overall response rate was lower than the researcher has experienced previously with online surveys involving college students.

The researcher regrets that a software problem resulted in loss of some data. Respondents were asked to rate the success of peer-to-peer mentoring in each of the ten work task areas. A data collection error resulted in an inability determine how many respondents ranked "successful or very successful" in each of the individual task areas – although the average ranking of success in all areas was recorded as noted in RQ1 results.

Discussion

The results of this study show two-thirds of respondents are familiar with the concept of peer-to-peer mentoring, but only 41% of respondents knew for sure that peer-to-peer mentoring was used in their student media workplace.

Among those respondents who had peer-to-peer mentoring experience, most of that experience seems to have come in an informal and unstructured way, with no system for measuring its outcomes and specific benefits. This is contrary to experts' recommendations. Success of any mentoring program is dependent on a sound organizational structure with defined outcome expectations (Hall, & Jaugietis, 2011; Colvin & Ashman, 2010; Deutsch & Spencer, 2009). Establishing a mentorship program without adequate preparation and support structures can result in discouragement or even resentment among participants (McCann & Johannessen, 2009). An unstructured mentoring program with no specific outcome expectations results in a situation in which no one is held accountable for mentoring's success or failure. In other words, in the college media environment, a poorly structured mentoring program could bring more harm than good.

Still, among survey respondents who have participated in peer-to-peer mentoring, 90% would recommend mentoring to their fellow students – and 48% said they preferred peer-to-peer mentoring to instruction from a faculty or professional staff member. This, together with the responses to the survey's open-ended questions, shows students perceive a variety of individual and organizational benefits when asked to learn new tasks alongside their peers.

Conclusion

Many college media programs struggle with the demands of new media education and convergence (Sarachan, 2011; Cahill, 2009; Barry, 2005). It is not surprising that communication faculty surveyed in 2006 reported increasing frustration over too many workplace demands and not enough time to deal with everything (Swanson, 2006).

College faculty and staff need to find more efficient instructional methods. It could be that peer-to-peer mentoring would provide an efficient means of training students. The results of this small study suggest peer-to-peer mentoring offers a method that students readily respond to.

Despite the stated limitations, it is hoped that the findings of this study might motivate educators to consider increased, more strategic use of peer-to-peer mentoring within the college

media workplace. Likewise, it is hoped this study might motivate scholars to conduct further research, build on these findings, and develop a more comprehensive understanding of all the ways peer-to-peer mentoring contributes to teaching and learning within the college student media workplace.

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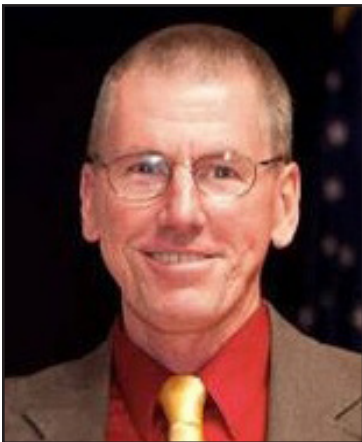
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Caught in the Balance: Information Access in an Era of Privatized Public Higher Education

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Introduction

Public information laws at the federal and state level enshrine a citizen's right to petition public agencies for access to records and meetings related to the business of governance. Most such laws make no explicit mention, however, of private entities that do public work either instead of or in addition to what public agencies provide. As a result of vague or insufficient laws and ambiguous court decisions, information that might once have been accessible could potentially be withheld from the public because it has moved into the private domain. The tension between privatization and public access today is intensifying as public agencies increasingly contract out services, accept corporate sponsorship, create quasi-public entities or otherwise transact with private organizations and individuals. Nowhere is this more evident than at public colleges and universities, which are turning to privatization as state revenue, fiscal prioritizing and even the philosophical underpinnings of public education shift around them. In every state, student media journalists and advisers at public colleges should study relevant legislation and case law surrounding this issue, review contracts and communications with private entities and, when warranted, push for access when schools close the door on information that might once have been obtained with a simple request. This article is meant to provide a beginning for that process.

The Path to Transparency

Transparency is one of the ideological roots of democracy in the United States of America. In this country citizens are given the right to scrutinize the records of public agencies – to review written guidelines, examine finances, trace communications – as a means of keeping such agencies accountable and preserving public trust. Thomas Jefferson made this intent clear in 1803: "We might hope to see the finances of the Union as clear and intelligible as a merchant's books, so that every member of Congress, and every man of any mind in the Union should be able to comprehend them, to investigate abuses, and consequently to control them" (Randolph 1829, 489).

President Lyndon Johnson echoed that sentiment when he signed the federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) into law on July 4, 1966, stating that "a democracy works best when the people have all the information that the security of the Nation permits" (Johnson 1966). To that end, transparency has been codified in the form of public access or "sunshine" laws

not only at the federal level but in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and some territories. The Freedom of Information Act and corresponding laws in each state, most of which were drafted in the post-Watergate 1970s (Cleveland 1987, 24), protect a citizen's right to petition for documents related to the operations of public governance, allowing for certain exemptions when privacy or security are at risk. (Sunshine laws also include Open Meetings acts, but this research focuses on records access.) States have various names for such laws, including the Freedom of Information Act in Michigan, the Public Records Act in California and the Access to Public Records Act in Indiana, and can have vastly different stipulations within those laws (Hearn 2004, iii). Federal and local government agencies are subject to such laws, but so are institutions of public education, from K-12 school boards up to state universities. Most state legislatures have refined their laws via amendments over the years, proving the legislation to be fluid and open to updates when deemed necessary (Hearn 2004, iii).

The statutory definition of a public agency differs from state to state, but most state laws do not explicitly grant access to information that is in the hands of private entities. Public agencies or bodies are generally defined in governmental terms, making it unlikely that private firms performing government services would be included (Bunker 1998, 465; Frankel 2009, 1494; Gupta 2007, 2). For example, Section 552(f)(1) of the federal FOIA law defines an agency as "any executive department, military department, Government corporation, Government controlled corporation, or other establishment in the executive branch of the Government (including the Executive Office of the President), or any independent regulatory agency." The logic behind such a definition was self-evident when public and private institutions were more clearly delineated, when the balance between privacy and disclosure was easier to weigh. Agencies that are funded by taxpayer money in order to benefit or facilitate a community should be accessible and accountable to those taxpayers so that they can make informed decisions about their representatives. Private companies that must stay competitive in a capitalist system and serve a fundamental goal of generating revenue have a right to protect trade secrets, finances and other proprietary information. It is the blurring of the distinction, the breakdown of the delineation, that shadows public access today.

The Privatization Trend

In its broadest sense, privatization is defined as "the transfer of assets or services from the tax-supported and politicized public sector to the entrepreneurial initiative and competitive markets of the private sector" (Reed 2003, author's emphasis). Privatization gained new momentum during the recent economic downturn, but it first became popular in the 1970s and '80s, when bureaucracies stifled by tax burdens, debts and deficits began to look for new modes of survival and a Reagan-era ethos of self-reliance took hold (Reed 2003; Savas 2005). Municipal leaders adopted competitive bidding, allowing private companies to compete for public services, and over time grew comfortable ceding larger and larger swaths of work to outside providers. The answer, many mayors came to feel, was not in bigger checks from federal government or higher taxes, but in "private enterprise, private capital, neighborhood empowerment, and a market-based economy" (Savas 2005, 3). Since then, most counties, cities, school districts and even some states have privatized assets or services in one way or another, from wastewater treatment to street lighting to tree-trimming to snow removal to parking meters to jails. And privatization can mean more than contracting out. Public-private partnerships such as economic development corporations and university foundations have also blurred the boundaries between the two domains. Such entities are arguably more beholden to access laws than contractors because they have characteristics of public agencies, and in fact are explicitly

covered in a few states, but the laws are still murky in most states. Some statutes include but only vaguely define quasi-public agencies, while others don't acknowledge them at all (Gupta 2007, 6).

Much has been written on the perks and pitfalls of privatization. The process, at least as far as its proponents are concerned, can transform the bureaucratic and financial morass of government monopolies into a competitive marketplace that fosters increased efficiency, faster delivery of services, higher quality, less potential for corruption and more choices (Savas 2005). Cash-strapped governments unburden themselves of employee payrolls and other expenses associated with any given service, while constituents are assured that the service will likely improve because the competitive process incentivizes providers to remain in good standing. Opponents contend that privatization actually ends up costing more taxpayer money in the end because by relinquishing control, governments give up the oversight required to keep service providers accountable, responsive and efficient (Rahamatulla 2009). As law professor Shirley Mays wrote in 1995, "The private corporation cannot be entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining and nurturing the rights of the individual… When decision-making, planning and programming that were under the auspices of the public government are transferred to the control of a private corporation, the city residents lose whatever recourse they previously possessed to provide redress for their grievances" (68).

Whether it is a panacea or plague for a government's bottom line, privatization is unquestionably part of public governance today, yet sunshine laws overwhelmingly have not acknowledged or accounted for the changed model. Even without a consideration of privatization, public access laws raise what educator and author Harlan Cleveland once called a "trilemma" of three overriding and somewhat conflicting principles: the public's right to know, the individual's right of privacy and the public institution's mandate to serve the public interest (23). Given a private entity's legitimate right to secrecy, the question of how to maintain the right of access is complex and potentially controversial, yet it is one in crucial need of addressing because information in the public interest hangs in the balance. As lawyer and journalist Harry Hammitt notes: "Federal and state laws that provide a right of access to government information are most effective when they encompass the largest universe of information. As governments continue an already significant drive towards moving traditional governmental functions to private entities, the universe of information shrinks accordingly" (9). A few authors have delved into this particular challenge as the privatizing trend continues, including journalist Rani Gupta, who compiled a 2007 special report for the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press titled "Privatization vs. the Public's Right to Know"; and attorney Craig Feiser, who has examined the interplay of privatization and sunshine laws both statutory and judicial, and both state and federal, for various law journals.

But nowhere has the tension between public access and private enterprise been more intense than at public schools and universities (Hammitt 2006, 6), and it requires particular vigilance. These institutions already face challenges in remaining transparent while effectively conducting business and preserving their mission, most notably when it comes to governing board functions, such as deliberations over controversial topics, research agreements, and presidential search and selection, especially concerning whether and when to identify applicants (Hearn 2004). Little has been written about the interplay of sunshine laws and public higher education regardless of the privatization trend (Hearn 2004, 1). The continuing strength of that trend and a steady decline in public funding suggest that the need to preserve the spirit of sunshine laws will only grow with time.

A Public Mission Redefined

The state-owned college is becoming a relic. Public higher education has become a prime

victim of state budget shortfalls, which totaled more than $530 billion from 2009 to 2012, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. States like California and Michigan, struggling to close projected deficits, have winnowed their appropriations for certain public services, and for higher education in particular (Heller 2006, 29). According to the Center for the Study of Education Policy, state funding for higher education nationwide declined by 7.6 percent from fiscal 2010-11 to 2011-12.

But the decline in relative state support is not as ephemeral as a financial downturn, and it likely won't reverse course if and when the economy fully recovers. About 7.3 percent of state expenditures went toward higher education in 1977; by 2000 that portion was down to 5.3 percent. If the 1977 share had been maintained, public colleges would have received $21 billion more in 2000 (Kane 2003, 3). This is certainly due in part to budget constraints, but is also part of a more lasting shift in fiscal priorities. State spending on higher education declined 14 percent between 1986 and 1996, while the portion for Medicaid nearly doubled and the portion for corrections rose more than 25 percent (Yudof 2002). With the cost of medical and pension priorities, corrections, transportation and other infrastructure needs pressing in, states "are unlikely to revive their former role as the primary funding agent for public higher education" (Douglass 2007, 251).

The shift has not only been in fiscal prioritizing, but also in the philosophical apportioning of responsibility for educating the nation's public college students. The Morrill Act, signed by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862, granted federal land to states as an endowment for public colleges that would focus on technical training and public service, and it led to the establishment of many of today's largest state research universities (Conley 2006, 154). In the years before and certainly after these land-grant universities came to be, public universities were considered part of a broad social mandate to open and equalize higher education in a way that private schools had not. The idea of federal incentives and state responsibility worked for more than a century in establishing a national system of public higher education (St. John 2006, 249). As the University of Wisconsin president put it in a 1910 commencement address, the "state owns the university; and every citizen feels himself to be a stockholder in that ownership" (Douglass 2007, 5).

During the Reagan era in particular, when public funding was reduced for everything except national defense, this philosophy shifted toward a belief that public universities benefit not the state or society at large, but instead the individual who receives the education (Berdahl 2000). As such, the financial burden or "ownership" has moved away from state and local municipalities and toward students. In 1980, fees and tuition accounted for about 15 percent of public university operating costs; by 2000 they grew to about 28 percent (Douglass 2007, 274). In 1994, tuition income overtook state appropriations as the largest revenue source for higher education for the first time since a mid-century mass expansion of public colleges and universities (Conley 2006, 158). As Donald Heller writes, "The era of universally low tuition in the public sector, an era that dominated most of the nation's history, is over and will not return" (29). Graham Spanier, president of Pennsylvania State University, said in 2005 that the end of this era and the onset of skyrocketing tuition was part of "public higher education's slow slide toward privatization" (Dillon 2005). At the time, only 12 percent of his college's budget came from state funds (Businessweek 2004).

Recent efforts to raise tuition and increase admission of out-of-state students, so-called "cash cows" who pay higher tuition (Denvir 2011), have been met with media scrutiny and raucous student protests nationwide. Losing out on public appropriations, and unable to shift the burden entirely to students, public colleges are increasingly turning to private models and industry for salvation. This includes actively pursuing extramural support for research, courting private donors by offering naming rights and other perks, contracting out services such as bookstore

operations and food vending, forming start-up companies and ventures related to university research discoveries, and seeking more freedom from government authority (Douglass 2007, 252).

Research agreements between public colleges and private corporations have drawn particular attention because they spark fears of diminished intellectual freedom and commodification of the academic pursuit. Several books have articulated this anxiety, including The University in Ruins (1996) by Bill Readings, University Inc.: The Corporate Corruption of Higher Education (2005) by Jennifer Washburn, and The Lost Soul of Higher Education: Corporatization, the Assault on Academic Freedom, and the End of the American University (2010) by Ellen Schrecker.

Research agreements highlight what is potentially at stake in the sometimes conflicting principles of public accountability and private enterprise, but these days it is not uncommon to find private companies behind any number of services on a public college campus. Some schools have taken especially bold steps toward a privatized model as they clutch at new revenue sources. In July 2004, the three-campus University of Colorado system won "enterprise status," meaning it is no longer governed by the same rules as state agencies (Businessweek 2004; Kaplan 2009, 113). In Texas, Gov. Rick Perry filled the board of regents at all six state college systems with those who shared his vision that "colleges (should be run) like businesses whose customers are students" (Denvir 2011). UCLA's Anderson School of Management decided to go completely private and charge students private-school level tuition (Denvir 2011).

The level of privatization at public educational institutions is important because it can directly affect information access and disclosure. In Pennsylvania, four universities including Penn State are considered "state-related" rather than state-owned, a legal status allowing them independent control while still bestowing public funding, which totaled $600 million in 2008. Because of their status, these four universities are primarily exempt from the same public access laws to which the state's community colleges and 14 State System of Higher Education universities are explicitly beholden (Schackner 2008).

What the Laws and Courts Say

As public colleges and universities continue to embrace the privatization trend, particular attention must be paid to how information access is affected on those campuses. In their respective publications, Feiser and Gupta examine the public information statutes and judicial interpretations that have shaped the level of access citizens are granted in situations of privatization. Their work is not aimed toward higher education but is instructive for student journalists, media advisers and journalism professors, as examining relevant state legislation and case law is a necessary foundation for both assessing a state's codified commitment to transparency in the face of privatization, and a public college's adherence to the spirit and letter of those standards.

Sunshine laws tend to govern the level of access public colleges and universities provide (Katz 2012). In most states, such laws are not on the side of those seeking information about privatized services or research because they expressly apply only to public agencies (Frankel 2009, 1494). That said, state legislatures continually debate the issue of government openness and transparency, and a small few have strengthened and broadened their laws as privatization grows. Florida has one of the strongest public access statutes, amended in 1975 to apply to a "public or private agency, person, partnership, corporation, or business entity acting on behalf of any public agency" (119.011(2)). In 1999, Georgia's Open Records Act was amended to state that records maintained by a private entity on behalf of a public agency "shall be subject to disclosure to the same extent that such records would be subject to disclosure if received or

maintained by such agency" (50-18-70(a)). Connecticut expanded its law in 2001 to include anyone deemed a "functional equivalent to a public agency" (Public Act 01-169.1(1)(B)), and Rhode Island passed a law in 2006 to ensure that information access would not be hindered by privatization of services.

When it comes to public colleges and universities in particular, California took a significant legislative step toward transparency in September 2011, when Gov. Jerry Brown signed a bill that extended the state's Public Records Act to the auxiliaries and foundations that conduct fundraising for the state's two public college systems and community colleges (Lin 2011). A state senator drafted the bill after Cal State Stanislaus' foundation refused to release a speaking contract with former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin (Lin 2011). The college systems opposed the bill until the senator amended it to protect the identity of donors in all cases except when the donor receives something from the university valued at over $2,500 or when the donor receives a no-bid contract within five years of the donation.

These are rare examples of explicit statutory affirmation of information access in instances of privatization. In reality, the courts have had to do the heavy lifting by applying judicial inter-pretation when disputes are brought before them. Relevant rulings have occurred in most but not all states, and those courts have decided the issue in "myriad and often confusing ways" (Gupta 2007, 10), resulting in a "hodgepodge of case law" (Edmonson 2011, 327). Even Feiser, the attorney who set about classifying each state's judicial approach to access and priva-tization for a law review article published in 2000, said it was often difficult to determine what the courts meant by their rulings (Gupta 2007, 10). At the time of his work, courts in 34 states had ruled on such cases. Those that granted access did so by interpreting their respective state statutes' definitions of "agency" and/or "agency records" to include more than just traditional government entities and/or explicitly public records (Feiser 2000, 826). He classified courts in 22 states as "flexible" in their approach to access and courts in 12 as "restrictive." Further, he designated "sub-approaches" within the two categories. Such sub-approaches among the flexible states include "totality of factors," "public function" and "nature of records." Sub-approaches among the restrictive states include "public funds," "prior legal determination," "possession" and "public control."

Totality of factors: Under this approach, no one factor is enough to grant access to infor-mation that is not explicitly covered by the law. Courts weigh a number of factors and rule on a case-by-case basis. Six states have used this approach, according to Feiser: Connecticut, Florida, Maryland, North Carolina, Oregon and Kansas (837). Factors can include the level of public funding, whether the activity was conducted on public property, whether the private entity is performing a governmental function, whether the private agency was created by a public agency, and more (839).

Public function: This approach narrows the review to the question of whether an entity "is performing a public function," rather than considering funding or other factors (845). Attor-ney and journalist Hammitt prefers this approach because he considers the determination of whether a contractor or quasi-public agency is the "functional equivalent" of the government to be fairly straightforward and commonsensical (Gupta 2007, 12). Courts in 10 states have relied on this approach, according to Feiser, including Georgia, New York, Ohio, California, Louisiana, Missouri, Utah, Kentucky, Delaware and New Hampshire.

Nature of records: This approach does not look at the function of an entity itself, but rather the public or private nature of the records being sought. A court asks whether the contents of the documents include public information, regardless of the entity that actually has posses-sion of them (851). This is perhaps the most aggressive assertion of transparency and Feiser's preferred method, because it reasons that information pertaining to the public should be made

public regardless of other factors. It ideally would be the philosophy of courts in every state and the substance of any amendments to public access laws, but courts in only six states have used this approach, including Colorado, Maine, Minnesota, Montana, Washington and Wisconsin.

The more restrictive approaches to interpreting public-access statutes in cases of privatization tend to involve consideration of only one factor in making a determination and result in either denial of access or access under very limited circumstances (853):

Public funds: Under this approach, courts allow access only if a specific level of public funding is evident. If a private nonprofit receives less than half its funding from the government, for example, a court might decide that is not enough to make that entity a public agency. Six states have employed this approach: Arkansas, Michigan, North Dakota, Indiana, South Carolina and Texas.

Prior legal determination: Courts in four states – Pennsylvania, Tennessee, New Jersey and West Virginia – have taken this approach. Feiser writes that this approach limits access to cases where the private entity "was created by the legislature or in some way previously determined by law to be subject to freedom of information laws" (857). In other words, a court is not free to determine whether a private entity might be subject to disclosure laws and must rely on previous courts' rulings for guidance.

Feiser applies the two remaining restrictive approaches to the two states left on his list of 34. He writes that the Iowa Supreme Court takes a possession approach, in that it strictly limits access to records that are in possession of a public entity (859). In Illinois, an appellate court has taken the public control approach, limiting access to cases in which the private agency is essentially controlled by a public agency (860).

In a March 2012 email to the author, Feiser said he hasn't tracked relevant case law since his classifications were published in 2000. A May 2012 LexisNexis search of relevant cases and law reviews yielded a few noteworthy updates. For example, Massachusetts could join Iowa on the list of states that employ a restrictive "possession" approach. In Harvard Crimson, Inc. v. President & Fellows of Harvard College (840 NE2d 518, 521 (Mass. 2006)), the state Supreme Court upheld a ruling that although Harvard College police are partly authorized by state and local police, their records are not subject to disclosure because the records are in possession of the private university and not the police. Tennessee courts rely on prior legal determination, but they seem to have moved toward a "public function" approach in defining a private entity that performs public services. In Memphis Publishing Company v. Cherokee Children & Family Services (87 SW3d 67 (Tenn. 2002)), the state Supreme Court ruled that a nonprofit contracting with the state for childcare services was not a government agency, but its records were state property because it "operates as the 'functional equivalent' of a governmental (state) agency."

The hodgepodge of case law can sometimes come from a single court. In examining court rulings related to the state of Washington's Public Records Act, Jeffrey A. Ware writes that the state Court of Appeals ruled in 2006 that a nonprofit provider of government-funded services was not subject to the act. One year later, the same court ruled that a for-profit corporation can be the functional equivalent of a government agency and therefore subject to the act. "Thus, the PRA's definition of agency has been turned on its head through incremental actions," Ware writes (742).

Conclusion

Tracking the sometimes confusing course of case law is an important part of assessing in-

formation access in an era of privatization, but that is not where examination or advocacy should stop. Any form that privatization takes on a public campus – outsourcing, fundraising, licensing, research agreements and other transactions – must be weighed against legally stipulated transparency by those with an interest in and understanding of the need for access. Emily Francke, executive director of Californians Aware, a nonprofit that assists journalists in advocating for open government in that state, says the growing influence of privatization represents one of "the big black holes when it comes to access to public agencies" today. Her organization scored a victory last year in pushing for the California bill on college auxiliaries and foundations, but it took many years of trying and two vetoes of previous incarnations by former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. The larger question of privatization versus public access might be taken up by CalAware in coming years, Francke said, and perhaps is a ripe cause for journalists and other advocates of access.

There are any number of directions to take this issue on individual campuses. Student journalists and media advisers at public community and four-year colleges should find out more about the level of privatization in policing, vending, research sponsorship, management services, athletics, fundraising and other elements that facilitate the academic and extracurricular experience. Understand the legitimate need for privacy in some cases, especially as codified in sunshine law exemptions, but push back when it seems the exemptions or vague wording of the laws are being used to skirt access in situations of privatization. Request contracts and examine stipulations regarding information disclosure, being especially attuned to any reference to confidentiality. Keep in mind that once information makes contact with an agent of a public entity, it is typically subject to disclosure, such as in the case of emails between a college employee and a private contractor.

Also be aware of the potential privatization of physical space as well as information. This pertains to meetings, but it also matters when private contractors are hired to manage space that might once have been considered public. Frank LoMonte, executive director of the nonprofit Student Press Law Center, says he sees a showdown brewing over student journalists being told they can't take photographs in bookstores, cafes and other campus spaces now managed by private companies. He doesn't know of any court challenges yet, but he encourages students to test whether photos and video are restricted in spaces that once were clearly the domain of public institutions, and whether there is any discrimination between student journalists and other students.

Just as state support is unlikely to return to previous levels, the path toward privatization is unlikely to slow at public colleges and universities. This raises delicate questions of how to balance privacy against transparency, but student journalists and media advisers should remind officials and remember themselves the essential spirit of sunshine laws. Members of the press have a great responsibility, as the media functions "not only as a vocal advocate of greater public access to information about governmental decision-making, but also as an institutionalized adversary of powerful institutions in American society" (Hearn 2004, 5). Ignoring the changing responsibilities on their campuses – and the shift in accessibility that might ensue – would be a disservice to such responsibility.

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About the Author

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